## Conclusion

*shardcore* {Fig. 117} is a collection of projects by Eric Drass, an artist and curator who aptly describes his work as such: ‘Sometimes this work is political, frequently it is playful, often it is provocative or transgressive in some way.’[[1]](#footnote-2) In March 2016, Drass launched the ‘Glitch News Network’[[2]](#footnote-3) that consists of conglomerations of the day’s news in visual form assembled into a video 2000 microseconds in length that is undecipherable at a conscious level but entirely decipherable at an unconscious level with only the briefest moments of recognition conveying a huge amount of information. Drass describes the project thus: ‘Here’s the news in 2000ms. This bot scrapes various online news sources for images of the latest stories. These are then glitched and mashed into a video which lasts less 2 seconds. After all, who has time to keep up with current affairs? Drass’ justification is that it’s a normal part of the evolutionary process for human beings to process information (especially visual information) at such speed because it enhances our survivability; he’s correct, but the extension of this is that the digital representation of information can be equally sped up. ‘The Glitch News Network perhaps offers a glimpse of the future, where we further disengage from our conscious central executor and merely stream blipverts at our subconscious.’[[3]](#footnote-4) Drass’ project is clearly a little sardonic, but the point is well taken in this remarkably intelligent art work: it’s not just simply that we, as human beings, have evolved to process information quickly but that the information itself has evolved independently to be absorbed quickly, to the point that there’s an increasing disconnect between its status as information and its existence as digital data in a manner similar to all forms of media in recent human history, a point taken up by Manovich but equally extendable beyond his words when he writes: ‘After the novel, and subsequently cinema privileged narrative as the key form of cultural expression of the modern age, the computer age introduces its correlate – database. But it is also appropriate that we would want to develop poetics, aesthetics, and ethics of this database.’[[4]](#footnote-5)

In taking a broader overview than we have, focusing on software, Lev Manovich recently wrote: ‘I am interested in how software appears to users – i.e. what *functions* it offers to create, share, reuse, mix, create, manage, share and communicate content, the *interfaces* used to present these functions, and *assumptions and models about a user, her/his needs, and society* encoded in these functions and their interface design.’[[5]](#footnote-6) Our approach has been very similar, if a little more focused on a particular set of objects as the outcomes of software, in line with one piece of art by Metahaven that declares *The Future Of Soft Power Depends On A Handful Of Pixels*, part of the *Disposable Imagecraft* (2012) series of work.

Our analysis of the New Aesthetic has been an examination of the condition of a new set of phenomena, rather than an attitude. Recognizing the dangers involved in an unthinking embrace of New Aesthetic ideas while also recognizing its productive and transformative potential has been one of our priorities. The story behind the New Aesthetic clearly proves that the most innovative and at the same time unconventional approaches to contemporaneity emerge beyond the walls of the academia. This is part of why we decided to consider it as a new type of phenomenon requiring a real-time enquiry involving a hybrid form of investigations into its manifestation as a web-based popular culture movement, interpreting examples of art influenced by digital design, employing ideas from the current pantheon of new media and postdigital theories as well as rooting our methodology in traditional philosophical practice.

The New Aesthetic is deeply embedded in the same computational practices (network-based data distribution, real-time digital data processing) that it is trying to describe, and it exists as a non-movement or approach for increasing society-technology interaction that might be helpful as one interpretation or as one of the signposts of the epistemic and ontological shift into the postdigital that we are currently undergoing. Not only can the New Aesthetic be found in the experience of common digital objects but also it is, we believe, substantiated by numerous examples of New Aesthetic art. Our analysis of the New Aesthetic uncovers its inseparability from the grain of computation (particularly in visual media) while unveiling the persistence of computational materiality in its relationship to contemporary civilization.

Technology has been a force for change in aesthetics since the beginning of human history. The very fact that an object could be represented, for instance, on the walls of a cave with pigments made out of natural materials should be regarded as both an artistic achievement as well as a technologically driven paradigmatic shift in how we understand the world. Technology has moved art into certain forms before – the Impressionists would never have created the paintings they made without portable tubes of paint that they could carry to locations where they would paint *en plein air* – but in the contemporary worldtechnology has acquired a vitality that is self-generating and self-sufficient; the means that artists and programmers and others who create the methods of our interaction with data and the information produced out of that data has become so independent from the creators’ full control in our postdigital world that it has asserted an autonomy of its own. And, therein, can be found the New Aesthetic.

1. Eric Drass, *shardcore*, ‘About shardcore.org: bio’, http://www.shardcore.org/shardpress/about-shardcoreorg/. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Eric Drass, *shardcore*, ‘Glitch New Network’, 2 March 2016, http://www.shardcore.org/shardpress/2016/03/02/glitch-news-network/. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Eric Drass, *shardcore*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Manovich, *Software Takes Command*, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)