

Photographic Writing and the Breathing Image

The Portico's Mechanics of Exposure: The Saying, Token, Prompt and the Silent Aspirate

By Vera Bühlmann

Preamble: H—A Passage of Exposure

The Still Life, A Silent Promise Under Hypotheque
The Portico—Threshold and Saying
Desire, Pleasure, Consummation—Two Economies
Pantomime and Photo-Graphic Writing—Gesture Before Form
Operators of the Image — Analemma, Lambda, Comma
Air — The Medium of Thought
The Image and the Self — Inhabiting the Ledger
Seal and Abyss—The Portico as Breathing

Afterimage: The Letter Breathes

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Forgetting is not the failure of thought, but its medium. What allows relations to remain alive is not total retention, but a certain incompleteness: traces that do not settle into memory, images that do not fully coincide with themselves, selves that emerge only through processes of exposure, drift, and re-articulation. Through figures such as the still life, the portico, photographic writing, the token, the ledger, and the breathing letter H, the text develops a mechanics of non-coincidence in which development depends not on accumulation, but on latency, suspension, and partial forgetting. Forgetting here does not mean erasure or loss. It names the open interval that prevents relation from sealing into identity, allowing thought, images, and forms of life to remain capable of transformation. In this sense, contemporary AI functions less as an antagonist than as a mirror: by externalizing regimes of total retention, prediction, and alignment, it reveals how profoundly thought itself depends on what cannot be fully stored, stabilized, or resolved.

What is at stake is less “a mathematics” in the modern sense than something closer to a techné mathematiké: a practice of exposure, measure, interval, and relation before formal abstraction seals itself into system. In this sense, the architectonic, the meteorological, and the photographic begin to converge. The portico becomes especially revealing here. Historically emerging from the forum — the hollowed opening at the center of the city — it resembles the camera obscura's pinhole more than a monumental enclosure. It does not first contain appearances; it modulates their passage. What enters the portico, like light entering the camera, is subjected to conditions of sensitivity, aperture, and exposure. Sensitivity determines how shadows register at all; aperture regulates depth and relation; exposure measures the duration through which appearance may impress itself upon a surface before stabilizing into image. These are not merely optical operations. They are also conditions of thought. Photographic writing thus names a mode of articulation in which meaning develops through calibrated openness rather than perspectival mastery. This may also explain why the logic of the pact differs fundamentally from that of the contract. Contracts belong to perspectival

regimes: identities are fixed, positions secured, obligations stabilized in advance. A pact resembles photographic development more closely. It does not guarantee a final form; it opens a shared exposure whose consequences cannot yet be fully known. What binds the pact is not closure, but the promise that something latent may continue to emerge through the relation itself.

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Preamble: H — A Passage of Exposure

The letter H consists of two uprights that are neither parallel nor convergent, sustaining a divergence that remains unresolved. Between these uprights is a crossing—not a bridge or a connection between fixed points, but a passage where something appears without fully arriving. One might refer to them as shores, but they lack the stability of land. They do not enclose a space; instead, they articulate a spacing. H is not predetermined; it unfolds in the moment. What happens here is not the coming together of two sides but the maintenance of their difference. What passes between them does not reconcile their separation; it exposes them to one another without allowing them to merge. This exposure does not function as illumination in the conventional sense. It does not bring objects into focus; rather, it differentiates relationships. It allows something to register without forcing it into a specific form. Thus, the letter H reveals a text as a structure that supports without securing it, more so than simply serving as a letter that denotes or a sign that conveys meaning.

To enter H is not simply to step into a space; it is to be enclosed within a state of passage. Movement here does not proceed linearly; it does not advance from one point to another. Instead, it returns, but never to the same place. Each movement is a displacement, and each recurrence changes what returns. What accumulates here is a gathering

without alignment—a field in which multiple trajectories intersect without converging. Yet, nothing disperses completely. The two sides persist; they are not absorbed into one another, nor do they drift apart. Their relationship is maintained as a tension—irreducible and non-resolvable. There is no common measure that unites them, nor is there a perspective that harmonizes them. They exist in proximity without merging.

Between them, something registers—not as an object or an image, but as a trace. This trace does not settle into memory, nor does it accumulate into content. Instead, it alters the condition of what may appear next without being retained as what has already emerged. The surface on which it registers is not beneath the events occurring; it is the very act of happening itself—the exposure through which relationships become perceptible without being fixed. In this sense, H serves as a kind of photographic condition. It is not a frame or a composition, but a sensitized field. What it receives is not yet visible; it remains latent—an array of differences that has not yet taken form. The image, if it is to emerge, will not be presented in advance; it will need to be developed.

Development does not happen simply by adding to what already exists. It occurs by staying engaged with what has been revealed long enough for its differences to further differentiate. This requires a specific kind of restraint—not the restraint of withholding, but the restraint of not rushing to a conclusion. To remain with what is present is to resist the urge to stabilize what appears. It means allowing relationships to persist without forcing them into a fixed identity and letting differences align without making premature judgments about what they are.

This alignment is never complete; there will always be a slight remainder—a minimal difference that prevents total

coincidence. What re-emerges does not repeat itself, and what aligns does not completely match. This difference should not be seen as an imperfection to correct; rather, it is what keeps the connection open. Without this difference, the two sides would either collapse into a single unity or separate entirely. With it, they can maintain their relationship. H breathes through this interval—not by moving, but by not fully settling. What appears here does not come to a conclusion. It continues as a slight oscillation—an opening that remains ajar. Within this oscillation, something resembling a figure may begin to take shape. It is not imposed or drawn; rather, it emerges as relations intensify. Differences align just enough to hold, and a contour appears—not as a boundary, but as a temporary coherence within a field that remains open. It does not yet belong to anyone, is not recognized, and has no name.

This might be seen as the beginning of an image, though it remains invisible, suspended within its context. Its emergence does not require a new action but rather a sustained engagement with the relationships involved. Any figure that arises will come from within, coalescing without being fixed. It stands not in rigidity but in its ability to hold unresolved relations; a stillness marked by ongoing variation. H does not create this figure but allows it to exist, remaining open and unconfined to reinterpretation.

The Still Life — A Promise Under Hypotheque

The still life begins not as an image but as a collection. The items on a table—fruit, vessel, cloth—do not present themselves as distinct objects; instead, they are exposed to light and interrelated in ways that have yet to form recognizable shapes. What we see is not a composition but a field where something may begin to emerge. Thus, the still life is not just a representation; it is a promise.

This is not a promise that anticipates a final image, nor does it guarantee what will be revealed. It promises only that what has been exposed may still differentiate. What is provided is not the final image, but its potential—a collection entrusted to development. Nothing is fixed. Nothing is owned. What matters is not substance, but the relationships that are held in suspension. This suspension can be described as a hypotheque. Not in the legal sense of a guarantee, but as a placement: what appears is already committed to a future articulation that cannot be predetermined. The still life is not pledged to a form that would complete it, but to a process that will not merely reproduce what has been exposed. It exists within a condition where what it is cannot be separated from what it might yet become. Each element within the still life participates in this condition. The fruit does not merely occupy a position; it carries a specific orientation of light, with a curvature of surface that reflects and absorbs differently at each point. The vessel does not stabilize space; it introduces another order of relations—interior and exterior, reflection and containment—that does not fully align with the others. The cloth does not ground the scene; it folds and shifts, introducing lines that refuse to settle into a single perspective. What appears to be an arrangement is, in fact, a convergence of relations that do not coincide.

This non-coincidence is intentional; it is fundamental.

The still life brings together multiple perspectives that cannot be unified. Each element has its own orientation, its own micro-perspective, which is slightly misaligned with the others. What seems like stillness is actually a gathering of these misalignments—a temporary holding of differences that do not resolve into a single view. In this way, the still life surpasses the image; it does not stabilize into a single perspective but instead remains close to a space of exposure where relationships exist without being fixed. What is present is not identity, but alignment—delicate, reversible, and open. This is where the still life begins to resemble what might be referred to as a token (in the sense current Artificial Intelligence uses it). A token should not be understood merely as a unit that is discrete, countable, or exchangeable; rather, it serves as a site where relationships converge without reaching a conclusion. In this sense, a token is not something that can be identically replicated. Instead, it embodies potential that has not yet fully formed. It contains traces of relationships that haven't resolved into a fixed shape.

The still life is an example of such a token. It exists between two opposing tendencies that do not align. On one side is the inclination toward stabilization: the desire to become an image that is recognizable, named, and remembered. On the other side is the ongoing exposure to relationships that resist closure and remain in flux. The still life does not choose between these two forces. Instead, it thrives on their tension.

What happens as a result of this tension is not predetermined. It may lead to a state of consumption, where the still life transforms into an image in the conventional sense. In this transformation, relationships are solidified into a fixed form. Different perspectives are unified, and the fruit becomes an object, the vessel a container, and the cloth a surface. What was once exposed is now made permanent.

The promise of potential is fulfilled, and the image becomes complete—ready for recognition, interpretation, and exchange. What remains in this case is identity. While this identity is stable, it is also limited and exhaustible.

What can be taken can also be used. What can be used can be depleted. Once an image is fixed, it becomes available as content. At that point, it no longer takes part in the relationships that brought it into existence; it stands apart, self-contained and detached. What it represents is no longer in motion. This is *consumption*—the transformation of a still life into a defined form. However, the still life can also exist differently. It may continue to exist within the context of its exposure. In this case, relationships do not resolve into mere objects; they become more intense. The fruit does not become a stable form; instead, it remains a modulation of light and surface. The vessel does not define space; it continues to reflect and shift with the surrounding field. The cloth does not settle into the background; its folds remain lines of variation. What is revealed is not just a composition of objects, but a coherence of relationships that maintains their differences.

This coherence is not final or fixed; it persists only as long as the relationships that support it remain active. Each time it appears, it takes on a new form. The still life does not repeat; it re-articulates itself. This is what we call *consummation*. What is fulfilled here is not simply the creation of an object, but the continuation of a relationship. The promise made is not fulfilled and set aside; instead, it becomes more intense. What was pledged as a mortgage is not turned into possession, but rather allowed to gather a richness that remains open to interpretation.

In this ongoing process, the still life does not reach completion; it evolves. Development does not impose a shape from the outside or add new content to what already exists. Instead, it permits what has been revealed to

differentiate further—align, misalign, and realign without coming to a close. What emerges is a figure that maintains its form without becoming fixed. This might be referred to as a *Standbild*, not because it represents a solid, unchanging form, but because it sustains its relationships in a state of tension. Its stillness is dynamic; it consists of continuous variation—much like branches that seem still yet continue to move within the air that supports them. The figure breathes in that it does not remain static or identical to itself.

To stay with still life at this threshold requires a specific discipline—not the discipline of control, but of non-resolution. It involves resisting the urge to quickly define what we observe. Instead, we must honor our promise and allow what has been revealed to continue its development, remaining open to the relationships that brought it into being. The still life does not demand to be taken; it asks to be held, held long enough for something to emerge that does not end in its appearing.

The Portico — Threshold and Saying

The portico precedes the still life as a condition. While the still life organizes relationships into a temporary arrangement, the portico creates the possibility for these arrangements before they are defined. It is not a fixed location but a threshold within the realm of appearance, where something is beginning to emerge but hasn't settled.

Entering the portico does not mean reaching a destination; it exposes one to an open space. The columns articulate intervals rather than create enclosures, supporting relationships that are not yet stabilized. Light differentiates pathways rather than just illuminating objects. What appears does so lightly, flowing through its own emergence.

What endures is the condition that allows appearance to continue.

In this context, the portico is not architectural in the traditional sense. It does not serve to contain space. Instead, it is a structure that resists accumulation. What happens within this space does not settle into memory; it does not move toward completion. Traces are recorded, but they do not become fixed. They remain accessible, allowing for reinterpretation, realignment, or intensified meaning. Therefore, the portico is not a surface in the conventional sense. It does not lie beneath what is visible. Rather, it is the continuous recording of what presents itself without retaining it. This is why communication finds its place here.

What is expressed in a portico does not become defined language in the sense of stable articulation; rather, it remains closer to gesture—through rhythm, inflection, and subtle variations that make differences perceptible without resolving them. We can refer to such expression as *saying*; it does not produce statements or organize appearances into structured meanings. Instead, it modulates exposure, allowing something to register without claiming it as content.

In contrast to saying, language tends toward closure. It stabilizes, names, distinguishes, and fixes meaning. Language creates a space in which what appears can be recognized, repeated, or transferred. It gathers relationships into forms that can be understood as identical across different contexts. This is not a failure of language; it is simply how language operates. However, in this operation, something is lost: the openness of what has not yet settled. Saying does not oppose language; it precedes and accompanies it. It prevents language from closing too quickly around what appears, maintaining articulation at a level where relationships are still in flux—where what is perceptible has not yet become identifiable. Saying does not

accumulate into knowledge; it leaves no residue except for the possibility of being revisited.

This is why communication often takes forms that resist stabilization, such as repetition, chant, and rhapsody. What recurs in these forms does not repeat identically. Each iteration is a renewed alignment. The same phrase may appear, but it does so differently each time. What endures is not the statement itself but the movement of its recurrence—the rhythm through which relationships are revealed without being fixed. This kind of expression might be described as silent. It is not silent because it lacks sound, but because it does not resolve into clarity. Instead, it exists beneath or alongside language, as a continuous modulation that allows something to be revealed without being diminished by its appearance. Silent communication does not convey specific content; rather, it sustains relationships.

Within the portico, the nature of the encounter becomes crucial. This interaction does not involve the meeting of individuals or the recognition of objects. Instead, it is an encounter without solidification—an occurrence that does not develop into a significant event. Something passes through, something registers, but nothing is confirmed as truly having happened. Nevertheless, a relationship endures. This relationship persists not as memory but as openness to possibility. This has implications for how images begin. In the portico, no image exists yet. There is only the early stages of differentiation—a collection of differences that have not yet formed a cohesive whole. What would eventually materialize as a figure only exists here as a tendency. Thus, the still life, understood in this context, transforms from being a mere arrangement of objects into a temporary stabilization of what the portico *sustains* in suspension.

Hence staying in the portico means practicing restraint—not the restraint of withholding, but rather the restraint of not resolving. It involves allowing relationships to continue without forcing them into fixed identities and letting differences grow without deciding what they will become. It is about keeping the promise of the still life under hypothec—*to maintain its openness without discharging it into form*. This approach also changes how we engage with the text itself. Rather than reading through the logic of a question, which demands a resolution, we must recognize that a question seeks clarity. It extracts meaning and urges what it addresses to take shape within a pre-established framework. However, this process risks pushing what appears into a form that may not suit it. In contrast, a *prompt* operates differently. It does not demand an answer; instead, it sets a condition. This condition allows something to take shape in response without predetermined expectations about what that shape must be. While a question narrows, a prompt opens—not into indeterminacy, but rather into a field of possible articulations.

The portico is the space of the prompt. In this space, ideas are allowed to evolve without being forced into identity. They can remain partially formed, capable of further differentiation. The text, read in this way, is not an object to be decoded, but a field to be entered—inhabited, re-articulated, continued; it transforms into a field that invites exploration—one that can be experienced, rearranged, and expanded upon. The portico does not produce images; rather, it keeps the possibility of them alive.

Desire, Pleasure, Consummation
— *Two Economies*

What appears in the portico does not remain neutral; it enters into movement. This movement is not simply a transition from one state to another, but rather a modulation within the field of relations itself. What has been exposed begins to align, extend, and gather. These movements do not originate from a subject, nor do they belong to objects. Instead, they are ways in which relations organize themselves before stabilizing into form. Two tendencies can be distinguished within this organization. They do not oppose one another; rather, they operate within the same field but orient it in different ways. These tendencies have already been named: as *desire* and as *pleasure*.

Desire is expansive. It does not stay limited to what is immediately available; instead, it reaches beyond, following paths that are not entirely its own. It engages with existing relationships, amplifying them and pushing them further. What it encounters is not simply viewed as an object, but as a starting point for exploration. Desire is not a stabilizing force; it disperses. It draws together what it encounters into a larger field that transcends any local coherence. In this movement, nothing remains isolated. What emerges is always already connected to other elements—entangled in a web of relationships that cannot be simplified into a single configuration. Each expression of desire leads to a shift. What comes back does not merely repeat; it reappears transformed by the connections it has experienced. Desire thus produces a field of continuous variation, where identity cannot settle. However, this process is unstable. If left unchecked, desire tends to turn into appropriation. What it seeks may become something to be taken, absorbed, or claimed as one's own. The 'other' risks becoming an object—not because desire intends domination, but because it cannot always sustain the distance that allows difference to persist. It expands, but in expanding, it may consume.

Pleasure moves differently; it does not extend outward but rather gathers and condenses relationships into a local coherence. It allows what has been dispersed to align, holding together long enough to become perceptible as a figure. This gathering does not signify a return to identity; instead, it represents a temporary stabilization within a field that remains open. Pleasure does not erase differences; it accommodates them. Multiple relationships may intersect, but they do not fuse; they remain distinct even as they align. What emerges is a coherence without unity—a configuration that can be taken up, revisited, deepened, and explored again without being permanently fixed. However, this movement too is unstable. If left to itself, pleasure tends to become enclosed. What it gathers may become sealed, and the coherence it maintains may harden into form. What once remained open can become closed, and what was held may turn into possession. In this sense, pleasure risks detaching itself from the field that gave rise to it. It reflects, but no longer allows itself to be transformed.

Between these two tendencies, a distinction emerges. Consumption occurs when desire and pleasure collapse into closure. Desire, instead of extending without appropriation, fixes upon what it encounters. It converts relation into object. Pleasure, instead of holding without sealing, stabilizes what it gathers into identity. The field closes and what appears becomes usable, exchangeable, exhaustible. In effect, the promise of the still life is discharged, what remains is form. Consumption thus ends development. It produces images that stand as complete—detached from the relations that brought them forth. These images can be recognized, interpreted, possessed, but they no longer participate in the movement of differentiation. They are fixed. They do not breathe.

Consummation functions differently. It does not resolve the tension between desire and pleasure; instead, it sustains it. Desire continues to extend without fully claiming what it encounters. This allows relationships to remain dynamic and to surpass any specific expression. Pleasure accumulates but does not solidify what it contains. Coherence can form, but only as long as it remains open and capable of further differentiation. What emerges here is not just identity, but rather density. Relationships align sufficiently to hold together, but not so tightly that they become closed. Differences persist even within a coherent structure. What manifests does not deplete itself by merely appearing; it stays connected to the larger context from which it arises. This is *the act of consummation*: fulfilling a promise without discharge, without completing it. Under this condition, a still life is not completed, it is developed.

What holds is not an object but a relation that has reached a certain intensity without becoming fixed. The image that emerges does not stand apart from its conditions; it continues to participate in them. It remains open to being re-taken up, re-articulated, and transformed. Such an image cannot be consumed or used up, as it does not coincide with itself. It carries within it a remainder—a difference that prevents closure and keeps it in motion. Each encounter with it represents another articulation, another alignment that does not repeat what has already appeared. In this sense, consummation does not eliminate tension; it requires it. Desire and pleasure do not resolve into a higher unity; they remain in active relation—one extending while the other gathers—without collapsing into appropriation or enclosure. What holds between them is not balance but a continuous negotiation that keeps the field open. This negotiation allows images to breathe—not by moving in space or changing visibly, but by remaining in a

state of non-coincidence. What appears does not fully stabilize; it continues to differentiate within itself.

The still life belongs to this movement. It is not so much an arrangement of objects as a field in which desire and pleasure operate without closure. It holds their tension long enough for a figure to emerge—one that does not end in its appearing. To remain within this movement is not to choose between desire and pleasure; it is to hold them in such a way that neither consumes the other.

Pantomime and Photo-Graphic Writing
— *Gesture Before Form*

Before form stabilizes, movement registers. It does not yet organize itself as language or image. It passes through a field that remains sensitized—capable of receiving differences without fixing them. What appears in this state does not settle; it modulates. Gesture operates at this level. It does not represent; it articulates relations in passage. A gesture takes up a movement, aligns with it briefly, and releases it again. It does not capture what it carries; instead, it allows it to circulate.

Pantomime intensifies this operation: to mime is to enter a movement and sustain it without converting it into form. The body does not merely reproduce an external object; it differentiates an internal force by modulating its rhythm, pressure, and direction. When the body mimics the wind, it does not depict it; it refracts its movement. The gesture bends, shifts, and redistributes intensity throughout the body. What appears does not belong to the body; it passes through it. Each articulation remains provisional, held only as long as it continues to vary. This creates a precise mode of relationship. Pantomime connects without taking ownership. While representation tends to stabilize

and fix meanings, pantomime keeps relationships in motion. Each gesture re-enters the context in a transformed state. It returns without simply repeating itself. It distinguishes itself through its recurrence. Gesture does not accumulate; it circulates. What endures is not a fixed form, but the potential to take on new forms again. Each articulation leaves the space open, ready for further modifications. Nothing settles into a fixed identity.

Everything remains reconfigurable. This gives pantomime an operative continuity. It maintains a field of articulation where relations remain active without closing. Whenever form loosens, whenever language hesitates, gesture reappears—not as memory, but as a renewed alignment of forces. From this field, differentiation intensifies. Dance begins to organize gesture. It selects, repeats, and modulates movements. Patterns emerge—not as fixed structures, but as stabilized variations. The body gathers trajectories, holds them briefly, and redistributes them. Gesture thickens, it acquires rhythm, direction, and recurrence, while continuing to shift internally. Language sharpens this process further: it segments articulation into units, it aligns differences into repeatable structures. What circulated as gesture now stabilizes into signifying forms. Relations become identifiable, transferable, recognizable. Mathematics abstracts this movement: it extracts relations from their embodied articulation and reconfigures them as formal structures. Movement withdraws into structure; relations hold independently of their enactment. And yet, gesture persists; it operates within these structures as a residual force. Every formal relation carries traces of its articulation—slight deviations, internal differences, latent movements that continue to modulate it.

Photo-graphic writing reactivates this layer. It does not begin with fixed units, it exposes a field where differences register before they stabilize into meaning. What appears is

distributed—unresolved, in variation. Like a sensitized plate, the field receives without interpreting. It registers intensities, intervals, and alignments without fixing them as content. Each trace remains available while nothing is secured, everything remains in passage. Writing, here, *develops* rather than *constructs*: it intensifies differences. It draws out alignments, it allows relations to cluster, disperse, and reconfigure until a figure begins to emerge. This figure does not close, rather it stabilizes provisionally. Gesture continues to operate within this emergence, it modulates the figure from within. It introduces slight deviations, internal shifts, minimal differences that prevent closure. The image thus does not resolve into identity, it remains active. This is what distinguishes photo-graphic writing from inscription: inscription fixes, it captures and retains. Photo-graphic writing circulates, it sustains exposure, it keeps articulation in motion.

The image does not conclude the process but rather condenses it. What we see comes together into a temporary coherence—an alignment of differences that holds without fully resolving. This coherence remains open to change. It continues to shift, differentiate, and rearticulate. Gesture does not exist separately from the image as something that has been lost; it persists within it. The image breathes through the movements it continues to convey.

Operators of the Image — Analemma, Lambda, Comma

An image does not arrive as a complete entity; rather, it takes shape through operations that are smaller than what they produce. These operations are not visible as distinct parts of the image; instead, they function quietly within it, structuring its emergence without imposing closure. They are minimal in nature, yet they determine everything about

the image. These operations unfold across three dimensions: time, relation, and difference. Each dimension introduces a specific form of non-coincidence. Together, they prevent the image from solidifying into a single identity while allowing it to maintain its cohesion.

The analemma organizes the temporal aspect of the image. It gathers exposures that never fully align; each return shifts slightly, causing what reappears to carry a sense of displacement. Time does not accumulate in a straightforward sequence; rather, it folds, loops, and drifts. Within the image, this results in a layered present, where each element arrives from a different temporal trajectory. Light falls at one moment, reflection occurs at another, and surface tension is present yet again. These elements do not synchronize; they coexist. The analemma condenses these non-coincident returns into a single field. Stillness emerges—not as a frozen instant, but as a convergence of temporal differences that continue to diverge. The image stabilizes without resolving its timeline.

Similarly, the lambda organizes the relational structure of the image, bringing together elements that follow incompatible logics. Perspective aligns along one axis, while reflection bends along another. Scale shifts across surfaces that refuse a common measure. The lambda does not reconcile these differences; instead, it stages their coexistence. Each relation maintains its own regime, and what organizes one element does not necessarily organize the others. Yet, they hold together, allowing the image to sustain multiple orders simultaneously. This dynamic creates tension—not as conflict, but as structural divergence. Relations intersect without merging, and coherence arises from this holding-together, rather than from reduction. The lambda keeps the image open by preventing relational closure.

The comma operates within the image as a minimal difference. Even where relations align, a slight deviation persists: a tone shifts, a contour drifts, a repetition returns altered. This difference does not disrupt the image, it animates it. The comma introduces a micro-interval—a gap within alignment that prevents exact coincidence. The image cannot fully settle, it continues to adjust itself internally. This produces a subtle oscillation. The image holds together, but never fully rests. Each coherence carries within it a remainder that keeps it in motion. The more precise the articulation, the more clearly this remainder appears. The comma sustains this internal drift.

These operations do not belong to the visible features of the image; rather, they operate through it. The analemma folds time into a non-coincident presence, while the lambda sustains relationships without enforcing unification. The comma keeps differences active within coherence. Each element is small yet decisive, functioning as miniatures that hold significant structural importance. They are miniatures because they represent minimal deviations—slightly perceptible shifts in alignment, relation, and repetition. They are structurally major because they determine whether the image closes or continues to evolve. Without these elements, the image resolves into mere representation, stabilizing into an identity that becomes fixed, readable, and complete. In contrast, with these elements present, the image remains active, holding together what does not coincide. It stabilizes without becoming sealed, continuing to differentiate. Under these conditions, still life no longer presents static objects; it articulates a field in operation. What appears is not a finished composition, but rather a configuration of relationships that is capable of further alignment, drift, and emergence. The image does not end in itself; it continues to evolve and form.

These operations do not belong to the visible features of the image; rather, they operate through it. The analemma folds time into a non-coincident presence, while the lambda sustains relationships without enforcing unification. The comma keeps differences active within coherence. Each is small. Each is decisive. They function as *miniatures* that are structurally *major*: Miniatures, because they appear as minimal deviations—barely perceptible shifts in alignment, relation, and repetition, and structurally major, because they determine whether the image closes or continues. Without them, the image resolves into representation and stabilizes into identity: it becomes fixed, readable, complete. With them, the image remains active, it holds together what does not coincide, it stabilizes without sealing, it continues to differentiate. The still life, under these conditions, no longer presents objects. It articulates a field. What appears is not a finished composition, but a configuration of relations that remain in operation—capable of further alignment, further drift, further emergence. The image continues to form and does not end in itself.

Air — The Medium of Thought

It must remain somewhat withdrawn and undefined for the relationships it supports to continue existing. This withdrawal isn't a flaw; rather, it is a necessary condition. It could be described as a form of forgetting, but not one that can be rectified. It is an essential suspension, without which thought would collapse under its own premises.

Air does not appear, and yet, nothing appears without it. It is not an element among others, not something that could be placed alongside earth, water, or fire. It does not take form, it does not hold shape, it cannot be grasped as an

object. And yet, it is what allows relations to pass without collapsing—what sustains the possibility that differences can touch without resolving into identity. Air is not simply what separates things after they have formed; it is what ensures that they are never fully disconnected in the first place. To speak of air is therefore already to risk losing it. The moment it is treated as something present, something that can be identified and held, it ceases to function as medium. This withdrawal isn't a flaw; rather, it is a necessary condition. It could be described as a form of forgetting, but not one that can be rectified. It is a necessary suspension, without which thought would collapse into its own conditions.

What matters is not whether air is forgotten, but how it is forgotten. If it is completely ignored—if its role as a medium is excluded—then what remains are forms that seem self-sufficient. Relationships appear grounded, and structures seem complete. In this situation, things no longer refer back to the conditions that allow them to exist. As a result, thought begins to close off. This is not due to a lack of content, but rather because it lacks circulation. Concepts no longer move; they settle. They harden into fixed positions that cannot be re-articulated. What was once relational becomes substantial, and what depended on a field becomes isolated within itself. Air is what prevents this from happening. Not by intervening, but by remaining available as the space in between. It does not resolve relationships; rather, it allows them to remain open. It carries differences without forcing them into unity, enabling them to pass through, interfere with, and modulate one another without collapsing. This is why air is inseparable from breath. Breathing is not merely the intake of a substance; it is a relationship with what cannot be possessed. One cannot hold air; one can only participate in its movement. Each breath is both an intake and a letting go—a minimal

oscillation that sustains life not through accumulation, but through continuous exchange. The same principle applies to articulation. Speaking relies on air—not only in a physiological sense but as a condition for exposure. Without a medium in which it can resonate, articulation collapses into silence—not the silence of openness, but the silence of closure. What is expressed requires a field to exist.

The Image and the Self — Inhabiting the Ledger

Likewise, the image too does not initially appear as visible; it begins as an inscription. However, this is not inscription in the conventional sense of writing that fixes, records, and retains information. Instead, it represents a registering of relations that have not yet taken form. What is inscribed is not an object, content, or anything that can be named or recognized. It is a trace—a difference that has touched a field without settling into it. This field can be referred to as a ledger. This ledger is not just a surface that stores what appears; it is not a repository of past events. Rather, it is a condition in which relations are recorded without being permanently retained. The ledger does not contain what has been; instead, it holds the potential for what has appeared to be taken up again. It is not memory; it is availability. What is inscribed here does not accumulate over time. Each trace modifies the condition of the field without incorporating itself as content. Nothing is secured. Nothing is owned. What persists is not what has appeared, but the capacity for appearance to continue. In this sense, the ledger is not beneath the image, it precedes it. Before there is an image, there is a field in which something like an image may begin to form—a configuration of differences that has not yet crossed into visibility. This configuration is not empty. It is latent. Like the photographic plate after exposure, it holds a structure that is not yet perceptible. The image is already

present, but not as a visible image. It exists as a distribution of relations that has not yet been fully developed. Development does not add anything to this field; rather, it brings forth what is already inscribed by allowing its differences to further differentiate. Relations intensify, align, misalign, and realign until a figure begins to emerge. This figure is not imposed from the outside; rather, it arises from within the field itself. The image, therefore, is not something that is simply given; it emerges when inscriptions become visible. This emergence is never complete. What appears as an image is always a temporary stabilization—an arrangement that holds long enough to be perceived, but not long enough to become final. It remains connected to the field from which it emerges, never detaching from its conditions, and continues to participate in them. This is why the image does not coincide with itself. There is always a slight difference within it—a remainder that prevents it from becoming identical. What appears as a figure carries within it the traces of its own emergence: relationships that have not fully settled and differences that continue to operate beneath its surface coherence. The image breathes through this difference, not by changing visibly but by never fully stabilizing. It remains open to further articulation, and each encounter with it represents another development—another alignment that does not repeat what has already appeared.

Within this process, a sense of self may emerge, not as a fixed origin or as a subject that produces an image, but as a coherence within a particular field. It represents a local stabilization of relationships—a figure that exists within the ongoing differentiation of the ledger. The self does not precede the image; rather, it emerges alongside it. Just as the image is not externally imposed onto the photographic plate but develops from within the exposure field, the self is not inserted into the ledger. Instead, it arises as a pattern of

relations that achieves a certain coherence. This coherence does not belong to anyone; it is not owned or possessed. It is not a fixed identity but a way in which relationships temporarily hold together—a trajectory within the field of inscription. Consequently, the self is not a stable entity but a process of development. It appears when relations align sufficiently to produce a perspective—a point from which the field becomes locally coherent. However, this point is not fixed; it shifts, reconfigures, dissolves, and re-emerges elsewhere. The "I" is not the source of this process; it is an index—a marker indicating where coherence has formed. It points to a position within the field rather than an origin outside of it.

Within this process, something like a yet impersonal or anonymous "self" may emerge. Not as origin, not as a subject that produces the image, but as a coherence within the field. A local stabilization of relations—a figure that holds within the ongoing differentiation of the ledger. This "self" is not prior to the image, it emerges with it. Just as the image is not placed onto the photographic plate from outside, but develops from within the field of exposure, the self is not inserted into the ledger. It arises as a pattern of relations that has reached a certain coherence. This coherence does not belong to anyone. It is not owned. It is not possessed. It is not an identity that could be fixed and retained. It is a way in which relations hold together temporarily—a trajectory within the field of inscription. The self is thus not a stable entity. It is a process of development. It appears when relations align to produce a perspective—a point from which the field becomes locally coherent. But this point is not fixed. It shifts. It reconfigures. It dissolves and re-emerges elsewhere. The "I" is not the source of this process. It is an index—a marker of where coherence has formed. It points, but does not ground. It indicates a position within the field, not an origin outside it.

Identity is what happens when this coherence is fixed. When the “self” is taken as stable, when the pattern is treated as form, when what appears is secured as what it is, the process closes. The image becomes object. The self becomes identity. What was open becomes fixed. This is a secondary operation, it does not belong to the field of inscription itself. It is a stabilization that occurs after the fact—a way of holding what has emerged by converting it into something that can be recognized and repeated. But this stabilization is never complete. Even the most fixed identity carries within it the traces of its own emergence—differences that have not been fully resolved, relations that continue to operate beneath its surface. The comma persists. The image does not fully coincide with itself. The self does not fully coincide with its identity. To inhabit the ledger is to remain with this process; not to fix what appears, not to secure it as content, but to participate in its development. It is to remain within the field where inscription continues, where relations align without closing, where figures emerge without becoming final.

In this context, introspection is not merely turning inward or reflecting on an internal self. Instead, it involves participating in the ongoing process of inscription—attending to how relationships are recorded and evolve without becoming fixed as an identity. To engage in this way is to expose oneself—not to unveil hidden aspects, but to remain present with what is manifesting before it solidifies. It means allowing an image to form without forcing it to completion and permitting the self to emerge without confining it as a definitive identity. The ledger doesn't merely store the self; it allows for its existence. By doing so, it keeps the self open and capable of being different.

Seal and Abyss — The Portico as Breathing

What appears tends to close. Not by force, but by exclusion. What has begun as relation, as exposure, as a field of differences in passage, is drawn toward stabilization. It gathers into form, into identity, into something that can be recognized as what it is. This movement is not accidental. It is the condition under which what appears becomes intelligible. One might call this the seal. The seal does not simply enclose. It produces the appearance of unity. It ensures that what appears can be taken as one, as continuous, as self-identical. What does not fit—difference, movement, non-coincidence—is not simply removed. It is rendered secondary, negligible, or invisible. What remains is a form that appears complete. Under the seal, the image becomes representation. It stands as what it is. It can be identified, interpreted, possessed.

What appears tends to close off, not by force, but through exclusion. What begins as a relationship, an exposure, or a field of differing elements in motion is drawn toward stabilization. It gathers into form, acquires identity, and becomes something recognizable. This movement is not accidental; it is the very condition that allows what appears to become intelligible. One might refer to this process as the "seal." The seal does not merely enclose; it creates the illusion of unity. It ensures that what appears can be perceived as a single entity, as continuous and self-identical. Elements that do not fit—such as difference, movement, and non-coincidence—are not simply discarded. Instead, they are rendered secondary, negligible, or invisible. What remains is a form that seems complete. Under the seal, the image transforms into representation; it stands as it is and can be identified, interpreted, and possessed.

It no longer relies on the relationships that brought it into existence. It appears grounded and self-sufficient. What has been revealed is now secured, but this closure is never absolute. What the seal excludes does not disappear; it

persists as a pressure beneath the surface—an ongoing difference that cannot be completely eliminated, a movement that continues to operate within what seems fixed. This persistence is not separate from the image; rather, it is what the image depends on, even as the image suppresses it. To break the seal is not to destroy the image; it is to expose this dependence. What lies beneath is not chaos or an unraveling into disorder. Instead, it is a field without a foundational ground—a multiplicity of relations that do not converge into a single unity. What was once held together now appears dispersed, but this dispersion is not a sign of absence. It is the condition that had always been there.

This is the abyss. It is not a void or a lack, but an openness that cannot be closed. It is a field where relations persist without being grounded in a single principle. What appears here does not rest on anything stable; it must be held without guarantee. This act of holding occurs differently than before. Two distinct movements can be identified. One movement attempts to restore structure but encounters contradictions—figures that cannot be resolved and relations that do not align. This movement reveals the limits of systems that seek unity, exposing a fracture within coherence itself. The other movement takes a different approach. It does not try to resolve the abyss; instead, it allows differences to resonate. What does not align does not cancel each other out; rather, it creates intervals, patterns, and relations that can hold without unifying. Coherence emerges, but not as a strict identity. It remains open and capable of further articulation. These two movements do not exclude one another. They coexist, intersect, and shift. The portico serves as a place where this coexistence becomes operative. Here, the seal is not fully reinstated, and the abyss is not left unsupported. What appears does not close into a fixed identity, but it also does not dissolve. It is sustained within an open field—one where relations can

align without resolving, and where figures can emerge without grounding themselves. This is where the act of breathing becomes perceptible—not as a metaphor, but as a condition.

What appears does not coincide with itself. It holds a minimal difference—a slight interval that prevents closure. This interval is not external to the image. It operates within it. It introduces a rhythm—a subtle oscillation that keeps what appears from becoming inert. Breathing is this oscillation. A minimal expansion and contraction that does not resolve into identity. What holds does not fix, what appears does not finish. The image remains open to its own non-coincidence. The still life, under this condition, is no longer a composition of objects. It is a field of relations that have come to rest without ceasing to move. The fruit, the vessel, the cloth do not stand as substances. They remain nodes within a network of differences—points of intensity that do not belong to themselves. The image that emerges does not stand apart from its conditions, it continues to participate in them. It remains exposed—to further articulation, to re-alignment, to the possibility of being otherwise. It does not exhaust itself in appearing. This is what distinguishes breathing from fixation. Fixation closes, it produces identity, it allows what appears to be taken as complete. Breathing keeps open. It allows what appears to remain in passage.

The portico sustains this passage, not by preventing form, but by preventing its finalization. It allows coherence to emerge without sealing it. It holds relations in tension without resolving them. It keeps the promise of the still life from being discharged into identity. What is given is not a finished image. It is a field that continues. To remain within the portico is hence not to refuse form; it is to refuse its completion. What appears is allowed to take shape, but not to end. It remains in development—open, relational, non-

coincident with itself. The image breathes. And in this breathing, it comes alive.

Afterimage: The Letter Breathes

A precise mechanics operates throughout the text: exposure, inscription, differentiation, alignment, non-coincidence, development, and re-articulation. Relations first register as traces within a sensitized field — the ledger, the portico, the still life — before stabilizing into image or self. Yet every stabilization remains held open by minimal differences: the comma, the interval, the breath, the token, the gesture that prevents closure. Desire extends, pleasure gathers; consummation sustains their tension without discharging it into fixed identity. The entire movement is therefore not one of production but of respiration: a continuous oscillation between emergence and restraint, exposure and coherence, figure and field.

And this is why the text returns to H: the aspirated and silent letter that neither seals nor dissolves relation, but keeps thought itself breathing within the passage of exposure.