

The World as Image



Berlin-Brandenburg Academy
of Sciences and Humanities
Interdisciplinary Research Group "The World as Image"

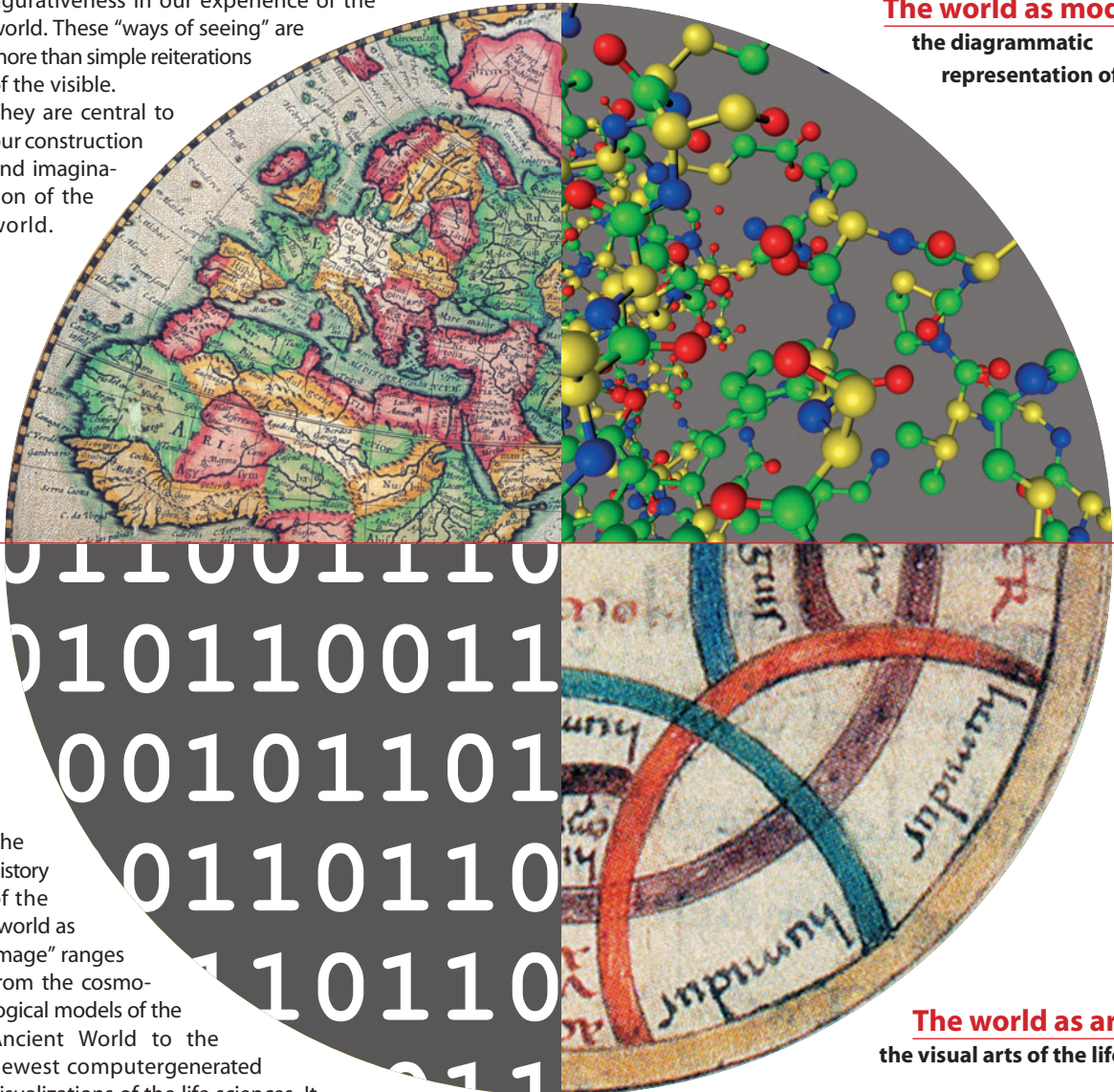
"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

(Exodus 20:4 KJV)

Despite the Old Testament commandment, we have always been drawn to the image. This fascination with the image, however, extends far beyond an interest in the unseeable Almighty. In a very much broader sense, the history of images is the history of the visualization of the world beyond the reach of the human eye.

The concepts of "Weltanschauung" (world view) and "Weltbild" give a clue to the fundamental importance of sight and figurativeness in our experience of the world. These "ways of seeing" are more than simple reiterations of the visible.

They are central to our construction and imagination of the world.



The world as icon:

the globalization of visual memory

The world as model:

the diagrammatic
representation of nature

The history of the "world as image" ranges from the cosmological models of the Ancient World to the newest computergenerated visualizations of the life sciences. It encompasses a broad spectrum of visual media, including manuscript illumination and computer visualization, easel painting and informational graphics, cartography and diagrams. With the so-called "iconic turn" these media have decidedly become the central focus of scientific research.

The interdisciplinary research group "The World as Image" has as its goals – from both a historical as well as a systematic perspective – the study and investigation of visual representations of world concepts and the analysis of scientific visualizations and models, whose visual descriptiveness is essential for the acquisition of scientific knowledge. The group's work focuses on the following paradigms:

The world as number:

algorithmic representation between 0 or 1

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The world as artifact:

the visual arts of the life sciences

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