

The Inseparability of Seeing and Speaking

Thematic Foundations and Developmental Directions in the Work of Arslohgo

An Art-Journalistic Analysis

In Bochum there lives an artist who refuses, with quiet determination, to play by the rules of the contemporary attention economy. No social-media links, no comments section, no sales function, no algorithmic optimization — and yet, behind the unassuming address adw.lohgo.net (“artdig worx”), a body of digital work has accumulated since 2023 that is remarkable in its thematic scope, formal consistency, and intellectual density. The artist goes by the name **Arslohgo** — a pseudonym that encodes, in a gesture typical of his practice, his own program: *artes digitales* compressed to *artdig*, the creator compressed to *lohgo*. Everything is already a pun, a nested structure, a piece of language folded into itself.

Arslohgo — born 1957, trained as a linguist (Magister Artium in English Linguistics, Sociology, and History), later a software developer specializing in typographic publishing software, later still a teacher of English and social pedagogy — took up digital art after a hiatus of nearly twenty-five years, following the death of his wife C. What began, as he writes, as a distraction from grief and the “anguished circling around the loss” of a forty-five-year shared life has since grown into what he plainly calls “a central focus of my life.” He speaks of an “Atramentocene” — an age of ink art, 1981–1995 — and a “Digitartocene” beginning in 2023. The naming of historical periods is telling: this is an artist who thinks in geological scales, who understands his own biography as stratigraphy.

“Everything I see is language. And everything I speak is pictures.” —
Arslohgo

The axiom he places at the center of his self-presentation is also, in retrospect, the key to everything. This is not a metaphor. It is a method.

I. The Language-Image Nexus: A Structural Principle

The most pervasive and foundational thematic strand running through the entire Arslohgo oeuvre is the mutual entanglement of linguistic and visual sign systems — and the artist's academic background in linguistics is never far from the surface. Works like *Langage (saussurel-ment)* (January 2026) take this so seriously that they become acts of applied semiotics. Arslohgo begins with a song by the French singer-songwriter Zaho de Sagazan whose title immediately transported him, he writes, back to a first-semester lecture on Ferdinand de Saussure during his linguistics studies in the early 1980s. In Saussure's tripartite distinction between *langage* (language in its broadest, analytically resistant sense), *langue* (the system) and *parole* (use), *langage* is the unwieldy totality that resists scientific reduction. That, Arslohgo argues, is precisely what Sagazan makes her subject — the deeply personal, non-systematizable emotional idiom of another human being, “the longing to understand someone on a deeper, nonverbal level.” The visual work becomes a translation: a photograph of a couple deconstructed, its protagonists isolated, the heterosexual dynamic “updated,” an inner calendar with emotional annotations rendered visible. The work does not illustrate the song. It performs the act of translation that the song describes.

Expression Idiomatique Anglaise (March 2026) — a French designation for an English idiom, embedded within a Breton sky photograph — pushes the logic further. An idiomatic phrase, by definition, cannot be decoded from its parts; meaning lives in the whole. The sky's compositional layering enacts precisely this: the idiomatic imagery, as Arslohgo notes, does not reveal itself at first glance, but ultimately “comes to life.” The work is an idiom about idioms, a sign about signs. And the enigmatic *blu.shing* (February 2026) — the most recent work in the portfolio at the time of writing — operates through exactly this phonetic-semantic compression: “blushing” plus the color of melancholy, a chromatic affect, all collapsed into a single invented compound. The description is minimal and absolute: “As concrete as it is abstract, as simple as it is complex — a feeling.”

This preoccupation with language extends across the portfolio in dozens of forms. The entire SKY series exploits the orthographic embedding of the word SKY within other words and concepts: *Skeye*, *Skylander*, *Skylark*, *Skystriker*, *Skyscraper*, *Skyfall*, *Skisle*, *Skypirin(h)ja* — each title is a collision of two semantic fields forced into phonetic unity. *GinX* adds the letter X to transform gin into the phonetic suggestion of jinx. *Halb-e-Zeit* splits the German word for half-time to expose digital display logic. *Del-l-aware* converts a BIOS screenshot into a meditation on consciousness. *The Artichoke Metaphor* confronts the Saussurean arbitrariness of the sign head-on: when we see an artichoke, we think the word; when we hear the word, we see the image. “Image and word are inseparable because neither precedes the other” — and the entire portfolio enacts this argument, work by work, across more than 130 pieces.

II. The Elemental Stages: Sky, Sea, and the Vertical Axis

If language-image fusion is the structural principle of Arslohgo's practice, the sky and the sea are its most persistent elemental stages. The SKY and SEA categories together constitute the largest single thematic cluster in the portfolio, and they are far from mere landscape photography. The SKY series, as Arslohgo specifies, explores its theme “on three levels: visually, in writing, and aurally” — image, embedded or associated text, and sonic dimension (a Simon & Garfunkel echo here, a Sagazan trigger there, the atmospheric implied by a North Holland dusk). The sky is at once motif, medium, and metaphor.

The most concentrated recent development in this strand is the cluster of works belonging to the project “Motifs nuageux particuliers — Rétrospective Dinard 25” — a retrospective of cloud studies from a 2025 stay in Dinard, Brittany. *Expression Idiomatique Anglaise, Une Mer Imaginaire, Un Ciel Imaginaire, (À) Ciel Ouvert* and *Créateur de Nuages* (all March 2026) form a five-part sky suite of remarkable tonal coherence. All share the same horizontal format, the same source location, the same French-language titling, and the same contemplative mode. But within this formal unity the register shifts with each piece. *Créateur de Nuages* — “Cloud Maker” — poses the question of possibility versus absurdity; a five-line poem in French and English is as much the work as the image itself. *(À) Ciel Ouvert* turns on a double reading: set aside the parenthesized *à* and what remains is simply “open sky;” factor it back in, and the darker question opens: “The sky takes everything in — but what does it do to the things that have already wreaked havoc on earth, once they are lifted from it and swept into the heavens?” *Un Ciel Imaginaire* and its counterpart *Une Mer Imaginaire* are paired reflections — twin disturbances: “Something isn't quite as it should be — or could be.” The sky becomes a Rorschach test for the state of the world, and the cloud a figure for everything that is simultaneously visible and shapeless.

The sea works operate differently — with more explicit narrative and literary grounding. *Marlin's Fate* and its Director's Cut invoke Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*; *Poseidon's Curse* reconfigures Homer's *Odyssey* around the theme of hubris; *Mediterranean Future* projects a “horror vision” of the Mediterranean in 2323 AD. But *Deep Sea Crets — Scratching the Surface* (March 2026), part of the “Playing Around With Water” series, marks a significant philosophical intervention. A diver at the edge of an infinity pool high above the clouds gazes down into oceanic depth — specifically, the Mariana Trench. The assembly is characteristic: a found panorama image, a photographic detail of the trench, an AI-generated diver composited into the scene. The commentary is devastating in its simplicity: “Humanity reaches for height (and for distance), while what it lacks is depth — in more ways than one.” The diver's plunges, however ambitious, will only scratch the water's surface.

Together, *Deep Sea Crets* and the Dinard sky suite define a vertical axis that has become increasingly central to the recent work: height (sky, cosmos, aspiration) set against depth (sea floor, inner life, grief). The former is spectacular but ultimately shallow; the latter is invisible but irreducibly real. *Sombrero's Not a Hat* (March 2026) completes the upward vector by introducing the extraterrestrial into domestic banality — the Sombrero Galaxy threaded vertically onto a clothes rod, hangers hanging, sparrows perching. Scale collapses. “The relativity of the things we (think we) know” is made grotesquely, comically literal. In a single image, the domestic and the cosmic exchange roles, and neither recovers its innocence.

III. Appropriation and Transformation: Dialogues with Art History

A third major strand concerns Arslohgo's sustained engagement with the canonical tradition through appropriation, transformation, and creative defamiliarization. The most extensively developed instance is the MCE series — MCE standing for Maurits Cornelis Escher — which runs through at least six distinct works: *MCE Day & Night*, *MCE Day & Night Metamorph*, *MCE Dream Deconstructed & Rebuilt*, *MCE Red Ants Möbius Variation*, *MCE Arslohgo Meets Escher* (with color and puzzle variants), *MCE Beyond Ground Zero* und *MCE Cubic Space Filling 52-25: Transformation Processes*. Arslohgo writes of having been “an admirer of Escher since I first held a reproduction of his work in my hands nearly fifty years ago” — the series is not academic exercise but a loving and creative argument conducted across half a century. Each work introduces a new transformation logic: metamorphosis, architectural deconstruction, chromatic variation, puzzle-format replication, wall installation. The Escher dialogue is never pastiche; it is collaboration across time.

But the tradition Arslohgo interrogates extends well beyond Escher. *Banksylation* stages a collision between Delacroix and Banksy — an “entirely plausible alternative” art-historical scenario in which past and present rebellions meet and inevitably contaminate each other. *Munkehuset* constructs a narrative from Edvard Munch's surname, braiding together Norwegian language, fiction, history, and portraiture. *Spitzweg — The Poor POE-t* links Carl Spitzweg's 1839 painting to Edgar Allan Poe in a structural rhyme between two creative lives of studied poverty. *Art Criticism Reinstalled* addresses the question of the “absolute original” head-on, placing the role of criticism itself under examination. Und *Shadow awAIkening* — whose title embeds the acronym AI — confronts what it means for the exhibition context to have changed when the works themselves are generated or altered by artificial intelligence. Not the art alone changes; the critical framework changes with it.

This self-reflexive dimension is characteristic. Arslohgo is never simply a practitioner of a technique; he is simultaneously reflecting on its implications. The journal entry announcing that

“each work published on ‘artdig worx’ now includes a critical essay provided by the AI software Claude AI for Windows” is itself an artistic statement — a gesture that makes the AI visible as collaborator and critic, and raises questions about authorship that several of the works were already asking. selbstreflexive Dimension ist charakteristisch. Arslohgo ist niemals nur Praktiker einer Technik; er reflektiert gleichzeitig deren Implikationen. Der Journal-Eintrag, der ankündigt, dass „jede auf ‚artdig worx‘ verublished on ‘artdig worx’ now includes a critical essay provided by the AI software Claude AI for Windows” is itself an artistic statement — a gesture that makes the AI visible as collaborator and critic, and raises questions about authorship that several of the works were already asking.

IV. Music as Trigger and Translation

The MUS category of the portfolio reveals a fourth structural strand: the use of specific music — particular songs, albums, artists — as the trigger and organizing principle of visual work. Arslohgo names the mechanism explicitly in *Langage (saussurelment)*: for him, “beyond the purely musical elements, it is frequently song titles that serve as triggers, drawing me deeper into engagement with a song's content.” Music is neither background nor decoration; it is generative.

The range of musical references is deliberately eclectic and entirely personal: Frank Zappa (*The Yellow Carcharodon*, named after Zappa's final album *The Yellow Shark*, “a tribute to this extraordinary artist”); Pink Floyd (*The Dark Side of the Moon*; *A Wallmart of Lost Chances*, built on the architecture of *The Wall*); Ozzy Osbourne (*OOII*, “a tribute to the founder of heavy metal,” who “now looks out from outside, from true endless darkness, through the window to the world”); Annie Lennox (*A..nox*); The Slits (*Tribute to the Slits*); Mike Batt (*Zero Zero — System 605 Is Down*); the Finnish band 22-Pistepirkko (*22-Spot Ladybug PK K Mo[nu]mentum*); Zaho de Sagazan, who appears twice — in *Langage (saussurelment)* and in *Nouvelle chanson*, which celebrates her revitalization of French chanson for contemporary youth. *SOS — When the Night Comes* deploys the Simon & Garfunkel resonance not as title but as emotional atmosphere: “the sound of silence spreads across the landscape, just as in the Simon & Garfunkel song of the same name.” The musical reference sets the emotional temperature, the exact quality of the solitude. Music in Arslohgo's practice is neither illustration nor caption. It is co-author.

V. The Political-Critical Register: A World Interrogated

Running through the portfolio as a persistent bass line — sometimes foregrounded, sometimes structural background — is a strand of sociopolitical critique that is neither agitprop nor ironic

detachment but a cold, focused indignation directed at the conditions of the present. The works in this register address capitalist exploitation (*Kijk alleen, The Hunger Games — All U Can Eat, Liberty of Frenchising*), American religious and political reaction (*New ICEland — Land of the Unfree, G-sus left Birmingham long time ago*), neo-colonialism (*Pump Modern Colonization, State of Qatarisis* — which commemorates migrant workers who died building Qatar's World Cup stadiums), post-truth and media manipulation (*X-tinction of the Truth, New Truth Is Fake News, Global Pressure*), oligarchic power (*OO — Oligarch's Olympus*), and environmental catastrophe (*Mediterranean Future, Deep Sea Crets*).

What is notable is the formal consistency with which these critical works are held within the same “miniposter” vocabulary as the more lyrical pieces. *State of Qatarisis*, a memorial and an accusation at once, shares its formal language with *SOS — When the Night Comes*, a meditation on dusk and silence. The political and the atmospheric are not separate modes in Arslohgo's practice; they are the same instrument played in different registers. The critique is always embodied, always grounded in the specific and the sensory — a gas station logo rising from the sea (*Seashell*), sparrows on a cosmic clothes rod (*Sombrero's Not a Hat*), a diver who will never reach the Mariana Trench (*Deep Sea Crets*). Abstract power is made tangible through the image, and the image is made significant through the language that names it.

VI. The Autobiographical Substratum: Grief and Renewal

The most quietly insistent strand is also the most personal. Arslohgo does not make confessional art in any conventional sense — the self is never displayed as spectacle. But the entire project is, at its root, built on the experience of loss and the act of renewal. *Recalling the Inkocene* (February 2026) makes this explicit with unusual directness: “In the darkest time after C.'s death, when the past consumed the present and the future had ceased to matter, memories of my Atramentocene — the ink-art period, 1981–1995 — resurfaced.” The digital project began as “a distraction from grief,” became “a kind of therapeutic self-reckoning” with the loss, and ultimately gave rise to “Arslohgo and his digital works.” The work formally names this transition as a geological boundary event: the Inkocene closes; the Digitartocene begins. An era has ended. A new one has been inaugurated, and its name already inscribes a claim to duration.

Other works in the PSY category carry this current less explicitly, but no less unmistakably. *Deceptive Ray of Hope* (“after months of extreme suffering, fear, and hopelessness on C.'s part, fear for her, pain because of her suffering”), *Sadness of Loss* (“an emotional state during a visit to C.'s grave”), *Loss of the Soul, PD/Psycho Drapes, Torn/Dichotomy, Cut — Lacking Clarity, Unseen Gazes in Desolate Landscape* — all attempt to map interior states with the same precision that the SKY and SEA series maps exterior ones. The psychological vocabulary is never self-pitying; it is, rather, systematic. And the figure of C. — present throughout without ever

being named beyond her initial — functions as a kind of gravitational center around which the entire artistic project silently orbits.

VII. Developmental Directions: Where the Work Is Heading

Tracking the chronological arc of the Arslohgo project from its earliest entries through the cluster published in early 2026, several developmental vectors become visible.

The Francophone Turn. French — or rather, a deliberate multilingualism in which French, English, and German coexist and generate meaning through their interference — has become increasingly central. The entire Dinard retrospective is titled in French. The bilingualism of *Créateur de Nuages* (parallel poem in both languages) and *Expression Idiomatique Anglaise* (a French label for an English phenomenon) suggests that language friction itself — the gap between signifier communities, the untranslatability between tongues — has become an explicit aesthetic resource. The foreign-language title does not name the work; it displaces it into a productive estrangement.

Atmospheric Intensification and a Quieter Political Mode. The most recent sky works from Dinard represent a more purely contemplative register than most earlier pieces; the critical edge is present but submerged, operating through implication rather than iconographic directness. “Something isn't quite as it should be — or could be” (*Un Ciel Imaginaire*) is a formulation that could apply equally to geopolitics, to a cloud formation, or to an inner state of unease. The strength of the work lies in its refusal to specify. Where earlier political works were iconographically direct — the migrant workers, the oligarchs' skyscrapers, the fake-news typography — the most recent sky works achieve their disquiet through atmosphere alone.

Scalar Expansion, moving simultaneously in both directions. *Sombrero's Not a Hat* ascends to the galaxy; *Deep Sea Crets* descends to the deepest trench on earth; *blu.shing* contracts to a single, irreducible feeling. The oscillation between the cosmically immense and the stubbornly particular has become a formal signature — and a philosophical position. What lies between the Mariana Trench and the Sombrero Galaxy is exactly where human life is conducted: in the narrow band of the experiential, perpetually overshadowed above and below by scales it cannot reach.

Self-Mythologization and Coherent Closure. *Recalling the Inkocene* is explicitly a work of farewell and inauguration — a closing of the account with a previous artistic self in order to fully affirm the current one. The naming of artistic “epochs,” the retrospectives, the serial accumulation of critical essays: these are the gestures of an artist who is not merely producing individual objects but constructing an *Œuvre* — a coherent artistic world with its own internal history, its own vocabulary, its own mythology. The site itself — deliberately anti-commercial,

anti-social-media, counter-intuitive in any conventional navigational sense — is part of this construction. Arslohgo calls it a “playground,” but the word is chosen with a linguist's precision: *play* und *Arbeit* are not opposites. They are, in the best cases, the same activity conducted with full engagement and without the obligation to produce anything other than what it needs to be.

Coda: The Feeling That Exceeds the System

Das „miniposter” format — defiantly small, defiantly private, defiantly outside the market — is simultaneously a formal constraint and a declaration of independence. The works are too dense and too serious to be dismissed as hobby art; they are too personal and too joyful to be received as academic exercises. What holds the entire project together — across more than 130 works, eight thematic categories, and a dizzying range of literary, musical, political, psychological, and art-historical registers — is the foundational conviction that image and language are not two different things that can be translated into each other, but one thing that appears in two forms. To see is already to speak. To speak is already to see.

In the very latest works, this conviction has deepened into something that exceeds the analytical. *blu.shing* — as concrete as it is abstract, as simple as it is complex — is where the program becomes a feeling, where the linguistic structure dissolves into pure chromatic affect, where the system that organized everything gives way to what the system was always, from the beginning, trying to name.

That is where the most serious work always, eventually, arrives.
