

The Infrastructure Is the Artwork: MMI as Meta-Emission

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This paper argues that the Multimodal Institute is itself an artwork in the precise sense that ideamorphism defines: a structured emission, shaped by a crystallized codex, released into a field of ouvertures it cannot control. The invariant of the institution is not any individual work it produces — not the paintings, the sculptures, the nanopublications, or the theoretical papers — but the infrastructure itself: the AQC reference architecture, the versioned MMIDS methodology standards, the epistemic profiling system, the four-layer nanopublication logic. This structure persists unchanged across every instance the corpus generates and constitutes the physical invariant of the emission. The codex that generated this infrastructure crystallized across two professional lives: four decades of artistic practice organized around a specific sensorial constraint — color blindness compensated through harmonic transliteration — and twenty years of global enterprise operations requiring the construction of scalable, integrity-verified systems architecture. Neither life alone was sufficient. The institution required both the theory of emission and the architecture of the laboratory in the same person, after sufficient time for each to reach maturity. The paper examines the NAN-COL nanopublication layer as the point at which the sensorial constraint becomes structurally visible: the computational color analysis closes the perceptual loop the practitioner cannot close directly, encoding the very limitation that generated the codex into the feedback architecture of the laboratory. It situates MMI within the methodological literature on practice-based research — Frayling, Sullivan, Nelson — as an instance of that tradition taken to its logical conclusion: a codex crystallized to sufficient depth to generate its own institutional form, indifferent to any individual instance, and fully externalized on request. PUB-PAP0003 is the intentional invariant disclosed.

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by Arnaud Quercy — 2026-03-28

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1. The Claim

The Multimodal Institute was built as an artwork.

This is not a metaphor, not a provocation, and not a retroactive reframing of something that began as something else. It is the precise description of what the institution is and what it does. Understanding it requires taking seriously the theoretical framework that generated it — ideamorphism — and following that framework to its logical conclusion.

Ideamorphism proposes that the artist does not create. The artist emits. Creation occurs in the receiver, through diffraction — the irreversible transformation that happens when a structured wave passes through an overtone it did not design and cannot predict. The artwork is not the object. The artwork is the event of transmission: the wave in passage, the diffraction in progress, the ricochet returning charged with what it generated without the emitter's knowledge.

If this is true of a painting, it is true of an institution. If it is true of a musical chord transliterated into chromatic structure, it is true of a documentation architecture transliterated into research claims. Scale does not change the structure of the proposition. It tests it.

MMI is the test at scale.

2. The Codex: A Lifetime in Two Registers

Every emission is structured by a codex. The codex is the personal system of constraints through which the wave takes its form — operating simultaneously at a formal level, articulable on request, and an intimate level that remains the singular logic of this particular overtone.

The codex that generated MMI did not crystallize quickly. It required approximately sixty years and two professional lives to reach sufficient stability to produce an institution.

The first life was artistic. Four decades of practice across painting, sculpture, and music — a practice organized, from its earliest stages, around a specific sensorial constraint. The practitioner is color blind. Color as conventionally perceived — as a stable, identifiable, nameable property of surfaces — is not available in the way it is available to most painters. What is available, with the full precision of a trained pianist, is harmonic relation: the structural relationships between tones, the tension and resolution of intervals, the architecture of chords and voicings.

The codex that emerged from this constraint is not compensatory in the pejorative sense. It is compensatory in the engineering sense: it identifies a perceptual limitation, locates a register of equivalent structural richness that is fully accessible, and builds a systematic transliteration between them. Music becomes the instrument of measurement. Color becomes the output. The practitioner paints what cannot be directly seen by navigating through what can be precisely heard.

This is not synesthesia — the involuntary cross-modal perception of a sensory gift. It is the deliberate construction of a bridge between a strong register and a constrained one, built by someone who had no choice but to build it rigorously. The limitation generated the discipline. The constraint crystallized the codex.

The second life was corporate. Twenty years in global enterprise operations — technology infrastructure, systems architecture, the management of complexity at institutional scale. Global CIO of a large division. The practitioner knows, from professional experience with real stakes, what it means to build infrastructure that holds: versioned standards, persistent identifiers, integrity verification, epistemic profiling, atomic publication units, reference architectures that scale across thousands of records without losing coherence.

These are not skills borrowed from science or imported from information theory. They are competencies developed under operational pressure, where the cost of architectural failure is concrete and immediate.

Neither life alone could have produced MMI. The artist without the CIO builds a practice without infrastructure — rich, singular, undocumented, lost at the edges. The CIO without the artist builds infrastructure without a theory of what it is measuring — rigorous, scalable, empty at the center. MMI required both: the theory of emission and the architecture of the laboratory, in the same person, after sufficient time for each to reach maturity.

The codex crystallized when the two lives became one methodology.

3. The Invariant: Infrastructure, Not Instance

MMI produces a continuous stream of instances: paintings, sculptures, drawings, digital works, nanopublications, catalog PDFs, theoretical papers, methodology standards, exhibition records. The corpus currently comprises 860+ documented artworks, approximately 10,000 PDFs in live deployment, between 2,500 and 5,000 individual nanopublications, and a philosophical research library of 4,745 documents.

None of this is the invariant.

The invariant is the infrastructure through which all of it passes: the AQC reference system that assigns each work a persistent, unique identifier linking it to its documentary record and its position in the catalog raisonné; the four nanopublication types (NAN-PHY, NAN-DIG, NAN-COL, NAN-CTX) that decompose each artwork into distinct epistemic layers; the MMIDS methodology standards (MMIDS-CMP-2025, MMIDS-DIG-2025, MMIDS-WAT-2025, MMIDS-PAP-2025) that specify, version, and make auditable the procedures by which each layer is produced; the epistemic profiling system that assigns to every record a claim type, a voice, an epistemic status, a methodology reference, and a certainty level; the SHA-256 checksum that cryptographically binds each record to its content at a specific moment in time.

This structure persists unchanged across every instance the corpus generates. A new painting enters the system and passes through the same architecture as every painting before it. A new theoretical paper is produced under the same publication logic as the previous ones. The corpus grows; the infrastructure does not change. It is, in the precise sense that ideamorphism intends, the physical invariant of the meta-emission: unconditional, stable, received as constraint by every instance that passes through it.

The individual works are not the wave. They are what the wave produces as it moves through the field. The wave is the architecture itself.

4. The Emission: What MMI Releases into the Field

An emission requires a receiver. MMI's receiver is not the gallery visitor, not the collector, not the reader of a single catalog. MMI's receiver is the field: the research community, the institution, the archivist, the future practitioner, the philosopher who encounters a footnote, the information scientist who finds the nanopublication format, the curator who discovers the MMIDS standards, the artist who reads the manifesto and recognizes something they have been doing without a name.

The wave reaches each of these ouvertures differently. Someone encounters the documentation system and sees an artist's ego institutionalized at scale. Someone else sees the most rigorous practice-based research methodology in contemporary art. A musician sees a composer who paints through harmonic structure. A technologist

sees a CIO who never really left operations. A philosopher sees someone who took the proposition that transmission is physical seriously enough to build a laboratory around it. A color vision researcher sees a compensatory system of unexpected conceptual elegance.

All of these are valid diffractions. None of them is the emission. None of them is wrong.

This is precisely what ideamorphism predicts. The overture determines the diffraction. A wave that produces uniform reception has failed — it has over-determined the overture, collapsed the space of possible creation into a single channel. The fact that MMI will be read as art by some, as research by others, as pathology by others still, is not a failure of communication. It is the wave working exactly as designed.

The generative loss is massive. The gap between "artist documents his own work" and "the documentation system is the artwork" is not a gap the infrastructure closes. It is a gap the receiver must cross. Some will. The ricochet, when it comes, will arrive from those overtures — charged with what the wave produced without the emitter's knowledge.

5. The Codex Is Public

MMI publishes its codex. The formal level — the rules of transliteration, the reference architecture, the MMIDS standards, the epistemic profiling logic, the publication protocols — is fully disclosed. This paper is part of that disclosure. The *Manifesto Ideamorphiste* (2026a), the *31 Propositions of Ideamorphism* (2026b), and the *GRIM-OIRE: A Philosophical Research Note* (2026c) disclose the theoretical codex. The MMIDS standards disclose the methodological codex. The nanopublications disclose the documentary codex, record by record.

This is not transparency as institutional virtue. It is the structural requirement of full ideamorphism. The intentional invariant must be articulable on request. An invariant the emitter cannot explain is opaque — the emission is real, but the ideamorphism is partial. MMI's claim is to full ideamorphism: a codex crystallized to sufficient depth that it can be completely externalized without losing its identity.

The intimate level — why these constraints, the singular logic of this particular overture — is present in the biography of the codex recounted in §2. It is not hidden. It is simply not transferable as procedure. Another practitioner could adopt the MMIDS standards, the nanopublication architecture, the epistemic profiling logic — and produce a different emission entirely. The formal codex is reproducible. The intimate codex is not. That distinction is not a limitation. It is the definition of a codex.

6. NAN-COL as Feedback Loop

One architectural decision in the documentation system deserves specific attention because it makes the sensorial constraint visible in structural form.

NAN-COL — the computational color analysis nanopublication — records the chromatic properties of each work through k-means clustering, texture metrics, brightness gradients, and spatial organization of color fields. It is generated algorithmically, not perceptually. It is the only layer of the documentation system that produces a verifiable chromatic record of works produced by a practitioner who cannot fully verify them perceptually.

In a conventional documentation system, NAN-COL would be archival enrichment — useful metadata for search, comparison, and scholarship. In this system, it is something more specific: it is the feedback mechanism the maker needs because direct perceptual verification is unavailable. The computational analysis closes the loop that the eye cannot close. The machine measures what the sensorial constraint withholds.

The infrastructure compensates for and encodes the very limitation that generated the codex. The laboratory was built in the shape of the instrument's known aperture. This is not incidental. It is the most precise expression available of the relationship between the practitioner's overture and the system that overture crystallized.

7. Practice-Based Research at Its Logical Conclusion

The methodological literature on practice-based research — from Frayling's taxonomy (1993) through Sullivan's studio as research site (2005) to Nelson's practice-as-research framework (2013) — has consistently argued that the practitioner-researcher generates knowledge unavailable to the external observer, and that this knowledge demands its own validation criteria. The argument is correct. The infrastructure to sustain it has remained underdeveloped.

MMI is that infrastructure, taken to its logical conclusion. Not as a claim that making is equivalent to knowing, but as a demonstration that a sufficiently crystallized codex generates its own laboratory — that the discipline of practice, pursued long enough and explicitly enough, produces institutional form.

The nanopublication is the measurement record. The MMIDS standard is the calibrated instrument specification. The catalog is the published finding. The theoretical paper is the contribution to cumulative framework. PUB-PAP0003 is the intentional invariant disclosed on request.

What makes this practice-based research rather than documented practice is precisely the infrastructure's independence from any individual instance. The system does not depend on the quality of any particular painting, the reception of any particular exhibition, the success of any particular theoretical argument. It is indifferent to instance in the way that a laboratory is indifferent to any individual experiment. The experiment may fail; the laboratory remains. The painting may not diffract as intended; the infrastructure persists, records the fact, and moves to the next emission.

This indifference is not coldness. It is the structural condition of cumulative research. And it is only possible when the codex has crystallized to the point where the system can run without the practitioner supervising every record.

8. The Ricochet This Paper Anticipates

This paper will diffract.

What the reader makes of it — what they decide MMI actually is — is not a question this paper answers. It is the question this paper poses.

The measure of MMI as artwork is not institutional recognition, citation count, or critical reception. It is whether, across diverse ouvertures and over sufficient time, the infrastructure produces ricochets — returns charged with what the emission generated without the emitter's knowledge.

That is the only metric ideamorphism recognizes.

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