

Post mortem performances: On Duchenne de Boulogne,
or physiognomy in the age of technical media

Physiognomy. Galvanism. Photography. Resuscitation. Hypnotism. Expressionist
film.

This essay reconstructs the genealogy of the electro-physiognomic experiments which Guillaume-Benjamin Duchenne conducted in the second half of the 19th century, and highlights their impact on the media dispositif of the early 20th century. The photographs in Duchenne's *Mécanisme de la physiologie humaine* (1862) are discussed as part of an epistemological shift from the semiotic regime of expression to the medial regime of switching by which they are indissolubly connected to the history of galvanism and electromagnetism on the one hand, and to the history of hypnotism and Expressionist film on the other. Due to this perspective, a main focus of this article is the archaeology of Duchenne's special feature of the gliding cardboards that introduces the on/off operation of switching into both photography and "the body," and its echo in films such as *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (1919/20) or *Frankenstein* (1931).

Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Bernhard Siegert
Faculty of Media
Bauhaus University Weimar
Bauhausstr. 11
D-99423 Weimar
Germany
bernhard.siegert@uni-weimar.de