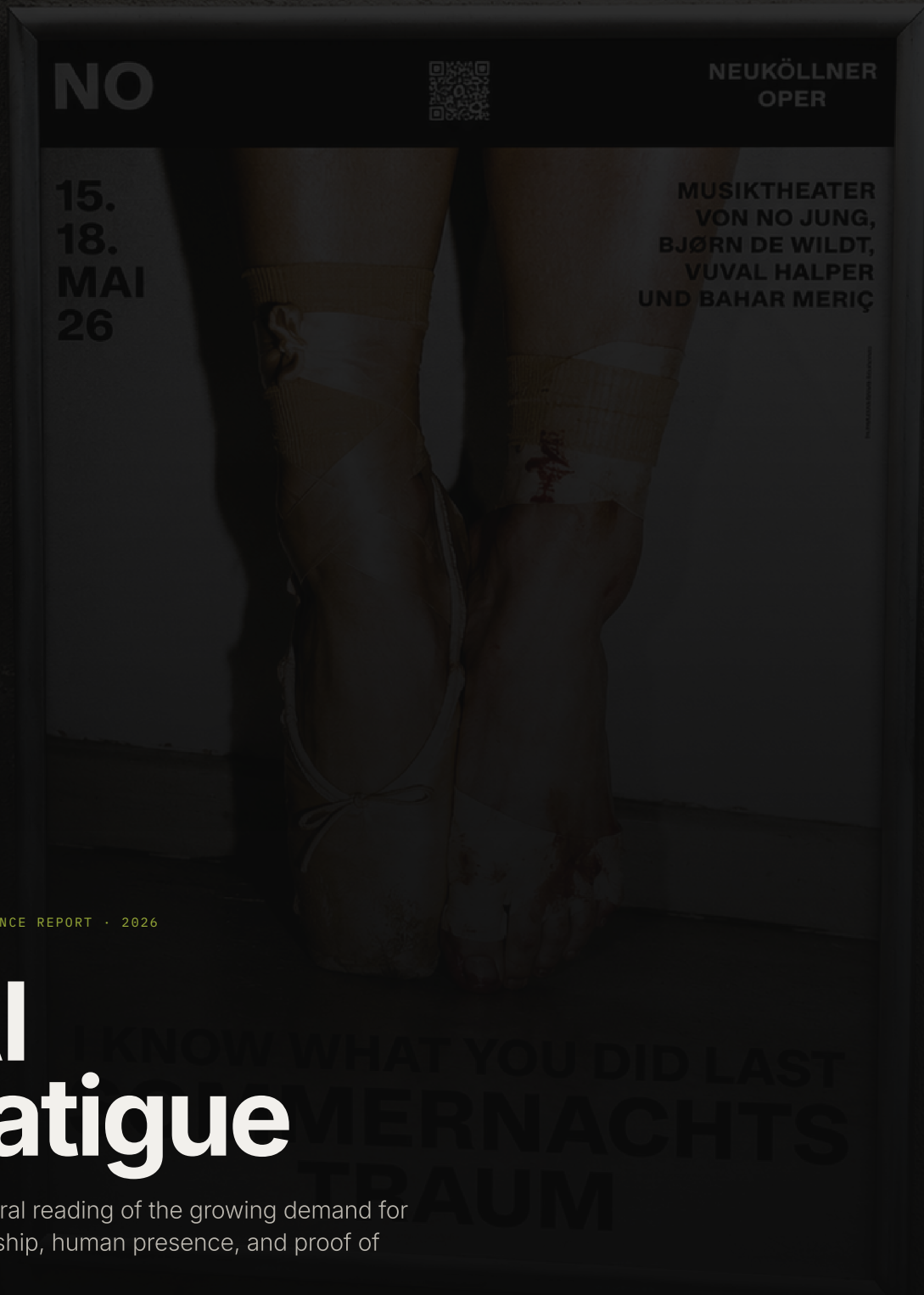




CONVERGENCE REPORT · 2026

AI Fatigue

I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST NIGHT MERNACHTS TRAUM

A cultural reading of the growing demand for authorship, human presence, and proof of origin.

Cultural Forecasting and Analysis · Berlin
June 2026

For years, digital culture chased frictionless perfection.

Faster outputs.

Cleaner interfaces.

Infinite generation.

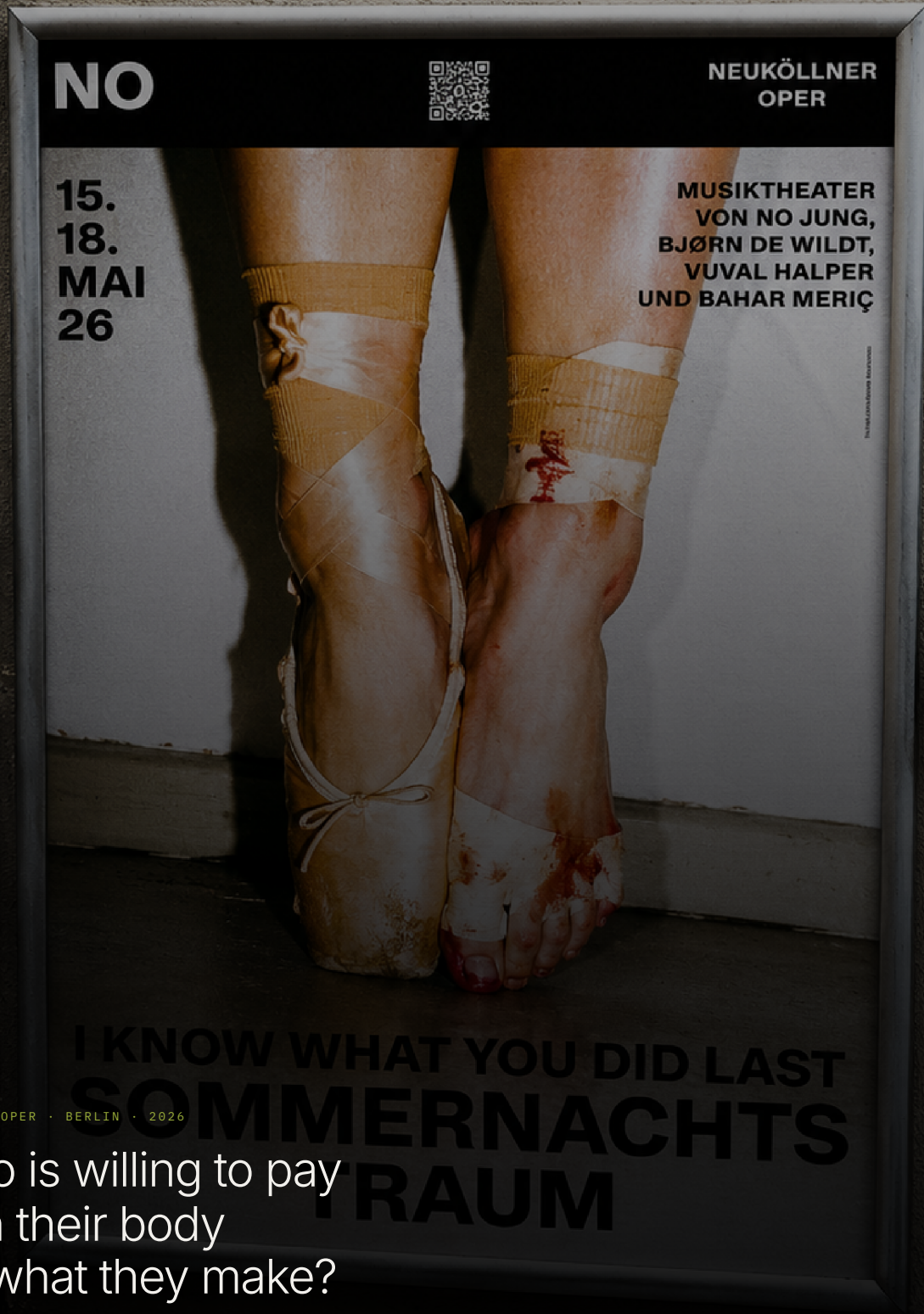
Saturation precedes cultural reorganization.

The more synthetic content spreads, the more human irregularity becomes culturally valuable. The saturation of synthetic aesthetics is not a phase of adjustment. It is an ongoing cultural recalibration.

'Was this made by AI?'

A QUESTION THAT DID NOT EXIST THREE YEARS AGO.





NEUKÖLLN OPER · BERLIN · 2026

Who is willing to pay
with their body
for what they make?

The promotional poster for a local production: a ballerina's feet, blood, bandages, visible physical strain. An editorial choice about what makes something undeniably human.

01

01 · WHY NOW

In three years,
preference for AI
content fell 34 points.
While investment in
producing it kept
rising.

CONSUMER PREFERENCE · 2023–2025

–34 pts

While brand investment in AI content rose 79% in the same period

AI-GENERATED · FACEBOOK LONG-FORM

>40%

of long-form content in 2025. Saturation is no longer only cultural — it is measurable.

In three years, preference for AI-generated content fell 34 percentage points among consumers in the US and UK. This happened while adoption among brands and creators was accelerating.

The figure comes from a Billion Dollar Boy study of 6,000 people in the US and UK, conducted in 2025. In 2023, 60% of consumers preferred AI-generated content. By 2025, just 26%.

The paradox is the argument: while 79% of marketers increased their investment in AI-generated content over the past year, audiences moved the other way. The market is producing more than people want to consume.

More than 40% of long-form content on Facebook is currently produced by AI, according to an estimate by Originality.ai, cited in an EY study published in July 2025. Saturation is not only a cultural perception. It can already be observed in the composition of what circulates.

This is not a reaction to technology's failure. It is a reaction to its success.

When something multiplies without friction, without cost, without limit, the perception of what holds value starts to shift. The signal appears when that discomfort stops being individual and starts emerging in different places, at the same time, without coordination.

TIMELINE · 2020 TO 2026

- 2020

Global screen time peaks during the pandemic.
- 2021

DALL-E and MidJourney launch as public tools.
- 2022

ChatGPT launches. Consumer acceptance of AI-generated content: 60%.
BILLION DOLLAR BOY
- 2023

The r/analog community on Reddit passes 2.7 million members, one of the largest global forums devoted to film photography, chemical processes, and analog aesthetics.
- 2024

The analog film camera market grows 7.3% annually. 'AI slop' begins circulating in forums in August.
MELTWATER
- 2025

Ghibli AI: negative sentiment 20 times above average within 48 hours. MELTWATER
'AI slop' named Word of the Year by the Macquarie Dictionary. Dec 2025.
- 2026

Fresta detects 8 converging signals. From emerging behavior to systemic recalibration.
FRESTA SIGNALS



Field record · Flea market · Berlin · May 2026 · Analog search for a specific object in a physical context. The opposite of algorithmic discovery.

02

02 · PROOF OF HUMANITY

Human presence is no longer assumed. It must be perceived, declared, evidenced, or felt.

-
- Distrust of polished outputs
 - A desire for traces of authorship
 - Preference for visible process over invisible automation
 - Demand for proof of human origin
-

AI Fatigue is not a rejection of artificial intelligence. It is the growing emotional exhaustion produced by synthetic repetition, excessive optimization, and aesthetic homogenization.

- + Distrust of polished outputs
- + A desire for traces of authorship
- + Preference for visible process over invisible automation
- + Skepticism toward AI-mediated intimacy
- + Demand for proof of human origin

01 **Neukölln Oper, Berlin, 2026.** The promotional poster shows a ballerina's feet: blood, bandages, visible strain. A deliberate editorial choice. Who is willing to pay with their body for what they make?

02 **'No AI' declarations in creative portfolios.** Photographers, illustrators, and designers have been adding human-process statements to their work since 2024. Declaring 'made by a human' was redundant before 2023. Now it functions as a positioning argument.

03 **Briefs asking for imperfection.** The vocabulary of communications briefs has shifted: 'organic', 'unpolished', 'looks handmade', 'no AI feel' are recurring requests that did not exist three years ago.



Field record · Handwritten note · Kreuzberg, Berlin · May 2026 · Manual communication in public space. The choice of handwriting makes the origin of the gesture immediately readable.

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- 04 **'Was this made by AI?'** The question has been appearing with increasing frequency in categories where authorship matters: art, journalism, design, food, fashion. A new layer of evaluation inserted into the act of consumption, one that did not exist before 2023.
-
- 05 **The Ghibli AI reaction, March 2025.** Studio Ghibli is perceived as the product of decades of artisanal labor. Applying AI to that perception triggered a disproportionate response, revealing an underlying emotional state: people draw lines around where automatic synthesis is not acceptable.
-



Field record · Paris · May 2026 · Printed photographs, frames, negatives, and visible processes. The materiality of the image returns as cultural value.

FROM HUMAN SIGNAL TO HUMAN LABEL

When synthetic production becomes abundant, human origin becomes a visible attribute.

What begins as residue, gesture, or imperfection becomes formalized as a seal, proof, and market language.

Origin stops being assumed. It becomes communicated. Authorship stops living only in the process. It becomes declared.



The Human Made Mark · Certification for AI-free productions · April 2026

CERTIFICATION

The Human Made Mark · April 2026 · AI-free productions across creative sectors

PLATFORM ADOPTION

Pinterest, Meta, Google: provenance metadata labels worldwide since 2024

03

03 · HOW FRESTA READS THIS

Eight signals detected independently between January and June 2026. None emerged to support a hypothesis. The convergence appeared later.

LOCAL FRICTION SATURATING	SOFT REFUSAL SATURATING
MANUAL RESIDUE SATURATING	DIGITAL FOLKLORE EMERGING
HYPERLOCALITY NEW	PERMANENT OWNERSHIP EMERGING
INTERFACE EXHAUSTION EMERGING	BODY AS TERRITORY NEW

AI Fatigue is not a search for humanity. It is exhaustion with synthetic aesthetics, an exhaustion that makes verifiable humanity more valuable. The distinction matters: the phenomenon is depletion, not nostalgia.

The hypothesis came later. The signals came first.

Revisiting Fresta's portfolio, we found eight independent signals pointing in the same direction, each documented in distinct sectors, through its own methodology.

The portfolio did not generate the hypothesis. The hypothesis revealed what the portfolio already contained.

Fatigue is not only aesthetic. In March 2026, researchers at the Boston Consulting Group reported a phenomenon they called 'brain fry': a cognitive overload associated with the continuous supervision of multiple AI agents. Participants described difficulty concentrating, increased errors, and decision fatigue caused not by the work itself, but by the effort of coordinating autonomous systems in parallel.

The verification of human origin now functions as a value criterion before any formal judgment of quality.

SIGNALS DETECTED · 1 / 2

SOFT REFUSAL

An aesthetic withdrawal from digital overstimulation: slow mornings, analog routines, silence as aspiration. Not a frontal break, but a selective reduction in availability and immediate response. As synthetic experiences become abundant, growing value is placed on what demands presence, time, and deliberate choice.

DIGITAL FOLKLORE

Local cultural practices reinterpreted and circulating in digital environments without a direct connection to their source. Memories, references, and specific codes begin to function as context markers. When content starts to feel produced by the same logic everywhere, cultural accents and local repertoires gain force as evidence of belonging.

INTERFACE EXHAUSTION

Fatigue with overly polished interfaces, prompts, and outputs. Digital mediation now demands more verification than automatic trust. Origin has become a legitimate question before any quality judgment, and 'made by a human' has become a positioning argument.

HYPERLOCALITY

Verifiable territorial origin, belonging to a specific neighborhood, city, or community, as a resource of trust and proof of existence. When synthetic content feels globally undifferentiated, local specificity functions as evidence of authorship: someone was in a real place to produce this.

SIGNALS DETECTED · 2 / 2

LOCAL FRICTION

Traceability as value: knowing who made something, where, and under what conditions. Verifiable origin begins to influence decisions as much as the final result. As production becomes more homogeneous, process acquires its own economic and cultural weight.

PERMANENT OWNERSHIP

A growing interest in durability, repair, and long-term possession. Value migrates toward objects that accumulate histories of use, maintenance, and permanence. In a context of abundance and constant replacement, signals of continuity and material attachment become more visible.

MANUAL RESIDUE

The revalorization of visible imperfection and exposed process as quality markers. The trace of the hand returns as a perceived differentiator. Where automation produced aesthetic homogenization, visible human choice has come to function as a signature.

BODY AS TERRITORY

The body as evidence of presence: effort, practice, wear, scar, and accumulated experience become visible markers of human trajectory. When images can be produced at scale, perceived physical cost gains relevance as proof of dedication, experience, and time invested.

EXTERNAL CORROBORATION

The data below do not establish the signal. They corroborate. Evidence produced by third parties, unrelated to Fresta, pointing in the same direction. Their strength lies in that independence.

CONSUMER PREFERENCE

60% to 26%

Preference for AI content over three years. Fall of 34 points while brand investment rose. 6,000 people, US and UK.

BILLION DOLLAR BOY · 2025

ARTISANAL ECONOMY

10.2% CAGR

Growth of the global artisanal market. From USD 1.2T in 2025 to a projected USD 2.9T in 2034. Double digits while AI preference falls.

FORTUNE BUSINESS INSIGHTS · 2025

AI TRUST GAP

85%

Across 23 markets, 85% of people used AI in the past six months. The most telling data point is not adoption. It is the gap: use is growing faster than trust.

EY AI SENTIMENT STUDY · 2026

Aug 2024	'AI slop' gains traction in forums	461K mentions
Mar 2025	Ghibli AI · negative sentiment 20x average	20x average
2024-25	Origin Disclosure · Pinterest, Meta, Google: provenance metadata labels appear worldwide	+87% mentions
Dec 2025	AI Slop · Word of the Year, Macquarie Dictionary. 461K mentions in 2024. 2.4M in 2025.	2.4M mentions

04

04 · WHY THIS IS NOT NOISE

A signal becomes systemic when it appears across dimensions that do not communicate with each other.

LEXICON

'AI slop' → Word of the Year 2025. Niche to mainstream in under two years.

MARKET

Artisanal segment growing at 10.2% CAGR. Double digits while AI preference falls.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Preference fell 34 points in three years while investment rose.

AESTHETICS

Briefs now request: 'organic', 'unpolished', 'no AI feel'.

This is not a rejection of technology. It is a negotiation with synthetic abundance.

LEXICON

A niche term became Word of the Year in 2025.

BEHAVIOR

Preference dropped 34 points in three years while investment rose.

MARKET

Artisanal segment growing at double digits while trust in AI content falls.

AESTHETICS

Briefs request imperfection. Portfolios declare human process.

None of these movements were coordinated. All point in the same direction.



Field record · Artist studio · Neukölln, Berlin · May 2026 · The workspace as argument. The space preserves evidence of the process that produced it.

CONFIDENCE CRITERIA

High confidence.

Eight convergent signals, independently detected. Evidence from multiple external sources. A resistance concept that entered the mainstream lexicon in under two years. Market behavior aligned. Brief vocabulary changing. Origin verification becoming a new, recurring consumer behavior.

COUNTER-EVIDENCE

AI adoption continues to grow. Investment in AI-generated content continues to rise. The signal is not abandonment. It is active negotiation. The tension between synthetic production and preference for human traces is the most precise data point of the current cultural moment.

LIMITS OF THE READING

The reading is situated. It draws from monitored sources, field observation, and human judgment. Some contexts appear on the radar before others.

Naming a signal is also framing it. These limits define the scope of the reading, they do not invalidate it.

05

05 · WHAT THIS SUGGESTS

What begins as
residue or gesture
eventually becomes a
new cultural grammar.

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- 01 Human irregularity is becoming a signal of value, not limitation
 - 02 Authorship has begun to function as positioning, not just quality
 - 03 Visible process is replacing invisible automation as communication argument
 - 04 'Made by human' is now a declaration with market value, not a default state
 - 05 Brands without verifiable origin risk losing positioning regardless of final quality
-

01

Human irregularity is becoming a signal of value, not limitation.

02

Synthetic perfection has lost emotional impact in categories where authorship is perceived as part of the product.

03

Authorship has begun to function as positioning. It is no longer sufficient to make something well. The process of making must be legible.

04

Visible process is replacing invisible automation as a communication argument.



Field record · Bar · Kreuzberg, Berlin · 2026 · Lampshade with hand-painted figures in a commercial space. The trace of the process remains legible.

05

'Made by human' is no longer the default state of any content. It is a declaration that must be made, and that carries market value when made credibly.

06

The emotional credibility of a brand depends, in part, on the perception that there is a verifiable human behind what is produced.

07

Brands and creators without a verifiable origin story risk losing positioning to those that have one, regardless of the quality of the final product.

The next cultural differentiator
may not be intelligence.
It may be detectable humanity.

The more synthetic aesthetics expand,
the more human presence
becomes visible as value.



Field record · Paris · May 2026 · The notebook as material trace. Handwriting in a context where reproduction costs nothing.

In synthetic environments,
trace becomes value.

When synthesis becomes abundant,
origin becomes information.

AI Fatigue does not signal the end of artificial intelligence.
It signals the beginning of a new contest for authenticity.

FRETA SIGNALS · 2026

06

06 · METHODOLOGY

How Fresta reads, what it monitors, and where each conclusion comes from.

SIGNAL MONITORING Continuous detection system · January to June 2026	FIELD OBSERVATION Berlin · Paris · May–June 2026
SOURCE ARCHITECTURE Per-signal curation · Independent corroboration	HUMAN JUDGMENT Named and situated. Limits acknowledged.

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Per-signal source curation

Jan to Jun 2026 · Fresta detections

BCG · AI brain fry · March 2026

Field: Berlin · Paris

This report is a dated snapshot: it describes the state of Fresta's signal portfolio in the January to June 2026 cycle. As cultural signals have trajectories, later readings may differ: a signal can gain strength, change direction, saturate, or dissipate.

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Fresta Signals

Signals Before Saturation.

FRESTASIGNALS.COM