

L|R|Q

Leonardo Reviews Quarterly 1.03 | 2011

Executive Editor: Roger Malina

Editor-in-Chief: Michael Punt

Managing Editor: Claudy Op den Kamp

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LEONARDO

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE
ARTS. SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

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Leonardo Reviews

Leonardo Reviews is the work of an international panel of scholars and professionals invited from a wide range of disciplines to review books, exhibitions, DVDs, CDs, websites, and conferences. Collectively they represent an intellectual commitment to engaging with the emergent debates and manifestations that are the consequences of the convergence of the arts, science and technology.

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How much for a bad translation?

As we are preparing to go to press with this edition of Leonardo Reviews Quarterly an article in a reasonably respectable UK newspaper (Guardian, 15.04.11) quotes from the Association of American Publishers' report that total e-book sales in the US in February was \$90.3 million. They compare this with the figure for paperback sales in the same period of \$81.2 million. This article is headlined: "E-book sales pass another milestone. Electronic books have become the largest single format in the US for the first time, new data reveals." Four paragraphs into the article, however, it becomes clear that the overall trade in print books is still bigger than the e-market and that the most bullish prediction for parity in the US market is around 2014/15. (For a full account of these statistics see: International Digital Publishing Forum <http://idpf.org/about-us/industry-statistics>).

Undoubtedly there are new distribution and publishing opportunities opened up by the growing ubiquity of Internet connection and cheaper hardware production. But, according to figures from *Internet World Stats*, in June 2010 there are 6.8 billion people in the world and 2 billion of these (28.7%) are connected to the Internet, 13% of them live in North America, 24.2% in Europe and 42% in Asia. While the penetration rate of Internet usage is highest in North America (77%) the numbers involved are relatively low (on a global scale) and since the near saturation the potential for growth is much lower in the USA than in Europe or Asia (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/>).

To put the headline into another perspective it is worth visiting what exactly the Association of American Publishers (which comprises less than 300 US book publishers – there are about 4,000 listed at <http://www.lights.ca/publisher/>) posted on their website on 14.04.11. Their press release stated under the modest banner 'Popularity of Books in Digital Platforms Continues to Grow, According to AAP Publishers February 2011 Sales Report' was that, "[t]his one-month surge is primarily attributed to a high level of strong post-holiday e-book buying, or 'loading,' by consumers who received e-reader devices as gifts. Experts note that the expanded selection of e-readers introduced for the holidays and the broader availability of titles are both factors" (<http://www.publishers.org/press/30/>).

However, by the 18th of April the headline "E-book Sales surpass paper book" was all across the Internet (and some print journals) and will no doubt find its way into some academic conference calls and papers. Whilst it is understandable that vested interests such as G8 media outlets, including newspaper and book distributors, might 'spin' the story to suggest that the USA market is synonymous with the global market, and that the marketing category 'paperback' is in some way an equivalent to the semantic concept of 'books' from the point of view of the arts, sciences and humanities, these connotations need to be examined carefully and where appropriate challenged.

Alas the enthusiasm for a view of culture driven by technology encourages the slippage in translation between journalism and scholarship. The rhetoric surrounding the e-book publicity is inviting is reminiscent of similar poor analysis in Games Studies in the mid-nineties. The apparently significant milestone of games sales overtaking cinema theatrical ticket sales was uncritically repeated (often by senior academics) in a way that suggested that the 'games industry' was now bigger than the cinema. Such naivety about the economics of media distribution was itself a repetition of the vapourware that surrounded the CD-ROM, which was going to close libraries etc. What damaged the possibility of CD-ROM media development was arguably the rhetoric, which raised consumer expectations of content, which the storage media was not able to deliver. And whilst objections to the euphoria are often not well received, or regarded as mere antediluvian pedantry, what is at stake in this slippage is not just poor scholarship but, as in the case of CD-ROM and to some extent DVD, a failure to exploit creative opportunity. Moreover there is also the loss of quite precise terms that may not have relevance to one community but are still of crucial interest to another. Whilst the term library may mean no more than a collection of texts that can be digitally stored, for another community it is a collection of books that are catalysts for knowledge transfer activities requiring human interaction. Similarly the term 'book', as it was understood in the context of print on paper, may be a redundancy to some people in the world who in John Betjeman's famous poem *Slough* 'do not know/The birdsong from the radio,' for the 89.9% of Africans, and 79.8% of Asians not connected to the Internet, its meaning is attached to libraries and shelves (and human interaction) rather than the procedures of patent Optical Character

Reading software and data dumps. These two meanings are not synonymous: books do not fit into hard drives – only a reduced version of their text and images is amenable to such reduction. A reduction that reverses the technological logic of print, which has enabled the progressive reduction of error as each new edition corrected flaws in the previous. OCR and even multiple human transcriptions methods return us to the age of hand written texts in which each iteration introduces new error. (For an example see the discussion concerning Google Ngrams viewer based on Google Books.)

These objections and cautions against overstatement of the potential of a new form of distribution may seem pedantic and obvious, but in the enthusiasm of the moment or the opportunity what is lost in translation can be overlooked. The social and economic impact of extrapolating from the translation of local and economically privileged interpretation of a noun as a key to developing a global policy for knowledge transfer needs to be measured against the values and ethics of artists, scientists and those in the humanities whose primary interest is global enfranchisement through shared knowledge.

Language and meaning is always alive and dynamic and constantly changing and for this reason the cultural turn in translation studies that Roger Malina outlines in his editorial in this issue is a crucial move. Leonardo Reviews Quarterly is not printed and consequently the claim of it 'going to press' is a transfer from an earlier technology and not entirely appropriate (and I apologize for slack language). LRQ does have an irreversible moment when we commit the text to publication but unlike the print magazine its published form can be modified at will. However, the use of the old media term is exemplary of the ways in which a close study of translation through cultural filters can offer a new archaeology yielding insight into difference across time and communities, mindsets and value systems. It can also have a determining impact on pressing contemporary issues as key terms that shape our values and are redefined by quite local but economically powerful influential interests. For example the ubiquity of 'social networking' as a term associated with a product has altered the concept of social which excludes the more difficult negotiations between unequal communities ranging from the management of shyness at a personal level to the exclusion of 98% of Africans 93% of

Asian and 94% of the inhabitants of the Middle East from the Facebook 'social' network. Given such limitations what can the term 'social' mean in its new translation?

Another is that as a consequence of this new translation, which redefines the market place (or excludes the disenfranchised) Facebook's profits are likely to yield \$1 billion this year (http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/jan2011/tc2011016_998330.htm). Supported by collaboration from the media conglomerates whose investment is in distribution, rather than content, these vast sums were made in the slippage between the poor (by which I mean willfully limited) translation of 'social' and 'network'. Perhaps the most serious consequence of drawing an equivalence between a marketing term and a concept that travels across and between languages nuanced by cultural context in this case is that there is a slippage between social as something to do with collective interaction to something that involves a mere 30 million users. If the Facebook translation of 'social' becomes the dominant default, how, for example, will users of the term understand issues such as global malnutrition, big oil or the impact of climate change?

One can only welcome the 'Translational Turn' (although perhaps a better term than 'turn' could be found), and as a reviews project Leonardo Reviews and Leonardo Reviews Quarterly will be paying special attention to it in the coming months particularly in its capacity to alert us to the consequences for the disenfranchised of poor translation.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the stimulation for this editorial from exchanges with colleagues at the INTR network meeting in Budapest (<http://trans-techresearch.net/research/intr>). I am particularly grateful to Dr. Martin Zierold of the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) Gießener Graduate School for the Humanities (GGK) for his thoughtful comments in the preparation. Finally I am pleased to acknowledge support for the background research as an outcome of the EU/HERA funded TEF project and the UK team, Dr. Martha Blassnigg and Martyn Woodward (<http://trans-techresearch.net/tef/>).

Non-Euclidian Translation: Crossing the River Delta from the Arts to the Sciences and Back Again

Michael Punt in his LRQ editorial asks some simple questions: as we move into a new cultural context, of e-culture, what is gained, what is lost? When two cultures interface there can be constructive or destructive interference. What knowledge is being transferred, or constructed, by whom and to whom? Is the e-book really that important in the context of global culture? His scepticism I think rightfully argues that we are very much in the 'dark' ages and not yet the 'middle ages' of the way that digital cultural is re-shaping texts. Martin Zierold in his LRQ commentary, points to the writing of Vilem Flusser who emphasized that these new cultural tropes have to be learned, and this takes time.

One way to think of this is as a problem of 'translation'.

In Euclidian Geometry the three 'orthogonal' transformations are translation, rotation and reflection. Euclidian 'rigid' transformations preserve the properties of the objects, they are 'isometric'. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the development in mathematics of 'non-Euclidian' geometries with profound consequences in physics. We now know that the universe is 'non-Euclidian'. Special and General Relativity informs us that space and time are un-separable and that we need to think of 'manifolds' which may be Euclidian on small scales but very much more complex on larger ones, with folds and singularities.

Needless to say 'culture' is non-Euclidian and as we move ideas, or objects or processes, around 'the space of culture', the move to e-culture is not isometric.

Translation Studies have recently emerged as a new focus for understanding a number of problems in the humanities, with the expansion of the métier of textual translation to cross-cultural studies, and more recently inter-disciplinary studies. [1] I want to explore here the usefulness of some of the concepts of Translation Studies to current discussions on the relations between the arts and sciences.

Rainer Schulte [2] points out that "the German word for 'to translate' is 'über-setzen'." In its most basic visualization, the German word means 'to carry something from one side of the river to the other side of the river.' The metaphor carries a number of complexities which can illustrate why translation in a non-Euclidian space is not isometric: the landscape on each bank of the river is different, so objects are transformed, or grow or shrink, in their new context; some things can be carried over by boat, others are un-transportable; the journey back is not symmetric with the journey there; the boatman has an influence on what is carried and how; the idea is not to pave over the river to unite the banks, but rather to encourage trade and barter between the banks; travel between the banks is in itself enriching; the nature of the river is important (how long does it take to cross, is it a violent crossing, does one get distracted on the crossing) and so on.

To avoid the trap of the false dichotomy that C.P. Snow led many into, I would prefer to imagine a river delta. [3] The river beds themselves move with time and silt can create new banks and territories.

In a recent book, actually a pamphlet of unusual vigor, Jean-Marc Levy-Leblond, has mounted an all-out attack on some of the claims of the art-science field today. [4] Titled "Science is not Art" Levy-Leblond demolishes some of the art-science communities' favorite toys (the golden ratio, fractals, beauty, techno-kitsch, neuro-aesthetics, new media art in general and 3D realism). He decries the search for a new 'syncretism' that would somehow help us create a 'third culture' that melds the arts and sciences. In his view the arts and sciences are two different banks of a river as distinct and un-reconcilable as two ecologies that develop within different contexts, on un-mergeable continents, and have grown with differing survival mechanisms and goals. He argues that there are very good reasons that the arts and sciences have separated, that we need disciplines and we don't want a syncretism.

In this issue of LRQ, Leonardo Co-Editor Jacques Mandelbrojt [5] reviews Levy-Leblond's book, and points out that the concluding chapter, entitled "brief encounters" is actually a plea for art-science interaction of a specific nature. Levy-Leblond's arguments fall onto two categories: what I would group under the general category of creativity theory, and second the feeding of the cultural

Editorial Roger F. Malina
Executive Editor, Leonardo Publications

imagination that helps us make sense, make meaning, of the world around us.

I want to argue here that these 'goals' of art-science may be viewed as tasks of 'translation studies'.

Scientists get their ideas from somewhere, and Levy-Leblond values the 'otherness' of the perspective of artists, which forces scientists as a potential source of 'creative friction'. This idea is one that is frequently discussed in translation studies; the translator's role in unraveling the nature of 'otherness'. Artists who visit or work in the world of science, through the journey from art to science and back, can not only notice aspects of the landscape ignored by the scientist, but also translate in ways familiar to the indigenous people on the other bank; ideas or experiences that have no equivalent. Thus scientists are embedded in a world that is only accessible through scientific instruments, whereas in daily life we are in a world accessible only by, and filtered, by our senses (augmented by our cell phones). These are different worlds; one of the tasks of the translator then is to find ways to transfer certain translatables while acknowledging that much is un-translatable.

Levy-Leblond's second general argument relates to how artists help scientific ideas become culturally re-appropriated, and then fed back into the imagination of scientists. He argues that it is a necessity today "to re-establish the link between the concepts constructed by science and the reality from which they were abstracted." Again this idea is one that is rooted in basic concepts of translation studies. Einstein famously stated: "The universe of ideas is just as independent of the nature of our experience as clothes are of the form of the human body." [6] The interest, even fascination, of artists in 'embodiment' of scientific concepts can therefore be seen as a translation device. Numerous projects in 'science as theater', or interactive art works exemplify this approach.

Other interesting aspects of concepts from translation studies can be quickly sketched:

Artists' use of visualization and sonification technologies from computer science are a rich terrain of art-science practice and should be viewed as projects in translation not projects in representation. As Gyorgy Kepes called for [7] they appropriate the 'new landscape of art and science'

but their goal is not transliteration or accuracy, but rather to 're-sense' in the context of the arts ideas that arise on the other banks of the river deltas. Maybe my non-Euclidian analogy can help us in thinking about 'sense-making'.

The born-digital generation has a currency in a dialect that is valid on both sides of the river, and this shared language entails shared ontologies and eventually connected epistemologies. This process of shared language building, enables trade and barter and not assimilation, is one that is surely a contributor to creativity and innovation on both banks. But this surely takes time.

In a recent text Lynn Hogard, Denis Kratz and Rainer Schulte [8] note that 'technology, globalism, and relentless change' are characteristics that are creating synergies between the humanities and sciences for which translation techniques can be strategic.

They go on to state that there are three challenges:

- a) To navigate the technological environment, expertise and the ability to employ the current and yet to be invented technologies of inquiry and communication;
- b) To navigate in a global environment, a capacity for empathic understanding of the other and the ability to collaborate and communicate across barriers of language and culture;
- c) To respond adequately to change and surprise, intellectual flexibility and creativity — that is, applied imagination.

These would seem naturally to define some of the agendas in art-science practice. To return to our translation idea, one of the strategies of art-science practice can be the development of the tools of translation studies as means 'to carry something from one side of the river to the other side of the river' and back.

And of course the metaphor of our delta crossing begs the question of the nature and source of the river and the nature of the sea, and of the rain that feeds both the river and the land. To mix my metaphors, non-Euclidian space has sources (white holes) and sinks (black holes), time is not an invariant coordinate. We are just at the beginning of the 'translation' to e-culture.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge that this line of thinking was stimulated by conversations with Martin Zierold of the Giessen International Graduate Center (http://gcsc.uni-giessen.de/wps/pgn/ma/dat/GCSC_eng/Martin_Zierold/) that took place in workshops of the INTR consortium: HERA JRP call 'Humanities as a Source of Creativity and Innovation' led by Michael Punt (<http://trans-techresearch.net/>) and with Rainer Schulte, Frank Dufour and Tom Linehan who are teaching a course on Translation in the Digital Age at the ATEC center at the University of Texas, Dallas (<http://www.utdallas.edu/ah/courses/standalone-course.php?id=3624>).

References and Notes

[1] Doris Bachmann-Medick, Introduction: The Translational Turn, *Translation Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2009, p. 216.

[2] Rainer Schulte, The Translator as mediator between Cultures: http://translation.utdallas.edu/translationstudies/mediator_essay1.html

[3] I am bothered by the river metaphor since it sets up a 'strawman' dichotomy between the arts and sciences. I would prefer somehow to have a network of water streams to carry the idea of 'networked knowledge' rather than trans-disciplinary practice as argued by David Goldberg and Kathy Davidsen in the report 'the Future of Learning Institutions in the Digital Age'. (http://mitpress.mit.edu/books/chapters/Future_of_Learning.pdf). Many disciplinary boundaries are fuzzy and shifting.

[4] Jean-Marc Levy-Leblond, *La Science n'est pas L'Art*, Hermann Editeurs, Paris 2010 ISBN 978 27056 6954 4.

[5] Jacques Mandelbrojt: http://www.leonardo.info/reviews/apr2011/levy-leblond_mandelbrojt.php . My review of the book can be found at: <http://malina.diatrope.com/2011/04/17/is-art-science-hogwash-a-rebuttal-to-jean-marc-levy-leblond/>

[6] Albert Einstein, *The Meaning of Relativity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921, p. 1.

[7] Gyorgy Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science*. Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1956.

[8] Lynn Hogard, Dennis Kratz, Rainer Schulte, Translation Studies as a Transforming Model for the Humanities: <http://translation.utdallas.edu/research/FIT.pdf>

[9] If I had the space I would explore also the issue of 'teachability' since the issue of 'translatability' also carries with it the idea that there are tacit and explicit knowledge that may or may not be 'transportable' or teachable.

A Commentary

(The preceding editorials by Michael Punt and Roger Malina emerged from an intensive series of discussions on translation stimulated by Martin Zierold in Budapest during an INTR group meeting. Since that meeting there have been a number of other exchanges on the topic of translation between us, including e-mail traffic concerning early drafts. Martin Zierold has been kind enough to agree to allow us to publish one of his responses. Although there is ultimately some lack of synchronisation between his commentary and the editorials, the additional thickness it gives to the debate makes it seem worthwhile. -MP)

It is more than mere politeness that I would like to begin by thanking Roger Malina and Michael Punt for asking me to reply to their LRQ editorials. It is a privilege and an honour to be part of the inspiring discussions that take place within the Leonardo network and its rich publications. My perspective on both editorials surely is rooted in my personal disciplinary background in media and communication studies. At the same time, the intensive transdisciplinary discussions on the concept of translation at Giessen university's International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) have been much more inspiring to me than any single disciplinary vantage point.

In his editorial, Michael Punt makes a very important point about media history and the observation of media change/evolution: 'new' media at any given time always seem to tempt researchers (and journalists alike) to vast overstatements; simultaneously, we can find staggering euphoria and massive cultural pessimism on the other side. The equation of today's e-book hype with the situation of computer games some years ago seems very apt to me. Similar comparisons could be drawn to much older moments in media history, like the introduction of television, radio or even the printing press, all of which have been met with a concurrence of enthusiasm and panic.

Historic comparisons like these seem to suggest that in a way both arguments make a valid point: those who call for a more differentiated position and stress that the 'new' phenomena do not replace older practices and media, especially not as quickly as is often claimed, or not at all outside the western world. What is more, the vast social and cultural consequences that are usually implied in dramatic narrations about the

impact of 'new' media, quite often never materialise in the way they have been envisaged. On the other hand, the insistence on the profound newness of 'new' media and its potential for a real social and cultural transformation seems to hold true just the same--especially if we look at older moments in media history and their impact, which we can evaluate today in retrospect much more profoundly than any contemporary ever could: no one would deny the massive impact the printing press, or electronic (pre-digital) media have had (and still have) for our cultures and societies. Any worldly-wise claim that puts the enthusiast's statements into perspective runs the risk of downplaying the potential 'new' media do have, even though it might be exaggerated or misinterpreted by its contemporary proponents.

To me, Vilém Flusser is one of the key thinkers in this context. He has often stressed that the historical shift from one dominant medium to the following is by no means an immediate and smooth transformation. Rather it is a process of learning how to handle the emerging possibilities of new media technologies. This development is painful and slow, taking centuries rather than decades. Thus, we can never really understand what 'new' media 'mean' for a culture from a contemporary perspective, as they always imply uses, which will only be 'learned' over a long period of time. In the light of media history, Flusser advocates a very humble position: we cannot (yet?) understand the codes with which our new digital technologies operate--and we might need a very long time to come to grasp their social and cultural potential. [1]

I completely follow Michael Punt's scepticism about the term 'social' in 'social media'. However, I have some reservations whether 'poor translation' is the best way to frame this criticism for theoretical, or rather epistemological reasons: as Roger Malina points out in his editorial--and as translation studies have argued for quite a while, translation is not about being 'correct' or 'poor/false'. Untranslatability is a fundamental aspect of every act of translation. Thus, any translation might seem 'poor' judged by external criteria and particularly by criteria coming from the 'original' domain of the translated. However, a 'poor' translation (in which a lot seems to get 'lost in translation' from a purist's perspective) could be highly suggestive, useful or productive and in this respect might still be a 'good' translation. Consequently, the term 'poor' to me simply

seems to be a problematic adjective. Instead of judging translations as 'poor', it might be more useful to elaborate more explicitly on what exactly is lost in translation and why this is seen as a bad thing in this particular context. Brushing off 'poor translations' seems to imply that it could have been possible to have a 'correct' translation in the first place. But what would the 'correct' translation of 'social' be in digital cultures? This is by no means self-evident and will be a question for many discussions to come.

Roger Malina's metaphor of 'non-Euclidian translation' proves the point how important the exchanges or translations between arts, humanities and sciences can be. The metaphor seems to be really catchy and helpful, and it stresses the relevance of context and agency, rather than suggesting criteria for 'true' translations. As for the image of translation as 'über-setzen' in the sense of crossing a river, I do like this visualisation. At the same time, this etymological imagery again has its boundaries. While it can visualise the transformations and intranslatibilities of any act of translations, it suggests two unproblematic, given 'sides of a river'. In many cases, the situation seems to be even more complex, as even the 'origin' and the 'target' sides of the river are anything but clear and static givens. If we think about academic concepts for example, there are examples where we would have to imagine a fictitious river with innumerable strands: think about the term 'memory' which is used in computer sciences, medicine, biology, social sciences, history, literature, archival sciences, psychology etc. with constant transformations and translations between disciplines. Douwe Draaisma has made this point in his inspiring study how psychological metaphors of memory have always been interwoven with changing media technologies like the historic wax board, computer hard drives and today's metaphors of memory networks/connectivities. [2] Quite often, it seems extremely hard to identify a linear journey that a boat might have taken on the river of translation.

References

[1] Cf. Flusser, V. 2002a, *Die kodifizierte Welt*, in S Bollmann (ed.), *Medienkultur*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 21-8. (Or, for an English translation: Flusser 2002b, *writings*, in A. Ströhl (ed.), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.)

[2] Cf. Draaisma, D., 2000, *Metaphors of Memory. A History of Ideas about the Mind*, Cambridge University Press.

Marcel Duchamp: *Étant Donnés*

by Michael R Taylor

Philadelphia Museum of Art,
2009, 447 pp.

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Marcel Duchamp: *Étant Donnés*

by Julian Jason Haladyn

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Following Marcel Duchamp's death in 1968, details began to emerge of an unknown, final work that had been installed in great secrecy at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Progress was slow, but he had worked steadily on it between 1946 and 1966, finishing it off in a room behind his sparsely furnished and virtually empty Eleventh Street, New York, premises where he was commonly thought to pass his time engaged in less demanding pursuits. The concealed nature of the project provokes its own questions, which Michael R Taylor in his catalogue to the show at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, entitled '*Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*' has gone a long way towards answering. Taylor's position as Curator of Modern Art at the Museum has given him unrivalled access to the archive and so this work is likely to become the definitive account, his scholarship has been painstaking, penetrating and the results engagingly presented. One year later Julian Jason Haladyn followed Taylor with his own very different yet identically titled '*Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*' an apparently perverse doubling

of nomenclature that disguises a different approach derived from an archaeological model introduced by Michel Foucault, although Haladyn achieves a lightness of tone that is not normally associated with that particular master.



Duchamp left no explanation about his intentions behind the work or for the secrecy but clearly a compelling motive that drove it was the sexually charged nature of the material. Before the news broke about this substantial major work, Duchamp had fostered the view that he was otherwise occupied – or more correctly – that he was thoroughly un-occupied, encouraging the impression that this was as it should be and that there was no need for further enquiry. After its unveiling and faced with the evidence of his secrecy the commentators who responded to *Étant donnés* satisfied themselves with the obvious fact that as an ageing artist he needed peace and quiet, away from public attention in order to complete this late work; otherwise, responses to questions about the clandestine nature of his project went unsought – and in any case the new work appeared to be so bizarrely off message that its multivalent concerns took time

to assimilate. Nevertheless an enquiry along other lines was conducted, addressing issues more readily associated with concerns of the time – his opposition to the grandstanding posture of the Abstract and post Abstract Expressionist artists for instance, their materialism and the retinal certainties they promulgated were all features of an argument upon which he had pronounced on a number of well publicised occasions and to which there might be some sort of response made. It is part of Taylor's achievement that, now, the deeply consensual and relational nature of the project is thoroughly recognised and perhaps even understood. The protagonists on the project appreciated Duchamp's need for secrecy as much as they attended to, and powerfully served, the parameters of erotic yearning that drove him to revisit his melancholy theme of frustrated desire; a theme he was thought to have abandoned with the shattering of the 'Large Glass', properly known as 'The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, even' in 1923.

Duchamp's renewed interest in the ill-starred subject matter of the 'Large Glass' coincided with his emerging status as the *eminence grise* of the New York avant-garde. In consequence the interviews and studio visits, stimulated by this renewed attention, tended to occur in this mystifyingly empty space, which served as the public vestibule to the private project that no-one knew about, housed in the closed workroom just beyond. In retrospect it is perhaps easy to see how, from 1950 onwards, it should have been possible to tell that something more significant was going on. For some time he had been circulating a succession of small, coppery, ingot-

like objects, trophies with prurient titles that he was variously distributing as gifts while also passing off as exhibitable sculptures – all of these emanated from this same address with so few signs of activity. Even when he was asked about a return to practice – a leading question from interviewers of the time – they failed to determine, from his bland replies, any outline of a major project with explicit qualities that would dismay so many commentators more prepared for mischief and obliquity from Duchamp than they were for a full frontal sexual assault – albeit of an oblique kind. The convoluted, sexual problematic thrown up by the work that slowly, very slowly, came into existence was shocking indeed. We may wonder about this lack of perspicacity on the part of those who were in a position to know better, but the revisionism that we entertain in 2011 has been shaped and persuaded by the continuous stream of scholarly research devoted to Duchamp and his practice ever since. At the time, his interviewers held to the brief and the belief that at a particular point in the 1930s Duchamp had given up art for chess and this formulation became enfolded into the binding, perhaps blinding, cliché of his career that, whether approved of or not, was tacitly recognised. If a displacement activity was needed to explain what he might be doing with his time, beyond dedicating it to chess, it was that he was extending his remit, as he said, through an interest in ‘breathing’ – a conceit that seemed pretty far-fetched even for Duchamp – but which was nevertheless seen as a sign of the artist’s inevitable withdrawal from objective art-making in favour of a relatively benign form of immaterial speculation. Indeed a form of speculation that

was well suited to the diminishing energies of an artist in the closing moves of a professional game. And so Duchamp, opposing as he did all forms of habitual thinking in relation to his own work, implicitly condoned habit when it came to speculations about his career.

Without the addition of this new work it is conceivable that the metric length of shelving dedicated to Duchamp literature would have been shorter, lending weight to the contention that without the unsuspected appearance in 1968 of Duchamp’s *Étant donnés*, we might still be consulting Robert Lebel, Arturo Schwarz, Michel Sanouillet and Octavio Paz who between them had initiated and then expanded on the inventory of themes that came from the evidence of the work, their acquaintance with the artist and the verifiable information from notes and *aperçus* that Duchamp systematically released in the editions of the ‘Green Box’ and subsequent literary collections. One can sympathise with those authors who had gone to such lengths in their research but who were so glacially excluded from any information about Duchamp’s secret project. The revelation that his new work had been installed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art was an embarrassing surprise to these dedicated apologists, some of whom complaining with justification that even if Duchamp hadn’t told them about it, the Museum should have alerted them ahead of time in order for them to adjust the hard won certainties that now prevailed in their literature. It is clear that the appearance of *Étant Donnés*: 1° *la chute d’eau*. 2° *le gaz d’éclairage*. (Given: 1 the waterfall. 2 the illuminating gas) – to give it its full name but referred to privately, by Duch-

amp, in less abstruse and more starkly sexual terms – has required a reassessment that has continued ever since so that the bookshelf that holds this extralibrary of interpretations has had to be extended. Key concerns that emanate from the recent literature on the Philadelphia installation takes in a reassessment of the viewer in terms of transgression, and a shift in attitudes that range between misgiving and suspicion towards the institution framing the work. Most interestingly perhaps, it has stimulated a debate around Duchamp’s concept of *inframince* or ‘infrathin’. A topic that was barely touched by the earlier commentators, which now comes into focus as a carrier of terrific potential for the generation of artists who seek to position themselves within the framework of science, art and consciousness studies today.

Charles Mitchell, one of the first critical historians to publish his responses to Duchamp’s post-humous work, puts his pre-*inframince* understanding neatly enough as he begins to grapple with the implications of the new work at the end of his 1972 Power Lecture at the University of Sydney.

What I want to end with, rather, is a consideration of the function – or better, perhaps, the plight – of the spectator ... [who] with his eyes glued – like a devotee at an unholy professional-box – to the holes in the door of *Étant donnés* ... (unlike the spectator of the ‘Large Glass’ who can see through it and, baffled in mind if not in sight, walk all around it at will) is given no freedom at all either to see more than Duchamp wants him to see, or to interpret what he sees in any terms but Duchamp’s own impenetrably enigmatic ones. That

is to say, he cannot interpret at all: he can only look. His fate, like the poor baffled bachelors outside the door, is to be a *voyeur*. (MITCHELL 1973: 87-88)

Mitchell knew Duchamp and had interviewed him in 1959; he had viewed the work and acknowledges the peculiar perceptual shift that takes place. He was also familiar with Anne d'Harnoncourt's seminal essay where her main point, her thesis really, is that *Étant donnés* should be seen in conjunction with and as a literal reprise of the major themes of the 'Large Glass' and the viewer's relationship to it. Octavio Paz develops the link in his 1973 catalogue essay commissioned by d'Harnoncourt, expanding it through the poetic conceit of a 'delay in glass', a definition used somewhat enigmatically by Duchamp himself about the earlier work, which Paz updates with the suggestion that the term 'delay' might be understood better by referring to the musical expression describing the momentary effect when one note in a chordal structure is sustained in order to influence the music that follows. Whether or not this coincides with Duchamp's conception, it does help to describe the relationship between the two works in a particular way. The status of the visitor changes from its pathetic nature in the 'Large Glass' to the predatory, invasive voyeur of *Étant donnés*; and so in real terms, if Octavio Paz's use of the metaphor is correct, it would detail this gradual shift from one state to the other over a period of twenty years. Paz's 'momentary effect', his chordal delay, had to sustain its 'moment' to allow the queasy ethical transformation from passive spectator to invasive transgressor in the long delay of 1923 -1966.

On his way to '*Étant donnés*' Charles Mitchell, would have passed by the 'Large Glass' and had, no doubt, stopped before it to view and take stock, before crossing into the vestibule of the new work. In the 'Large Glass' the actual viewer becomes refined into the abstraction of a set of three silvered, elliptical motifs applied directly onto the glass surface. These patterns originated from samples used by opticians and Duchamp appropriated the French designation of *témoins oculistes* (oculist witnesses) to emphasise the importance of the viewer. Situated above these but just below eye-level is a silvered ring marking the place where Duchamp had intended to insert an optician's magnifying lens. Stooping to align himself with this viewing position Mitchell would have been able to observe (but gain little more from) the transit of visitors on the other side of the glass panel. If he had stood upright and watched them through the facade of its glass-plate surface the effect would have been much the same. However, the knowledge that the 'Large Glass' was to be the interface for an erotic exchange that would only be reconciled, never consummated, through processes of vision through this viewing ring was nevertheless familiar to him – the visitors in their traverse on the other side of the glass might have been surprised to learn that they were, nevertheless, contributing to an emerging debate that Jean-François Lyotard would later define in terms of the 'carnality of vision.'

Through Anne d'Harnoncourt's Philadelphia *Bulletin* essay, Charles Mitchell knew about the *cul de sac* that ended in the battered wooden door, pierced only by two eyeholes that he would have seen in reproduction in the

same journal and so there would have been few surprises so far. Once his eyes had adjusted to the apertures that gave onto the bright world beyond this door he would witness a scene for which there would be no prior visual impression. It had been photographed by the museum for conservation reasons, but never for public consumption and if he had requested an image of it, either in advance or after the event it would have been emphatically denied him. The Museum's injunction on photography was maintained so assiduously that the first monographs and essays devoted to *Étant donnés*; in 1969 with d'Harnoncourt & Hopps, with Copley and with Schwarz, in 1973 again with d'Harnoncourt & McShine, with Paz and with Golding, and in 1974 with Mitchell, all had to content themselves with the dead-end detail of this door bearing the palimpsest of many different uses but giving no indication of the lurid diorama beyond it.

Without images to inform and satisfy public curiosity, other details began to circulate about this new work by word of mouth, becoming exaggerated and embellished in the process in ways that competed luridly with an already complicated story – and so it was through such overheated descriptions that I became aware of the work as an art student in the winter of 1969. The idea that Duchamp's new work incorporated a stipulation banning photography that I thought – wrongly as it turned out – to be an explicit condition of the work, placing a priority on the act of looking, indeed on what might even be looked at, seemed to extend the possibilities of what a non-retinal art work might include or exclude within its compass. As a student

from England who had been educated through the profound materialism of British sculpture; Anthony Caro, William Turnbull, William Tucker; Duchamp's injunction, although mistakenly understood came as a tremendous alternative, pointing the way to an expanded practice that included permission and denial as part of its executive.

Taylor meticulously disabuses this liberal fantasy in a typically informative chapter, detailing the circumstances of the photographic ban, instigated, as a last resort by Duchamp himself because he: *'found it impossible to re-create in a two-dimensional image the spatial complexity and ambience of the diorama as it appeared through the binocular eyeholes'* (TAYLOR 2009: 150) and because the museum felt that it could not improve on Duchamp's best efforts with the medium. The resulting ban was never really rescinded for the fifteen years of its legally binding existence – although quite incorrectly, exceptions were made. We learn from Taylor that Les Levine was granted permission in 1970 on the spurious grounds that the clandestine images he managed to take were not documentary photographs, but an artwork in its own right. More problematically, Arturo Schwarz was also allowed to reproduce an unaccredited image in black and white for the second edition of his catalogue résumé and the Museum actually commissioned a stereoscopic impression from Billy Klüver for the Paris retrospective at the Pompidou Centre in 1977. Taylor's access to the Museum records gives him the overview that puts this and much, much more material into four neatly contrived chapters dealing with the genesis, construction and installation of the work as well as its legacy.

Through this matrix of chapters the major themes of desire, its opportunities and disappointments, are played out through the agencies of Duchamp's main emotional partners of the period, particularly his lover, the artist Maria Martins who informed, advised, inspired and sexually drove its production and then abandoned both the artist and his artwork after his demands for a life together became too unrealistic. Alexina Matisse whom he met and married four years later provided the stability, the circumstances and intellectual momentum that drove him to its completion. Both women posed for the body casts for the female figure, which Duchamp, in spite of their different proportions, amalgamated into one composite mannequin, contributing to the misshapen, physiological disquiet of the finished piece. Commentators have somewhat indulgently attributed a '4D' quality to this; an effect that cannot really be determined through the available photographic material but which, in any event was a subject that did not really survive the emotional disruptions at the start of WW1 and Duchamp's move to America in 1915. Nevertheless, this figurative distortion has received a fair amount of obloquy over the years, largely due to the disquieting, psychological, doubletake required to verify – not this proportional shift between the larger and smaller woman – but to determine that the slanted crevice at the centre of the work really is the mannequin's vagina.

Given that this composite figure in plaster and vellum, naked, splayed, deformed, unconcerned forms the optical centre of Duchamp's work and therefore the centre of Taylor's enquiry, it is perhaps worth noting that she does not adopt her

imagined status at the centre-fold position of the book. In the end she does appear, marginally across two pages but as the final colour plate image, before the appendices, towards the close of this very large book. Julian Haladyn gives her more prominence. His otherwise more modestly proportioned publication, places her on the cover and then reproduces her again for a second and third time within his ninety-odd pages in both colour-plate and a black and white. Reasons for Taylor's apparent reticence in showing the image can be variously interpreted. It could be that since the viewer of the assemblage is restricted to only one partially obstructed view there is no cause for duplication or close-up detail. In any case – as in the work – the figure should come as a profoundly shocking binocular intervention between the furtive eyes of the *voyeur* and the offset rictus upon which these eyes alight. In the key chapter that deals with this specific subject Taylor gives us a sextet of comparative vaginas by Balthus, Saint-Phalle, Man Ray, Courbet, Belloc, Masson but only one by Duchamp and that an occasional image, a working photograph, that he made before it was finished.

Another possible reason for Taylor withholding, and perhaps the one closest to the spirit of the work respects the original moratorium on photography and perhaps a sense that the scene behind the battered wooden door should have never been reduced to the dead-end objectivity of photographic detail and then placed in a book. For the cover of his catalogue, Taylor chooses to focus instead on the beautiful central detail of the old weathered door and then again shows the door in its entirety as the frontispiece. It is

interesting to note, in parenthesis, the changes wrought to this door from the attention of the viewing public when compared to a similar photograph taken in 1973 for d'Harnoncourt and McShine's MOMA catalogue. Whereas the area around the eye holes in 1973 is almost undifferentiated from the surrounding door, Taylor's 2009 image shows it ominously stained and darkened; the indexical patina of so many brooding interrogators that have passed this way. Close to the end of Haladyn's essay he confirms the necessity of this contact:

To touch the surface of a painting is to deny the illusionism of the image it bears; to touch the door of *Given* while peeping into its interior is to reaffirm the work's illusionistic reality as the *other* space. (HALADYN 2010: 83)

Earlier, in a section entitled 'Given the Illuminating Vision of *Given*', Haladyn refers to the viewing arrangements of *Étant donnés* in terms of upsetting normal museum protocols about touching the exhibits on display. With his head pressed against the wooden door, Haladyn's eyes would be prevented from operating freely around the object by changing position and viewpoint as they might have done with any other artwork in the gallery and so in a sense they collude in reducing the image to the flatness of a photograph that registers all before it with equal objectivity. However as has been shown from experiments with vision attention, change blindness and related research into the phenomenology of vision, the mind does not necessarily register everything that the eye delivers to the brain. Just because a scene with a waterfall, a lake,

clouds, a blue sky, perhaps the ambience of a warm autumn day, a girl on a bed of twigs, it does not mean that all of this gets closed down in favour of a wonky vagina, also and just as importantly the reverse is the case as well. Eyes can be made to ignore or learn not to register moments in the spectrum of vision – this of course is what happens when as *voyeurs* we select. But now – and this is a curious thing – when I read Taylor's wonderful description of the luminous effect on the eyes that this installation achieves on the beholder I am carried along with his account and perfectly prepared to agree with it, however my own recollections of seeing the work have been completely obliterated by over thirty years of wincing from inferior photographic representations of the mannequin and her surroundings in lectures, books, magazines and of course on electronic databases and so whether it was Taylor's intention or not to withhold on the mannequin in crucial parts of this publication I was pleased that the dispassionate objectivity had been held in check this time at least.

Michael Taylor's four chapters are then followed by three technical essays, one of which, by Melissa S Meighan, is so highly illustrated with replica details from the 'lower torso' – identified and indicated with direction arrows, encircled features, photographic overlays, and close-fitting prosthetic devices (devised by Duchamp to hold the vellum substrate over the plaster figure) and all to such sober purpose that this part of the catalogue begins to assume the qualities of a manual of forensic instruction. In spite of the David Cronenberg aspect of some of the utensils devised by Duch-

amp the essay is straightforward and persuasive and like all good manuals it does its job – nevertheless the elderly artist (being 122 by now) might have permitted himself a dry chuckle that might not have completely disappeared when recalling the observation from the art historian and Duchamp specialist Amelia Jones when she lists, so clear an iteration of the mannequin's many gynaecological deficiencies that Taylor, taking it on the chin, not only cites it in this essay but in an earlier one for Jennifer Mundy's 'Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia' catalogue at Tate Modern in 2008. Much earlier however in the 1970s Lyotard noted the unusual swelling to the right of this disturbing groin and suggests that here is the premonition of incipient cross-gendering in the mannequin – linking it with Duchamp's interest in sexually undefined states exemplified by his *Mona Lisa* adaptation LHOQQ and also with Rose Sélavy whose undeclared status allows him/ her to sidle towards the ineluctable multivalences of the *inframince*. This is how we understand why Taylor is prepared to beat himself up over Amelia Jones' diatribe against the mannequin's labial deformities and I think it best to quote him here:

However, the repeated emphasis that has been placed on the mannequin's external genitals as being deformed or mutilated misses the artist's point, and fails to take into account his playful investigations of the *inframince* (infrathin), a term he defined as a barely perceptible change in a body or object, or a liminal form of separation from one state to another. (TAYLOR 2009: 194)

And so an undeclared consequence of Taylor's text is the

light it sheds on what is really the most imperceptible, illusive, promising and perhaps pioneering aspect of Duchamp's conceptions as it impacts on art making today. Consistent with the evanescent qualities of *inframince* Taylor resists a head-on approach so, for instance, there are no chapter headings devoted to the topic and in fact, surprisingly, the term does not even appear as an entry in the index and so to find *inframince* in the catalogue one has to slip into the endnotes to find a definition there:

In which inside becomes outside, front becomes back, concave becomes convex, solid becomes void, female becomes male, and vice versa. (TAYLOR 2009: 80)

Nevertheless, the insight that Taylor brings to this discussion is the clear understanding of how Duchamp converts the theory of *inframince* into practical outcomes resulting from his struggle and eventual failure to make a convincing surrogate of the woman that he obsessively adored. From the thirties onwards he had been jotting down exemplary definitions that seemed to remain suspended as intriguing speculations in his oeuvre without much further application and we have become familiar with his statements about the qualities of corduroy, the warmth of a chair seat, the *instané* of a bullet's path between muzzle and target; perhaps, just perhaps, his statements in the 1960s about extending his remit into an interest in 'breathing', in order to hoodwink his interlocutors, might have had a correlation with the tobacco-smoking analogy of *inframince*. Otherwise there is little that could be attributed to the term in its practical

form until, that is, the mannequin's eventual appearance and Duchamp's struggles to clothe her in the smooth glowing skin that he could no longer possess. This must have been an awful time for Duchamp, working in cramped confinement with materials for which there was no manual of instruction. Neither was there a precedent for this form of activity in his career, having embraced and stayed with machine aesthetic and forms of mechanical production and reproduction from the mid tens of the century onwards, he had no way of dealing with organic things. In a disconcertingly relevant chapter from his influential text 'Mechanization Takes Command' (1948) the Swiss architectural historian Siegfried Giedion, discussing the merits of mechanisation on the Chicago and Cincinnati meat-processing industry concludes that mechanisation could offer little of value:

Only the knife, guided by the human hand can perform the transition from life to death in the desired manner. For this operation craftsmen are needed who combine the precision and skill of a surgeon with the speed of a piece worker. (GIEDION 1948: 243)

And later goes on:

What is truly startling in this mass transition from life to death is the complete neutrality of the act. One does not experience, one does not feel; one merely observes. It may be that nerves that we do not control rebel somewhere in the subconscious. (ibid 246)

Michael Taylor's terrific chapter on the process and construction of *Étant donnés* starts off with a photograph of a plaster life

cast of Duchamp's face: 'a rather morbid portrait of Duchamp that was cast from life yet contains the deathly stillness of a funerary effigy.' (TAYLOR 2009: 61) In *Étant donnés* Duchamp undertook to reinvigorate the cold stillness of his body cast of Maria Martins by enveloping it in a covering of hand-painted vellum. Duchamp's technique of rubbing in the paint, where the caressing motion of his fingertips would inform the surface, creating an emulsion of intimacy in the moment of separation between the death-like cast and the translucent vellum upon whose sensually contrived surface the external gaze of the *voyeur* would fall. Not only was he trying to duplicate the organic body here but he was also attempting to penetrate its unreachable interstices. Unfortunately his unstable materials were affected by extremes of temperature and dismayingly the results demonstrate the failure of the system only too clearly. Neither Duchamp's considerable skill as a technical draughtsman nor his faith in the hilarious and cack-handed *bricolage* he otherwise espoused were of much help to him. In reality he needed the dispassionate skills and deft accuracy of the Chicago and Cincinnati meat-workers that Giedion describes in order to achieve the desired results. Nevertheless, the prosthetic utensils and armatures that he did make and did adapt, in order to coax the recalcitrant material into the desired erotic configuration, became an exegesis in his adaptable mind, for the infinitesimal differences in the shared surface of a mould and the moulded object that separates from it. Although the purpose for which these objects were devised was not always successfully achieved – the mannequin's skewed clitoris is the

most obvious example – after being gussied-up, electroplated, and put on a pedestal they were re-appropriated by Duchamp for a different imperative in teasing-out and defining the separation between two almost identical states – resulting in a fluent instability a liquidity that remains, to this day, the solid cornerstone of his attraction fifty years beyond his death.

Taylor's comments, on the largely untapped resource that *inframince* offers to scholarship as well as to practical research, were written ahead of Julian Jason Haladyn's publication of his eponymously titled, though more modest 'Marcel Duchamp: *Étant donnés*'. However, as in Taylor, the attributes of *inframince* slip beguilingly in and out of the final thirty pages of text. Haladyn's section headings avoid the topic, and so we get the sense that efforts to corral *inframince* into one area would ultimately diminish the concept. So it is allowed to slip in and out, past borders, crossing different sections, skirting around the edges of other good ideas. The chapters themselves follow the same rubric, using the anglicised version of *Étant donnés*, (Given) as the prefix of each strap line for each section thus:

Given the Illuminating Vision of *Given* (p.58)

Given the Origins (p.68)

Given the Pleasure and Anxiety of Looking (p.82)

Given the Gap of *Given* (p.90)

As already stated, no section heading declaring, perhaps:

Given the Beguiling Applications of *Inframince*

Clearly *inframince* has to be seen as an application and not an object that can be con-

tained by borders – nor in a body of text that can be contained within section headings in an organised chapter structure. *Inframince* flows through all of the above, binding, separating, invisibly demarcating. And now, a recent search on Amazon shows that a newcomer, Thierry Davila has published his *De l'inframince - Brève histoire de l'imperceptible, de Marcel Duchamp à nos jours*, which might be titled if translated as: 'Of 'Infrathin': a brief history of the imperceptible, from Marcel Duchamp to the present'. The cover shows the artist Roman Ondák staring through a plate-glass window. Because his face is firmly fixed to the glass, we cannot say what occupies him, but he cannot know that we – obscene in the shadows – can see him either, or whether he even knows that we are there – and so the paranoiac stand-off from *Étant donnés*, a paranoia that must surely derive from Duchamp's late summer friendship with Salvador Dali: subject/ object, viewer/ voyeur, receiving rictus/ probing eye held close to the weather beaten door that Duchamp brought from Cadaqués in Spain, Dali's home town. While waiting for the English translation of Davila's book we can begin to speculate about the slippage of meaning that will occur between the two languages – and what Duchamp might have drawn from this. In the meantime we have two books with identical titles: 'Marcel Duchamp: *Étant donnés*' by Michael R Taylor 2009 and 'Marcel Duchamp: *Étant donnés*' by Julian Jason Haladyn 2010. Two books on the same subject with largely the same points of reference but with distinctly different approaches; I would not recommend one over the other – they achieve different things, satisfying different budg-

ets. One takes up considerably more shelf space than the other and so this might be a consideration – otherwise I would allow space for both. Much could be gained from understanding the *inframince* of separation between them. Call up the carpenters, extend the shelf

3D Typography

by Jeanette Abbink and Emily CM Anderson

Asia Pacific Offset China & Mark Batty Publisher, 2010, 224 pp.

ISBN: 978-0984190621

Reviewed by Martha Patricia Niño Mojica

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The book is divided in six chapters and has over 100 different contributors. The text explores 3D typography in a wider sense, meaning that you can find in it a number of crafts, photographs, and art installations that depict 3D typography with common and unusual materials, such as wood, sugar, food, water, moss, hair, sand, bricks, clothes, tubes, cardboard, skin, chairs, disks, security tape, the human body, hose, neon, thread paper, among other types of objects. Thus, the main topic of the book is the un-tethering of letters from conventional 2D paper.

The book also deals with the electronic image and the information that we sometimes consider a mere blip of glass or intangible, remote, non-corporeal, elusive or transitory communications. In order to describe some of the outstanding work found in the book, I am going to list and summarize the most interesting among them: Ebon Heat focuses on work composed by a circular arrangement

overlapped typography that resembles computer generated art using recursive mathematical functions. He calls his work "typographic sculptures." This approach is his attempt to propose a body language that is able to transcend the possibilities of plain paper (p. 19). Aoyama Hina is a Japanese paper artist who creates fine pieces of cut phrases in French with an organic font type that resembles paper embroidery (p. 22). Yulia Brodskaya is a Russian who pursued a masters degree in Graphic Communication at the University of Hertfordshire and uses textile painting, origami, and collage to create highly detailed objects for companies like the *New York Times*, Hermes, Starbucks and Nokia (p. 29). The London based designer, David Aspinall, produces typographic experiments with shredding paper create pieces — that, after being folded — resembling an alternative to intaglio (p. 35). The Glasgow School of Art Graduate, Alida Rosie Sayer, presents paper cutting combined with computer techniques to achieve a work that resembles a 3D navigable phrases (p.36). Vienna based artist, Brigitte Kowanz, uses light and language to create multilayered work with steel, neon tubes and mirrors (p. 62). Andrew Byrom constructs work in neon. UK Based graphic designers Miles Gould and Joe Luxton created an installation entitled "Last time I dreamt that" in which participants could actually weave their dreams through a structured pattern grid that resembles algorithms for pattern creation (p. 54). Designer and illustrator Ana Garforth creates living texts using moss that creates calligraphy in the stone facades of buildings (p. 78). Rhett Dashwood used Google maps to create an alphabet us-

ing images of both landscape and architecture (p. 85). UK designer, Amandine Alessandra, uses shelves as typographic grids (p. 106). Claire Morgan is another London based artist that uses organic processes in order to create sculpture and installations in huge spaces that employ thousands of fragments of white polythene suspended in horizontal steel threads. Two other of his installations use nylon threads and pink polystyrene to ask for silence (p. 114). UK based designer, Richard J. Evans, uses laser cut wooden letters that seem to emerge from a faucet in order to represent the liquid properties of new media and the way internet and television are easily and rapidly disseminated (p. 166). Oscar & Wan is a small London based design studio that created the physical sign "Agency" that is made by sticks and responds to wind and movement. They also created the work "Discovery" for Metropolitan Works London using a nylon rapid prototyping machine as well as a 3D Environment (p.190). Jonas Valuation photographed milk at high-speed motion in order to create an alphabet (p.194). In a similar way, the design team at Biwa Inc., working with Shinichi Maruyama, took photos at 1/75000 of a second for creating calligraphy with water splashes (p. 195).

The book has many other interesting contributions from a variety of topics and techniques, and only few of them have the potential of shocking the reader because they use a direct reference to death or use human bones as an ordinary material. This book is very recommended for people interested in illustration, design, and photography. At the end of the book, you can also find a selection of interviews and a good directory of

all the contributors and their websites.

Radical Light – Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area 1945-2000

by Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid (eds.)

University of California Press, 2010, 51 pp.

ISBN: 978-0520249110

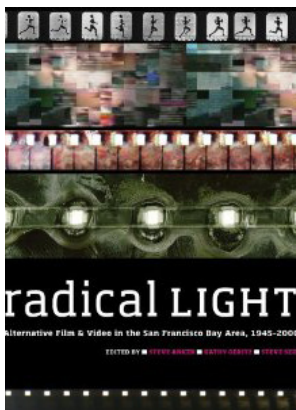
*Reviewed by Mike Leggett,
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'A haven for radical art and experimental film and video' is how the port city of San Francisco is described. Certainly its reputation as a multicultural centre for adventurers, entrepreneurs and other individualists is well evidenced in this kaleidoscopic work of documentation and appraisal. Some seventy contributors: curators, critics, managers, artists and filmmakers themselves, are wrangled into a compendium that more than adequately describes the scene.

As an artist filmmaker myself who screened work in North America during a tour in the mid-1970s, the vigour of activity in San Francisco left vivid memories. The Reminiscences recorded here by the selected artists provide personal accounts of their work but for the reader seeking the broader context several essays capture the bigger picture: the pioneering work of the Englishmen, photographer Muybridge and filmmaker Chaplin; the age of electricity, and a light show manifestation called the Scintillator (1915); and television experiments in

the 1920s.



The post-War period establishes a milieu with a distinct role and practice. Film appreciation at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and film-making at the Arts Institute created an early community of activists and proto surrealists engaged for the most part in what P. Adams Sitney wryly described as “allegories of artistic vision and creation”. Baillie, Belson and Brackage later moved toward “spaces of the mind” with abstracted film form, developing “expressionist and individual traditions” with which the San Francisco scene became most closely associated. The Vortex concerts of the late 50s picked up where the Scintillator had left off (and continue today around the world as countless VJs manipulate the myriad laptop applications for mixing image, light and sound).

The six sections in the book divide the narrative in time periods identified by the editors as reflecting the shifts in practice, determined largely by technological and institutional change. The essay form is interspersed; with Focus pieces on particular artworks, Artist Page artworks, Cutaways of ephemera and an Addendum on page 64!

As an ensemble of material that took some eight years to assemble, the book is an extraordinary source for anyone curious about the flow of moving image artists’ initiatives in San Francisco throughout the last part of the previous century. Like several other volumes internationally about artists working with film and video, the publications’ indicate a general shift away from the ‘magic of Fine Art’ and the expert critic toward a wider range of voices in discourse employing broader reflection in the evaluation of creative enterprise. The pitfall is a lack of editorial resolve - too often, contributors here repeat what has already been established in other writers’ references and histories and the repetition is liable to take a toll on the reader’s patience.

There are less historical sections: Dialogue in Lyric, a concluding essay by Konrad Steiner, introduces recent ideas and forms, crossovers between media and cultures; Japanese *renga* (linked verse) and ekphrastic cinema, forms which are “both description and expression at an interface of language and image”. Whilst such thoughts appear to move towards contemporary computer-based interactive artworks, the dialogue instead turns back toward precursors in literature and artists’ film. Likewise in Margaret Morse’s contribution, the microprocessor becomes a re-render device for video art in installation, the viewer able to view but, as with the movies, unable to touch. It seems the editors were resolute at least in avoiding linkage with contemporary artists’ ideas for expanding cinema practice.

A lavishly illustrated and well-designed coffee table sized book,

with a full Index (though no Bibliography), it is a complementary source to the online Centre for Visual Music, one of the hubs in California for continuing the work of many of the pioneers documented in this volume.

Casablanca – Movies and Memory

by Marc Augé

Tom Conley (transl.)

University of Minnesota Press, 2009, 120 pp.

ISBN: 978-0816656400

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I pause as the machine tells me the file is ‘Loading into memory’. As the gaze is averted from the screen to the bits and pieces around the desk, the workbench, the room, they receive an unaccustomed glance; synapses fire as the object that holds my attention summons from memory its *raison d’être*.

Presumably this is why so many applications will ‘beep’ upon completing the task they have been set, to bring us back to the task in hand. Moments of immersion in the past are like the immersive experience of the re-run repertory cinema, shared with an audience of fellow devotees. This is not the isolated penumbra of the home theatre but the common space of the unchanged, where the spectres on the screen appear like the objects on the desk, with a significance attached to somewhere in the personal past.

Marc Augé re-runs the 1942 classic movie *Casablanca* star-

ring Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart. The film was an instant hit and provided the American public with an exemplar of moral fibre, no doubt required at the time as a morale booster for the troops prior to the liberation of Europe. Augé lived in France under the Nazi occupation as a child and was not able to see the film until 1947. In this extended essay he traverses the spaces between reminiscence, recall, recollection and reconnections with past moments, conjunctions between the fixity of the motion picture image and personal memory. As an anthropologist (and student of Levi-Strauss), his self-observations are carefully linked, like cinematic montage, cutting between his personal story and that of the film and its history.



The director of the film Michael Curtiz he relates, worked quite freely with the script and the material that was shot, improvising as each day of shooting led to the next and gradually to the film's conclusion. The process of pulling it together is compared to "...the past – even the relatively immediate past – most often comes to us as an array of dispersed 'scenes'. At the moment of remembrance

we try to retrieve the bond that unites them, the thread that runs from the one to the other, the very thread of existence."

As terrified refugees, the Augé family fled before the invaders, like that of the characters in the film, scattering across France, across memories of movies, across memory of family histories, of stories passed on by distant relatives, partial accounts, filtered observances. The family of screen stars from the 1940s re-visited today is as, "handsome as gods and goddesses ... they haven't acquired a wrinkle. They remain faithful to the first image they gave of themselves when we were young." They remain on the screen unchanged and we remain as they.... the clothes and décor may be of another country, but "To see a film again is to recover a past that retains all the vivacity of the present."

This enjoyable volume does not fit easily into any category: it is part memoir, rumination upon the nature of memory, travelogue (through a wartime France); it reasserts the part mid-20th Century cinema had to play in entrancing Western audiences not only by providing romantic role models but also by pointing towards notions of national consensus and moral choice. The translator Tom Conley, as an academic and most appropriately as a fellow cineaste, provides further context to Augé's story in a short afterword.

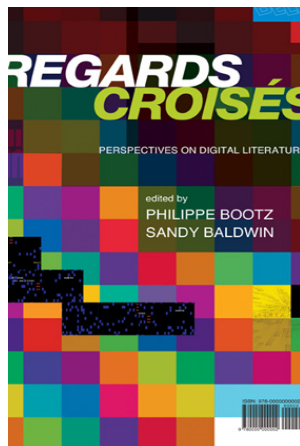
Regards Croisés: Perspectives on Digital Literature

by Sandy Baldwin and
Philippe Bootz (eds.)
West Virginia University Press,

2010, 128 pp.
ISBN: 978-1933202471

Reviewed by Jan Baetens,
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The least one can say of this collection of essays on electronic literature, is that it is different from most existing material on the topic. Even when written outside the US, this material is strongly indebted to what is being done in the American academia: the authoritative critics and theoreticians most often quoted, such as N. Katherine Hayles, George Landow or Lev Manovich, the works and authors that have been recently canonized by the ELO (Electronic Literature Organization), but also the gate keeping institutions are all definitely North-American, and US English is their global language. *Regards croisés* does not ignore this line of thinking and working, since all the contributors to this volume (Shuen-Shing Lee, Alckmar Luiz dos Santos, Camille Paloque-Bergès, Eugenio Tisselli, Janez Strehovec, and Alexandra Saemmer, Sandy Baldwin, Philippe Bootz) are well-known theoreticians and practitioners in the field, often with a proven international (read: US) record and

in all cases a good knowledge of the ongoing research at Brown, MIT, San Diego, etc. Moreover, the ambition of this book is not all to criticize the research done in the US or in relationship with it. Its basic stance, which in a certain sense is not unlike the “glocalized” project defended by *Leonardo* (as readers may know, the journal has also a section in French!), is rather to offer a broader, i.e. linguistically and culturally more diverse framework for the study of emergent forms of literary writing.

How is this difference then made concrete and palpable in this volume? What strikes at first sight is of the course the ambition to take into consideration works written in other languages, French and Portuguese for instance. However, this expansion of the field remains superficial (although important and necessary, of course) in comparison with the real breakthrough proposed by all the contributors, namely the conviction that even works produced for the global market and with the help of such universal tools as the modern digital media, are deeply rooted in local cultural and linguistic traditions, and can only be understood when referred to them. Hence, the overall emphasis on the importance of language in electronic literature, and the subsequent claim that the visual turn and the multimediization of the (hyper)text do not suffice when it comes down to understanding why certain authors are doing what they are doing. In addition, this foregrounding of the text goes far beyond the simple reminder that not everything in new media has shifted towards visual and multimedia signs. Finally, it also implies the necessity to study the specifically verbal dimension of digital literature in relationship with lit-

erary ideas, traditions, debates, and models in which the contemporary e-texts are deeply embedded.

More specifically, this reopening of digital literature to textual and verbal signs takes three different forms. First of all, a strong accent put on close reading. Second, the highlighting of the historic density of concepts, genres and models. When contributors of this book use the word “poetry”, for instance, they will take care in defining what cultural practice and structure of feeling lays behind or underneath a word that is deceptively simple. Yet it makes a crucial difference if one accepts or rejects the idea that poetry, although being a “machine”, is also aiming at “producing emotions”. French poet and theoretician Paul Valéry, whose reflections on poetry are still playing a paramount role in French culture, said both, but contemporary critics of digital poetry, who may like to quote Valéry’s statements on the machinic aspects of poetry-writing, will tend to discard or simply ignore the flip side of Valéry’s poetics. Given their attempt to disclose the cultural background of writing and literature in specific historic and geographical contexts, the essays in this book manage to offer more than once a refreshingly multifaceted approach of their corpus. Third, the importance given to the crossing of boundaries, but not the kind of boundaries that are generally discussed in the field of digital literature. Here, the main focus is not only on the crossing of new frontiers and the leap into the future, but also, more modestly perhaps, the blurring of boundaries between present and past. It is the mix of existing methods of reading and reading, on the one hand, and emerging practices in screen writing, read-

ing and thinking, that gives this book its special value. *Regards croisés* makes us travel through time and space, and it makes a strong plea for the integration of traditional and cutting-edge reflection on electronic literature, not as a new form of literature, but as literature *tout court*.

Such a stance is not a mirror-view approach of the future. It offers, on the contrary, a sharper awareness of the literary text as an “event”, i.e. as a moment in time, a performance, in which change is taking place, but never in an absolute manner. The richness of this approach can be discovered in the stimulating rereading of certain too well-known concepts, such as the mix of closeness and remoteness of Benjamin’s aura (here applied to the reading of digital literature in the essay by Philippe Bootz) as well as in the innovative theoretical hypotheses that are defended in various articles (such as the analysis of the rhetoric of brevity in the essay by Alckmar Luiz dos Santos).

Mapping Intermediality in Performance

by Sarah Bay-Cheng, Chiel Kattenbelt, Andy Lavender and Robin Nelson

Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 304 pp.

ISBN: 978-9089642554

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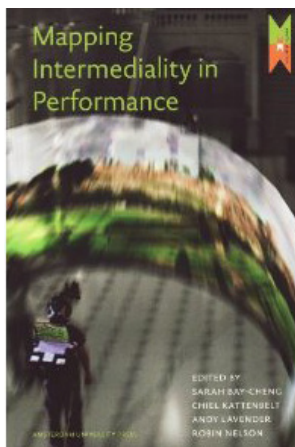
When I defended my dissertation in *LinguaMOO* in 1995, I was very aware that there was significant space between the room where I was physically inputting my responses to ques-

tions posed to me by my committee who were physically present and the virtual auditorium where I watched my thoughts become instantiated as posts (that each began with “Dene says”) for the 50+ members of the online audience. I was, likewise, acutely aware that the performance required for each room was different—different in a way that had nothing to do with the research findings I typed for my responses but, rather, how I put forward those findings in each. Somewhere in that space between here and there I had to make a significant shift in my personae in order to reach the audience in both rooms effectively. Yes, William Gibson had, close to 10 years before, provided the metaphorical notion of “jacking in” and described the experience of moving from the real-world “Sprawl” to the online “Matrix,” and Sherry Turkle had already described the experience of *The Second Self* and had just told us what happens when we live *Life on the Screen*, but the theoretical language for making sense of the space and the performances that it mediates had not fully been realized in 1995.

Some years and a Second Life later, a cogent theory of what I had wondered about emerged: Intermediality. While Bay-Cheng et al’s *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* is certainly not the first book to discuss intermediality directly—that honor may go to *Intermediality: The Teachers’ Handbook of Critical Media Literacy* published in 1999—it is perhaps the best one for making sense, theoretically, of it from a performance focus.

Mapping Intermediality is a collection of essays written by 30 international artists and scholars working in the areas of art history, theatre, film studies, me-

dia art, music, literature, and performance studies and, so, provides a broad, yet detailed, perspective of intermediality and performance, specifically in digital culture. Organized into five portals, or “gateways into the network which afford a range of situated perspectives,” four nodes comprising a “cluster of terms” and instances that offer “dialogic engagement” and a general fleshing out of ideas, the book itself reflects the act of mapping out space. Throughout the book the reader will find arrows pointing to “links” in the book’s “system” (9), a strategy of remediating hypertextuality in print form that makes good sense for a book about intermediality in digital culture.



Intermediality, the book suggests, is concerned with “correlations . . . that result in a redefinition of the media that are influencing each other, which in turn leads to a fresh perception.” It is, as Robin Nelson writes in the opening essay “a bridge between mediums” (14) and, so, constitutes a “both-and approach” to understanding information rather than an either-or perspective (17). Citing the *International Encyclopedia of Communication*, Nelson points out three basic perspectives

accepted for understanding intermediality:

“First. . . [it] is the combination and adaptation of separate material vehicles of representation and reproduction, sometimes called multimedia. . . . Second, the term denotes communication through several sensory modalities at once. . . . Third, [it] concerns the interrelations between media as institutions in society, as addressed in technological and economic terms such as convergence and conglomeration.” [1]

Out of this broad understanding of object and experience emerge basic qualities associated with intermediality, such as interconnectedness, syncretism, interactivity and playfulness, and dislocation, to name a few that figure largely (19-21). One of the pervasive characteristics of digital culture is the way in which media work together in a system to accomplish “communicative strategies” (15). In fact, the term, intermediality, suggests “the *interconnectedness* of modern media of communication (my emphasis).” [1] Video games that incorporate sound and image are but one example of the way in which elements of media objects connect with one another in order to present a unified vision—in this case for creating gaming experiences. But this relationship extends beyond the connection among elements to that between user and object.

The essays that follow build on these concepts from the perspectives of “performativity and corporeal literacy,” “time and space,” “digital culture and post-humanism,” “networking,” and “pedagogic praxis.” In sum, the book covers intermediality from practice to theory to teaching.

While rhetorical, communications, and linguistic theories offer insights into the relationship between viewers and information, they do not address the complexities that arise when linking analog objects, such as those represented by the physical body of viewers, visual art, and the like, to digital media like sound, images, video, and words found on the web. Moreover, intermediality stands in stark contrast to the separation of human and objects so prevalent in Western epistemologies. Thus, Andy Lavender's essay on "Digital Culture," which he says has been "shaped" by intermediality (125) and Ralf Remshaff's essay on "posthumanism," which he tells us is a "matrix" and not a "condition" (135), provide good foundations for understanding this change in perspective. Additionally, Remshaff's take on the audience "becoming cyborg" also explains the way immersive technologies are "shap[ing] a new communal posthuman sense of performance experience" (138).

The final section traces intermediality in "earlier encounters" (248), beginning with, as Klemens Gruber points out in his essay "Early Intermediality: Archaeological Glimpses," the use of the term for "spiritist séances" (247), through the "crisis in art" brought about by the "verisimilitude" of photography (247) to the "radical experimentation of film" (253). Thus, intermediality is not new, but we are made more readily aware of it through the "convergence of digital technologies." Certainly, "the process of encoding in 0:1s" all things "visual, verbal, sonic, and gestural" (16)—as I learned by watching my online self interacting with the virtual slides in *LinguaMOO's* auditorium during my defense—drives a need to

reenvision intermediality, as the authors so aptly do in this book. For the fundamental shift in the relationship between humans and the digital technologies they engage with lays bare our potential to connect and become part of a feedback loop, influencing and being influenced by information—in fact, becoming expressed as information ourselves as another media in the *multimedia*. And while it is understood that "all discourse [is] 'mediated' (15), it is, I have come to see, equally realized when connecting via and to digital media that the membranes that seemingly contain the elements as unique, discrete units are actually exceptionally thinned and extraordinarily permeable in this flux of information exchange.

Needless to day, *Mapping Intermediality* is well worth the read and will be useful in undergraduate and graduate level courses in digital media where performance is a topic under study.

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[1] International Encyclopedia of Communication Online. http://www.communicationencyclopedia.com/public/tocnode?query=intermediality&widen=1&result_number=1&from=search&id=g9781405131995_yr2010_chunk_g978140513199514_ss60-1&type=std&fuzzy=0&slop=1 (accessed October 14, 2010).

Fast Feminism

by Shannon Bell
Autonomedia, 2010, 198 pp.
ISBN: 978-1570271892

Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics and Publics, 1974-2007

by Suzanne Lacy
Duke University Press, 2010,

424 pp.
ISBN: 978-0822345695

Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher, Saginaw Valley State University
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One would expect, in 2011, that all persons would reflexively call themselves feminist as one might say small-d democrat or an anti-racist. Yet I suspect some of my own art students, female or male, wouldn't immediately designate themselves that way. Behold new books by two avowed feminists in the realm of art, one whose sensibility was shaped by the Punk rock and Gay Lib 1970s and 1980s subcultures, and the other formed amidst 1960s and 1970s political activism. Their works show two very different manifestations of the personal as political, and the private rendered public.

Shannon Bell, "pornographic sage" and Ph.D., is the Toronto-based promoter of Fast Feminism, drawing upon Paul Virilio's designation of speed as characteristic of our time and its politics, plus Queer Theory and a spice rack of other contemporary intellectual currents. Her provisional manifesto calls us to critique the world quickly, upset usual contexts and scholarship, mix up art and theory and base it upon the experienced human body. Her sexual excursions take her to drag balls, endorphin-triggering torture with scalpels and hypodermic needles at women's bath house sex events, to perform a ritual embrace of lingam statuary on the banks of the Ganges among burnt corpses, and—dusted off—into a tissue engineering lab to grow cells that construct from scratch a "female penis" and sexy toe. Our adventures slathers and rubs a tube or two

of poststructuralist and queer theory into her good-natured travelogue. She defends the concept of the female phallus against the avoidance and omissions of Freud, Lacan, even Deleuze and Guattari. She straps on theory to “bugger Levinas with Bataille”.

You know she’ll deliver a good story when she begins “As part of the Masturbation Cabaret, I walk onto the stage accompanied by Drag King Sean Con...” Dr. Bell is also a performance artist whose specialty—generally performed for audiences in private sex clubs yet illustrated in full color and black and white here—is onstage self-stimulation that ultimately produces an exuberant stream of female ejaculate. She contextualizes this rather vaudevillian act of pleasure in opposition to the history of male denial, denigration of, or dissembling about the female orgasm. Marvel at her ecstatic geyser. Watch out where you stand!

Bell’s libertarian defense of all sexual flavors or transgression extends to her involvement in the child pornography trial of John Robin Sharpe. One assumes Canadian—and previous—laws against pornographic texts are predicated on the Roman Catholic equation of sin “in thought, word or deed”, for Sharpe’s offense was purely textual, and didn’t involve real boys in person, physically or photographically. Another academic called as defense witness, James Miller of University of Western Ontario, situated Sharpe’s writing in a tradition of grisly descriptions of human suffering that dates back to Dante’s hellacious *Inferno*. In the end Sharpe was found guilty, yet received a sentence considerably less harsh than

he would in the US. The Canadian pornography law applies to sexual descriptions of anyone under 18 years of age, which feels excessive, so therefore worthy of Bell’s public defense... and later her succoring and vivid carnal solace of the defendant. By the time the reader reaches the book’s afterglow-like coda, a warm remembrance of Shannon Bell’s mother Mildred Alice Edwards, one would be rude to inquire: So what did Mom think of your work?



Three decades ago the painter and San Francisco State University Professor Cherie Raciti suggested to this reviewer that I investigate the community arts work of Suzanne Lacy, but I was too entrenched in the painting of post-Diego Rivera wall murals to pay much attention. My loss, but at least there is now this book to document the substantial body of work by the California artist. Following Moira Roth’s helpful overview of the issues that Lacy has engaged—many related to violence against women, or their exploitation—three decades’ worth of the artist’s own writings follow. Her 1974 project “Prostitution Notes” consisted of meticulous notes taken in research into the lives of prostitutes on the streets of Los Ange-

les, later read aloud by Lacy and collaborator Leslie Labowitz to an audience. The two methodically interrogated the women, then their pimps who seemingly treated their interrogators with curious respect. Lacy’s “Falling Apart” collages, exhibited 1976, are arresting photographs of the artist, nude, leaping into the air, yet torn at her midsection and photographs of animal entrails appearing in the chasm. In other projects, she created a parody of a cooking show, appeared with a racing car as “Cinderella in a Dragster”, and dressed-up as an aged, homeless “bag lady” to roam the streets and provoke reactions.

“The Life and Time of Donaldina Cameron” was performed in 1977 on the Angel Island ferry, on the way to immigration station from China and the Pacific. Lacy impersonated the 19th century reformer Cameron, while Kathleen Chang played a fictitious woman whom Cameron saw “saved” from prostitution for a life of sweatshop-like labor sewing. In solidarity with organized activists, Lacy created “Record Companies Drag Their Feet” in 1977 about violent imagery used to sell rock music albums sporting titles like “Black and Blue” and “In Cold Blood”. “She Who Would Fly” made use of diary entries recounting rape experiences, read in performance at Garage Gallery, Los Angeles, 1977. Lacy became aware of increased feminist concern in California performance art in the 1980s that broadened its definition. In this wider context, Jo Hanson merely sweeping the streets of her San Francisco neighborhood outside her residence became consciously politicized.

Lacy began to organize performances and public inter-

ventions that involved a large group of women, whose very number was a powerful statement of solidarity. A project in 1981 brought 50 white women and 50 black women, aged 13 to 86, together to share food and conversation. She organized 17 groups of women who talked about survival in a furniture showroom during the 1982 San Francisco International Sculpture Exhibition (notes on whose Space Art panel was this reviewer's first contribution for Leonardo, while missing Lacy's project). In a dialogue with Lucy Lippard, Lacy posited political performance as a contemporary form of pageantry. In the 1980s she increasingly questioned whether works that were less issue-specific were necessarily less activist, for organizations of "cultural workers" like SPARC, NAPNOC, and PAD/D gave a new political context to adventurous, even ambiguous, works. Lacy's "The Dark Madonna" was a performance at Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA, which strove to illuminate self-critical, psychological aspects of motionlessness versus activity.

Lacy's 1990s were spent developing her model of engagement that she saw on a continuum of non-fixed roles for artists, private to public. One might be an experienter, an empathetic reporter of information, or an analyst, providing an activist critique and program. She interrogated artists' intentionality, questioning what produced both the good and the effective. She re-examined the 1970s democratic movements (and the impact of her teacher, the late Allan Kaprow) in the 1990s and beyond, yet continually affirmed how personal experience has political implications. She was active in the attempt at institu-

tionalizing community arts in the CSU Monterey Bay Visual and Public Art Program, and examined youth, their increasing criminalization and impoverishment in California and the United States.

Suzanne Lacy worked with a community of cancer patients, survivors and their families to produce "Stories of Work and Survival" at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2007. This work further affirms the centrality of women's health, safety, needs and concerns in any discussion of health care and a healthy society. I would very much like to see Suzanne Lacy on a public panel offering insights as to the role of the arts in health policy. And yes, let's hear from Shannon Bell, too.

In Praise of Copying

by Marcus Boon

Harvard University Press,
2010, 304 pp.

ISBN: 978-0674047839

*Reviewed by Amy Ione, The
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Anyone who followed Barack Obama's popularity leading up to the 2008 presidential election in the United States no doubt recalls the iconic Hope image that seemed to become the unofficial poster of the campaign because many felt it defined Obama's message so well. The poster itself was so powerful in a symbolic sense that the Smithsonian Museum it acquired when he took office, despite their usual policy of collecting official portraits of presidents as they are leaving office. As it turned out, the artist, Shepard Fairey, had used an Associated Press

(AP) photograph to achieve the likeness. As a result, a question arose: Did Fairey's use of a photograph, taken in April 2006 by Manny Garcia require permission or was it covered by fair use? The ensuing legal case, which was settled out of court, has stimulated enormous amounts of discussion because of the many examples of artists who have copied photographs to create their work. [For example, Gerhard Richter has conceived numerous series based on photographs.]

More amusing are the Jeff Koons' cases. Koons recently sent a 'cease-and-desist' letter to an artist he claimed was copying his balloon dog sculptures. Like Fairey, Koons settled this case out of court. The Koons case received quite a bit of coverage because this artist has been sued several times for copyright infringement. The best-known case is perhaps *Rogers v. Koons* in 1992, in which the court agreed with Art Rogers, a photographer, who claimed that Koons had used Rogers' material to model three sculptures he sold for \$367,000.

These vignettes are among the many that touch upon the variety of questions concerning the nature of copies and originals. While the computer, the Internet, and our global society has perhaps heightened awareness of what we gain and lose with copies, as Marcus Boon shows in his book, *In Praise of Copying*, the subject of copying is neither new nor simple. Walking us through an immense volume of information, Boon argues that copying is an essential part of being human and demonstrates the complexity of the subject.

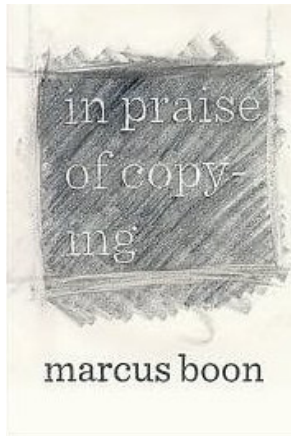
The strength of Boon's book is his ability to write easy to read

text and to simultaneously provide an erudite discussion. In part this is accomplished by putting many of the nuances into the footnotes. This is an effective approach given the breadth of the presentation. Equally compelling is the volume's originality, particularly in light of a thesis that validates copying. I wondered if he would argue, like a Nietzsche quote he includes, that life itself is an appropriation and thus his work is more a compilation of material than an original perspective. In any case, in my view, the presentation is novel due to Boon's use of Buddhism as a touchstone to the broad sweep of Western ideas.

The author explains that his impetus to write the book grew out of the observation that copying is pervasive in contemporary culture, yet at the same time subject to laws, restrictions, and attitudes that suggest "copying" is wrong. Proposing that we need to rethink how we see the tension between copies and originals, Boon suggests that Mahayana Buddhism, in its various historical forms, offers entry into the subject because it provides a way to rethink common duality of terms that have historically supported Western views. While Buddhism may offer an alternative to dualistic types of ideas such as subject/object, I didn't find the dualistic thesis convincing in terms of copies. Even before reading the volume the tensions between originals and copies did not strike me as a dichotomy.

One interesting aspect of the Buddhist perspective is that it allowed for a comprehensive overview and did not compel a "new" ethics, so to speak. Rather the effort highlights the role of copies in our culture, largely

through a weaving of critical theory, philosophical history, and cultural examples. Platonic mimesis is meshed with memes. The history of copyright laws and patent laws is introduced in terms that look at both modern law and philosophical perspectives we can trace back to Plato and Aristotle.



Boon has an interest in what words mean and how they affect the discussion. "Copia," for example (as in "cornucopia"), is the subject of one chapter. Boon claims the nuances of the word, which originally referred to the abundance, multiplicity and variation of copies that were not mere imitations, was lost due to a variety of reasons. These include the development of the disdain people had for copying as imitation and how the printing press, copyright and other societal values favored individual ownership. On the other hand, before the printing press "publishing" meant making an original available for scribes and students to copy. Through doing so they would glean a deep sense of the material and, in some cases, make it material to others as well. Indeed, a book that remained uncopied was unlikely to survive.

Although there is much discussion on film, art, and literature, it still seemed to me that the book was weighted too heavily toward philosophical ideas and cultural products (e.g., counterfeit Louis Vuitton bags and bootleg Harry Potter products). Academia is woven into the discussion, as is plagiarism, but in a generalized fashion. He does mention that copying is a subject he teaches to students at York University. Many of the examples seem targeted to that cohort (e.g., comparing iTunes with tape mixing and Internet downloads). There are also many examples related to education in the university. These range from the fact that student readers are subject to copyright laws (that increase their cost) to the use of services such as Turnitin.com at universities to spot plagiarism.

Given how copious my copy (!) of the volume is, it surprises me that some of my favorite examples of the tension between copies and originals were not mentioned. While art is not neglected, for example he mentions the important role Andy Warhol played in making artistic copying a part of contemporary aesthetics, I would have liked a chapter on art that discussed both the historical discussion and the trope of copies as art, epitomized in the multiples of Andy Warhol and the mass production techniques. Warhol and other artists are discussed (e.g., Mike Kelley, Duchamp, Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, etc.), but their work is blended in more than looked at in terms of the language of art. Boon does note that Warhol turned the ethos of preciousness on its head to embrace the multiplicity of copies as an aesthetic in its own right and the use of appropriation as an artistic strategy. What I felt was missing was a section

that zoned into the tension between the original and copy in art in a larger sense, in terms of artists, collectors, forgeries, education, etc.

Historically, for example, there were many arguments about what constitutes “great” art. On the whole, artists were trained by copying the work of others. Yet, particularly with the Renaissance, the goal for the artist was to achieve recognition as an innovator, a genius who made original work. This not only created a conflict in the studio/atelier, it also created an academic tension since good “technique” and the qualities that made works exceptional were not seen as the same thing. Moreover, with the invention of photography in the nineteenth century we find many fine artists using the ease of the photographic copy to “sketch,” which facilitated in the production of their work. Nonetheless, as recent research has shown, they often hid their photographs because of the stigma attached to working from copies. His contemporary examples, like Andy Warhol, seemed to buttress the cultural orientation rather than to look at art *per se*.

Finally, I also would have liked some integration of how the ideas about originals and copies interface with multiple discoveries. For example, Darwinism is discussed in several places, but the attribution of evolutionary theory is not. It is well known that Herbert Spencer (1820--1903) was thinking about ideas similar to Charles Darwin’s before Darwin’s publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 (1809-1882); yet, Spencer was accused of copying the idea. Similarly, there has been much research on the seventeenth-century calculus controversy between Isaac

Newton and Gottfried Leibniz. At the time it was said that Leibniz copied Newton’s work, although later research suggests the two approaches were independently developed.

Despite these minor limitations, *In Praise of Copying* is a splendid book. It will appeal to anyone who wonders about the nuances of how we think about copies and where copies “fit” in our world today. The discussion ranges from what is a copy and copying as deception to montage and the mass production of copies. The text moves quickly and it is only upon closing the book that one realizes how much territory the author covered.

Dans l’Atelier de l’Art – Expériences Cognitives (The Art Workshop – Cognitive Experiments)

by Mario Borillo

Champ Vallon, 2010, 247 pp.

ISBN: 978-2876735071

Reviewed by Florence Martellini

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In the *Art Workshop – Cognitive Experiments*, a collection of scientific papers, the publisher Champ Vallon presents a subject of increasing interest in the cognitive science community, the functioning of the brain. More specifically, what the brain of both the creator of an artwork and its viewer can tell us about how they perceive the world. Curiously, understanding a contemporary artwork ever more requires to analyse the artist’s behaviour/creative process rather than purely ex-

ploring the emotions it triggers. Mario Borillo goes even further by claiming that some contemporary artists purposely create artworks, which focus on the working of the mind - this trend may be influenced by the debates generated by the cognitive scientists. Numerous research studies have looked at the social impact of the artistic creation in the history of mankind as well as that of the artists and their patrons. However informative these works are they do not really bring a critical scientific eye on the actual act of creating arts.

Encouraging exchanges between artists and scientific researchers is another theme discussed in this book. Increasingly artists and cognitive science experts realise that they can learn from each other, that despite their different methods and tools they have a perception of the world which deserves a mutual collaboration. French researchers and fundings are lagging behind and, in some extent, the rest of Europe with the American scientific approaches leading proudly in this research field. Given the variety of relevant questions, methods and available tools, this inter-disciplinary research theme is very broad and requires an adventurous mind to embark on it. This book proves though that a real interest in it exists in France. The articles are very interesting, however, most are not reader friendly for a layperson even to an artist - only one author out of the twelve presented articles is an art expert.

Taking a closer look at some of the articles presented, Mario Borillo remarks that a cognitive analysis of an artwork allows to touch upon both processes the mental and the emotional but, can we talk about the logic of

the emotions? In his article, he examines the complexity of art and cognitive sciences working together. The latter provides the structure of mental processes and their understanding would allow, for example, to decide whether someone is an artist or not. This cognitive knowledge could be extended to the perception process. Cognitive researchers are interested in the creative process itself to go to the roots of aesthetic experiences. The artwork is only its trace and to analyse the artist creating poses problem in that an external observer would disturb the process itself - the viewer can only bring a subjective perspective of that process. Borillo reviews briefly the history of the cognitive sciences and discusses two theoretical models amongst many others in existence. He stresses that defining a work of art is paramount to overcome these challenges, however, within the confines of cognitive sciences is not an easy task. He concluded that contemporary art, being predominantly conceptual, may constrain cognitive sciences to adapt their theories to use art as a research field.

Jérôme Dokic questions whether there exists a cognitive architecture underlying an aesthetic competence. He presents two thesis 1) *reductionism* – the aesthetic experience is the result of a mix of cognitive competences which are not intrinsically aesthetics; 2) *modularism* – the aesthetic experience is the product of stand alone aesthetic responses which are cut off from reasoning and other underlying/existing beliefs. The author favours *reductionism* which brings together aesthetic responses and meta-cognitive feelings such as the sense of knowing, surprise, fear, illusion, etc. He

claims that the aesthetic experience cannot really be considered as a process independent of judgement and existing belief and denies the existence of an underlying sense of aesthetic. Hence, it is a melting pot of competences of which nature and contribution vary according to the context in which it is used. The arts are a broad cognitive field for experiment - they bring cognitive experiences but also questions about cognition itself.

Jean Vion-Dury, on the other hand, refutes that the aesthetic experience of the sublime can be interpreted by a reductionist model such as neurobiology or psychology. He claims that the sublime in art is a sort of auto-hypnosis triggered by an external agent which can vary from an artwork, a landscape to a human gesture, or a music piece. It cannot be communicated by words and it is a shared experience in which empathy is paramount. The sublime brings also ethic changes, i.e. changing ethos (where we live), hence, how we live in the world. Art can bring such a debate to cognitive sciences and it should not stay at the bare level of studying works of art and neural processes but should also enter the field of philosophies of art and of the mind.

Jean-Luc Velay and Marieke Longcamp look at motor visual perception and aesthetic judgement, in particular, at how our own movement and emotions react to visual information created by human being movements such as graphics and handwriting. The way we know and react to objects around us is conditioned by how we have learnt to interact with them. Velay and Longcamp claim that some interactions are learnt by repetitions others obey more general and

universal laws. Awareness of our own movements constrains our visual perceptions e.g. mirror neurones are permanently and automatically active when we observe the actions/the movements of another person. Applied to graphics, our brain seems to be able to re-construct a movement out of a series of static traces appearing say a in painting (brush strokes) or a handwritten document. Hence, it seems that when the traces/prints left by a human being are there in the environment, in front of us, they are automatically analysed *a posteriori* by the motor cortex of the viewer. A study by David Freeman and Vittorio Gallese reveals that canonical and mirror neurons play an important role because they simulate embodiment that are relevant to aesthetic responses, thus, offering the basis for understanding the neural substrate of empathetic reactions to works of art. They help bridge visual perception movements and the embodiment, which occur when looking at works of art.

Jean-François Bonnefon and Henri Prade believe that cognitive psychology helps to understand what makes us tune in with some artworks and suggest two cognitive theories 1) *structural theory*, which claims that understanding art requires the knowledge of the history of art, of its social context, etc; 2) *individualistic theory*, is a study of the individual and his cognitive structure i.e. the perception process of the viewer in front of a particular artwork and the artist's need, intention of revealing, materialising a reality hidden to the world. Despite being critical of Semir Zeki's and V.S. Ramachandran's most influential neurological theories, they state that *High Art* could be defined as the art which offers

the brain the most interpretations possible, all being relevant. They conclude that the art has made evolve its relationship with the viewers – today, the artist expects more from the viewers than a mere cognitive response relating to beauty and the sublime they must show an interest. Hence, studying the viewer's mind is paramount. Today, new technologies offer new opportunities to manipulate light, colours, texture of copied originals to study further the viewer.

Finally, the only art expert Pascal Pique explains that an interest in the mind in contemporary art is making a come back e.g. the symbol of the brain is ever more present. Jan Fabre, visual artist and writer, creates pieces in which the brain is a central theme - the brain is a physical organ but is also the centre of thoughts, imagination, the mind, etc. Pique asserts that contemporary art has never been as productive as it is today. And because art has no longer boundaries, philosophy has difficulties to analyse it, to classify it as it used to when the notion of 'beauty' was the reference point. Pique acknowledges that the art and creation are paramount to the permanent re-invention of our relationship to the world. Cognitive sciences must avoid reductionism and the scientist Francesco Varela opened a new door by claiming that the brain is an organ/a limb, which builds worlds, rather than reflecting them back. Hence, the human being and the world mutually inter-connect, exchange. Alva Noë, philosopher, suggests that we should look at the relationship artist-artwork not as what they represent but rather as how they interact with their external realities. Artist Bassecole believes that artists show us how our perception of the

space and time has changed – it is broader, to the scale of the cosmos. Does this transformation already affect our physical and psychological make ups? Cognition creates new worlds in continuity. There is a need to re-think the relationship 'science – art' to re-introduce a symbolic dimension, which implies that the scientist and the artist be more open-minded to each other's mindset.

The Object Reader

by Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins (eds.)

Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2009, 576 pp.

ISBN: 978-0415452298

Reviewed by Martha Blassnigg, University of Plymouth

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The Object Reader provides an extensive compilation of mostly previously published key articles by renowned authors along with original contributions of new works in an accessible anthology. 'Objects' are introduced upfront from the original Latin *obicere*, referring to the 'act of blocking', 'to throw at' or 'throw against' in the sense of disapproval or an objection, alongside the philosophical use of the term as a 'thing which is perceived', external to the subject, as well as the common use of the word for 'material thing(s)'. It is highlighted that another etymological meaning refers to 'that to which action, or thought or feeling is directed, the thing (or person) to which something is done' (p. 2), which does not differentiate between inanimate or conscious 'things', the organic/inorganic or human as a matter of fact. According to this wide

spectrum of definitions and interpretations, the volume treats objects not strictly in the sense of studies of material culture, but reflects on their practical uses, phenomenological perceptions, symbolic functions and social meanings. For this reason it draws from a range of fields comprising anthropology, art history, classical studies, critical theory, cultural studies, digital media, design history, disability studies, feminism, film and television studies, history, philosophy, psychoanalysis, social studies of science and technology, religious studies and visual culture.

Against this background perhaps not surprisingly, the *Reader* opens with Marcel Mauss' famous account on the reciprocity of gift culture, in the sense of the Latin *do ut des* and Sanskrit *dadami se, dehi me*, setting out objects' relations as reciprocal bondage, and it ends with Candlin's personalised reflections on post-generational haunting of ghostly presences as a continuous shifting and interactive negotiation between the material and immaterial. When taking the numerous layers into account that the volume's contributions (too many to treat individually in any adequate way in this framework) unfold, wrap and interconnect, it could be observed that the topic of the compilation is very much about the virtual (in a Deleuzian/Bergsonian sense) of the addressed objects' relations and those material interfaces and interactions where they temporarily manifest and actualise. This might also be another way to approaching the last section of the book – rather than 'object lessons', as they are indicated, as well as experimental treatments in the form of short essays – as creative unwinding, recollection, application and fur-

ther extension of some of the dense entanglements of object encounters throughout this excellent compilation throughout of thoughtful, innovative and rigorous scholarship. A lesson that certainly can be learned from the editorial ambition and realisation of *The Object Reader* is that the fuller the recognition of inherent overlaps, tensions, contradictions and tendencies in the subject matter — in this case of discourses around the conception of objects, which seem to share a profound dissatisfaction with the extremes of materialism and idealism, conceived from the broadest spectrum of approaches — the richer the potentials for a critical engagement that might even tentatively broach the sublime as embedded in experience.



The Object Reader seems particularly timely with the recent revival of 'material culture' (continuing the established strand in, among other, cultural anthropology) and the continued interest in the social construction of technology, ANT, the discussions around the 'internet of things' etc., and especially the focused philosophical concerns with object ontology (such as the philosopher Graham Harman's 'object-oriented philosophy' and

lan Bogost's work in object-oriented-ontology ("ooo"); also topic of a recent symposium at the Georgia Institute of Technology in April 2010). In this context the Reader is exemplary for alluding to the significance of addressing the underlying philosophical frameworks on which the great variety of approaches to objects and objectifications are built, addressed and communicated. This exercise, however, is mainly left to the reader, and has not been taken up explicitly in the anthology, neither in the introduction nor the compilation of the various sections, which is driven by a distinction of terms such as object, thing, or what objects 'do' or we attribute to them such as agency, experience, images. However, as it is common practice in successful anthologies, the philosophically informed and interested reader will extrapolate and move through the Reader weaving a parallel track of intersections and tensions on a meta-level which provokes important questions that relate back to the very foundations of the implied methods and disciplinary practices. The editors have succeeded in the selection of excellent writing and thinking where this dimension is surfacing through, within, but also beyond the text and topic of some of the investigations. In this sense *The Object Reader* exceeds and offers much more than the title initially suggests. It also exceeds what is usually conceived as a Reader: it is far more than an assemblage of cognate ideas emerging from, in themselves unique, pearls originated in much larger research and thinking projects. The Reader as such is an example *par excellence* of its own topics (— there is no 'object' as such, hence the plural and the title possibly should be read "*The Objects Reader*" —), which it

attempts to straddle, seemingly impossible to contain, in all its assemblages and boundless relations. It almost appears as a Utopia at the same time as it provides hands-on reading into a spectrum of ideas on concrete objects, the making and activities on, with and to objects to the tentative dissolution of the paradigmatic subject-object divide.

The authors' intention, as expressed in the introduction, not to distinguish between animate and inanimate matter is rather ambitious and difficult to trace in the individual articles, and can only be read as a programmatic framework and vision wherein the juxtaposition of sometimes contradictory approaches create new networks of interconnection in order to open new perspectives that move from an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary adventure into the knowledge transfer of transdisciplinary practices. This would be welcome to be continued in future research and publications. *The Object Reader* sets a timely example into this direction.

Archeology of Violence

by Pierre Clastres

Jeanine Herman (transl.)

SEMIOTEXT(E), 1994, 335 pp.

ISBN: 978-1584350934

Reviewed by Allan Graubard

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I came across Pierre Clastres quite by chance several years ago at a large bookstore affiliated with an uptown university in New York. The title drew my interest and when I saw that the novelist Paul Auster provided the translation, I grew more intrigued. *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians* was a revelation of

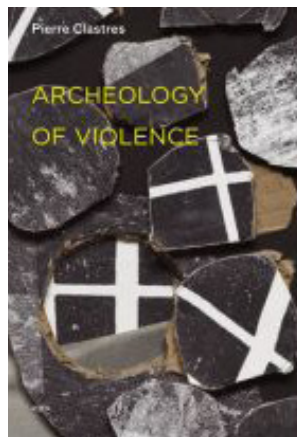
sorts that Clusters' previous book in English, *Society Against the State*, framed. Here was an anthropologist whose research had convinced him that much of his predecessors' works on primitive societies had missed the point, some by a large degree, some by a small degree. Simply, despite the ethnographic evidence, anthropology was not immune from the ideological distortions that Western culture commonly made when considering primitive societies. Knowing how they lived did not ensure that we understood why they lived as they did. And at the heart of that distortion was the power of the state; a monumental presence that we, if only for the sake of clarity, struggle to engage and disengage.

Archeology of Violence, now in a new edition, carries a similar potency if in more discrete, self-contained chapters; twelve, in fact, that focus on seminal issues dealing with the state and alterity, which Europe met in Native America.

By his insights, Clastres revives what alterity is and what it implies. His vigor in questioning has also served to instill a political context within anthropology precise to the culture and what we bring to it. From his docu-satire on tourism to his discussions of ethnocide, myths and rituals, primitive power and economy, the forms of submission so essential to states, the ethnocentrism of Marxist anthropology, the abstractions of structuralism, and war and the warrior in primitive societies, we are left with an evolving view that his sudden death in 1977, at the age of 43, cut off.

How much of this anthropology has taken to heart since then, and refined or refuted, is not

for me to say. I am no expert. But when reading Clastres I am compelled by his thought, the evidence he presents, and his capacity for a kind of interpretation that raises issues that strike home because of their immanence. Primary among them is our need for alterity, our expectation, however problematic, that it is still present, and the growing impoverishment of our world whose diverse reflections may very well congeal to a single covalent image mediated by commodity exchange and hierarchical structures of governance.



Is this the legacy that we will leave to future generations? For Clastres, as I believe for most of us, it seems so. And yet, because he uses science well, and knows the difference between qualities of logic, which theory all too often appeals to, and experience, which vitiates theory of its abstractions, his views open a glimpse on alterity that may yet prompt us to discern ways to nourish it as we can -- a vivacity that Clastres seeks even as his, and our time, constrains it. With the stunning image that flashed across our screens in May 2008 of a "last uncontacted tribe" in the Amazon jungle near the Peru-

vian border, in an aptly named "ethno-environmental protected area," there is little question that the road ahead is opaque.

Most important, I think, is Clastres' insistence that our failures of interpretation, when faced with primitive hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies, close the door on their worth as human organizations within the context of their needs and desires; based, as he often reiterates, not in subsistence but affluence, not in unity but differentiation, not in subservience but freedom (albeit a type of freedom that we find difficult to accept), and not in ignorance but with knowledge. Alienated individuality, as we know it in the West, is certainly not the point here.

War is also a central theme for Clastres. And why shouldn't it be? In primitive societies war is a global phenomenon, with very few exceptions. It is also a force that sustains it. His discussion thus not only turns the tables on anthropological views -- that war comes from scarcity, that war advances hunting from animals to men, that war feeds a warrior class who make war on others as much to secure their servitude as the servitude of those in their own society, that war results from an exchange gone bad, and, finally, that war roots in a failure to sustain the peace -- but also raises the issue in terms of his subject with a directness that would be exceptional were his descriptions, drawn from his data, not so evident. What war is in primitive societies is not what it is for modernity. For the former it is prestige that empowers, and war becomes possible only when it embodies the collective will. For the latter, power provokes war, with prestige a

concomitant. Here, the maintenance of power by war within and over the state and enemy states is a given. That war emboldens the modern state while preventing the establishment of a primitive state is something that Clastres also asks us to consider. That war is continuous, a kind of stasis that relates and differentiates them and us, is simply a statement of fact.

And while Clastres does not explicitly question these differences in the essays that comprise his “archeology,” there is an implicit contrast drawn between primitive and modern societies, including what we have gained and lost through our history of, and political organization for, war.

Published in books and journals mostly during his life – from *Les Temps Modernes* and *L'Homme* to *Encyclopaedia Universalis* – the chapters in this new edition chart junctures in the author’s research whose interweaving themes I have mentioned.

Do we understand primitive society with greater acuity because of Clastres? Is our interpretation of Clastres sufficient to provoke further or different unknowns for research? What can we use of him to clarify our dilemmas in this second decade of the 21st century? Are protected areas, the transfigurations of art, political imagination or the kind of adventures that reveal our limits, differences and commonalities enough to stave off an accelerating homogeneity? Surely the *Archaeology of Violence* will contribute to these, and other, debates.

Blog Theory. Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive

by Jodi Dean

Polity Press, 2010, 140 pp.

ISBN: 978-0745649702

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Jodi Dean’s new book has a great title: *Blog Theory* – but it’s especially the subtitle what the book is about: *Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Desire*. Less a detailed software analysis of politics of blog software as platforms of communication, and more a *Zizekian* take on the affect worlds of repetitious, circulatory desire in network culture, *Blog Theory* uses “blogging” to dig into fundamental political concepts such as crowds, action/passivity, reflexion as well as enjoyment. What *Blog Theory* is about is the culture of the digital everyday – also in the most banal sense – that makes up network culture through its actors and the binds between social actions; as such, Dean is more accurately after the critique of social network and participatory culture, than just blogging – and using “blogs” as a gateway to this wider field of “communicative capitalism.”

Using the psychoanalytic methodology, and drawing much from *Zizek*, Dean claims that much of the seeming activity of network culture from participation to discourse/response, action and activism is more or less either illusory, more about interpassivity, or actually contributing to the flow of capitalism. Participation is far from subversive.

In the most interesting devel-

opments of the book, Dean argues how the themes of creativity and participation are far from adversary to the circuits of capitalism, and at the core of its logic. This is analyzed as part of the decline of symbolic efficiency: there is no more a big Other that would offer a horizon for meanings, and hence is according to Dean an apt way to understand the circulatory space of the social network culture that in the midst of illusions of communications is actually more emblematically characterized by “crapflooding”. Dean also mobilizes other interesting conceptualizations such as displaced mediators, when arguing how this capitalism of communications is at its core unstable. A bit similarly as other theorists, such as Terranova, Dean argues that “communicative capitalism is a formation that relies on this imbalance, on the repeated suspension of narratives, patterns, identities, norms, etc.” (31).

Hence, again as a *Zizekian* twist, things are often their opposite, argues Dean; social networks are really not that social, or about friends; communication is less about actually communication than submitting data to the platforms and their databases (even if that political economic side could have been analyzed in more detail), and political activism is actually not that active. Dean paints a bleak picture of the complexity of capture which problematizes the traditional grounding of oppositional politics (democracy, truth, activism); and despite the bleak message, such notions as blogipelago are to me actually quite apt ways of understanding how the imaginary of community, or connectedness is underpinned by a much more fundamental fragmented nature

of internet culture, and a good counter-force to celebratory discourses of virtual communities.

Yet, when it comes down to analyzing politics, something more could have been developed. Is it only that media activism and network politics aims to develop “tool and apps” to “get their messages ‘out there’” (125) which constitutes the way politics works --- or might we need a more meticulous analysis of various projects creating alternative networks (first that come to mind are Diaspora and Thimbl) where the point is not only get the message out there but to get people “in” –the mere fact that such platforms do not contribute to the data mining economy of proprietary social networks? This is why it seems that differing notions of “affects” in network culture – such as for example Nigel Thrift’s notes on political organization and the pre-cognitive might capture more accurately the stakes in media activist practices that are as much about the fact of participation in itself important, than about the communicated, communicative goals.

Dean discusses a range of interesting theories and theorists, but some are tackled a bit too quickly, for example Kittler. Dean suggests that Kittler is suggesting a post human vision of digital media culture where computers dispense with humans, whereas for Dean computer networks actually demand the existence of human beings as part of their functioning – an apt point in itself, but actually Kittler is more complex than is criticized; the notion of the “so-called man” hints already towards the fact that “man” anyway, even before technical and digital media, was only “so-called”, and embedded in such networks of media, even

if non-technical. In the digital age, the notion itself is already suggesting elements to which Dean gives a political edge; that the networks feed on human energy and drive. Yet, what Kittler’s perspectives afford is what is missing from this book: what are the energies inherent in the other bits of such networks: for example software and the engineered mathematics from which our biopolitics of non-human media circuits consist of. In other words, the fact that our computers engage continuously in traffic that we do not see; you just need to have your Ethernet cable plugged in. The drive is not the only inhuman element in societies of technical media.

Dara Birnbaum: Technology/ Transformation: Wonder Woman

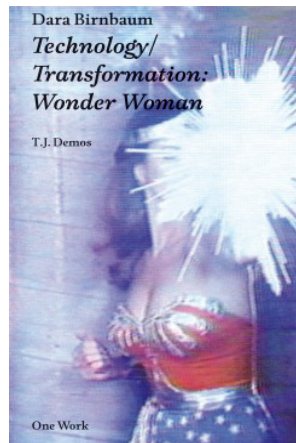
by T.J. Demos
Afterall Books, 2010, 112 pp.
ISBN: 978-1846380679

Reviewed by Jan Baetens,
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An art critic and theoretician with links to the *October* group, T.J. Demos proposes an interesting reflection on a perhaps lesser-known work that belongs to the pioneer years of video art: Dara Birnbaum’s *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978/1979), a 5 minute and 50 second colour video with stereo sound sampling key fragments of the short-lived television series adapted from the much older and much more successful superheroes comics *Wonder Woman* (the first female equivalent or counterpart of *Superman*).

Demos’ ambition in this exemplary book is twofold. First, he offers a historical contextualization of the work as well as of its amazing reception (Birnbaum’s video is now being read in a very different way than it was at its first release, and even at the moment of its first projection the consensus on its meaning was far from complete). Second, he tries to understand why *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* has been capable of producing such diverging and often incompatible interpretations. In both cases, Demos proves to be an excellent pedagogue, with an in-depth knowledge of the historical framework of the work and its intertext as well as with a profound understanding of the theoretical and cultural underpinnings of what it means to read and interpret this kind of work, which is deeply rooted in both popular culture and cutting edge critical theory.



At first sight, Birnbaum’s work is typical of what the first pioneers of video art were looking for. On the one side a critique of the dominant culture, by which one has to understand not only the technological critique of the dominant medium of these days, namely television, but also the ideological critique of the domi-

nant cultural messages spread by television and related popular media (such as of course film and comics). Television was considered by avant-garde artists and critical theorists as a medium that had betrayed the possibilities of social interaction, dialogue and critique enabled by the very technology: broadcasting is indeed not the only way of using television technology, and artists as well as social activists were looking for ways to “talk back” to the medium (David Joselit’s *Feedback* is a key publication in this regard). And the messages it carried to the public were characterized by a strong ideological subtext that was, among many other things, very woman-unfriendly.

On the other side an attempt to remediate these flaws, both by exploring video’s medium-specificity and by resisting to the ideological meanings of the dominant media. Video was not (only) used as a carrier for other meanings, it was an opportunity to explore, i.e. to invent a new visual language, which was used in its turn as a way of criticizing the belief that images, most importantly television images, were transparent windows on the world. Moreover, the new video art investigated also the (in this case sexist) ideology of the messages spread by popular and media culture, which were attacked and deconstructed through classic avant-garde mechanisms of sampling and collage.

T.J. Demos describes with great clarity the historical context of Birnbaum’s video, stressing very rightly the relationships between the beginnings of video art and the postmodern aesthetics of appropriation art as exemplified by Craig Owens work around the landmark *Pic-*

tures exhibition. He also underlines the strong input of *Screen*-based critical and feminist film theory, as illustrated by theoretically schooled filmmakers such as Mulvey and Wollen.

Yet contrary to other works of the same artistic and ideological movement, Birnbaum’s reworking of the *Wonder Woman* mythology and television series, has never had the same homogeneous and politically streamlined reception as that of most other works of her colleagues and competitors (one of the critical voices in this regard was that of Benjamin Buchloh). From the very beginning, there were doubts on the political “correctness” of this video, and today it is even seen by many spectators, including women, as defending a positive image of a strong, postfeminist woman.

For T.J. Demos, this persistent ambivalence is not a flaw of Birnbaum’s work, but one of its major strengths, and the fact that after three decades the *Wonder Woman* video is still producing such divergent interpretations should be the core question of any analysis of the work. Demos rejects, and I think he is right doing so, the easy hypothesis of the multiple audiences: if Birnbaum’s work engenders various readings, it is not only because the public is different, both synchronically and diachronically, but also and foremost, and this is a much more courageous hypothesis, because *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* takes very seriously the strength of popular culture and dominant media and does not discard automatically the positive aspects of our fascination with this kind of culture. Birnbaum’s work is a highbrow critique of lowbrow culture, but one that does not

take as its starting point the unbridgeable gap between both. How this complex relationship between distance and fascination works, is discussed in the last sections of Demos’ analysis in reference to notions such as experience, interaction and affect (and, not unsurprisingly, the names of Bourriaud and Masumi are quoted more than once).

The aim of the One World series, which focuses on specific works, is of course not to give definitive answers to very general questions, but T.J. Demos’ discussion of *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* is a valuable contribution to a better, i.e. a less *a priori* negative understanding of our long-standing oscillation between involvement and critical distance in contemporary mass culture.

Leo Villareal

Foreword by Susan Krane

Introduction by Steven B. Johnson

Texts by Sara Douglas Hart, Steven B. Johnson, JoAnne Northrup, Michael Rush, and Mark Van Proyen

Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010, 192 pp.

ISBN: 978-3775726566

Reviewed by Rob Harle

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This lavishly produced, large format, coffee table style book is essentially the catalogue that accompanies the major representative exhibition of Villareal’s art. This exhibition has been organised by the San Jose Museum of Art, where it is showing from August 2010 to January 2011. Then it moves on to the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno; Nerman Museum of Contem-

porary Art, Kansas; and Telfair Museum of Art, Georgia.

Leo Villareal, now 40 years of age, established a significant place in the art world during his 30s. He works exclusively with light. In the early years he used strobe lights and fluorescent tubes with various forms of controllers and rudimentary computer programs. He now works almost entirely with LEDs (light emitting diodes) controlled by sophisticated computer code, which he programs himself, and in some cases, collaborates with other computer programmers. His works vary from small gallery pieces to huge public installations comprising hundreds of thousands of LEDs! The effect of these pieces is simply stunning. As Rush notes, "Villareal conjures the heavens and offers us passage into the fabric of the universe in his increasingly immersive light sculptures." Walking through, *Threshold* or *Multiverse* "brings us as close as we can get to walking through the sky" (p. 37).

The book, as you would expect, is full of colour photos and plates. These show finished works *in situ*, shots of pieces under construction in Villareal's studio, and sequential shots of many of the pieces. These sequences are an attempt to give the reader an idea of just what the dynamic, changing nature of the light sculptures look like in the real. Unfortunately, even this strategy does not do justice to the ever-changing play of light that emanates from the actual sculptures. This is not a criticism of the book; it simply highlights the perennial problems of adequately representing immersive, conceptual, and interactive artwork in the static medium of print. As an example the *in situ* photograph of the

work, *Hive* looks like a rectangular panel with numerous square orange lights — quite dead. The sequence photos on the following page show just how dynamic and amazing this work is when in action so to speak (Plates 40 – 41).

After the introductory Forward by Susan Krane, there are five essays followed by Plates, Biography & Documentation, and Catalogue of the Exhibition.

1 – *Introduction: The Work of Art in the Age of Algorithms* Steven B. Johnson

2 – *Animating Light* JoAnne Northrup

3 – *Leo Villareal: Code as Medium* Michael Rush

4 – *The Cybernetic Construction of Social Space: Leo Villareal and the Disorient Projects at Black Rock City* [Burning Man Festival] Mark Van Proyen

5 – *Leo Villareal: Play of Brilliance* Sara Douglas Hart

JoAnne Northrup is chief curator of the San Jose Gallery, and her essay *Animating Light* is a detailed study of Villareal's career from his first studies at Yale through to his present highly regarded status as a dedicated, innovative, and important artist.

I particularly enjoyed Rush's illuminating essay, where he discusses the various manifestations of code behind the artworks, both that of Villareal's and other artists who work with light programmed to draw the viewers out of themselves into an ethereal world. Van Proyen, in his essay, discusses the Burning Man Festival and the impact that this has had on the development of Villareal's work. Villareal produces site-specific artworks each year at Burning Man, some

of these are then recycled into other works in various locations in America.

The essay *Play of Brilliance* discusses the relationship of art to architecture, and especially the way Villareal works with architects at the conceptual stage of building design. This results in art that is not just a decoration, in or on the building, but an integral part of dynamics of the architectural impact. A fantastic example of this collaboration is evident in *Sky*, Villareal's work as part of the building at Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, Florida (p. 58 Figure 40).

One aspect of Villareal's work that is not discussed by the contributors to this catalogue is the mystical quality, or at least, allusion to spiritual/astral worlds that many of Villareal's works evoke. I am not sure that these qualities are intended by Villareal, but they are there, nonetheless! *Threshold* a wall of ethereal coloured light is one good example of this (p. 36). Still, the work *Joshua Tree of Life* in the Californian desert, indicates that Villareal is familiar with the Kabbalah (concerning the mystical aspects of Judaism) — perhaps this is an aspect of his work that could be explored further.

This is a beautiful and interesting book, and I suggest would be a great addition to the libraries of all those interested in contemporary art and architecture, and especially artists that use computer code to control immersive and interactive sculpture.

The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction

by Arthur B. Evans, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., Joan

Gordon, Veronica Hollinger, Rob Latham, and Carol McGuirk (eds.)

Wesleyan University Press, 2010, 792 pp.

ISBN: 978-0819569547

Reviewed by Enzo Ferrara

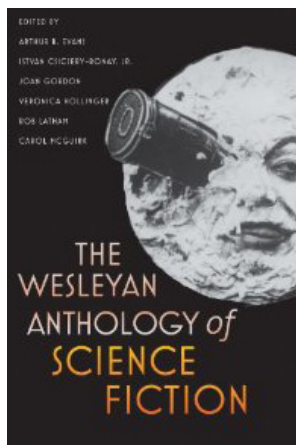
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Science Fiction Studies is an academic journal lively engaged with critical and cultural theories published three times a year at De Pauw University (Indiana). Its issues deal with what is considered the most popular selling genre of contemporary literature. Since the middle of the twentieth century, in fact, science fiction exerts an enormous influence on popular culture, dominating the art of cinema where star wars, intergalactic journeys, or unstoppable epidemics are frequent expedients to pose really big questions, e.g. about what it means to be human, the limits of knowledge, the role of science, and the chance of alternative societal development, opening up speculations and discussions that other forms of literature would have trouble in dealing with.

The editors of *Science Fiction Studies* conceived and developed this robust anthology (52 novels) with the ambition to exemplify a number of themes and styles characteristic of the genre and represent, if possible, the best and most teachable stories in the field. The aim, indeed, is explicitly pedagogic: the anthology is thought to “serve as a bridge not only to an appreciation of some of the best works of SF ever written but also to the world of SF scholarship” (p. xvii). Ancillary material consists of a critical bibliography listing many of the most important studies in the field and a teacher’s guide available online (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/wespress/sfanthologyguide>).

wesleyan.edu/wespress/sfanthologyguide).

The most important features of SF are extensively analysed in the introduction to properly address the reader, or the teacher, towards a fruitful exploitation of the collected texts. Remarks are, for example, on how varied the genre is, the chronic difficulties for SF to establish itself in a public space, the historical location of its origin – back to the Renaissance tales of great voyages, among enlightenment and romanticism with Mary Shelley’s modern Prometheus (“Frankenstein”, 1818) having a particular importance, emerging from the techno cataclysm of the Industrial Revolution?



A peculiar point worthy to be discussed is the so-called “SF Megatext”, i.e. the amount of narrative items and landscapes commonly shared by writers and readers of SF cumulatively gathered, one story after another, encompassing typical characters (renegade scientists, robot rebels, alien or artificial intelligence), environments (space-ships, space-time distortions, inhumane landscapes), events (nuclear and other apocalypses, galactic conflicts) and ethical concerns (science responsibili-

ties, encounter with otherness, shifting definitions of human condition). All of these regularly re-imagined elements form a unique inter-textual background that lies behind so many SF narrative purchasing the reader with confidential expectations about the plot accompanied by a rather jargonized language: “The more familiar readers are with the SF Megatext, the more readily they will find their way into and through new stories”, explain the curators.

No anthology can incorporate the richness of a genre, nevertheless the stories of the Wesleyan Anthology offer a comprehensive outlook on SF, ranging from its roots in the XIX century (“Rappaccini’s Daughter” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1844, p. 1) to the more recently published novels (“Exhalation” by Ted Chang, 2008, p. 742) that demonstrate the form’s continuing vitality. Two approaches, historical and thematic, are offered, thus a chronological perspective illustrates SF evolution along with intersection with its most frequently recurring topics, “alien encounter, apocalypse, dystopia, gender and sexuality, time travel, and virtual reality” (p. xv). The collection includes classics as Julius Verne and Herbert G. Wells, early precursors as Edward Morgan Forster and Edmond Hamilton, strengtheners of the genre as Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Sheckley, and Robert A. Heinlein, visionaries and post-modernists as Philip K. Dick and James G. Ballard, disenchanted writers as Stanislaw Lem and Bruce Sterling. Twelve authors are women, among them only Leslie F. Stone and Judith Merril are included in the list before 1960.

Appreciable in this set is the

recognition that even in the most technicistic version SF remains a humanist writing, readers, students and teachers can interact meaningfully with the texts to explore in diverse ways new means of talking and thinking about the world. With time, the genre has lost most of its original boundaries and has changed as a literary slipstream able to cross the previously conceived separations between SF, fantasy and mainstream fiction. Another noticeable judgment is that whatever they produce, utopian dreams or dystopian nightmares, SF writers renew the bourgeois notion of fiction as criticism of reality. "At its core, SF dramatizes the adventures and perils of change" editors explain, making clear that "although not always set in the future, SF's consistent emphasis on transformation through time demonstrates the increasing significance of the future to Western techno-cultural consciousness" (p. xii).

In the beginning, SF writers as Herbert G. Wells and E. M. Forster (see "The machine stops", 1909, p. 50) shared disillusion, their intention was to warn contemporary readers about the perils of a society entirely projected into future, careless of the present. During much of the XX century, speculative fiction served itself as an impulse of transformation, an exercise to imagine the future with novel possibilities of action. Actually, SF may seem having lost most of its fascination, as the modern society is mindless of the future, wholly concentrated on the utilitarian urges of a constant present. But, the capability to let issues rebound between present and future is probably the most intriguing competence of SF. Like ancient myth, it can implement rationality with im-

aginary consciousness forging new terms and means able to keep the will – at least – out of the recurrent impasse of mankind culture. Representations of the future like those gathered in this anthology are to be praised not much because of the positive or negative ideological elements they represent, rather as imaginative efforts to roll the human mind out of the precarious constraints that incessantly affect its evolution, since the dawn of time. This book is apt for everybody.

Transdiscourse 1: Mediated Environments

by Andrea Gleiniger, Angelika Hilbeck and Jill Scott (eds.)
Springer-Verlag, 2011, 184 pp.
ISBN: 978-3709102879

Reviewed by Rob Harle
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Transdiscourse 1: Mediated Environments is an important, illuminating and inspiring book. As the title suggests cross-disciplinary interaction is becoming an essential process if we are to have any chance of solving the huge problems facing humanity and the planet. "This book is the first in a series (four more to follow) and reflects both on transdisciplinary practice itself, and on social environments and urban space". (p. 5) "Transdiscourse is a term that embraces emergent meanings around the multifarious interpretations of the word "transdisciplinarity"". (p. 4)

The contributors highlight the impotence of mass media, television and the daily tabloids, in respect of bringing about positive, sustainable and equitable environmental change. Creative

and artistic discourse must be included in the scientific, financial and political decision making process. "Our main aims were to focus on the potentials of media, art and architecture to address both socio-political issues in an environment that includes scientific information, sustainability in relation to physical urban development and the raising of comparative awareness in society". (p. 9)

This book exemplifies the Leonardo project of encouraging the symbiotic relationship of science, art and technology. Most of the essays describe and critically discuss actual projects – created by artists in various parts of the world – where the three disciplines of art, technology and environmental science are combined. This combination results in outcomes that are creative, innovative, not financially/profit driven and bring practical ways to achieve sustainability to the general public.

There are twelve essays, either written by artists or scholars involved with the arts in some way. Each discuss quite different projects and approaches to using art as a medium of social activism. These are followed by contributor biographies and over thirty pages of colour plates (69 colour and 15 black & white images). There is no bibliography as each of the essays have their own Notes and Reference section. There is no general Index? The book is nicely produced but has a number of typographical errors which should not be present in a book of this quality.

The theme of art in the *service* of social activism and art *as* social activism is pursued throughout the book. The essay *Who Owns The Air? Emissions Trading and Contemporary Media Art* by An-

drea Polli is a particularly powerful example of this. It explores "...the idea of air for sale from an economic, political and cultural perspective. Contemporary art projects are discussed in the context of [Polli's] experiences while curating the online Aer exhibition for the Green Museum in California" (p. 75) There are a number of important insights brought to the reader's attention throughout this article, for instance, "The context in which an artwork is presented: for example as a high-priced product in a gallery or in a public space, affects the extent of its message and the effectiveness of the work in responding to a global crisis like climate change". (p. 85) Self-evident perhaps, but something that may not be realised by many artists whose work has environmental themes but unsustainable price tags!

The book is illuminating as it exposes many of the agendas of multi-national corporations that are hidden from public view, little known environmental problems that have huge significance globally, and because it exposes these deceptions in a clear, factual manner.

The book is important because it suggests perhaps the only way we are going to solve the global problems of environmental destruction and climate change. It does so in a balanced, carefully considered non-hysterical way. Most essays introduce the problem, describe the approach taken by the various artists to help solve, or at least bring the severity of the problem to the public, and then discuss the success of the project and future possibilities of extending the work.

The book is inspiring because it shows the varied ways artists

have approached such issues as environmental sustainability, climate change, the problems of waste disposal/usage and the disparity of wealth distribution. The success of their projects offers encouragement, and a modus operandi to other artists to further develop the transdiscourse concept.

It is my personal opinion that art should serve a dual purpose: firstly, as a work of art in its own right, and secondly, as a vehicle or process for bringing about social change and awareness. So called art that has forsaken all the qualities of art may be worthwhile but it has no business calling itself art. The works described in this book all seem to have embraced this dual purpose, and as such will probably endure longer in the viewer or participant's psyche and will be all the more powerful for this.

On Fact and Fraud: Cautionary Tales from the Front Lines of Science

by David Goodstein

Princeton University Press,
2010, 168 pp.

ISBN: 978-0691139661

*Reviewed by Jonathan Zilberg,
University of Plymouth*

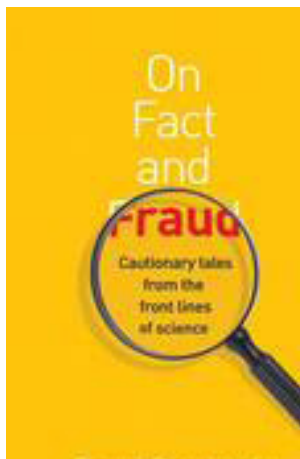
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On Fact and Fraud is a classic example of an exercise in clarity and brevity. It is the first book on the subject of the legal definition of fraud in science and codes of conduct for researchers. Richly contextualized with fascinating case studies and written by an intimate insider, a physicist of repute and senior university administrator, it is a study in caution and good measure. In addition,

it is of historical import for science writing considering both its elegance and the high profile cases of fraud and alleged fraud covered therein. Indeed, the way in which Goodstein makes complex issues in advanced science accessible and the way in which he deals sensitively with such compromising and tragic circumstances, is a testament to the author's skill as a writer and his level headed compassion. All in all, for undergraduates about to embark on a career in science it makes for indispensable reading.

What will be surprising to the lay reader is how it could be possible to read so effortlessly about what would, otherwise, be overly complicated topics to even consider engaging. Take for instance, the elegant way in which Goodstein revisits the famous posthumous case against Robert Andrew Millikan (the author of *The Electron* (1917) and first Nobel laureate) for data manipulation in determining the charge of the ion – and for anti-Semitism and male chauvinism in addition. Goodstein settles these accusations deftly for the record. In a masterfully illustrated chapter reproducing the original pages from Milikan's laboratory notes testing Stokes' Law, he concludes that a careful contextual reading of the data and publication at issue "greatly diminishes their apparent significance as evidence of misconduct" (p. 47). From allegations of fraud in the discovery of the charge of the ion to the same issue as it concerned the discovery of the AIDS virus, one finds oneself so quickly at the end of the book that one wonders how one could have read about such high science so easily and with so much pleasure. Surely the answer lies in its presentation. There is not an

unnecessary word or comma. In essence, then, for science writers above all, this book presents the ultimate Strunk and White experience [1]. And again, no less important is the ethical value of the text as an exercise in compassion and judicious good measure.



The first chapter sets the stage through describing the nature of the problem of fraud as it drew in Goodstein in practical terms. He begins by deftly outlining the progression of a scientist's career to introduce the reader to the stresses and strains and expectation that have to be met in order to enter into and succeed in the highly competitive world of research and publication. Then come the case studies, and there the reader will learn more about particle physics, molecular biology, immunology, virology and the likes than one could have imagined possible. And while that in itself is a fascinating and unexpected experience adding enormous value to the book, this is, above all, a first hand account of how the Caltech policy on research misconduct came about. On the latter issue alone, the book constitutes an indispensable classic on creating policy and on scientific fraud or "ffp" with

"'fabrication' being defined as making up results, 'falsification' as changing and omitting data or results, and 'plagiarism' as the appropriation of ideas without credit" (p. 67).

In the opening discussion on the nature of science, Goodstein revisits Bacon and Popper, falsifiability, and theory building. He describes the reality versus ideal nature of scientific research in generating new hypotheses and the authority and reward structure within which scientific advances and careers are made. More specifically, in the course of the subsequent discussion in each chapter, he underscores the importance of protocols and guidelines for pursuing charges of fraud, especially in universities, and of the importance of not rushing to judgment. As noted above, the study itself is an outcome of the creation of the Caltech campus policy governing the process of investigating and handling fraud. Written by the author in 1988, the policy was put to the test soon after he had completed the final draft [2]. Appointed as a member of the ethics committee dealing with the cases against Caltech immunologists Vipin Kumar and James L. Urban, Goodstein provides us with an inside view of the problem and how it was dealt with on campus. These cases were of particular importance to Caltech's reputation having taken place in the famed laboratory of Leroy E. Hood, the university's most prestigious biologist.

In Kumar's case, a figure had been faked in the *Journal of Experimental Medicine*. In Urban's case, fake data had been submitted in a manuscript to the journal *Cell* and then replaced with the actual data by the time of publication. As

Goodstein relates, procedure was duly followed and censure taken [3]. While Kumar went on to re-establish his career and become the head of the Laboratory of Autoimmunity at the Torrey Pines Institute of Molecular Studies, Urban's case was different. Disgraced, he disappeared.

A similar tragedy of a ruined career happened in the astounding case of John Hendrick (Jan Hendrik) Schön, a brilliant young experimental physicist working in carbon based semi-conductor research who published a paper every eight days between 1998 and 2001. Shortly after being offered the post of the Director of the Max Planck Institute, his paper, "Field Effect Modulation of the Conductance of Single Molecules," for *Science* and a similar article to *Nature* were found to be fraudulent [4]. The ensuing investigation showed that there was no raw data and there were no original samples. The problem had only been noticed by Lydia Sohn and Paul McEuen as the data was "too perfect," the same curves were given for different experiments and the background noise on the curves was identical. These two instances turned out to be only the tip of Schön's iceberg. As Goodstein duly notes, the "ethical fulcrum" of peer review works well at "separating real science from nonsense" but not as well for detecting fraud (p. 17). Schön, the golden boy and almost God-like figure of condensed matter physics, was fired from Bell Labs, and his doctorate from the University of Konstanz and a number of articles revoked [5].

The case studies serve to illustrate a wide range of fraud, real and alleged. Goodstein presents each in the most pre-

cisely measured and yet interesting way. Despite the detail, scientific, procedural and ethical, and presented within the larger social context of each scientific community, he is able to consistently hold one's attention. In doing so, he reveals fascinating aspects of how experimental science differs depending on the field and how this impinges on fraud in terms of reproducibility as noted above. In another case he explores, in the field of super-conductivity and field-effect doping, it is difficult to reproduce results. In fact, this instance of fraud had only been noticed because of duplicated results. In contrast, take the case of Victor Nimov then of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Nimov fabricated the evidence for the existence of element 118. Because he was working in a field in which precise reproducibility is expected, his case was easier to detect.

Similarly, in the case of the "too good to be true" discovery of high temperature superconductivity, reproducibility was expected and was not forthcoming. In addition, it was mercilessly and quickly publicly demolished by Lewis, Barnes and Koonin of Caltech as theoretically impossible and, thus, pronounced "effectively dead" early in the scandal. Yet, perhaps out of deference to his eminent and good friend Franco Scaramuzzi, Goodstein goes to great length to show how a scientist of such repute could have found himself in a deeply compromised situation and, furthermore, concludes that in his opinion, the verdict is not yet final on cold fusion. He also shows how Scaramuzzi's laboratory continues to struggle to maintain the research agenda and, in so doing, contributes to technical advances in the field

driven on by the occasional inexplicable bursts of energy. It does not, however, come to the same thing as the all important vindication of the virologists Mikulas Popovic and Thereza Imanishi-Kiri respectively in David Gallo's and David Baltimore's laboratories, the principals having in the process also experienced the full, if partial and temporary effects of the professional consequences of allegation of fraud by the mere fact of hierarchical responsibility.

Thereza Imanishi-Kiri was accused by a post-doctoral student of falsifying published immunological data based on the student's inability to reproduce the results. And even though David Baltimore, the head of the laboratory and then President of Rockefeller University, was never charged or even directly involved, he lost his job there. Subsequently, after the Department of Health and Human Services overturned the previous government verdicts against Gallo (and Popovic) as "meaningless," he was appointed President of Caltech. Similarly, while Imanishi-Kiri's tenure was upheld and she was barred from Federal funding for a decade, she was duly tenured at Tufts. Rather differently to the Baltimore-Imanishi-Kiri case, in the case of the Gallo controversy, the issue devolved on whether the laboratory had claimed credit for discovering the AIDS virus and whether Popovic had misappropriated cell cultures from the Pasteur Institute in Paris — in addition to allegations of having misrepresented and falsified both the data and methodology. Though Gallo was not included in the Nobel Prize, the careers of each of these scientists were, in the end, not otherwise adversely affected.

There is a history of tragedy in these cases, considering the arguably unnecessary trauma involved. In the cases of Schön and Nimov, they are exquisitely farcical but exceedingly rare. In Urban's case, claiming that one is sure what the results for an experiment would have been, and despite in this case these turning out to be correct, is hardly an excuse for submitting a fraudulent scientific paper to a prestigious journal. Interestingly enough, Urban would have gotten away with it had the material not surfaced during the Kumar investigation. While that case had minor consequences for the field at large, the consequences of the cold fusion saga were more long lasting. Stanley Pons and Martin Fleishmann who announced the discovery of cold fusion became "scientific outcasts" in a "pariah field" of "pathological science" and most memorable of all of Goodstein's pithy choice of words — a "sincere delusion" — though he is at pains to illustrate that the issue here was not a matter of fraud but bad science. In thus addressing such entirely different allegations and cases of real and alleged fraud and their consequences, Goodstein provides us with an unexpectedly rich insight into a wide range of experimental science that could probably not have been so effectively addressed had it not been for the unifying theme. Hence, we learn as much about science here as fraud and the proven lack or mitigation thereof.

To end, this text should be required reading for all young scientists. The case studies will be of particular value to historians of science, science writers, and journalists in terms of the need to be circumspect in making judgments on areas outside of their expertise, par-

ticularly for instance in the best known case of Robert Milliken. It is in all this fascinating how Goodstein is able to write about complicated and highly distasteful matters with such simplicity and grace. The consequence is that one comes away with an enormous respect for the integrity and common sense of the author and of what goes into creating such policies and applying them. The lessons provided herein for future scientists themselves are these: no matter the professional pressure one is under, no matter the expectations of reproducibility in one's field, even the suspicion of "fraud" will grievously damage you, your superiors and your institution – unless of-course you are a social scientist who doesn't believe in the distinction between fact and fiction.

Notes

[1] See Strunk, Jr., William; E.B. White *The Elements of Style* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999 [1918]. Also see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Elements_of_Style where Geoffrey K Pullum is quoted as referring to it as *the book that ate America's brain*.

[2] The Caltech policy on the procedures for dealing with potential ethics violations, and what constitutes fraud is included at the end of the book as an appendix. It will be as useful for administrators as it will be for practicing and future scientists. Also see, Eleanor G. Shore, "Effectiveness of research guidelines in prevention of scientific misconduct", *Science and Engineering Ethics* Volume 1, Number 4, see <http://www.springerlink.com/content/4v2110n7m47mjw72/>.

[3] In Caroline Whitbeck's all important article "Truth and Trustworthiness in Research" published in the Online Ethics Center for Engineering and Research, October 1995, which covers much of the same material in Goodstein's book, she questions the decision that Urban was judged not to have committed fraud but "serious misconduct". The moral basis for this was that Urban did not intend to deceive the editors in that he sincerely believed he would be able to

reproduce the invented results but as she explores, as I read it, the decision was legalistically debatable because the editor was in fact deceived and that in any event, the deception certainly did constitute a form of reckless endangerment. See: <http://www.onlineethics.org/Topics/RespResearch/ResEssays/cw2.aspx>.

[4] For a scintillatingly detailed account, see the BBC transcript, "The Dark Secret of Hendrik Schön" narrated by Jack Fortune at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/horizon/2004/hendrikshontrans.shtml>. Also see, E. S. Reich, *Plastic Fantastic: How the Biggest Fraud in Physics Shook the Scientific World*, New York: Macmillan 2009. For similar media scandals as regards physics and post-modernism respectively, see the Bogdanoff and Sokal affairs, particularly Stephen Hilgartner's "The Sokal Affair in Context". *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 22 (4): 506–522, Autumn 1997.

[5] For the Bell report and the list of journal retractions, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sch%C3%B6n_scandal.

Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents

by Wu Hung, with the assistance of Peggy Wang
The Museum of Modern Art,
New York

Reviewed by Ellen Pearlman
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Contemporary Chinese art skyrocketed into Western awareness during the mid-2000s primarily through its high auction prices and ubiquitous images of Chairman Mao. For knowledgeable Occidentals who want to probe the origins of modern Chinese art history, criticism and theory from primary Chinese sources in English the resources have been scarce. Wu Hung, the University of Chicago's Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professor

in Art History and East Asian Languages and Civilization, the Director of the Center for the Art of East Asia, and a consulting curator at the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, along with Peggy Wang has done an incredible service to the field of English language contemporary art history and translation publishing this fact filled book documenting the rise of Chinese art post Cultural Revolution. He has astutely divided it into different critical time periods from the mid-1970's until 2006. He has also regrettably managed to drag along the same old prejudice from China with a near total exclusion of women from this (his)story. Since Hung has a reputation as being "female friendly," this exclusion is all the more galling. Though he is astute enough to note the patriarchal and sexist tradition in China as a veritable footnote, he doesn't do much to dispel it.

Post Cultural Revolution

In 1966 the Cultural Revolution's attacked the "four olds", i.e., ideas, culture, customs and habits. When the Gang of Four including Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, were removed on October 6, 1976, this opened the way for contemporary art. It is inconceivable for most Westerners to understand just how deep the attack and annihilation on culture was. Exhibitions as we understand them, and viewing of Western Art were not in the equation. Art teachers who had managed to survive the putsch mainly taught methods relating the rules and regulations of formalist aesthetics.

As recent as 1984, China was still afraid of western liberal bourgeoisie imports. However, Robert Rauschenberg's 1985 exhibit at the National Gallery

(now NAMOC, the National Art Museum of China) had a huge impact on Beijing theorists. A young Fei Dawei, now a major curator commented, "How limited our knowledge is regarding Western concepts and ideas."

The 1985 "New Wave" introduced current blue chip artists and critics like Huang Yong Ping (Xiamen Dada movement), Zhang Peili (the "father" of Chinese video art), and Li Xianting (the "godfather" of the Chinese Avant Garde.) Thinking shifted from mass collectivity to individual creativity. Zhang Peili predicted art would critically challenge the Chinese establishment and, "An age of confrontation, rebellion and reconstruction was immanent." Huang Yong Ping, one of the first to mention John Cage and chance operations wrote, "Collecting art in China doesn't exist and this may be a good thing."

It is revealing to read statements like "China lacks the social and cultural background for modern art. Modern art evolved after the Western humanism established a solid social foundation and after the concept of the subjective consciousness had emerged in modern philosophy... Chinese art emphasizes poetic grace, the expression of the subjective consciousness, and the drawing process and has been influenced by the Soviet Union." This is something most astute non-Chinese observed early on, but to realize the Chinese concurred is astounding.

Shu Qun defined the difficulties China faced were from two sides, "spiritual poverty" and "material poverty." Peng De argued contemporary culture was an influence from abroad and initiated from outside. He observed on the surface the 1985 New

Wave artistic movement was voluntary, but "anthropologists point out that when one particularly isolated society encounters another strong and more technologically advanced society the two will form a relationship of subordination and domination, with the subordinate force adapting to the dominate one." Yi Ying added, "What we copied from Western Modernism in the '85 New Wave consisted mainly of its early styles which had already become academic relics... We are going through a process which Western developed nations have already gone through." And in 1986, now blue chip artist Wenda Gu stated "One borrows Western modernism to attack (Chinese) tradition and now one needs to use Chinese tradition to strike against Western modernism."

1989 China Avant Garde

The China Avant Garde Exhibition at The National Gallery evolved into a veritable who's who of the contemporary Chinese art world. Li Xianting wrote, "After being constrained for so long a new mentality yearned to be set free," saying real avant garde art (nudity and performance) was not allowed, even though one had to "confront society" with a sense of "freshness and provocation." He referred to Xiao Lu and Tang Song's "gun-shot incident" with their piece "Dialogue" that caused the entire exhibit to be shut down by the police when Xiao Lu whipped out a gun and shot her installation. This is where Wu Hong had a chance to right an egregious wrong; he could have included Xiao Lu's statements about her exclusion from that point on by every male critic in Chinese art history, and the reasons for it. These statements were freely distributed by Berenice Angre-

my and Huang Rui's DIAF and Thinking Hands organization in the mid 2000's, but Hung did not, thereby excluding Xiao Lu's seminal actions once again from the annals of "official" (his)tory.

Globalization and a Domestic Turn

After the crackdown of Tiananmen Square Chinese art entered no-man's land of cynicism and darkness birthing the styles of Cynical Realism and Political Pop. In 1992 the "new history group" learned when performance art got political it got shut down. To "objectify concepts into external social activities," East Village artists Zhang Huan made masochistic art and Ma Luming made meals in the buff. Particularly insightful is China's reaction to artist Zhang Dalai who sprayed guerilla-style graffiti as opposed to propaganda – they just didn't get it. While artists during the 1980s willingly assumed the burden of regional history and social responsibility artists of the 1990s sought to reaffirm their self-identity in a global sphere.

There is an insightful explanation of new photography that began with the April Photographic Society in 1974, and gave way to individualistic social documentation with the 1990 artists of the East Village. Video art did not reach China until 1990 when a Professor from Hamburg Institute of Art showed it to students in Hangzhou's Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts. In 1991 Zhang Peili, considered the "godfather" of the form exhibited "Document on Hygiene No. 3," the first piece of video art by a Chinese artist inside China.

After the crackdown of 1989 many Chinese emigrated abroad, which reshaped their

arts practice to transcend national boundaries. Ho Hanru, another great curator residing in France wrote, "Chinese artists work with the identification, non-identification and re-identification." April 1990 saw the first exhibit at CAFA, the Central Academy of Fine Arts of "World of Women Artists," which I wish Hung had expounded on, instead of glossing over.

In the late 1990's through early 2000's the use of animal corpses and the artists' own body are discussed. Zhu Yu had skin surgically removed from his stomach and sewn onto a dead pig. The dealings he went through with authorities are meticulously archived, becoming a record of his social interactions. Critics said he turned art into "hospital surgery rooms and morgue." By 2001 the Ministry of Culture was issuing hysterical bulletins arguing it was time to get back to "Marxist Aesthetics." Some even denounced the pieces as Western Colonialism injected onto Chinese art.

In 1992 China recognized the need for an art market based on global standards, hosting and promoting Biennale Art Fairs. The third Shanghai Biennial brought Chinese art from being shown as "apartment art" or "embassy art" and launched the rise of the first independent not for profit spaces. The artist Zhuan Hung noted the abysmal role of the critic in China in developing the art market. He aptly describes them as either rambling philosophers or those who ply a secret exchange of favors between friends open to the highest bidder, a problem that is ongoing today.

The book showcases artist writings, such as the letter of Fei Daiwei to Li Xianting, ("Does

a Culture in Exile Necessarily Wither?") Xu Bing, a MacArthur Fellow discusses words and language (On Words), and Wenda Gu explains his United Nations Arts project. There are also essays by Cai Guo-Qiang whose retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum was well received a few years ago, and Ai Wei Wei often referred to as the Andy Warhol of China. Wei slyly wrote, "In a rational social system artists should play the part of a virus, like a computer virus. A small project has the ability to effect definite change in a rational society, and the chaos that results form such a change is the process of making a rational world more alert. That is an important function of art today otherwise if art were merely reflecting public morals then its outcome would be far inferior to scientific activity."

2000 And Beyond

By 2000 domestic and international writings grew strident and polemical. Ai Wei Wei and Feng Boyi's seminal 2000 "Fuck Off" exhibit in Shanghai criticized cultural power, art institutions, and art trends between East and West, exoticism, postmodernism and post colonialism. Because this period produced more documents in English, this section supplements the many available materials and books.

Hung included Brita Erickson's essay "The Reception In the West of Experimental Mainland Chinese Art of the 1990s." She mentions the 1998 Frauen Museum in Bonn show of 24 Chinese women, mounted as a rebuttal to an exhibit two years previously of 31 Chinese artists that contained no women whatsoever. Finally, at the back of the book a chronological section of 1976-2006 defines who did what,

where, and how over a span of thirty years.

China itself is now setting the record straight. This past December, the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) mounted Yao Daimei's enormously important show of over 100 works, "Woman Art in China (1920-2010) Self-Image: Interpreting a Perspective of Chinese Woman Art in the 20th Century."

Air

by John Knechtel (ed.)
The MIT Press, 2010, 320 pp.
ISBN: 978-0262014663

*Reviewed by Jan Baetens,
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A new volume in the Alphabet City Media Books, *Air* is a perfect illustration of what this series is all about: a multilayered, transmedial, both critical and creative approach of a typically postmodern phenomenon that cuts across the various aspects of contemporary daily life (previous issues feature themes such as "trash" and "food"). As says one of the blurbs on the series' website: "This book is like having an art gallery in your hands" (Booklist).

The Booklist's description is correct, but not completely. It is certainly true that the series attempts at presenting utterly elegant and extremely well-crafted books, which have everything to seduce the reader: easy to hold and to keep, for instance in one's pocket, easy to read yet not superficial, pleasant to look at thanks to its ideal blend of visual and textual contributions, and last but not least instructive and useful. The basic idea is to tackle a "thing" (in this case

“air”) and to turn it into an “object”, that is a thing that has lost its transparency and self-evidence and that, by resisting automatic understanding, generates endless wonder (and also a strange mix of awe and fear). The most interesting aspect of the series’ approach is certainly the great diversity of viewpoints, often surprising but always appealing, on a subject whose importance we are not always aware of. In the case of this collection on air, one finds inevitably a number of essays on pollution and ecology (and it is a pleasure to give here great praise to the one by Bhawani Vankataraman on the earth’s atmosphere and its changes through time) or clouds, winds, smell, pneumatic tubes and so on, but the reader may be more directly attracted by less expected subjects such as dust sculptures, the history and signification of the whispered letter “h” or a new form of sidewalk sheds.



AIR

EDITED BY JOHN KNECHTEL

It is a delight to stroll to this book while being led by the editor from one viewpoint, style, insight, history, and discipline to another, to dwell upon the well-chosen images, and above all to learn a lot on a subject that appears much richer and infinitely more diverse than what

one could have imagined before reading this book. Nevertheless, the reader may also feel some frustration, not because the volume does not offer her or him enough information, new ideas, wonderful illustrations and new forms of representation, but because of a certain shallowness in the overall organization and structure of the book. Of course, *Air* is not chaotic or badly structured, but it has a certain playfulness and quickness that makes the reader permanently long for more.

For instance, one is looking all the time for the reason why this or that topic or approach has been selected and, corollarily, why this or that other topic or approach has not been kept for publication. It is not a problem *per se* that many possible aspects and disciplinary views are absent, but one would have preferred a clearer editorial statement on the way the book has been composed. To a certain extent, the same remark applies to the various contributions, which are most of the times very well written and, I repeat, very enjoyable to read, but even in the best essays one may regret the absence of more detailed references. Names of authors and artworks appear and disappear without bibliographical references, and these absences diminish clearly the book’s use-value. A well-organized bibliography and an index are missing, not just because they are not there but because the reader is really having the impression that he or she cannot fully benefit from all the wealth of information that is being offered. It might have been helpful to explain also why some authors and works are not being discussed (Stieglitz’s *Equivalents* or Damish’s *Theory of the Cloud*, for example, two classics

in the field) Moreover, the link between the historical or critical contributions, on the one hand, and the creative ones, on the other hand, is far from perfect. The literary contributions are rather weak, and one does not always understand very well why they are here in this book (inevitably, the reader eventually thinks that they are simply there for funding reasons...).

In short, *Air* is both exciting and disappointing. It is both not enough of this and too much of that, but the biggest problem of this book, and of the many other volumes that are nowadays being made in the same spirit, is their reluctance to all forms of totalizing view. I can, therefore, only hope that further volumes of this series will remedy this issue.

Perpetual Inventory

by Rosalind E. Krauss
The MIT Press, 2010, 336 pp.
ISBN: 978-0262013802

Reviewed by Amy Ione, *The Diatropé Institute*
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Perpetual Inventory by Rosalind E. Krauss is a collection of essays that span three decades. The title comes from Krauss’ view that her job as an art critic requires that she take a perpetual inventory of what artists make and do, constantly revising her ideas about the direction and significance of the work she writes about. I am not sure the book successfully showcases this effort, however.

In her introduction, for example, Krauss writes that this anthology considers what she calls the post-medium condi-

tion. She says that while Jean-François Lyotard argued that the *postmodern* condition is characterized by the end of a 'master narrative,' Krauss sees in the *post-medium* condition of contemporary art a similar coherence. She writes:

"For the most part, *Perpetual Inventory* charts my conviction as a critic that the abandonment of the specific medium spells the death of serious art...the artists I observed persevering in the service of a medium had abandoned traditional supports in favor of strange new apparatuses...calling such things 'technical supports' would, I thought, allay the confusion of the use of 'medium,' too ideologically associated as the term is with outmoded tradition."

In other words, since contemporary artists are often not medium specific, looking at art practices requires a broader framework than the traditional medium specific approaches of painting, sculpture, or whatever. As she puts in her essay "A View of Modernism," first published in *Artforum* 11 (September 1972):

"[M]oderist critics appear to have cut themselves off from what is most energetic and felt in contemporary sculpture. Their inability to deal with Richard Serra, or Michael Heizer, or Keith Sonnier, or Robert Smithson is anomalous in the extreme. Further, these critics have continually balked at admitting film to the status of a "modernist art." Given the quality of recent advanced film, this position is simply no longer admissible even for critics who confine themselves to dealing just with painting and sculpture, for film as a medium has become increasingly important to sculptors themselves; Serra and

Sonnier are only the most obvious examples. (p. 126)

As I read *Perpetual Inventory* I found the recent essays significantly more enticing than many of the older ones, particularly her discussions of William Kentridge's exploration of cinematic animation and Christian Marclay's "Lip Sync: Marclay Not Nauman." The "Lip Sync" article, first published in *October*, no. 116 (Spring 2006) focuses on Christian Marclay's *Video Quartet* (2002), an extraordinary work comprised of a sampling of more than 700 Hollywood films that draw the viewer in immediately. To my mind, lip-syncing isn't really the focus of Marclay's work, which edits segments of films together using movements and sound to create tantalizing connections. Krauss' point is that Marclay's efforts build on a history. How earlier filmmakers tried to sync sound with lip movement is well known. More recently, Bruce Nauman's classic piece *Lip Sync* (1969) alluded to this technological development in terms of video. Nauman held the camera upside down and focused in a close-up of his mouth with his lips and tongue articulating the words "lip sync" as the audio track shifts in and out of sync with the video. Marclay's statement, by way of contrast, offers more of an insinuation of synchronization than an articulation of it, developed through using hands on keyboards, men and women singing, dancing and noises to create the visual and sonic collage that unfolds on four projection-screens.

Krauss suggests that Marclay's sense of synchronicity, which we feel more than perceive, is an expression of how an artist today blends tools and styles. Her larger point is that contem-

porary artworks are layered mechanisms that show a unitary organization of an unfolding narrative. Those who know this work would understand that it feels like a unified piece despite the layers of its complexity. As is often the case with Krauss' essays, I'm not sure that her commentary on *Video Quartet* will translate as effectively to a reader who is unfamiliar with the artwork.

The *Lip Sync* essay also shows that Krauss, too, has a talent for layering. For instance, this article references the use of grids in modernist painting, Nauman's *Lip Sync*, how Nauman both paid homage to the challenge early filmmakers faced in their efforts to synchronize sound with silent films and more. Reading through the article I couldn't help but think how fascinating synchronization is. Cable television today offers a good case in point, for the problem of synchronization periodically comes up due to the large amounts of video signal processing.

"The Rock": William Kentridge's *Drawings For Projection*," originally published in *October*, no. 92 (Spring 2000) is the most compelling essay in the book. William Kentridge is a South African artist whose animated films pursue the problems of apartheid. It is in this essay that Krauss comes closest to articulating the idea of technical support because Kentridge's work mixes film, drawing, erasure and highly charged ideas. Indeed, Kentridge is a good example of how the narrative of a product is not simply what a work is "about." With Kentridge, Krauss shows how an artist speaks through the activity of creation and, in doing so, uses a language of a different quality than the narrative associated with the work. Ken-

tridge's term for this is *fortuna*, a word that is intended to explain how the technical aspects of his process open onto the conceptual. For him, *fortuna* is like improvisation. He compares it to speaking, pointing out that it is through the very activity of speaking, generated by the act itself, that new connections and thoughts emerge. Because Krauss' definition of technical support is broad enough to include *fortuna*, Kentridge is a particularly good showcase for her ideas. "Stalking the drawing," is another Kentridge device Kraus mentions to explain how the combination of drawing and seeing, making and assessing where one is, stimulates the creative process.

Regardless of whether Kentridge's drawings for projection come together in a series that examines apartheid, capitalist greed, eros, memory, or whatever, his process is not based on the theme of the series. The works result through the dictates of his creative practice of drawing a bit, shooting the drawing, and then drawing and shooting some more. The activity involves walking between the camera and the drawing and includes erasure as well as the ongoing progression to the work's conclusion. Krauss also does a nice job of relating Kentridge's technique to the ideas of Eisenstein, Deleuze, Cavell and others.

Aside from these two extraordinary essays, the book struck me as choppy. Although I am a big fan of Sol LeWitt's work, and he is one artist that comes up frequently in Krauss' writing, I thought Krauss' commentary on him seemed dated. With Kentridge's work and Marclay's *Vidéo Quartet*, by contrast, I felt that reading her critique enhanced

my understanding of these artists. Debating how to convey my overall response to the volume, I am drawn to a comment in the book itself. Krauss thanks her editor at MIT, Roger Conover, for his help and mentions that she is grateful he supported the project despite the "publishing world's disapproval of anthologies" (p. x). Reading this volume I better understand why this sentiment exists. To be sure, Krauss has considerably influenced contemporary art history, and her writings (particularly essays for *ArtForum* and *October*) highlight her intellectual gifts and legacy. Yet, throughout the book Krauss offers minimalist explanations as to where the essays fit within the larger body of art criticism. Thus, although no doubt unintentional, there seemed to be a certain conceit in this assemblage. While I can appreciate and understand why a scholar wants her voice to be heard, the contributions written specifically for this book are too sketchy. The introduction, for example, is only two half pages and two full ones. I ended up thinking that having an outside editor for the volume would have helped place her work critically within the larger scheme of things through broadly engaging with it. This feeling that an outsider commentator could have added some breadth to the discussion was particularly acute with the essays that go back to the 1970s.

I also wish more care had been given to the little touches that make a book reach out and help the reader place the details in relation to one another. Ironically, even though I could easily see instructors including some of these essays in course readers to help students get a feel for discrete topics and specific artists, I also felt that an educator would end up using some of the

oversights within the presentation to aid students in thinking about how writing most effectively communicates with an audience. It strikes me as odd that the poor editing job has a positive benefit as a classroom tool for looking at how an author can better organize a paper. One example, the illustrations are not well integrated into the article. Rather than including in-text references that would lead the reader to an image, the pictorial content simply co-exists with the articles. I think it makes more sense to walk the reader over to the image so that she realizes that there is a reference point for the textual elaboration, particularly when the image is not on the same page or across from the text.

All in all, the range of this volume demonstrates that Rosalind Krauss has a rich and fertile mind. Some of the longer essays are thought provoking and well worth reading. Some of the shorter essays bring to mind how little one can say in a brief critique. Taken as a whole, *Perceptual Inventory* highlights many of Krauss' contributions to art criticism and will no doubt enhance the libraries of contemporary art historians.

La science (n')e(s)t (pas) l'art

by Jean-Marc Levy-Leblond
Editions Hermann, 2010, 119 pp.

ISBN: 978-2705669454

Reviewed by Jacques Mandelbrojt

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In this provocative book entitled with humour both "science and art" or "science isn't art", Levy-Leblond, physicist and es-

sayist, examines, in a critical and subtle manner, similarities, often expressed by scientists, between art and science. The chapters like essays explore different points of view on these similarities. He concludes with his own brief encounters with art as a scientist.

Levy-Leblond starts by examining the nature of beauty in science and if beauty implies art. Scientist among the greatest, insist on the criteria of beauty in science and some such as Hermann Weyl or Dirac go as far as to assert that aiming at beauty is more important than aiming at truth for advancing in science. But how many splendid theories have been overthrown by miserable experiments as biologist and philosopher Thomas Huxley pointed out. Levy-Leblond notes that while scientist talk of beauty in science, modern or contemporary art does not refer to beauty. Actually most scientists who speak of beauty in science refer to traditional preromantic or even platonic beauty.

What is a beautiful theory, what is a beautiful experiment, a beautiful proof of a theorem? The beauty of a scientific statement or proof is linked to its simplicity, to its generality. Perhaps the true beauty of science lies, as it does in most human activities in the adequation between the instruments and their function. A beautiful formula, a beautiful experiment is one that is adapted to its purpose with the maximum of simplicity and efficiency. In science only a long work can remodel the original ideas to get rid of all its useless aspects and lead to (temporarily) final expressions. Levy-Leblond gives the example of Kepler's laws of planetary motion: it took more than a century to

realize that they were the consequences of Newton's laws of gravitation.

And what if the feeling of beauty was the illumination scientists have at the moment when they suddenly understand a new aspect of nature? Two concepts, according to Levy-Leblond should replace that of beauty: adequation and power. Adequation of the ideas to the phenomena being studied, and the power of these ideas, the fact that they can apply to numerous different phenomena.

Levy-Leblond examines several aspects of images in science. Modern technology has led science since 1970 to discover fascinating images of the microcosms or the macrocosms or of biology, but should these images be considered as art? The beauty of scientific images compensates for the non-scientist the increasing esoterism of scientific concepts or theories, Levy-Leblond considers that publishing or exhibiting these images aims mainly at making science more popular. He notes furthermore that research scientists do not actually work with these images but with series of numbers or curves which would not have the same public appeal.

In the past century, art and science have had similar evolutions first towards abstract concepts then towards the use of new technologies. Levy-Leblond gives arguments to reject the influence of science on art this seems to imply, just as he is reluctant towards analysis of art made by psychologists of perception.

After having rejected the usually accepted encounters between art and science, Levy-Leblond gives examples of what he calls

brief encounters between art and science. He gives examples of art works, in particular those of Morellet, Charvolen, Kowalski, Beuys, Anselmo, Rabinowitch, which take on a special meaning when seen from his point of view as a scientist.

Several examples are in the domain of art and mathematics. Here again Levy-Leblond starts, rightly so, by being very critical on the interpretation of art historians who artificially find the golden ratio on works by artists who did not actually use these rules. He then goes on to examine how artists can play around with numbers to create works of art. Morellet for instance, makes complex works using elementary rules.

Other striking interpretations of works of art are rather in the domain of epistemology: The works of Max Charvolen strikingly evokes to Levy-Leblond the way a scientific theory sticks so to speak to nature and then is torn away from it while keeping some of its essential aspects. Piotr Kowalsky shows how a same concept can apply to contrasting object such as an enormous pyramid made from stacked hay balls and a light suspended neon pyramid.

In conclusion "science is different from art" analyses in a very subtle way relationships between science and art. It is very critical towards many naïve similarities which scientists like to find between art and science, but it does describes works of art which evoke to the author scientific concepts or procedures. This book can lead LEONARDO readers or writers to discover a point of view different from that which usually prevails in LEONARDO and it can make them find their own path by comparing those two points of view.

Digital Apollo: Human and Machine in Spaceflight

by David A. Mindell

The MIT Press, 2008, 456 pp.
ISBN: 978-0262134972

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Digital Apollo: Human and Machine in Spaceflight by the historian David A. Mindell is the third book in what the author describes as “an unplanned trilogy” or trajectory of historical scholarly pursuits. Although not thematically identical, each text in the series uniquely revolves around another triad of concerns: technological invention; associative human identity, control and experience; and war—ranging from the very hot to the very cold. As such, this quintessentially American trilogy follows a chronological timeline with increasing technological complexity. The first in the series is *War, Technology, and Experience Aboard the USS Monitor* (2000), a fascinating study of the Union’s USS *Monitor*, a seafaring war vessel fatally utilized during the American Civil War; the second, *Between Human and Machine: Feedback, Control, and Computing Before Cybernetics* (2002), is an historical recalibration of the pre-existence and utility of control systems theory before and during World War II, several years prior to its nominal invention by Norbert Wiener. The third is the aforementioned text, *Digital Apollo: Human and Machine in Spaceflight*, an engaging overview of the digital computer system in the Apollo Space expeditions, considered so intrinsic to the missions that

it was named by some to be the “fourth crew member.”

For *Digital Apollo*, Mindell received the Eugene M. Emme Astronautical Literature Award, named after the first NASA historian Eugene M. Emme, and granted by the AAS, American Astronautical Society. AAS dualistically acronymizes the organization’s mission statement, **Advancing All Space**, and as such honors AAS Fellows, including the founder of our beloved journal *Leonardo*, Dr. Frank Malina, for his pioneering contributions to space flight. However, this *Rocketman*, one of the original three, is disappointingly not cited in *Digital Apollo* despite the use of his patented hydrazine-nitric acid mixture to propel the engines of the Apollo Service and Lunar Excursion Modules.

Mindell’s account places particular emphasis on the Automatic Guidance System (AGS) contracted to the MIT Instrumentation Laboratory, which has since renamed the Draper Laboratory after its founder Charles Stark Draper, and left the auspices of the MIT, although the Draper Laboratory remains in close proximity to MIT’s main campus in Kendall Square. Nonetheless, the MIT historical connections remain strong as the author is not only the Frances and David Dibner Professor of the History of Engineering and Manufacturing, the Director of the S.T.S. Program as well as a Professor of Aeronautics and Astronautics, but he is also an historian of MIT.

With expert agility, Mindell dives into the mass of data surrounding the Apollo missions, hones in on, and skillfully draws out the main plot line of the drama, the primordial struggle for control—man versus machine—as the astronauts were, by require-

ment, all male, military test pilots. Since the Apollo missions were interestingly synchronous with the launch of the Women’s Liberation Movement spanning a time when job descriptions were rigidly codified and classified by gender, thus, severely limiting what women could even conceive of doing or being. I sincerely appreciate and applaud the author’s use of the term *Human* in the subtitle of the book, as “Human and Machine in Spaceflight,” and would be offended were he to write otherwise, it still, unfortunately, seems to retrofit history while reminding one who remembers the Apollo missions that the exclusion of women in spaceflight was, then, considered *a priori*. No fault of the author here, however, this clearly remains an historian’s dilemma.

Irrespective, Mindell deftly builds upon the technological tug-of-war drama between the astronauts and the design engineers, or rather, more precisely, the amount of control and flying power the astronauts were to have in the Apollo missions versus the design engineers’ more automatized vision of their role. The strongest proponent of automation was none other than Wernher von Braun, of Operation Paperclip fame, a fact that the author nimbly averts, yet still remains vestigially reminiscent of more fascistic control.

However, Mindell gives voice to the astronauts, as *Digital Apollo* echoes its origins as a collaborative oral history endeavor entitled the “Apollo Guidance Computer History Project” funded by the Sloan Foundation and the former Dibner Institute for the History of Science and Technology at MIT, which assembled many of the still living participants in the Apollo missions.

And as it turned out, the astronauts triumphantly ascended to being more than what they derisively termed *Spam in the Can*. In each of the six Apollo lunar landings, the commanding astronaut “took control from the computer and landed with his hand on the stick,” thus not only asserting [hu]man power over machine, but making for a great read as well.

Premediation: Affect and Mediality After 9/11

by Richard Grusin

Palgrave Macmillan, 2010,
208 pp.

ISBN: 978-0230242524

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Richard Grusin’s co-authored (with Jay David Bolter) *Remediation* has become core reading in media studies and cognate disciplines curricula, and with a new book out called *Premediation* there is a temptation to read this a mere updating of the remediation-thesis introduced some 10 years earlier. *Remediation* came out at a good moment in the midst of an interest in drawing theoretical concepts and methodology from old media and new media in parallel lines and added to that theoretical context its own input. Understanding new media from computer games to the WWW through the very McLuhanesque theoretical idea of remediation was further elaborated in the book through the double logic of mediation in new media cultures. It was not solely an idea that new media circulates old media (even if even articulating that had strong repercussions in understanding the

prolonged life time of old media, with resonances to such work as Erkki Huhtamo’s on the recurring *topoi* of media culture), but an elaboration of the constant tension between discursive immediacy and hypermediacy as aesthetic strategies. In the words of that earlier book, “Our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them” (5). Actually, Grusin himself is keen to establish continuities between *Remediation* and *Premediation*. He describes this new research concept and the book as a continuation or a counterpart to the earlier one, a new form of a media logic that is especially visible after 9/11, which is for Grusin the key turning point. However, I would argue that these books are quite different in their take and style, and that *Premediation* is not only a complementary project to the earlier one; the clear-cut “adaptability” to use such a word that of course does not entirely catch the full breadth of *Remediation* is in *Premediation* emphasized towards more refined conceptual arsenal that articulates premediation more clearly as non-representational, material and affect-based logic of media.

Grusin outlines his new interest in such media logic that tries to come to grips with futurity as the new horizon for politics of media cultures. Indeed, smoothly written and mapping his interests as part of the wider development of post 9/11 culture, he articulates the shift from the more screen based emphasis of *Remediation* to his current interests in social networking, and software-based cultural production. A key concept is now “affect” which both resonates with some recent years of trends in

cultural theory even branded as the “affective turn,” but which for Grusin acts as a way to understand the embodied nature of our behaviour in network environments – behaviour that is fully embedded in politics of anticipation, that he sees as a new version, or perhaps as a replacement of what such writers as Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer articulated as the emblematic distraction inherent in cinematic modernity.

Premediation is defined in the book in various but converging ways that all seem to contextualize it as a regime of security, temporality, and processes of mediation after 9/11. Hence, as Grusin admits, it is primarily a book about America, even if post-9/11 culture has had its global after wakes. *Premediation* is about such futures that are already present – the idea, or feeling that “the future has already been pre-mediated before it turns into the present (or the past),” hence a kind of a remediation of the future in order to “maintain a low level of fear in the present and to prevent a recurrence of the kind of tremendous media shock that the United States and much of the networked world experienced on 9/11” (4).

Premediation works through the idea of media as objects, and “mediation itself as an object” (5) through which to investigate the mobilization of bodies in this security regime. Hence, *Premediation* takes much of its theoretical background from Foucault and especially the idea of governmentality — how to govern people and things, where the emphasis in *Premediation* is heavily on things as well in terms of how Grusin wants to steer clear of too human-focused perspec-

tives. Whereas Grusin would have benefited from a more in-depth engagement of Foucault's texts on security as a post-disciplinary logic of governing, he does however present a mostly convincing case in terms of how we should rethink media as a material translation, a mediation process that escapes representational frameworks. Indeed, the book is not only about Foucault, but draws heavily from Latour as well, and Deleuze when Grusin is arguing that premediation is not only a creation of possible futures in a videogame logic of algorithmic possibilities (this choice is made, this and that happens). Instead, premediation works through the virtual as understood the Bergsonian Deleuze, i.e. a governing of the future present as a multiplicity that is brought about. Grusin writes: "While premediation often takes the form (as in the run-up to the Iraq War) of the proliferation of specific possibilities, or particular scenarios, the generation of these specific possibilities entails the remediation of potentialities or virtualities out of which future actions, decisions, or events might (or might not) emerge." (59) This theoretical move is to be welcomed as it adds complexity to the logic of premediation but would have merited from more discussion as there is a constant danger of pulling the radically opened ontogenetical concept of virtuality into the regime of possibility and rationalization of the future. In any case, his discussion has a clear context in contemporary cultural theory with Brian Massumi's interest in futurity and security, and Greg Ulmer and Andy Opel's project and little book on *Preempting Dissent*.

For a short book that tries to emphasize the importance of

software cultures and social media, there is relatively a lot of emphasis in terms of page count on such case studies as Don DeLillo's *The Falling Man*-novel (2007) and especially Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*-graphic novel series. Grusin does, however, also engage with such social media phenomena as Abu Ghraib photos in their medial logic. What could have been perhaps further elaborated would have been the logic of anticipation and its relation to distraction. Grusin's reading might have actually benefited from a further historical insight offered by Jonathan Crary, whose reading of the concepts of distraction/attention as part of the creation of modern media culture would have offered a further complexity to the suggested newness of anticipation as part of social media cultures – in short, for Crary even the cinematic modernity is not only one of distraction but a continuous drilling for a temporal, fluctuating and attention-demanding physiological state of being which in itself is closely related to "anticipation". As always, any good book is a starting point for further thoughts and elaborations, and Grusin's intervention into the politics of affect and security is an extremely important one.

Bring on the Books for Everybody: How Literary Culture Became Popular Culture

by Jim Collins

Duke University Press, 2010,
312 pp.

ISBN: 978-0-822346067

*Reviewed by Jan Baetens,
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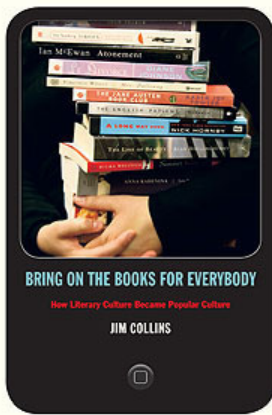
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One of the most widespread cultural stereotypes of our post-modern times is undoubtedly the supposed incompatibility of books and electronic media. Just as video killed the radio star (but did it, really?), Internet, the e-book and Kindle are killing the book, hardback or paperback. The countless official reports on the erosion of reading habits and the alarming shrinking of time spent with a book in our hands are all based on that same hypothesis: as soon as other media pop up (yesterday film and television, today games and other digital media), the position of the book is in clear danger, certainly in the case of these groups of readers who are insufficiently educated or lack of cultural capital to resist the temptations of the non-book forces.

The starting point of Jim Collins' timely book (also available as e-book, I imagine) is that this opposition is not what can be observed when we look around. On the contrary: books are now everywhere, including in places where they had been completely absent until now (small town America, for instance, and this thanks to the spread of chain stores such as Barnes and Noble or Borders), they are heavily promoted (as sexy, seductive objects), and they are also massively sold and marketed (mainly through the Internet, but not without the help of very 'physical' groupings of people such as book clubs or reading groups). In the book business, sales figures are not shrinking, even if the type of books that are sold may no longer be the same as the one academic gatekeepers have always been dreaming of.

The ambition of Collins' study

is not just to *describe* this phenomenon, although this is what the author is doing as well, often in very unexpected and refreshing ways, but to try to *understand* it, without condemning or defending the new forms of popular reading as such. In both cases, Collins manages with great acuteness and with a great sense of humor and (self-) irony to make us think differently on matters that don't leave no reader indifferent.



For Collins the most striking features of the recent evolutions of reading in popular culture (the title of the book is an allusion to a ritual sentence that punctuates Oprah Winfreys' Book Club shows), are more complex than it is often assumed. First of all, he underlines the fact that popular reading has dramatically changed in the last two or three decades (actually, since the emergence of the personal computer and the subsequent restructuring of social interaction). Popular reading is no longer the middle-brow attempt to catch up with something that is 'missing' (mainly education, as formerly dispensed by qualified institutions) and whose 'lack' is considered a major problem, but as a way of self-development. Second, this approach of read-

ing as self-development is no longer governed or determined by the authoritative voice of specialists (professors, national critics, and so on), but organized by the readers themselves, not in a purely individual way (that would be the populist option of the newly discovered readers' agency: I decide all by myself what is good or bad, and my taste is as good as yours) but via an intense dialogue with peer readers (one might call this the interactionist model: readers refuse to rely on the traditional gatekeepers; at the same time, however, they eagerly accept to team up with others in all kind of new social networks to try to find out what is good and what is bad).

For Collins this shift from 'old' to 'new' popular reading, i.e. from reading 'guided' by prestigious others to reading in which the readers themselves are taking the initiative, is not simply a shift from one type of reading to another. If today's popular readers have achieved agency, it is because the traditional system has collapsed. There is now, in wide circles of non-specialized and non-professional readers, an awareness that the system has failed, mainly because an excess of theory and formalism has separated reading from life. Therefore university professors and great critics are no longer taken seriously, their advice is no longer followed, and readers turn toward books with completely different expectations and in a totally different spirit. What popular readers are interested in, is not what books mean *in themselves*, but what books can mean *for them*, what they can bring to their life. It is only this crucial shift that explains why people continue to read, and even do it more often and more passionately than be-

fore: reading has remained or become so important for non-professional readers, because they find in books something that cannot be given by other media, and this 'something' is socially organized and networked self-help and development of personal taste.

For taste, besides the ideology of self-help, is the second key term of contemporary popular reading, and here as well the author stresses the link between the vanishing of classic taste standards (the ones offered by a classic college education) and the appearance of new attempts to discover, through dialogue and debate with peers in new social networks, which might be the standards that should be followed. Once again: this is quite different from the populist version of mass culture, which reduces discussions on taste on individual preferences or rather, for these discussions are frequently biased, on manipulation by the mass media. The aspect of taste is decisive when it comes to book culture: if reading is so important in an age in which nobody is supposed to read any more, and certainly not in those social groups accused of being narcotized by television and other visual media, it is because of the capacity of books to play a role in the shaping and organization of one's own life style – an issue whose importance has not to be repeated.

As Collins argues, it is perfectly possible to consider these new forms of reading, in which books may seem a pure alibi to something else, as 'the end of civilized reading' (as says the title of his first chapter). Yet this viewpoint is too elitist, and it certainly despises the vitality of popular culture and its manifold interactions with mass me-

dia. Without Amazon, Google, Kindle, and the social interaction enabled by the new media, the new reading culture would have been unthinkable. But this reading culture does not only destroy old forms of book culture (the independent book shop or the independent publisher, as demonstrated by critical voices such as André Schiffrin, whose theses are not discarded as elite or old-fashioned by Collins), it also merges with them and changes them in totally unexpected forms (which makes for instance that a Barnes and Noble book shop is now functioning as a... library, yet a library without well-informed librarians, since the policy of the company is to only hire people with no special knowledge on books, in order to avoid any social distance between sellers and customers!). Deconstructionist interpretations of the digital revolution in literature have been prophesying for many years the progressive blurring of boundaries between reading and writing: this is clearly not what is happening in serious fiction or scholarship (dear reader, have you ever tried to modify just one single character in an essay by a major representative of French Theory and to publish it as 'your' text?), but it happens daily in these new forms of popular reading, where readers really can write – because what is at stake is no longer the 'text', but the way one absorb it in one's own life.

Since the frontiers between texts and life tend to vanish, it is only normal that literature (in the sense of fiction) is no longer restricted to books only. Literature becomes an experience, which can and must migrate from one medium to another. It is another word for 'something that changes' your life, and

that can therefore be perfectly found and realized through, for instance, film but also through a wide range of practices (cooking, wine connoisseurship, interior design, dating, love-making, etc.) that are covered by the notion of life-style. In this regard Collins' book proposes crucial and field-expanding analyses of 'cineliterature', more specifically of the particular forms that are taken by the age-old phenomenon of filmic adaptation of literary materials. Following the defense of a more sociological approach of adaptation made by scholars such as Robert Stam, he argues very convincingly, first that adaptation has become a major force in post-classic Hollywood, and second that adaptation obeys today the same rules as the popular book culture that he analyzes here. Indeed, the books that are being adapted are those that belong to the same universe as the 'typical' books that circulate in the books clubs and reading groups (i.e. books that you can discuss with your community rather than books that you read, in the old, 'civilized' meaning of the word) and that in addition to this can be perfectly be integrated in the merger of book culture and life style culture. For Collins, the Merchant-Ivory productions have been paramount in this regard: furniture is the leading actor here, and discussions on good taste fill the screen. The author goes even further, his final chapter suggesting that the exchanges between film and literature cannot be limited to the reuse of literature by Hollywood. They go the other way round as well. The contemporary hype of 'lit lit' (a notion ironically coined after 'chick lit' and referring to the obsessive presence in modern fiction of writers, preferably of writers with a strong interest in life style, and reading, pref-

erably of reading of the same kind as the one practiced by passionate book-clubbers) is for Collins one of the literary answers to the spread of the new popular book culture in which the reading of books is presented as something that can change one's life and that one should therefore crave for at each moment of the day.

Despite his visible sympathy for the phenomenon that he scrutinizes and his overall optimism concerning the future of reading, Jim Collins is far from a naïve defender of popular culture. The stances he takes in his book are not at all populist, but a honest and inspiring attempt to understand new forms of culture that may rightly horrify us (Collins is quite critical of Oprah, as he is of the Miramax adaptations that ruled Hollywood in the 90s), but that it would be a pity to discard as vulgar and stupid. Collins strikes the right chord between left-wing catastrophism of the culture industry and right-wing praise of 'the people's preferences. With great clarity, he offers an important mapping and many of the questions that he raises deserve a large and critical debate.

How to Catch a Robot Rat: When Biology Inspires Innovation

by Agnès Guillot and Jean-Arcady Meyer

Susan Emanuel (transl.)

The MIT Press, 2010, 232 pp.

ISBN: 978-0262014526

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As this highly informative book shows through numerous ex-

amples, it is not quite as easy to catch rats, robotic or otherwise, as it seems. The authors use the concept of the rat metaphorically, as being clever, cunning and a highly intelligent natural entity to show that nature does not give up her “design” secrets easily. Many researchers, especially working in artificial intelligence, have found this out the hard way.

How To Catch a Robot Rat: When Biology Inspires Innovation was first published in 2008 in French as *La bionique: Quand la science imite la Nature*. This edition published in 2010 has been translated by Susan Emanuel. Even though some of the details are quite scientific, the text flows beautifully and is suitable for the general reader as well as specialists. The book provides a thorough, though brief grounding in the history of technological objects and systems, the current state of research and possible future developments.

The book (which is devoted to the new bionics) has three sections followed by a Conclusion, Bibliography, Notes and Index. There are numerous quality black & white illustrations together with a glossy, colour plate centre section.

Part 1 – *Structures, Processes, Materials* describes some of the many technological achievements inspired by natural structures, processes, and materials. The discussion moves effortlessly back and forth through the history of biomimetic inventions from the earliest times to the present.

Part 2 – *Behaviors* explains, “... one field of research (that is of ancient inspiration but has been prospering for a few years): the

concept of autonomous robots inspired by animals and their behavior — what is commonly called ‘bioinspired robotics’” (p. xii).

Part 3 – *Hybrids*, this section examines work whose goal it is to hybridize natural and artificial systems. It looks at neuroprostheses and endoprotheses. The combination of these systems hopes to help, for example, quadriplegic persons to control machines such as wheel chairs.

This book is literally jam packed with information; there is no long-winded superfluous padding as the book moves along at a rapid pace, similar to that of the current global research in the field of robotics and bionics. The issue of ethics is briefly touched on, more as a caution as to the way we should proceed, rather than an in-depth discussion as to the full development of ethical guidelines.

Although it is certainly not the purpose of this book, the area of ethics research is in need of urgent attention and development so as to keep up with the speed of inventions by companies whose motives are not necessarily or always for the “good of the many”! There have been some tentative moves in producing guidelines for research and, Rights of Robots, by countries such as Japan and Korea. The authors quip about the current debate over same sex marriages becoming insignificant compared to when a human wants to marry a humanoid robot. The humanoid robots Repliee Q2 and the Clone of Professor Hiroshi Ishiguro — both developed by Ishiguro at Osaka University — have silicone skin, multiple sensors, respiratory movement, facial expressions, hand and arm movements and can con-

verse with a human. Ishiguro made his clone so as to occupy his office when he travelled overseas! (p. 136) The authors, Guillot and Meyer, not only discuss metaphoric rats but also have developed a real robotic rat *Psikharpx* in their own laboratories. They are attempting to answer a question neurobiologists have not yet been able to answer which concerns the exact mechanisms (of a neuronal nature) that enable the selection by rodents of different navigational strategies. (p. 124) As a whimsical aside, and because we are trying to catch rats, it is interesting that many laboratories use rats for research and the spelling encodes this — labo_rat_ories!

One of this book’s greatest virtues is the balanced approach taken by the authors. Rather than “values” laden commentary, the approach is more objective reporting, leaving it to the reader to judge the many complex issues this research raises. As such the book will be useful as a comprehensive introduction to bio-robotics for students, the general public and perhaps those scholars in the humanities dealing with ethics, law and public health.

Photo-texts: Contemporary French Writing of the Photographic Image

by Andy Stafford
Liverpool University Press,
2010, 246 pp.
ISBN: 978-1846310522

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Andy Stafford's book is a welcome and attractive publication to the fast-growing field of intermediality studies, and an exciting enrichment of a series that opens new ways in the study of postcolonial Francophony. The qualities of the book, which should concern more readers than just those interested in contemporary French and francophone culture, can be situated at three levels: the subject in itself, obviously, but also the dialogue that it tries to establish between Anglophone and francophone scholarship as well as the specific accents that are proposed by the author. I will discuss these points in that order



As far as the subject is concerned, the task of any author writing on the domain of phototextuality has become a rather difficult one, such as has been the almost chaotic development of literature and photography interaction in the last decades. Stafford pays, therefore, a lot of attention to circumscribe his corpus, not always in the most convincing ways, for throughout the book one feels a permanent struggle with the many possibilities of organizing the material. Nevertheless, since the author presents and discusses his own doubts and biases in a very

open and self-conscious way, the reader can feel sympathy for his efforts, even if till the end of the book one is left with the impression that other types of classification might have been possible. Nevertheless, the global structure, which leads us from a text inspired by just one picture to a work focused on captioning, is clear and coherent and does certainly not prevent the author from doing what he wants to do. The notion of phototext is mainly defined by Stafford in terms of "photo-essayism", a term that is both exclusive and inclusive: it excludes the whole field of the photonovel, while it includes all kinds of textual productions (essays in the traditional sense of the words, but also prose fiction, poetry, captions etc.) that establish a dialogue not just with photography, but with specific photographs on the page. This both very narrow and very open definition allows Stafford to propose a very broad and diverse corpus of nine works, some of them very well known (such as *Errance* by Raymond Depardon), others less known or rarely introduced in discussions on phototextuality (such as some works written by Tahar Ben Jelloun). What matters here is less the fact that some usual suspects may be missing (there is for instance no chapter on Sophie Calle) than the fact that the selection made by Stafford really innovates the field: the overall impression one gets from his view on phototextuality is really different than the one that is offered by most French studies on the subject, the main difference being the emphasis on postcolonialism.

The difference and usefulness of this book can also be explained by its eagerness to establish a cross-fertilization of Anglophone and francophone

scholarship. One of the most paradoxical and painful aspects of globalization is indeed the growing gap between humanist scholarship in these two traditions: Anglophone readers, even very specialized ones, only know of "French Theory" what is available in translation, whereas Francophone scholars like to stress their "cultural exception" to avoid or misread work being done in English (a good example is the long-time refusal or fear of cultural studies in France, a blatant case of cultural blindness which really should have no reason to be). Stafford is doing an important job in this broken dialogue, and he tries to do it in as an objective and impartial way as possible, even if one feels some unease from time to time, not at the level of the theoretical discussions, but at the level of the critical evaluation of some of the works under discussion (Stafford is clearly reluctant to criticize Tahar Ben Jelloun, for instance, whose work presents a number of features that are criticized elsewhere in the book: this stance can only be explained by the greater openness of Anglophone scholars to postcolonial authors). Once again, this is a detail, for *Photo-Texts* offers many insightful and inspiring confrontations of US/UK and French authors. On the one hand, he carefully demonstrates the interest of the work by WJT Mitchell as well as Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, while at the same time underling also the limits of their respective approaches. On the other hand, he gives a very sympathetic presentation of authors such as Jacques Rancière, André Rouillé and Hubert Damisch, whose names may be (very) familiar to Anglophone readers but whose writings on photography have not yet received the

critical attention they certainly deserve. Here as well, the global sympathy of Stafford's tone does not avert him from making critical remarks, which are dramatically discerning, even for Francophone readers.

The most fascinating aspect of the book, however, is the personal view of photo-textuality that is defended by the author. Four aspects should be stressed here. First of all, Stafford claims that photo-textuality has changed in the 1990s, and he links these changes in a very convincing way to the end of the 'short 20th Century' (i.e. 1914-1989). Photography has changed after 1989 (and will do so even more after 9/11, but the main focus of the book is on the 90s), and the new relationships between word and image is one of the revealing traces of a change that shatters traditional photographic truth claims. Second, the author underlines in an even more persuasive manner how photo-textuality has become part of postcolonial culture, a point insufficiently made in French scholarship, although Stafford –and I think this is a great quality as well– does not accept the gap between metropolitan and francophone culture. Third, the political turn that underlies the two previous points is strongly linked with the material culture in which photo-textuality appears. The relationship between words in images in this kind of cultural products cannot be separated from certain material conditions such as the book market, to name just one example, and Stafford propose very astute and illuminating readings of the importance of this context, not only for the production of the works but also for their reception (how can one do for instance critical photo-textuality if the work produced is a coffee table

book?). Finally, and this might be considered a really important innovation in our thinking on the field, Stafford defends the idea that the relationship between text and image should never ecumenical, but remain as critical as possible. The word critical has to be understood here in its etymological sense of "crisis": words and images do not only need each other, they also question each other, they break each other open, and in that critical dialogue emerges a third dimension, which Stafford calls "orality", a dimension that he cleverly relates to the broader field of memory and memory studies.

Designing Things: A Critical Introduction to the Culture of Objects

by Prasad Boradkar
Berg Publishers, 2010, 336 pp.
ISBN: 978-1845204273

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'With some exceptions, design has traditionally under-theorized the cultural meanings of objects' (Boradkar, 2010, p.12). Designers have, traditionally, been rather uncritical of the objects they create and the wider networks that their activities are embedded within. In *Designing Things*, Prasad Boradkar attempts to encourage designers to be rather more critical of the diverse networks that their creations are, and become, embedded within. What Boradkar wishes to highlight is the agency of not only designers of things, but how these things themselves then design those who use and ongoingly interact with them in the objects

lifetime. This is embedded in the title of the book, which in one sense 'refers to the primary activity of making, i.e. the process of the design of products, buildings, graphics, interiors, services, [and] systems', and in a second sense as suggesting 'things themselves have agency, they afford specific kinds of action, they encourage certain types of behavior and they can elicit particular forms of emotions' (Boradkar, 2010, p.4).

Boradkar alludes to walking the precariously fine line between emphasizing the agency of human beings and the agency of the objects that become embedded into the quotidian. In the introductory chapter, Boradkar presents a philosophical backdrop to this argument in 'a very brief history of 'the philosophy of things' (p.26-35). Within the space of nine or ten pages, Boradkar takes the reader from Anaximander, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle through to Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Heidegger, and the contemporary philosophy of Bruno Latour, Graham Harman and Paul Verbeek. In particular, it appears to be Latour who has inspired Boradkar's book the most, and Latour's work is given more space to be explained than the lineage of thinkers prior and since. The consequence of this concise discussion leads Boradkar to assert that '[f]or this study, things will be treated as inseparable from the networks to which they belong' (Boradkar, 2010, p.35). Whilst Latour appears to be particularly en-vogue in contemporary design literature, the manner in which Boradkar discusses Actor Network Theory and then introduces Graham Harman's work leads the reader to begin thinking about the entanglements between human and

non-human agents and actants encapsulated in an emergent network, where 'things' exist on both their own terms and their relations to the other. The drawing upon this particular philosophical discussion alludes to a refreshing take on the critical discourse surrounding the design of material objects. In the following sub-section entitled 'Disciplining Things' (p.35-44); however, this refreshing perspective is somewhat diluted. Continuing the swiftness of the previous section on philosophy, in eight to nine pages Boradkar takes the reader through Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Material Cultural Studies and Science and Technology Studies as examples 'of a few disciplines engaged in object studies' (Boradkar, 2010, p.35). The purpose of this section is for Boradkar to highlight how the boundaries between these disciplines are somewhat flexible, and individual research projects belonging to one discipline actually crossover with one another. It might be questioned here, however, that these boundaries have such flexibility as a result of their inherently similar epistemological basis.

Whilst the first chapter is a flood of information, the following eight chapters are a steady flow of critical and cultural theory as it relates to the Western (mostly North American) industrial design. Chapter two explores the concept of value, highlighting how whilst value may generally be assumed to be an economic and monetary concept, objects accrue values over their lifetime that have various emotional, symbolic and aesthetic meanings to those who come into various contact with them. Chapter three discusses labor and a Marx-informed history of making things, leading into

chapter four which takes the reader through Fordism, Taylorism, mass production, and on to contemporary examples of consumers being brought more directly into contact with the production process. Chapter five focuses upon aesthetics as it is understood in the design of consumer goods, which Boradkar summarizes to be residing 'neither in the solid materiality of the object nor in the ephemeral mind of the consumer' (Boradkar, 2010, p.158). Whilst style is not inscribed by the designer, it is also not 'organically created by the owner in processes of consumption' (Boradkar, 2010, p.158). Boradkar argues here that aesthetic experience is located between the designer and the consumer, in the 'external surfaces' and 'object skins' of the material goods. Chapter six examines how designers have focused upon exploring the 'needs' of consumers, appearing to sympathize with Victor Papenek's [1] argument that designers tend to design ethically questionable needs (as in make them up) with which to then design for. Chapter seven critically interrogates the issue of 'planned obsolescence' in Western industrial design, identifying a number of cultural arguments both for and against designing obsolescence into the end-product. Chapter eight moves into the realm of semiotics, mostly in terms of Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, and subsequently Barthes. Boradkar examines how theories of semiotics have been incorporated in industrial and product design (particularly as it emerged from the Cranbrook School of Art and the influential product semantics work of Krippendorff and Butter). The discussion of signs and meanings lead into the final, and brief, chapter (nine), which discusses

certain aspects of the fetishism of certain materials and objects.

As the above synopsis highlights, Boradkar covers a lot of ground in one book. Each individual chapter is easy to follow and the ideas discussed (of other authors) are well conveyed. At the same time, each chapter reads as being somewhat discreet from the next and on many occasions it is not always clear as to why particular ideas are discussed rather than others. This is perhaps the consequence (and a necessity) of the mass and generality to the terrain that Boradkar (de) limits himself to. This leads to the feeling that on a number of occasions certain ideas are repeated from chapter to chapter without clear acknowledgement, and chapters that feel clear and easy to read are yet somewhat vague in where they are heading.

More problematically than any of the relatively minor writing issues with this book, I have a deep sense of "so what?" after 280 dense pages. Whilst in the opening pages the book comes across as rather dynamic and refreshing, Boradkar loses his own voice during the following chapters and repeats arguments that have been staples of design, marketing and consumer theory for much of the latter twentieth century. This leads to the realization (on this reader's part) that what Boradkar is providing here is a contemporary, post-modern, design undergraduate theory programme (spread over three years) condensed into a single book. It is a textbook re-framed as scholarship. This is not to be conveyed as entirely negative; when considered in these terms *Designing Things* is a useful publication indeed, and would be of much use to a designer struggling to identify any

critical basis with which to begin reflecting upon their own practice. This may have been what the author intended, but much of the introduction and opening chapter alluded to a rather different text to what follows. Perhaps it does not come to much of a surprise that an early title for this book was the Marx inspired 'A Very Strange Thing', which Boradkar argues highlights how 'mundane, inanimate objects are repositories of many untold stories' (Boradkar, 2010, p.263). Not only would this title have been rather apt, it might also have provided the unsuspecting reader the forewarning that what follows would be a contemporary Marxist stroll through the history of very contemporary consumer-led, industrial design. Similarly, if Boradkar's book were subtitled 'An Introduction to the Culture of Objects' (minus the critical), then perhaps this reviewer would be rather less disappointed. The issue at hand appears to be that, whilst arguing that an interdisciplinary approach to theorizing design is required, he limits himself to a group of social-science disciplines that are highly cohesive with one-another. Beyond this, these are the disciplines that have been the primary basis for design theory in the past. In drawing upon this lineage in a somewhat unquestioned manner, *Designing Things* feels as if it is repeating ideas and theories about design, consumerism and material culture that have often been said (and repeated) before.

Whilst Boradkar pronounces that objects, within design disciplines at least, are under-theorized, he does not provide much of a critical interrogation of those theories he uses to critique these objects. By emphasizing a reliance on the social sciences, critical and cul-

tural theorists' as the primary source of knowledge on human and object culture, Boradkar's book somewhat lacks the sensitivity to diverse ideas and approaches that he so argued for in the opening chapters. Whilst with a few exceptions the design discipline is criminally under theorized, it is perhaps just as problematic to repeatedly analyze design as a primarily culturally (or economically, or technologically) determined discipline. The textual mass of this book, the ground covered, and the broad manner in which critical theory is used makes this reviewer wonder whether this book would have benefited from been more specific and detailed, yet the same length; longer yet shorter, if you will. Perhaps another age-old design reference is required here; less is more.

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Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture

by Paula Lupkin

Minnesota University Press,
2010, 312 pp.

ISBN: 978-0816648351

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Architectural history, sociology, gender studies and cultural studies come smoothly together in this very interesting publication by Paula Lupkin (assistant professor of architecture at Washington University Saint-

Louis) on the "Y", as the YMCA is often called. The book is an exemplarily inviting and challenging study on something that has been so ubiquitous and so "typically typical" that it had become almost *invisible* in American history: Indeed, thanks to the success of the organization after the Civil War, when it was rebuilt and reorganized by the new generation of WASP entrepreneurs, and to an ambitious building program in the first decades of the 20th Century, when more or less standardized Y centres spread nationwide, the YMCA –both a building and as a center of social life (later often associated with gay culture, hence the still popular song by the *Village People*) – has long-time been of the major landmarks of America's Main Street urban life. Lupkin's book does not only tell the story of the building culture of the Y's, although this story itself, technically speaking a variation on a neo-classical ideal and institutionally speaking an example of the shift from philanthropy to business, is quite fascinating in itself. What Lupkin is most interested in, is the social, political, ethical, ideological, and commercial aspects of what the YMCA buildings were actually standing for. The answer to this question proves to be very complex, since the meaning of the Y has changed dramatically over time.

Broadly speaking, the main changes were twofold, yet each of them had to do with the necessity of adapting the organization to new forms of urban culture in which the original WASP values were no longer at home. In each case, Lupkin describes very well how a change of function corresponds with a change of meaning (and vice versa).

First, from an ideological point of view, Lupkin analyzes the gradual shift from a half-social, half-religious center to a merely social center in which (more and more) athletics, social activities and (less and less) religion were blended. In the former model the initial customers were invited to train themselves in typically WASP ideals such as honesty, hard work, self-control, paternalistic responsibility—all pre-incorporation era values that in the first decades of the Republic it was still possible to transfer for the sphere of family life to the different world of business and commerce. In the beginning, the Y functioned as a kind of informal school in which unmarried young men learned to behave well so that they might become successful in business as well as in social life and marriage. In the latter model, which did not appear overnight, the sporting and social facilities of the YMCA gradually erased the religious function, although this function had never been the main focus: young men were invited to get themselves exposed to religiously tainted activities, but this invitation was never an obligation. The Y became rapidly a social center representing “honest” activities, rather than a place of indoctrination or manipulation. Initially strongly opposed to modern entertainment, at least in comparison with competing entertainment forms such as the saloon and the brothel, the Y had to negotiate its place in the new market of mass culture and commercial entertainment, hence the progressive opening to athletics (the swimming pool and the gymnasium were not present in the first YMCA buildings) and new forms of urban culture (the billiard pool soon replaced the lecture hall, at least in the eyes of the visitors). In a still later stadium, the

ideological dimension of the Y faded away like the religious dimension had done and the organization’s function became purely social (in that later period, the YMCA started also to rent rooms, a decision that had of course a strong impact as well on the structure of the buildings).



Second, from a management and financial point of view, Lupkin examines as well the increasing tension between the original aims of the YMCA, whose driving force had been the desire of modern captains of business to fight the moral and social dangers that menaced the male workforce of incorporated capitalism, with its widening gap between employers and employees, and the necessity of becoming an incorporated business itself, with all that implied at the level of fund-raising, membership, organizational structure, and strategic policy. These transformations strongly affected the way in which the YMCA was managed as well as the public it was catering to. In the beginning, membership was not only necessary, but in practice limited to white-collar workers having left their country home in order to find a job in the city, hence the strong gender, social and ethnic undertones of social life at the Y. Women, blue-collar, immigrants, non-

whites were excluded, or rather encouraged to socialize in separate YMCA’s (for Germans or for coloured people, for example). The difficulties in coping with the changes of society as a whole are well analyzed by Lupkin, who rightly emphasizes the importance of competition between various types of organizations devoted to the construction and management of social centres, some of them explicitly religiously or ideologically oriented, others no less explicitly defending a policy of neutrality.

The great merit of Lupkin’s book, however, is not just to offer a very readable and interdisciplinary approach of a crucial social phenomenon that until now had escaped serious scholarship, but also to introduce some important hypotheses on the exceptional success of the YMCA. Ideological and social adaptability is certainly one of the major causes that explain the incredible expansion of the Y over the whole nation (and even abroad). Management culture is another, and perhaps less expected one. But also urban development and planning proved to be a decisive factor, each city being eager to host a Y that was bigger, more original or better situated than that of comparable cities (if Richard Florida would have written his book on the creative class a century ago, he would certainly have stressed to role of a well-equipped YMCA to attract and keep young promising people!). Finally, image-building and mass communication are included as well, as for instance in the very illuminating analysis of the post card fashion that invaded the US after the invention of that new medium (first launched at the Chicago World Exposition of 1893).

Lupkin succeeds in presenting

her subject with a perfect mix of sympathy and critical distance. The iconography of the book is gorgeous, and used in a way that is both efficient and permanently surprising. And the style of her writing is elegant and smooth from the very first till the very last sentence. A must-read for all those interested in American cultural history, and for all those who are looking for what interdisciplinarity in cultural studies may represent at its best.

Nancy Spero: The Work

by Christopher Lyon
Prestel Press, 2010, 312 pp.
ISBN: 978-3791344164

Reviewed by Giovanna Costantini

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Commemorated with the opening of a major retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in Paris this year (12 October-10 January, 2011), the work of Nancy Spero (1926-2009), long recognized among the most path-breaking artists of the later twentieth century, stands as testimony to a lifelong engagement with *la peinture feminine*, an epochal striving to give greater articulation and resonance to women's experience in art. In works of her maturity, she introduced into canonical discourse a dialogue with art history and memory as both the consciousness and the subject of aesthetic expression. This she conceived as the voice of women over time, a universal language long silenced by repression. Cast as *choroi* of antiquity, her openly sexual, political, and provocative female subjects represent *women as protagonists* who defy the conventions of a male-dominated

artistic history to assert their life-affirming presence in the act of creation.

She was inspired early in her career by Dubuffet who in 1951 delivered a series of lectures at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where Spero and her husband of more than 50 years, the painter Leon Golub, were art students. Spero long remembered Dubuffet's talks on language and beauty that informed her understanding of painting as a language of signs much more immediate than verbal communication, closer to the cry or the dance as an expression of the inner voice. Initially her work was composed of complex arrangements of text and inter-textual constructions, juxtapositions of poetry, expletives and declamations with miniscule figurative cut-outs of heads or headless, bodiless, contorted depictions of the self. Through combinations of literary excerpts delivered by a host of "borrowed" tongues interspersed with phrases of her own, she confronted emerging philosophical debates in art based in linguistic, literary, psychoanalytic and feminist theory that held currency during the 1970's. These ideas included appropriation, deconstruction, and concepts of *difference*, presence, and coming into being identified with Jacques Derrida, and notions of the Other, phallogentrism (*the obscene phallic weight of a tongue that prays/Artaud*), fragmentation and dimensions of the imaginary, particularly the grammatical voice of desire and *jouissance* espoused by Jacques Lacan. Spero's incorporation of reproductive imagery, compositional bi-directionality, paradox, hybrid construction, wordplay, reversal and other effects have also been linked to Laura Mulvey.

She aligned herself more fully, however with the French school of feminist theory represented by H el ene Cixous (*The Laugh of the Medusa*) and Julia Kristeva, which provided the underpinnings of her interest in semiotics, abjection, the relationship between sexuality and language, and intertextuality. The semiotic significance of Spero's polymorphic symbolism is one of the most distinctive features of her developed imagery.

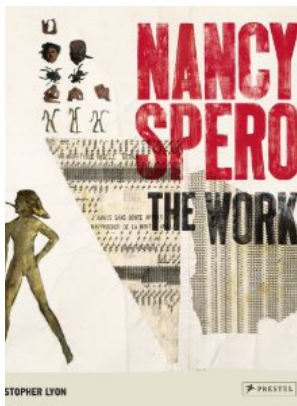
Dubuffet's conviction that the artwork should be the result of an internal struggle whose marks convey a subject's primary essence appears early in Spero's *oeuvre* as in the hallucinatory poetry of the *Codex Artaud: When a man dies he kindles a light for himself. Living. He touches death. Waking. He touches being*. Spero's existential orientation developed further through engagement with the writings of Simone de Beauvoir whose treatise *The Second Sex* detailed the oppression of women, setting forth the principle tenets of the post-1960's feminist revolt, especially the credo that *existence precedes essence*, a position that denies the social constructions of gender as it seeks the validation of difference. Spero's understanding of the connection between sex and power as it contributed to hierarchic organizations of society, abuse, discrimination, violence and war became central to her friezes of the 1970's. These positions provided the philosophical infrastructure of a shared commitment (with her husband) to figuration and history painting as a quest for meaning in a world beset with evil and injustice. More importantly, Spero's ideology, founded on a belief in moral intentionality, ethical freedom, human relatedness and artistic transcend-

ence was in sympathy with the crux of Simone de Beauvoir's secular humanism and ethical existentialism.

Against the prevailing trends of the 70's, above all abstract expressionism and minimalism which she viewed as both largely self-absorbed and insular, she remained committed to figuration, a figuration that allied her work to venerated themes of cant and dramatic ritual long associated with sacred architecture, manuscript illumination and mural painting. Intent on rescuing the female subject from denigrations of the past, her work increasingly sought to re-envision the human story as a mythic arabesque in which archaic, medieval and modern archetypes are woven into an ennobled present.

Christopher Lyon's commanding text *Nancy Spero: The Work* presents the most comprehensive survey of the artist's *oeuvre* available to date, certainly the most definitive sourcebook on her career, annotated with an extensive bibliography, exhibition history, collection record and index. While the monograph joins many other publications on the subject, including articles, dissertations and catalogues written by such respected luminaries as Hans Ulrich Obrist, Jon Bird, Lisa Tickner and Helaine Posner, Lyon's distinction is that, given full access to the Spero archive both during her lifetime and following her death, the resulting text integrates her work with relevant biographical data, wide-ranging contemporary critical and theoretical positions, formal and iconographic analysis, direct conversations, published interviews, quotations and commentary by noted art historians and curators such as Robert Storr,

Barbara Wally, Peter Scheldahl and Lucy Lippard. He availed himself of material provided by family members and galleries; an inclusive image data-base compiled by Samm Kuncze, long-time Golub/Spero studio manager; and poems, critical reviews, photographs, books and essays in Spero's possession that help to document the conceptual and iconographic framework of her production. While not a catalogue raisonné, the book sets forth Spero's overarching artistic program as a springboard for future scholarship and criticism including assessments of her contributions to modernism and postmodernism and her involvement with psychoanalytic theory and esotericism. Among its strengths are detailed analyses of Spero's evocative mixed media techniques rendered with a variety of typesets and hand-printing processes (some created with a bulletin typewriter), collage, textiles, photoengraving and mosaic.



Commissioned 10 years ago by Nancy and Leon together, Lyon's text adopts a chronology originally outlined by Leon, one especially beneficial due to Spero's overlapping sequences and methods of reworking earlier subjects over time. He traces her artistic movements

through three principal phases, from the *War Series* and *Codex Artaud* in the tradition of apocalyptic manuscripts, codices, epic poems and cantos; to the endless scrolls and friezes of her classic period which reference Egyptian funerary art, ritualistic dance and temple architecture (*The Hours of the Night, Torture of Women, Notes in Time*); to site specific installations and museum interventions applied directly to walls, windows, skylights, cornices, stairwells and rooflines over the last three decades. These increasingly collaborative works include her ever-expanding cast of stock characters (Sheela-na-gig, Dildo Dancer, Marathon Runner) in *To Soar II* at Smith College; *The Ballad of Marie Sanders* in Hellerau, Dresden; *Artemis, Acrobats, Divas and Dancers* in the Lincoln Center subway, and *Cri du Coeur* at the Galerie Lelong in New York.

The volume includes hundreds of full color illustrations spanning more than 60 years of Spero's art, many newly photographed. These permit closer appreciation of the dark, atmospheric quality of the Paris Black paintings; the muted tonalism of iconic Mothers and Children lit from within; the hand-rubbed Lovers series with smearings of ink and color underlay; and gatefolds of *Notes in Time* and the Lincoln Center mosaics that reveal the force of Spero's formal and compositional bravura. Lyon takes care to note Spero's dialectic of anguish and exultant release, sullied ground that yields to luminosity, zinc-cut stampings superimposed over evanescent tracings. He emphasizes the quintessential ephemerality of her imagery, its aleatory grace and the emotive power of space as she conceives of it. In her later work he

highlights the centrifugal movement of celebratory figures who spiral ever upward and outward. Above all, he conveys the lyric musicality of her work, its syncopated rhythms and synchronicity as a “defiant and joyful” dance of life. In so doing he does justice to her legacy, her humanity and her art as one of the twentieth century’s most gifted artists.

Among those who knew her personally, Nancy Spero will always be remembered as a model of endurance, transfiguration, and hope. To view her work in its totality resembles issuing from the 1-line at 66th Street—steel doors crash open, passengers surge forward and suddenly you are face to face with the operatic glory of Spero’s monumental golden Diva. You can hear the voices of women everywhere ringing through the tunnels as the *O Fortuna* chorus of *Carmina Burana*. Overhead you see Spero orchestrating from the studio, Sky Goddess in a golden bathing suit busting through the sky.

Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art

by Laura U. Marks

The MIT Press, 2010, 405 pp.
ISBN: 978-0262014212

Reviewed by Rob Harle

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If I had to use one word to describe this book, it would have to be *fascinating*. It is a courageous Westerner who analyses and writes about Islamic art and culture itself, but to draw parallels with new media art and develop a sophisticated aesthetic philosophy of these connections

shows a fearless and confident scholar. As she writes: “I intend to use classical Islamic thought to discuss new media art as if it were the most natural thing in the world. If someone puts down this book believing that the Mu’tazila atomists invented the pixel or that the concept of artificial life originates with the carpet weavers in the sixteenth-century Caucasus, that is fine with me” (p. 26).

Enfoldment and Infinity is a fast paced, scholarly tour de force. Mark’s depth of understanding of Islamic culture and the various philosophies that historically have been used to produce its art — including poetry, architecture, utensil decoration, music and of course carpets — is quite profound. Perhaps more than any other religion, an understanding of the political influences involved is as important as understanding the various scriptures and their interpretations. Marks considers these factors and describes clearly how and why the various forms of Islamic art were created the way they were. She argues “that new media art, considered Western, has an important genealogy in the aesthetics, philosophy, and science of classical Islam” (p. 149).

The book has a centre, colour plate section together with numerous black & white illustrations. As Marks mentions herself, the photographs cannot do justice to the texture and relief features of carpets and the domed ceilings of mosques. There are ten chapters, followed by an extensive Notes section and an excellent Index. The chapters are as follows:

1 – Getting Things Unfolded

2 – Islamic Aesthetics and New Media Art: Points of Contact

3 – The Haptic Transfer and the Travels of the Abstract Line, Part I

4 – The Haptic Transfer and the Travels of the Abstract Line, Part II

5 – The Haptic Transfer and the Travels of the Abstract Line, Part III

6 – Baghdad, 830: Birth of the Algorithm

7 – Baghdad, 1000: Origin of the Pixel

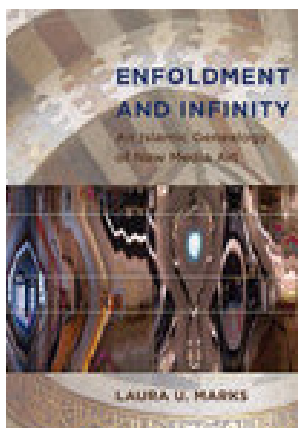
8 – Cairo, 972: Ancestor of the Morph

9 – Herat, 1487: Early Virtual Reality

10 – Karabagh, 1700: Seeds of Artificial Life

Chapter 1 is basically an introduction and description of the approach taken in the following chapters. Chapter 2 proposes several properties that are common to Islamic art, regardless of its historical period, and contemporary abstract and new media art. Chapters 3 – 5 follow the westward travels of Islamic aesthetics, from the twelfth to twentieth centuries. Chapter 4 argues that by the nineteenth century, the subjective states that accompany Islamic art had without doubt begun to manifest in Western art and popular culture. Chapter 5 suggests that Islamic aesthetics subtly informed the aesthetics of aniconism and algorithmicity in the cybernetics of the 1950s and 1960s. This chapter ponders whether networks are the haptic space of our age. Chapter 6 proposes a historical parallel to new media in art of the Sunni world from the tenth and eleventh centuries that privileged geometric forms. Chapter 7 is mainly devoted to atomism, a brief and fascinating movement in ninth-century Iraq,

which holds that the world consists of accident and fluctuation, changing at God's command. Chapter 8 looks at calligraphy whereby letters and words start to look like bodies. While chapter 7 shows that in some contexts the point or pixel is thought to be the inner limit of thought chapter 9 examines the infinitesimal dimension — the idea that the smallest point has an inside. Chapter 10 explores that unfolding is like life itself. This chapter is devoted to another fascinating commonality between new media art and much Islamic art: qualities of nonorganic life, self-organization, or autopoiesis (pp. 33 – 35).



Marks covers a huge amount of ground with this book and as such leaves her self open at times to criticism for inadequate support for her occasional “throw away” statements. As an example her brief discussion of feminist perceptions on page 145 seems trite to me and her assertion that, “Craft, in Western contexts almost always considered feminine...” is simply incorrect. Surely, the crafts of the silversmith, blacksmith, potter, cooper and so on were all male dominated. This is a minor criticism and does not detract from the importance and depth of

scholarship of the overall study.

I am surprised that Marks does not consider fractals and associated Chaos Theory in far more detail. There are a few short references throughout the book to fractals, however, given that the main subject concerns — enfoldment, immanent infinity, aniconism and the expansion from the point to infinity — I think a chapter itself devoted to an analysis and comparison of fractals (a purely new media phenomenon, not realisable without computers) would add depth to her thesis of the connection of new media art with Islamic art. Perhaps this and a far more detailed discussion concerning quantum theory, especially, field theory and the zero-point field could form the basis of further investigation. Because of its wide scope, this book will appeal to a fairly wide scope of scholars, especially critical theorists, art historians, new media artists and clearly, those interested in metaphysics.

Reframing Photography: Theory and Practice

by Rebekah Modrak and Bill Anthes

Routledge, 2010, 560 pp.

ISBN: 978-0415779203

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Since photography has become today a classic part of any academic program in art history or art theory, the number of handbooks, readers, textbooks and other course materials has increased subsequently. Yet more and more the focus of these

learning materials has shifted. In order to stress the differences between a professional training in photography and a university class in the same field, there has been a gradual split between the theoretical and the technical in the two domains. Whereas professionally trained photographers are more and more invited, if not obliged, to take into account the theoretical and historical approaches of the medium (it is no longer possible to major in photography without having an in-depth knowledge of the theoretical insights borrowed from cutting-edge aesthetics, critical theory, art history, and of course philosophy), the opposite movement has taken place in academic training, where the practical knowledge of the medium is still only rarely taught (it is perfectly possible to write an excellent PhD on photography without having taken one single picture). Despite of much lip-service being paid to the interaction of theory and practice, the benefits of this dialogue are far from being accessible to all those with an interest in the medium.

Modrak and Anthes' handbook has all the qualities to become a pioneer in the efforts to bridge the gap between the technical and the theoretical. Their work strikes a perfect balance between what one can find in technical handbooks on photography and what one should expect from a theoretically well-inspired study of the medium. The authors offer simultaneously a hands-on, “how to” manual of photography (they explain what a camera is, how it works, and how to use it) and a good overview of the most important concepts, ideas and hypotheses that have flourished in the field of photography history and theory since more or

less three decades (hence for instance the importance taken by the work of Susan Sontag, although Modrak and Anthes make impressive efforts to confront their readers with as broad a survey as possible).

What strikes, first of all, in this book are its clever and inspiring didactic qualities. Thanks to its very clear overall structure (the book is divided in four great parts: "vision", "light and shadow", "reproductive processes", and "editing/presentation/evaluation"), thanks also to its many and always well-chosen illustrations (with a good mix of technically as well aesthetically motivated pictures), and thanks finally to the global composition of the book (constructed as a real handbook, open to use in the class-room as to self-study, and well supported by an accompanying website, which Routledge promises to update on a regular basis!), *Reframing Photography* really manages to make the reader get what he or she is looking for: a synthetic introduction to "all" aspects of photography. These qualities are strong enough to overrule some technical flaws of the object itself: the print quality of several images is not as good as it should be (some illustrations are printed so small and are so dark that one hardly sees what is at stake in the chosen image), whereas the horizontal format of the book and its soft cover make its physical handling rather unpleasant (one has to put down the book on a flat surface, if not turning the pages becomes unhandy).

Another great advantage of this book is its very broad definition of photography—not only at the level of the pictures studied, which are not limited to the field of fine arts photography, but

also at that of the photographic devices and techniques, which does not fall prey to the idea that the digital turn has made all previous techniques obsolescent. On the one hand, Modrak and Anthes confront their readers with an astonishingly wide panorama of photographic pictures and uses of photography, bringing together what other studies and approaches keep apart. On the other hand, they also propose an amazingly well-made "how to do" manual of old and new techniques, featuring both a hands-on training in Photoshop (and many other software programs that any photographer and any photography scholar should know) and a detailed description and instruction of numerous apparently old-fashioned dimensions of analogue photography (which are under pressure even in professional programs).

Finally, and this is a third major achievement of the book, *Reframing Photography* does not merely juxtapose the technical and the theoretical. Modrak and Anthes succeed in showing the historical and theoretical impact and underpinnings of the technical issues they debate, while demonstrating as well how important is the knowledge of the medium's technicalities to better understand what photographers are doing and why they are doing so.

Hypertext and the Female Imaginary

by Jaishree K. Odin
University of Minnesota Press,
2010, 176 pp.

ISBN: 978-0816666706

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There are things to admire about this book. Yet there are also nagging irritations and limitations, at least for a reader who recalls fondly the momentary flourishing of hypertext literature and maintains hope for its potential and values its rich (and feminist) history worthy of debate.

Hypertext has a grand history, from its theoretical formulation by Ted Nelson, through the commercial products that enabled it—Apple Computer Inc., Hypercard, and Eastgate Systems' Storyspace—through delivery media of floppy disc, CD, the World Wide Web to more recent collectively user-constructed Web 2.0 realms. One can identify the first generation of hypermedia creatives (arguably in the majority female) as those flourishing, publishing, and presenting their works at artists' forums and conferences around 1990. Odin's book centers upon a second generation of works, from the middle of that decade into the next and seems inattentive to the foremothers.

In her introduction and first chapter "Discontinuity", Odin sets out the frameworks of postcoloniality, *différance* and metanarrative that the authors of hypertexts she examines occupy. She establishes them in the traditions of writers Leslie Marmon Silko and Toni Morrison and filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-Ha. Odin examines Trinh T. Minh-Ha's works, but it seems a stretch to call any conventionally time-based cinema work "hypertextual", as the filmmaker remains in control of sequence, as well as duration. Yet a book like Julio Cortazar's *Hopscotch*, with its author-dictated nonlinear readings, might be called a nascent hypertext, or in an

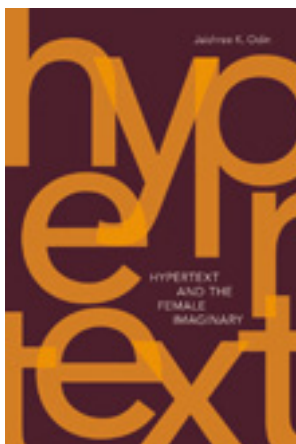
ancestral category all its own.

The second chapter “Fragmentation” builds upon and enlarges the author’s piece “Embodiment and Narrative Performance” in Judy Malloy’s 2003 anthology *Women, Art and Technology*, where Odin examined two hypertext works that probe embodiment and gender, both published by Eastgate Systems. Judy Malloy’s 1993 *its name was penelope* was a work reflecting upon women’s creativity. Shelly Jackson’s 1995 *Patchwork Girl or a Modern Monster by Mary/ Shelly and Herself* made use of a fragmented narrative of multiple threads and allusions to historic novels *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelly and *Patchwork Girl of Oz* by Frank Baum. In *Women, Art and Technology*, this work’s navigational tree map was illustrated, a helpful aid.

Chapter 3 “Multiplicity” is a very fine close reading (close clicking?) of “The Ballad of Sand and Harry Soot,” a poem by Stephanie Strickland, originally a conventionally printed project that was then published on the Web. One wonders if its author is kin to Rachel Strickland, researcher and videographer who worked with Brenda Laurel at Interval Research in the 1990s. Chapter 4 “Assemblage” similarly examines, in depth and with subtlety, M.D. Coverly’s *Califa* (2001) and *Egypt: The Book of Going Forth by Day* (2006). These two chapters may be some of the best and most attentive writing on new media, doing justice to two second-generation hypertexts.

And this is this reviewer’s big gripe: Odin seems to give short shrift to the earlier demographic, a whole generation of female hypertext authors, the groundbreakers who preceded Strickland and Coverly.

The hypertext works by Richard Powers, Stuart Moulthrop, and Michael Joyce that Odin cites are important, but less germane to the female imaginary than those of women who were active innovators two decades ago. Northern California artist-authors (visual hypertext blurs boundaries) Sonia Rappaport and Lucia Grossberger-Morales are appropriately mentioned—though neither appears in the index—but where is *Vital Journey*, *Virtual Heart* by Beverly Reiser, or Beverly Reiser and Barbara Lee’s *Private Loves/ Public Opera*?



Among Midwestern American *hypertextualistas* that remain unacknowledged in *Hypertext and the Female Imaginary*, Michigan poet and publisher Judith Kerman gave a memorable presentation at ISEA '93 (the International Symposium of Electronic Art) on hypertext poetry using her own examples published by Eastgate, and the work of several other women poets. Yet one especially regrets the omission of Colette Gaiter, her significant works developed while she taught in Minneapolis and Chicago from a book with a postcolonial focus. Gaiter’s Hypercard work *The Pyramid* wittily commented on racist

conventions of female beauty (it juxtaposed societal promise of “Separate but Equal” with undergarments to “Lift and Separate”), as well as George H.W. Bush’s campaign use of black reprobate Willie Horton. Her 1992 hypertext *easily remembered/ conveniently forgotten* critiqued both the Christopher Columbus commemorations and Clarence Thomas’ hearings for the Supreme Court. The multimedia installation *Space/RACE*, built in Macromedia Director in 1995, juxtaposed 1960s NASA astronautical aspirations and the nation’s struggle for racial equality, as remembered by this daughter of an African-American US Air Force Colonel. Gaiter subsequently created *The Natural Order of Things*, a World Wide Web-resident hypertext work giving impressions on race relations in South Africa, from travel there shortly after the fall of its apartheid regime.

Odin’s extensive bibliography contains the usual suspects’ university press books on hypertext, but her review of its literature should have taken her wider—to back issues of *Leonardo* journal, *YLEM Artists’ Using Science & Technology* newsletters, SCAN (Small Computers in the Arts) and ISEA conference programs. I fear the creative women cited above—no small inspiration to this reviewer—have been written out of the conventional histories of hypertext literature. They established the historical context in which I wish Jaishree Odin cited her own valuable, specific readings.

Odin’s fifth and final chapter “Technocracy” was clearly written before the Kindle, Nook, iPad and other electronic reading devices changed the playing field of where literature is

experienced. One suspects that this is her earliest writing on the interface of tech and art, before she came to focus on female authors, for she discusses Richard Powers' "Galatea 2.2", with its motifs of science fiction texts worked into a neural network, and Neil Stephenson's novel *The Diamond Age*. While these works are worthy of mention in any discussion of future of tech-enhanced literature, even a guy can tell that they have little to do with the female imaginary... when so many other strong works, by women, do.

Performing the Archives: The Transformation of the Archives in Contemporary Art from Repository of Documents to Art Medium

by Simone Osthoff

Antropos Press, 2009, 208 pp.
ISBN: 978-0982530900

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I believe histories of media, art, science and technology, rather than becoming a proliferation of case studies that seek to fix their place within a more established international art history canon, need to first and foremost critically engage with historiography and methodology as such, as media capable of topological performances of their own. (Simone Osthoff 2009, pp. 53)

Performing the Archives is a must read for anyone interested in the modern art history of Brazil and critical studies of media art. Certainly for the Leonardo circle, it is foundational [1]. In

revisiting the lively creative careers of Eduardo Kac, Paulo Bruscky, Villem Flusser (1940-1972), Lygia Clark (1920-1988) and Helio Oiticica (1937-1980) [2], Osthoff provides an important addition to the emerging studies of global modernisms, to the inclusive histories of movements such as mail art, conceptual art, constructivism and the neo-concrete amongst others. More specifically, her study raises fascinating questions concerning the use of archives as art and issues of techno-imagination and participatory aesthetics, telepathy and telepresence art including much else of transdisciplinary value such as performance ethics and psychotherapeutic healing. [3] *Performing the Archives* is especially useful for reflecting upon the expanding appreciation of that which was formerly excluded from the imperialist canon of American art history. The study shows how these artists worked as cultural activists through the 1960's and 1980's to preserve memories of their art, all the more important as their works had escaped commodification and to a great extent lacked international presence in its time.

In her fascinating theoretical discussions relating to the creative exploration of the intersections of art, media and archives that these artists pioneered, Osthoff's key argument is presented as the tenet of faith in the above epigraph. Therein notion of topology and topological performance runs through the book as an organizing metaphor and tactic around and through which she gathers and interprets the art historical data. Above all, she is a poetic theorist engaging art works and artist's writings to pose questions that she concludes have

no answers.

Chapter One introduces the notions of topology and topological spaces and how these concepts inform the artists' works and her understanding of the importance of those works for art history. For instance, in the case of Lygia Clark's work, Osthoff proposes that topological characteristics are prevalent in the Neo-Concrete work in the early 1960's and help to explain the fluidity of relations between the art works themselves, the artists' writings about those art works and the archives they created to record how those art works came about as well as their subsequent exhibition as art. In the case of Kac, she emphasizes the explicit connections between the artistic process, research and theory. Therein she embraces Flussers notion that art making is a form of theorizing, a type of science, and most controversially that science itself is a form of fiction. As I understand it, critique aside, what the notion of topology allows Osthoff to do is to bring together an extraordinarily diverse set of phenomenon, practices and influences, histories, technologies and philosophies.

Gazing across the table of contents evokes how deeply she has been inspired by Bruscky's "experimental exercise of freedom", how she has taken on his maxim that "whatever one man [woman] imagines, others can achieve." From archives alive to pervert's guides, from the history of the devil to evolution and progress as evil to Brazilian tropical utopia, from cannibalist tactics to cocaine guerillas, carnival and violence, porno-poetry, holopoetry, telepresence, body generating electronic archives, to the experimental bio art and electronic media life of *Rara*

Avis and *Rabbit Remix*, Kac's Cyborg, who in critical media or cultural studies could resist adding such a book to their archives?



It is however most unfortunate that there is no index. What is an index other than an archive of ideas in a book that allows for enhanced audience response and participation, the very goals of these artist's works? In any event, that minor but unfortunate issue aside, the point is that each of these artists as theorists have put ideas and art works into circulation that seductively call for creative elaboration. Osthoff, inspired has in turn created a topological approach to art writing as a response to the ongoing crisis in art criticism. That allows her to propose where these artists' works might fit in an ever changing and expanding, increasingly contested and inclusive modern art history. She also proposes a second-degree criticism based on Flusser's concept of techno-imagination and argues that archives are alive.

In essence, *Performing the Archives* relates how these transnational Brazilian artists used sensorial experiences and various media to transform audiences into participants - amongst

much else. Indeed, the range of topics as referred to above is dazzling and worth re-iterating. From the negative aesthetics of anti-heroes to the aesthetics of circulation and reproduction, from *Supra-Sensorial Parangolés* to ambivalent tropical modernity and exile ethics, from copyart to teleart, body art to data base, from networks as mediums to news media archives as art mediums, this book is not only a powerfully interesting intellectual performance but surprisingly readable.

Though Osthoff proposes that topology provides a new form of art historical discourse consonant with the nature of these artists' lives, works and participatory practices, one might yet ask however whether one could equally effectively approach all the issues raised here without recourse to a topological discourse? [4] Does Osthoff's inter-subjective topological approach really provide us with fundamentally new ways of understanding the "historization" of art and the "general crisis" in art criticism? Perhaps. And is there really effectively no difference between fact and fiction, art and science?

Art historians and others working in the field of archival studies might find it fascinating to consider the three stated studies relevant to the interpretations at hand: Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1996), Ann Reynold's morphological methodology in *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere* (2003) and Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repository* (2001). It would be interesting to consider all four studies in relation to each other as for instance in Taylor's case where she considers the hegemonic function of text-based archives over visual

and aural media. In any event, Osthoff is clearly a Derridean and a Flusser devout and wherever one's sympathies may lie in those regards, this is a wonderful book well worth reading. *Performing the Archive* is at once eccentric, highly eclectic and daring.

Notes

[1] See "A Radical Intervention: Brazilian Electronic Art", a Leonardo Special Project: Documents, Essays and Manifestoes at: <http://www.leonardo.info/isast/spec.projects/brazil.html>. Guest editor: Eduardo Kac.

[2] For easy access, See Jacobo Crivelli Visconti's "Paulo Bruscky: In Praise of the Fleeting" http://www.artaldia.com/International/Contents/Artists/Paulo_Bruscky, accessed March 14, 2011. On Villem Flusser, see <http://www.flusser-archive.org/aboutflusser/biography>. On Eduardo Kac, see <http://www.ekac.org/>. On Helio Oiticica's and Lygia Clark, see Simon Osthoff's article on line article at www.leonardo.info/isast/spec.projects/osthoff/osthoff.html. On the increasing inclusiveness of American art and the case of Oiticica see Roberta Smith's "A Short Intense Career Marked by Vibrant Color" in The New York Times March 17, 2007, accessed at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/17/arts/design/17oit.html?_r=1. Finally for concise descriptions of Lygia Clark's work especially her use of the power of art objects in the therapeutic treatment of psychological trauma as well as useful links, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lygia_Clark.

[3] Eduardo Kac is in all this an exemplary case of an artist as theoretician. See James Elkins "Foreword", in Kac's *Telepresence and Bio Art, Networking Humans, Rabbits and Robots* (2005). Also see Didier Ottinger, "Eduardo Kac in Wonderland," in *Rabbit Remix* exhibition catalog (2004).

[4] Topology is a mathematical subject regarding disambiguation or the preservation of spatial properties under continuous deformation. The classic instance is the Mobius strip and amongst mathematicians the possibility of transforming a torus into a coffee cup as can be seen in a moving 3D image at <http://en.wikipedai.org/wiki/Topology>. The essential issue is that the geometry of the object depends on the way an object is put together rather than on its shape. Perhaps what Osthoff means is that art

criticism of the works of these artists needs to be articulated in terms of relations other than the classic notions of perspective theory and quality etc which in any event have been something of a dead whipping horse in critical art history for many years. It would be interesting to see how authors such as James Elkin's and John Tagg respond to Osthoff's study. As for those working at the intersection of art and science, while the artists work on the transgenic and on psychological treatment of trauma are fascinating indeed, the notion that science is a form of inter-subjective fiction will be the axis around which opinion must divide.

Laughter – Notes on a Passion

by Anca Parvulescu

The MIT Press, 2010, 208 pp.

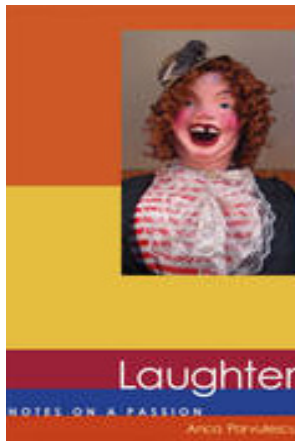
ISBN: 978-0262514743

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Parvulescu's Introduction to the subject of laughter is extremely comprehensive and, at times, somewhat convulsive. The scope of the book ranges from laughing as incantation, the matter of laughing at, passion, the mouth, the last avant-gardes, woman, reading/listening and finally the archive of laughter, and in setting this out the author touches on so many intriguing aspects of laughter that there is an almost irresistible temptation for her to stray into domains that distract from the subject rather than add to it. This is especially the case when she explains the subtitle and the initial framing of the book. Laughter in this book is returned to the passions and while the history of laughter does not necessarily have to be funny, the author has structured the book in such a way that each of the chapters revolve around an anecdote as well as a central figure which turns out to be such a tight corset that it leaves little

room for actual laughter.



Parvulescu's main target is to return to the materiality of laughter itself. In this regard the image of a laughing puppet on the cover summarizes its key discussion which is not so much the why and what about of laughter as the how and where. The book comprises of five chapters: on the civilizing of laughter; modernism – or an extravagance of laughter; the philosophical avant-gardes – or the community of laughers; feminism – or “she’s beautiful and she’s laughing” and finally cinema – or the laughing gas party. It is a narrow spectrum of the topic and can hardly be said to deliver an objective archive of laughter but perhaps that is not the intention, although it immediately draws attention to what is left out. Starting the book with the civilization of laughter this chapter also delivers an extensive overview on how society tried to deal with ‘the savage’ and kill it so to speak. In the discussion of laughter by the philosophical avant-garde or feminists, the central figures (Bataille and Cixous) connect laughter with death as does the chapter on cinema in which most of the laughter that Parvulescu discusses in this is produced by actors that

have died a long time ago.

Perhaps this morbid fascination should be expected since in opening with Nietzsche’s, “It is the past – the longest, deepest, hardest of pasts – that seems to surge up whenever we turn serious”, Parvulescu of course sets the tone of a book which is very explicitly about laughter in the past tense. As a consequence as an archive of laughter it necessarily lacks the immediate aspects of the actual act of laughter – even in an historic context. This could have been recovered with perhaps a broader brush to include the impact of laughter on art. For example Zürich Dada’s highly influential reinstatement of laughter in Modernism (which is discussed in this book mainly in terms of Afro-American culture) about which Hans Richter wrote:

“The unprofessionals and art historians recognised us more by our laughter than by anything we did. Because of our external and internal perceptive powers we were aloof from the world of the petty bourgeois. [...] we laughed to our heart’s delight. In this way we destroyed, affronted, ridiculed and laughed. We laughed at everything. We laughed at ourselves, as we did at the kaiser, king, and fatherland, beerbellies, and pacifiers. We took our laughter seriously; it was our very laughter that guaranteed the seriousness of our anti-art activities in our efforts to find ourselves.”[1]

This creative insistence on the what, how and effect of laughter is perhaps the ‘dog that does not bark’ in this book. However fascinating as an (partial) archive of laughter, history (and the medium of the book) Laughter - Notes on Passion apparently leaves no place for actual

laughter and that seems almost perverse given the subtitle. But to its great credit it places a key topic on the agenda for those interested in art and culture (and for that matter the sciences and technology) which is that although it is a largely private and apparently unpredictable reaction it has great resonance with where we are and how we view the world as a cultural habitat. Parvelescu says as much in her introduction: "Drawing on its musical overtones, the teacher writes "notes", around which she and her students improvise. Crucial in any note-writing exercise is the interval, the energetic white space between the islands of writing, where the interesting swimming happens." The burst of laughter may have been theorized to death; however, this book definitely inspires to write others on these white spaces and to bring laughter and its determining influences alive.

References

[1] Hans Richter, *Dada : Kunst und Antikunst* (Cologne: DuMont, Schauberg, 1964), 66f.]

Surrounded By Waves

by Jean-Christophe Ribot

Icarus Films, 2009

DVD, 52 min.

Distributor's website: <http://icarusfilms.com>

Reviewed by Rob Harle

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I was quite keen to review this film as I thought it might give clear incontrovertible evidence of the dangers posed to humans from electromagnetic radiation fields. Unfortunately, the film does not provide this. As those concerned with this issue know only too well, the literature is

controversial, contradictory, and extremely confusing. This is precisely the reason why the film cannot provide definitive answers. This observation notwithstanding, the film is extremely enlightening, well made, and a must-see for anyone vaguely concerned about neurodegenerative diseases, brain tumours, and a whole host of other health issues thought to be caused by these invisible waves. *Surrounded by Waves* by Jean-Christophe Ribot is very well researched and presents a balanced assessment of the evidence and current research, which interestingly is mainly conducted in Europe. If we read between the lines (or look between the frames as it were), I am sure most viewers will find some sobering facts. The film in DVD format runs for 52 minutes, is in colour, mainly in English with subtitles when necessary. The camera work and audio are both very good; one minor criticism is that some of the shots, a young man talking on a cell phone for example, are used too repetitively.



This film is as much about human nature and its intractability as it is about invisible waves. We are seeing exactly the same scenario now (2010) with cell phone (ab)-use as we have in the past with asbestos, massive indiscriminate use of insecticide and herbicide sprays, the tobacco industry and various pharmaceutical drugs such as thalidomide. That is - lies, deception, cover-ups and deliberately biased scientific reports to keep

the general public in a state of somnambulism. The stakes are very high indeed for the major players in the telecommunications industry, both manufacturers and service providers. I use the example of cell phones as this film concentrates mainly on these amazing, ubiquitous devices. There is little discussion about electrical house wiring, high voltage power lines, emissions from computer screens and so on. The film I believe would have benefited from a little more discussion in these areas.

If you doubt the deception concerned with the examples above, a little research will show that the dangers of asbestos were well known many years prior to legislation against its use. Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* showed without doubt the toxic environmental effects of such poisons as Dieldrin and 245T. She was hounded and threatened and attempts were made to discredit her scientific evidence by those with profit-at-any-cost agendas. When I hear a neurosurgeon from Royal Brisbane Hospital in Australia saying there is no doubt that excessive cell phone use (as demonstrated by numerous teenagers world wide) produces brain tumours, that there is a huge increase in the prevalence of such tumours, they are always on the side of the brain where the phone is used, what can I think? He is in despair because these tumours are increasingly becoming inoperable. Then, I hear some PR person for a cell phone manufacturer saying there is no evidence that these phones cause tumours? The film shows independent research laboratories, funded by cell phone companies that consistently fail to replicate results of other laboratories. Very

strange! Olle Johansson's lab in Sweden was the first to show the detrimental effects of Agent Orange. In this film his warnings are well worth taking seriously. Electro hypersensitivity is officially recognised in Sweden as a disability.

There is indisputable evidence that RF (radio frequency) waves can cause cancers. Radar operators from WWII and amateur ham radio operators have far higher incidences of cancer, especially leukaemia, than the general population. So, the real question is not *if*, but *how much* exposure (intensity, proximity, and so on) is a safe limit with these waves. The various scientists interviewed throughout the film stress the importance of finding these safe limits.



I bought a small Electromagnetic Field Detector that shows the levels of electromagnetic radiation so that I can assess which of our appliances were potentially dangerous. The microwave oven is not safe when in use within two metres! The cordless phone presents no danger at all, similarly with the computer screen. All electric motors present danger at close (30cm) proximity. I mention these readings from this detector for interest sake only and do not suggest that the readings are a scientific fact, though they may well be.

This film is well worth viewing so that you can make up your own mind concerning the invisible waves and, perhaps, take appropriate *reasonable* precautions to safeguard your health.

New Realisms 1957-1962: Object Strategies Between Readymade and Spectacle

by Julia Robinson (ed.)

The MIT Press, 2010, 294 pp.

ISBN: 978-0262515221

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This catalogue for a major exhibition (at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid) makes a strong case for rethinking, repositioning, and ultimately redeeming the fraught term "New Realism" in postwar art history. It argues as well for the inclusion into the art historical canon of works that, falling chronologically somewhere between the emergence of Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol—and far messier than either's—have received scant scholarly attention relative to their historical import. Strategies developed by an international array of artists in a few short years set the stage for everything from pop to performance, conceptualism to land art, institutional critique to installation and new media. The 200+ works in the show, by some thirty artists, among them Jean Tinguely, Robert Whitman, and George Brecht, are diverse, provocative, frequently difficult to categorize and, in their ephemerality, oftentimes hard to collect and preserve.

As the book's introduction by the exhibition's organizer Julia Robinson makes clear, the idea of new realism, although almost self-evident as a counter-trend to abstract expressionism, has

long been a problematic one. As a translation of the French term "Nouveau Réalisme," it shares that movement's lack of programmatic coherence. And if the 1962 exhibit at Sidney Janis Gallery, "New Realism," marked the triumphal emergence of American pop art (Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, etc.), it also, as Robinson shows, led to the shunting aside of the European variants and precedents, featured in the show but critically dismissed and even mocked in the American press.

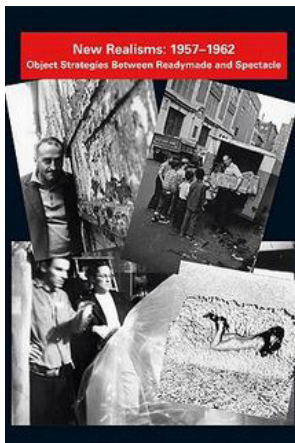
Still, "new realism" may be a most apt term to describe the freewheeling proliferation of object-based artistic interventions at the dawn of the 1960s, not only Nouveau Réalisme but happenings and proto-Fluxus events. Robinson uses the plural, "new realisms," broadly to refer to this international range of performative practices that recast the Duchampian readymade as commodity, display, and spectacle. This was, she argues, a critical moment in history, when one dominant mode of artistic production and dissemination (abstract paintings, supported by an increasingly official modern art establishment) gave way both to a new aesthetic (assemblage, happenings, installations) and to alternative exhibition venues, notably the upstart galleries of Iris Clert in Paris and Anita Reuben and Martha Jackson in New York—significantly, all three run by women. With a subtle understanding of the emerging international art world, Robinson traces a common thread linking Yves Klein's *Void* of 1958 and Claes Oldenburg's *Store* of a few years later. Eschewing national bias and a monographic approach, her larger project is an important contribution to a field often characterized by one

or both.

A set of three scholarly essays offers new insights into the presentational strategies and theoretical underpinnings of the Nouveau Réalistes, an occasional group of artists, mostly French, assembled and promoted by critic Pierre Restany. Critically maligned but commercially successful, Nouveau Réalisme has lately begun to get the serious treatment in Anglo-American scholarship that it deserves (see Meredith Malone's excellent 2006 dissertation, "Nouveau Réalisme: Performative Exhibition Strategies and the Everyday in Post-WWII France," University of Pennsylvania). In this volume, Hannah Feldman, Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen, and Ágnes Berecz each focus on a little-known aspect of the group. Especially welcome is Berecz's nuanced deconstruction of the critic-impresario Restany's rhetoric, its aims in France and abroad, and its problematic reception in a transatlantic context.

Also, reprinted here is a large portion of Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's 1971 essay "Formalism and Historicity," which essentially launched the field, and defined the terms, of post-war European art history in the United States. In a new introduction Buchloh acknowledges that the dichotomy he originally proposed between American formalism and European "historicity" or dialectical materialism, as well as the oppositional status he accorded certain Europeans in contrast to their history-blind counterparts, may no longer hold in a global art market that readily absorbs every opposition. The essay as edited here to focus on late 1950s and early 1960s work, however, remains presci-

ent in its bold departure from linear narratives of postwar art. (One exception: Buchloh's off-hand dismissal of Yves Klein's importance for future artists, which the catalogue's editor tries diplomatically to qualify, appears increasingly to have been proved wrong.)



Despite their fresh inclusions, the book's texts have notable lacunae. Christo is well represented in the expansive exhibit but not discussed in the rather narrowly targeted essays. Ditto Yayoi Kusama, Piero Manzoni, Daniel Spoerri, and others. More to the point, the innovative 1962 exhibit "Dylaby" (Dynamic Labyrinth) at the Stedelijk Museum in 1962 was a watershed event not only in the short saga of New Realism but in the larger and still unfolding history of interactive installation art. While appearing in the catalogue illustrations (and one of its seven individually-designed galleries, Martial Raysse's *Beach*, covered in depth in Butterfield-Rosen's essay), "Dylaby" merited its own chapter, or at least greater attention.

Clearly, the essays tended to go for depth of analysis while the exhibit tried also to make a case for breadth, attempting to

recover something of the era's "international diversity still too often reduced," as Robinson rightly puts it. At the back of the catalogue, a chronology compiled by Billy Klüver, Julie Martin, and Hedi Sorger features numerous artists and activities beyond those appearing in the show, such as those of the German group Zero. But other figures to whom the term "new realisms" surely applies, including the entire West-coast contingent of American assemblage artists or any number of contemporaries active in Asia and South America, do not come into play here. To point this out is not so much to criticize (with its 30 artists, the show offers an abundance of revelations) but merely to observe the extent of the phenomenon, something that confirms Robinson's basic thesis. Rarely if ever have five years seen the nature of art so completely transformed, and in so many places. Pluralism and post-modernism followed.

Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas

by Rebecca Solnit

University of California Press, 2010, 167 pp.

ISBN: 978-0520262508

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This reviewer lived in San Francisco for a decade in the last century, then forty-five miles away for its final dozen years. This book is adventurous, attentive, uneven, well-trodden yet revealing, much like the city it maps. An atlas of 22 maps; each map has an essay to accompany it. The essays are sometimes perceptive, sometimes more like

Sunday newspaper magazine writing, for the style and substance of the contributors varies.

There are, however, numerous excellent maps, and informative essays by Rebecca Solnit and others that accompany them. “Shipyards and Sounds: The Black Bay Area Since World War II” is nicely followed by “Fillmore: Promenading the Boulevard of Gone”, a major African American cultural center (my residence 1978-81, though by then no longer the nightclub-filled “Harlem of the West”). She erroneously says that Punk rock concerts were held at Reverend Jim Jones’ Peoples’ Temple, not the turn-of-the-century Congregation Beth Israel synagogue next door to it on Geary Street, called by music promoters Temple Beautiful, though all appear properly labeled on cartographers Ben Pease and Shizu Siegel’s map. This lapse is forgiven, as Solnit says she arrived in town in 1980, just as the concerts all stopped. She does mention the block as the site of the Clash’s first US concert; for contractual reasons, the flyers didn’t name them but called them “THE ONLY ENGLISH BAND THAT MATTERS” and their fans understood.

“The Mission: North of Home, South of Safe” delineates Latin American institutions and agencies that serve that community, as well as the blocks supposedly under the domination of the Norteño and Sureño gangs. What does that really mean on a daily basis, to residents and small business owners? Adriana Camarena’s impressionistic essay and its interviews paint a memorable picture but skirts that question. The map superimposes the U.S.-Mexico border as snaking between about 27th and 30th Streets, a nice touch.

“Tribes of San Francisco” broadly show some ethnic distributions, as if there’s no overlap (i.e., between Gays, Whites and Hipsters near Church Street?). Mostly the map’s an excuse for carefully drawn figures in colored pencil by Jaime Cortez, much like Dugald Stermer’s illustrations in the 1980s.



“The Lost World: South of Market, 1960, Before Redevelopment” shows the low-rent community before the demographic cleansing to produce the Yerba Buena convention center district; why San Franciscans of a certain age spit at mention of the name Justin Herman, the 1960s head of the Redevelopment Agency.

One can jump between “The Third Street Phantom Coast”, showing the shoreline at about the time of the Gold Rush, and “Once and Future Waters” juxtaposes nineteenth century bodies of water (like the Mission district’s Lago des Duendes, which my wife always thought should be allowed to surface) and the likely shoreline of a century from now, should global warming continue and coastal waters all rise.

San Francisco likes its history, and has engendered unique his-

torians. One of the best essays here is by Chris Carlsson on the industrial waterfront. A map of its past factories also includes the bars that opened at 6:00 a.m. to serve workers coming off the midnight shift. Author of both vibrant political histories and interesting future fiction (some shows a San Francisco of canals), autodidact and a typesetter-editor by trade, Carlsson has long been dedicated (see www.shapingsanfrancisco.org) to Howard Zinn-like excavation and publication of alternative and oppositional histories. He was a founder of the first Critical Mass bicycle events who sees his activism fitting into the historic radical traditions of his city.

Some juxtapositions upon a single map are inspired, like showing both violent deaths and Monterey pines, coffee shops with water and sewer system, centers of fine dining and wines vs. toxic polluters of the region. To contrast centers of gay and lesbian life with various species of butterflies found in the hills of San Francisco—some species endangered—brings a smile. Mona Caron illuminated this map with a nice painting of a bearded gay man in the nun’s habit of the Sisters of the Perpetual Indulgence troupe among similarly-fluttering butterflies. One map shows the biographies of four centenarians, and trajectories their movement around and out of the city. Fortunately they were spared eviction, like octogenarian Lola McKay, who soon died after her 2000 eviction from her apartment in the Mission. Meanwhile, evictions are depicted as grim red marks on the same map. A few maps feel a bit forced, like “Dharma Wheels and Fish Ladders”, which juxtaposes salmon migrations and Soto Zen centers. No logical correlation between

the two, but OK I guess.

There is a certain impatience welling up in the reader as the last maps approach; how's the author going to wrap this thing up? A logical ending to the book might have been the map of sites Solnit's personal history, all mapped along with those of her old friend Guillermo Gomez-Peña's, as if the two are nursing cognacs in their easy chairs. But it is followed by several more maps, including John LaFarge's phrenological map of the city as a great head in profile. Slight as it is, stretching the party game to map personality attributes to neighborhoods, LaFarge earns points for citing a demographic of people "who remember when the Dovre Club was in the Women's Building"; that's where I frequented (and was briefly employed by) the publican from Dublin Pat Nolan's memorable dive. The final map, "The Forty-Nine Jewels of San Francisco" assembles a great list of non-commercialized places to visit, cheap dates for young or mature couples like the wave organ, bison herd or Sutro Baths ruins. Mona Caron's murals and some other notable public artworks are included. Some landmarks, like the two pieces of the 17 REASONS WHY sign that long towered over 17th and Mission Streets, need special arrangement to be viewed, but that's not out of the realm of possibility.

Allison Pebworth's line drawings on the title page mash-up the city's various architectures over time, while an Ohlone canoe of 1750 spotting a container ship of 2010. The lettering of the title on the book's cover would make a good tattoo, sprouting both floral and biotech DNA motifs. Unfortunately, unlike useful guidebooks and accordion-fold

maps with durable laminated covers that withstand frequent use, *Infinite City's* covers are of an unvarnished cardboard that soaks up ever fingerprint and displays any grease spots in perpetuity. Perhaps the book designer Lia Tjandra was inspired by the matte covers of poetry and literature from (formerly-) northern California publisher Black Sparrow Press. The interior design is handsome, but there are some maps where streets and locations get lost in the gutter between pages, and the reader wishes a margin had been put there instead.

As with another recent celebration of the city by the bay, Annice Jacoby's rich but problematic *Street Art San Francisco* (2009, Abrams), there are often more snippets of information here—in Jacoby's case, visual—than are satisfyingly given context. As with the murals, stencils and graffiti tags in Jacoby's book, there are many, many stories yet to be told in the streets and streams of Solnit's book of maps. Yet every journey to, or within, San Francisco must begin with a single, comfortably shod step, so let it be here. This atlas is a good place to start.

Mashup Cultures

by Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss (ed.)
Springer, 2010, 256 pp.
ISBN: 978-3709100950

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This collection of essays is a celebration of global, peer-to-peer participation in social media, which is certainly impacting culture and education, in its span of concerns from the

classroom to the world. Mizuko Ito discusses post-Pokemon media for children in Japan, where there is a convergence of old and new media forms that encourage hyper-social participation, even a degree of authoring, through personalization and remix. The arenas that allow this most thoroughly are Yugioh and Hamtaro. Yugioh is a consumers' constellation of serialized manga, card and video games, movies, and miscellaneous chara (cartoon character) merchandise. One survey in 2000 found that EVERY Japanese student in the third grade owned Yugioh cards. Each child regularly purchased five cards—cost, about a dollar—and there exists a robust collectors' market for single cards outside of the five-packs. The culture of tournaments and new releases is covered in Shonen Jump Weekly, where the comic also appeared. Hamtaro is a similar arena, but catering to girls, featuring a little girl character's pet hamster. The hamster stories have spawned book, an animated film in 2000 and over 50 hamster games. Some games determine which pet is the right one for your friends, or matches couples much as would a horoscope, has contests for drawing the various chara (or the Pokemon characters). Hamtaro has also spawned an active amateur comics scene.

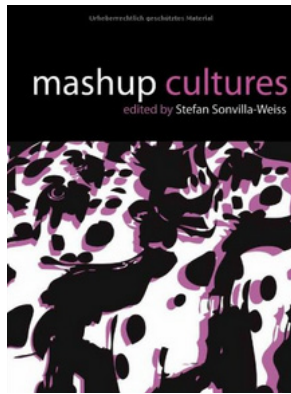
In Christina Schwalbe's essay "Change of Media, Change of Scholarship, Change of University" begins with a concept of Regis Debray, who so memorably divided the political planet into three worlds a generation ago during the cold war. More recently Debray has defined three mediospheres: the logosphere of words, the graphosphere of graphics, the videosphere of television. To that

Schwalbe adds a now evolving digital mediosphere, containing the increasingly mashed-up scholarly research, publication, discussion, disputation, and function of academic dissertations. To this she adds further comments on the European university and its evolution.

Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss, the program director of a “Learning Intensive Society”. Her wide-ranging essay weaves together crowdsourcing, GPS child-tracking, social networking, bookmarking of blogs, RSS feeds, redefining new media literacy in the public and the amateur media artist. She cites the movie *RIP* as one digest of the issues. Ours is an era of culture hacking and civil engagement, from the culture jamming trivial flash mobs to the Pirate Party in Sweden and Germany, and looks to the philosopher Slavoj Žižek on complicity. Elsewhere, Wey-Han Tan condemns disruptive un-usability in some educational games, which devalues the game to zero once you don’t want to play it again. Transmediacy in Japan is praised as giving a unifying experience to gameplay. The end result is a metagaming: awareness, sharing, hacking.

In “A Classroom 2.0 Experiment”, Noora Spula and Joni Leinc employ an interactive wall projection system, 3D scanner, video project of online participation. Technology allows the ancient tradition of the campfire storyteller to expand into virtual reality and (eventual, they predict) telepathy. Brenda Castro presents a Virtual Art Garden, online GUI collaboration produced as a learning community for study of historical images as “plants”, paintings viewed for scholarly understanding between the digital foliage. Adobe

Breeze, the virtual world *Second Life*, the data glove and light pen all figured in various experiments in an ubiquitous computing model enhancing and enlivening the classroom. In other chapters, Tere Vaden of Wikiworlds personal Finnish University is interviewed by Juha Varto, and David Gauntlett shares answers he solicited on Web 2.0 issues, finding its origins in 1980s bulletin boards.



Gauntlett notes an ongoing evolution of media manipulation into a hobby not a job. In one of the most theoretical of the essays here focused on transformations in the arts, Eduardo Navas’ taxonomy of mashups breaks into discreet genera. The first is that of Regressive mashups, said to occur after two or more previously released songs are mashed. Frederick Jameson, J.-F. Lyotard and Theodor Adorno’s theory of regression are all mustered in support, and the Macintosh graphic user interface introduced as mashup of a desktop metaphor. Reflexive mashup, such as a news feed, regulate constant change with respect to the work’s remix history. Examples of this kind are Jamaican dub mixes, or disco remixes for longer stretches of nonstop dancing, that add and subtract audio elements. The Reflexive

remix both require and showcases the track’s history. Finally, Regenerative remixes are ahistorical updates that change the initial musical or audio data itself. But the mashup historian’s question is: do Regenerative remixes mark an end to critical distance, in a youth culture where ahistoricity is the norm?

Doris Gassect brings up *Fight Club* (1999) content and form, questioning the aesthetics of narrative in its process to digital form. Torsten Meyer contemplates writers block and its solution when posed with the enormity of the world. The writer contrasts the art exhibition Documenta 11, which was multi-site, disorganized, not user-friendly, with friendlier books, citations, and cyberhistory (an examination of CERN and its role in creation of the World Wide Web). Meyer years for some organizing principle, like Brunelleschi’s perspective, productively imposed upon the architecture of his Florentine Baptistry.

Alex Bruns calls the act of remixing mashups “produsage”, a term which appropriately reads like sausage. A process dating back to 1920s Dada collages, it now flourishes in Wikipedia, Flickr, YouTube and Wikileaks. It is encouraged under the Creative Commons standard, where media is considered open source, unfinished and continuous, common property, probably giving the originator more intellectual rewards and citation than financial ones. Guitarist Robert Fripp said the pop music industry is “founded on exploitation, oiled by deceit, riven with theft and fueled by greed”. Note that the online newsletter *Rock & Rap Confidential* often headlines articles under the category *Who Needs the Record*

Industry?

Some mashup models call to mind the Museum of Jurassic Technology in California, a site of fiction that helps one to understand a greater truth about our understanding of science. Henry Jenkins—long interested in established and emerging artists’ contexts—documents the Macarthur Foundation-funded Project New Media teacher’s guide, and the use of Ricardo Pitts-Wiley’s “Moby Dick: Then and Now” at Rhode Island Correctional facility. This remix might be compared to DJ Spooky’s “Birth of a Nation” remix (or this reviewer’s own 1990 “Hucklefine” Macintosh Hypercard reworking of Huckleberry Finn). Pitts-Wiley collaborated with young men in prison, who chose this classic to update because they were in agreement that the book was “All about the money!” Residents in the facility contributed metaphors of the color white, where the drug industry serves as whaling, Elijah sees the attack on New York on 9/11, and Ishmael is a Navy Seal with a dishonorable discharge for his drug habit. Jenkins laments that schools ignore other versions of a work in pop media of the classics, such as the myriad movie versions (which are watched intently in English literature classes in other nations, like Japan). One solution was that discovered by Tim Rollins and K.O.S., (Kids of Survival) in the 1980s, a struggling high school literature teacher and his students who painted upon the pages of a text. Melville’s *Moby Dick* itself is often cited as a mashup, for its a raft of digressions, but what about the last two great whales of novels by James Joyce? Jenkins asserts that we all have the right—or obligation!—to revise, retell, remix the classics. A remix is then

good if, rather than superficial or arbitrary, the new, ensuing work is aesthetic, meaningful and generative.

We Can Change The Weather – 100 Cases of Changeability

by Marleen Wynants
CROSSTALKS Vub Press,
2010, 224 pp.
ISBN: 978-9054876922

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This is the fourth CROSSTALKS book coming out of the academic and corporate networking talks launched by Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2003. Projects tackled so far have been Smart Logistics, Energy Efficiency, Sustainability and Changeability, Prosperity without Growth?, Bridges over Troubled Water, Cleantech and Transparency in Healthcare, resulting in the publications *How Open is the Future?* (2005), *Brave New Interfaces* (2007), *In Sickness and in Health* (2009), and this *We Can Change the Weather*.

We Can Change The Weather offers, as Operational Director Marleen Wynants puts it in her introduction, tangible initiatives instead of “more political talk, more reports on climate change and unstable financial markets, more reports on resource depletion and pollution.” As the title suggests, the book is a collection of 100 cases of change or changeability taking as its premise that we have changed the weather and how it is changing us. The explicit “holistic” approach is expressed in the fact that the cases originate from

scientific researchers, architects, artists, political thinkers and entrepreneurs, true to the idea of sharing knowledge and stimulating creativity in search of sustainability that is behind all the CROSSTALKS projects. The result is thus a mixture of both quite hands-on solutions and more philosophical visions, differing in terms of scale and approach.

In taking for its headline a quote from literature, namely one by Marcel Proust (“A change in the weather is sufficient to recreate the world and ourselves”), the original scope of the book is clearly set. Every case has been assigned two pages, not unlike the Pecha Kucha format that the CROSSTALKS introduced in 2007. Trying to state a case in such a confined format has obviously its pros and cons. Sometimes the cases are mainly a thought-provoking suggestive (visual) statement; at other times the contributors succeed in making a clear point. The order in which the cases are presented seems to be somewhat arbitrary: they do not follow an alphabetical order or one according to discipline. As a consequence, the temptation is to flip to and fro through the book, getting lost in a world of possible solutions some of which have actually been tested and others that are just speculative proposals or are in various stages of development. Overall the word “holistic” returns regularly in the contributions, as in a take on Ecotherapy and Ecopsychology – “A holistic, human ecological, psychological and philosophical approach to a society and planet in crisis”. Other suggestions in this same vein are those urging the choice for macrobiotic or vegetarian food. But this does not mean that the book solely opts for what in this context is

more obvious alternative way of life. It opens, for instance, quite surprisingly with the case of JDS Architects who have been asked to develop a part of a city in Shenzhen, China. This is an unusually large development of some 2,5 million square meters and, following the principles of Feng Shui, opts for designs that are preferably 666, 888 or 1111 meters tall. The discussion of this project raises the question for the architects why urban growth should require the erasure of public space and nature.



On a relatively smaller scale François Jegou, director of the Brussels-based design research company Strategic Design Scenarios, questions whether it is possible to design products that influence users towards new and more sustainable behaviours, for example by introducing particular switches. Simon Dewulf of CREAX that aims at energy sufficiency in R&D gives recycling a new meaning when it is not only applied to recycling cars in a take on Industrial Ecology at Delft University of Technology, but also to recycling knowledge across domains. Other contributions deal with aspects such as creative ecologies (as practiced by Culture Lab at Newcastle University) or the use of renewable energy in the Dutch theatre production Eager To

Know. The project 'Laptops Unite!' seeks to raise awareness by creating a super computer for climate simulation by, tapping into their potentially huge computing power when laptops worldwide are connected. In a similarly informed response Takashi Ikegami, both a physicist and 'a maker of artworks', is developing a Mind Time Machine that needs to run all day in a public space and as a consequence asks for a new kind of sustainability.

Sustainability in *We Can Change The Weather* is researched in a wide variety of domains ranging from architecture, design, food, industry, R & D and art, the results of which in the end all feed back into each other. In this respect the book definitely offers a wide range of thought provoking cases although, unfortunately, it is not a practical book – an index of keywords would have been helpful – but, that said it is important book in that it demonstrates how the most diverse researchers try to find new transdisciplinary ways of dealing with our planet in peril. What would be especially interesting is to see how these ideas will hold or develop over a period of five, ten years and to give the book thus the dynamic status it asks for. ■

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