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## EPISODE - new anthology, published by Artword Press, London

{tab=Synopsis}

Title: Episode: Pleasure and Persuasion in Lens-based Media

Edited by: Amanda Beech, Jaspar Joseph-Lester, Matthew Poole

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Media-culture is an undeniable force in our lives. Its pervasive and pleasurable power has primarily been located in discourses on 'spectacle' and the persistent connections between technology and power in democracy. But when artworks can be seen to share the same experiential field as media-culture, both using and producing a media-culture, the question of how our experiences of it constitute the political is now imperative. How do media-culture and artworks, and the spaces they inhabit, produce and reform the naturalised and assumed realities of everyday praxis?

This new anthology, edited by the research group Curating Video, brings together an international field of researchers from the realms of cultural studies, visual art, psychoanalysis and political philosophy to explore a new matrix of issues that have become crucial to the understanding of the use and force of mediated images in our lives. Approaching the very present dilemmas of a current politics of the image, without idealising the image through its catastrophic and/or redemptive political potentialities, these essays set out with rigour, creativity and due force to interrogate the space of the image now. Rethinking the power of fact that images generate, this book proposes new dialogues, strategies and propositions to explore what is now at stake for a politics of the mediated image.

This title is currently available to purchase via Artwords Press, and at selected bookstores.

{tab=Extract from Introduction}

Introduction

by Amanda Beech, Jaspar Joseph-Lester, and Matthew Poole - Summer 2008

The discussions set forth in this book are a result of work conducted by the research group Curating Video, a project led by us, the three editors of this publication. The first strand of this wider research is focussed in the project entitled 'Episode: Pleasure and Persuasion in Lens-based Media', 2006-2008. This has taken a number of forms, including a series of international exhibitions and symposia, a conference panel at Tokyo University, Japan, and now this publication. Coming together through a shared interest in rethinking the critical possibilities for lens-based media, this work is driven by the question of how we can understand better the inherent problems of how we engage intellectually and ideologically with the pleasure and persuasion of lens-based images. Given the increasing role that images play in shaping the way we think and live, what are the ethical, philosophical and political implications for lens-based artworks? In what way and to what degree can photographic or video images prompt, determine or otherwise produce our beliefs?

A catalyst for this research was the recognition that discussions on these issues were already active in a range of disciplines that cross and intersect within the varying methodologies of the production and curation of art, critical and philosophical writing and live discussion, but had not been brought together or to the public. Throughout this project we attended to the issue of how media-culture is an undeniable force in our lives, a pervasive and pleasurable power that is now familiar to us as a space of fragmentation, plurality and difference - a space of numerous and multiple voices,

conflicts, and diversities that deny distinctions between fact and fiction, and which undermine what have been understood as the essential categories of centrality, neutrality, truth and objectivity. Taking the instability of groundless space as our starting point, our establishing approach to lensbased media was that the camera lens is no longer the key to the real and documentaries don't tell the 'truth'. Most significantly, we recognised that much work attending these same issues in the fields of curation, writing and art production had been situated in gestures that focus on a crisis of the image, where this lack of cohesion, for some, has led to a theoretical crisis - anxieties that a destabilised or groundless political field evacuates political agency as well as enabling dominant power. The starting point for our research thus set out to avoid these problems, establishing the caveat that this space of fragmentation renders any hopes of reconstituting power in a new wholeness, centrality and cohesion the biggest fiction of all. Therefore, when various ontologies are made unworkable in and by this space of mediation, what is understood as the fabric of our contingency, or what we agree to take as our beliefs becomes paramount.

Based in this expansion of methodologies our aims developed ambitious and open-ended discussion about contemporary art practice, media culture and their mutual affects on everyday praxis. From research areas that have included cultural studies, psychoanalysis, political philosophy and visual arts practice, this project has taken up various debates on the grounds of belief as they are proposed through the sensory, spatial and rhetorical experiences of lens-based media. Throughout, a central concern of the project is how, despite concerns about the nihilism of media-space, it is clear that our experiences of the mediated image are not fraught with scepticism or doubt, and statements that declare 'facts' are still produced and remain crucial to the political.

Taking this problematic as our guide, the project resulted in the production of various sites of curation, art production and discussion, sites where pleasure and force intersect and the question of the force of the mediated image in our lives is opened up to art practice. The touring exhibition 'Episode', hosted by galleries in London, Leeds and Miami, USA consisted of work by nine UK-based artists using video, lens-assisted painting and photography. This work was set within an installation of large suspended floating white laminated screens that both guided the viewer through the space of the gallery and interrupted how the works were viewed. In obfuscating and framing particular architectural fragments, passages of experience, avenues and vistas from which to encounter the artworks, the curation deliberately produced a 'difficult' space for viewing works. It set out to order experiences as equivalent to the artworks or even as a space where experiences were contested or made competitive. This curating of experience around artworks was matched by the selection of artworks in the exhibition in a synthesis that united the proposed critiques in the artworks with their curation. In this holistic approach our aim was to think through how narrative was immanent to these works as experiences, and yet this was not in contradiction to their non-representational qualities. Rather than proposing any content as a symbolic or indexical sign that art makes or is attributed with, this question of the politics of experience that artworks and their exhibition produce was coupled with an exploration of the force and pleasure of immersion as a state of experience. Exhibition making as a form of spatial choreography united with the discrete experiences proposed in individual artworks opened up the question of the increasing role that images play in shaping the way we think and live – that is, the ethical, philosophical and political implications of lens-based artworks.

Identifying art practice and exhibition making as a space where these questions are not only proposed but debated is especially significant when our contingency with media culture has now, more than ever, brought questions regarding what is a critical cultural practice to a crossroads. When artworks can be seen to share the same experiential field, using and producing a media culture, reflexing upon the same operations of pleasure, persuasion, immersion, force and attraction, we recognised that discourses on spectacle that implicate these cultures of the image with bad forms of power now seriously challenge any future for critique itself. Understanding the urgency of these problems, our project sought to produce new articulations and theorisations of the mediated image, mediated space, technology and art to ask how artworks and the mediated image turn to and produce the political.

Debate as well as practice are central to pursuing these questions and play a key part in the sustaining and development of this project throughout its duration. Alongside each exhibition we organised symposia to explore these questions further, in the context of practice. This interdisciplinarity is key to the project's development and its success. It is also testament to the commitment, engagement and enthusiasm of participants who have dedicated their time throughout this project as well as the contributors to this book you are reading now.

This book now extends these same questions with the same methodology, attempting to bring an avenue of this work to a partial moment of reflection. For this we are privileged to include work from eight writers. We have commissioned and

selected essays from the fields of art practice, cultural studies, art and architectural history, and philosophy. Taking up the same curatorial format in this book as that which frames our larger project, we set out this volume with the intention of enabling terms to cross, to be interpreted and employed in different ways from text to text. In this we hope to allow for the antagonisms that are already evident in this complex sphere of discussion. These different (en)counters and approaches involve and compel the reader through a series of expositions as fragments, that can be encountered in their reading as both complexities of discussion and as discrete claims.

However, these articulation of difference do not shape an eclecticism, instead they bring us to the shared territories for this discussion, where texts focus on such themes as the mobilities that a technological culture promises and promotes: speed, dynamism and their corollary, force. What can often be seen as the other side of pleasure – rationalism, is also taken up throughout and thought through as a part of pleasure, disorientation and immersion. As mediated space is as much as concern as the mediated image, the essays also deal with the transference between two and three dimensions – the move that mediation allows so easily, where texts take up the mythology of space, the question of what is social space and the technologised body moving through space. These descriptions characterise the multifarious conditions of technology, mediation and the question of how we constitute ourselves as socio-political subjects. By examining the relationship between experiential affect and political effect this book unites these various investigations as to how media-culture and artworks and the spaces they inhabit produce and reform the naturalised and assumed realities of everyday praxis. How does the episodic space of the mediated image generate non-illusory facts in our lives and what are their consequences?

{tab=Specifications & Contents}

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Anthology of 8 essays

Contributors are art historians, art theorists, philosophers, cultural historians, curators, and artists

135 pages

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Contributors & Essays Titles:

1. Sharon Kivland - "A Viennese Waltz and a Murder, an Eye-Witness Account"

2. Amanda Beech - "We Never Close – Techno-Culture and the Force of Law"
3. Jaspar Joseph-Lester - "Image Synchronicity and the Bonaventure Hotel"
4. Johanna Sumiala - "Georges Bataille and the Dark Side of the Social: the Case of Abu Ghraib"
5. Norman M. Klein - "Another Future of Forgetting: The Mouth of the Belmont Tunnel in Los Angeles"
6. Matthew Poole - "The Politics of Affect in Walter Benjamin's Dialectical Image"
7. Uriel Orlow - "Speaking of War and Freedom: How To Do Things with Words and a Camera"
8. Suhail Malik - "The Onto-Politics of the Spectacle and the Abu Ghraib Images"

Description:

A familiar comprehension of media-culture is that it is constituted by fragments, that its images are differentiated and temporal: that documentaries don't tell the whole truth and cameras are not the key to a 'real'. Taking this condition of pluralism as a starting point, this book has selected and commissioned 8 essays from an international field of researchers that reaches across the territories of art history, political philosophy, psychoanalysis, cultural and media studies and curation to ask how images and our experiences of them produce and generate truth within the context of this 'episodic field'.

Significantly the book makes strong connections between the territory of media culture and visual arts practices in contemporary culture. It brings these questions of truth, experience and force to bear on them as objects and images that produce the same claims to truth. This is something that is increasingly relevant when artworks now more than ever, can be seen to share the same experiential field, using and producing a media-culture.

The selection of essays outline a discursive territory that focuses on the experiential affect of contemporary artworks and media culture and their power to contribute to a wider production of fictions and their consequent mutation into and reception as fact. This is a site where pleasure and force are coterminous and the question of the force of art in our lives is opened up. By examining the relationship between experiential affect and political effect this book investigates and discusses how media-culture and artworks and the space they inhabit produce and reform the naturalised and assumed realities of everyday praxis.

By bringing together a range of disciplines to discuss this current and shared question of our cultural and social reality, we aim to establish this book as a key exploratory text for theorists, artists, students of arts subjects and those interested in media-culture.

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