

LEONARDO REVIEWS

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BOOKS

BUILDING STATA: THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF FRANK O. GEHRY'S STATA CENTER AT MIT

by Nancy E. Joyce. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A., 2004. 160 pp., illus. Paper. ISBN: 0-262-60061-7.

Reviewed by Rob Harle (Australia).
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A book can only provide a limited approximation of the reality of the subject it describes and presents. *Building Stata* goes just a bit further than most books of this type. It gives one the feeling that one has been part of the design process, been "on site" with the mud, concrete and steel, then finally strolled around the almost finished building.

This extra reality is due in large part to the brilliant photographs of Richard Sobol. He has managed to capture the spirit of the entire enterprise, from the excavation of the 5.3 million-cubic-foot hole to the finished glistening metal exterior surfaces. The book is lavishly illustrated with color and black-and-white photographs, plans, diagrams and sketches. The photographs are as much about the people who created this architectural masterpiece as the building itself. The book recognizes the contribution of all involved in the project, from the philanthropists who made it financially possible, to Gehry, the mastermind behind the design and, equally, to the construction workers who brought the concept into material reality.

The book starts with a rather candid commentary by Frank O. Gehry. This is followed by various introductions that provide a brief, though very interesting, history of MIT and its relationship with Cambridge, Boston and Massachusetts. There are chapters on "Planning," "Design" and "Construction." The construction chapter is divided into sub-sections: "Excavations," "Concrete," "Structural Steel," "Masonry," "Metal," "Glass" and finally "Interiors." These sections give an in-depth pictorial insight into the complexity, difficulties and dangers involved in creating a building of this stature.

It is almost a miracle that the building ever got built, considering the nature of this project. As Mitchell mentions in the Afterword, "modern universities do not present themselves as singular architectural clients" (p. 132). The list of those who have an interest (and say) in the project is extensive and includes powerful corporation members, deans, alumni, donors, local community groups, students and academic faculty representatives. The success of Gehry's building seems partly to come from the attention paid to this diverse group of people, all with different ideas and needs.

MIT has been and continues to be a center for invention, technical excellence and radical innovation in both theoretical and practical engineering, science, communication and now IT and electronic engineering. It was this radical innovation that needed to be articulated and represented in the proposed new Ray and Maria Stata building. The main aspects of the charter were to: (a) bring MIT's computer, information and intelligence-science researchers under one roof on main campus; (b) create spaces designed to improve the productivity of humans rather than efficiently house apparatus; and (c) provide a gateway to the revived R&D center and transport hub north and east of the campus, "creating a distinctive icon for MIT in the twenty-first century" (pp. 16–17).

One of MIT's enduring traditions is the "fostering of creative revolutions by thinking outside of the box" (p. 17).

Gehry's building by any standard is conceived "outside the box"; the external form and appearance is challenging and unique. The simplicity of the offices and work spaces belies the profound insight of Gehry and his associates in solving complex interaction problems and providing inspiring spaces for researchers to achieve the highest levels of technological innovation. In Gehry's own words at the beginning of the project, "What I want to do is make some kind of magic and take people someplace they've never been before" (p. ix).

This book is essential reading for anyone involved in building design and planning or in commissioning architecture. Part of the reason for the book's success is that, like the building it describes, it conveys a wonderful feeling of interaction at a human level. The author, Nancy Joyce (also MIT project director for the Stata Center) and Richard Sobol, photographer, are to be congratulated on producing an informative and inspiring book that will also become a valuable document in the future, especially regarding the history of MIT.

Reviews Panel: Peter Anders, Fred Allan Anderson, Wilfred Arnold, Roy Ascott, Curtis Bahn, Claire Barliant, René Beekman, Roy R. Behrens, Andreas Broeckmann, Annick Bureau, Roy Cobb, Robert Coburn, Donna Cox, Sean Cubitt, Nina Czegledy, Shawn Decker, Margaret Dolinsky, Dennis Dollens, Luisa Paraguai Donati, Victoria Duckett, Maia Engeli, Enzo Ferrara, Deborah Frizzell, Bulat M. Galejev, George Gessert, Elisa Giaccardi, Thom Gillespie, Artur Golczewski, Allan Graubard, Dene Grigar, Diane Gromala, Rob Harle, Craig Harris, Josepha Haveman, Paul Hertz, Amy Ione, Stephen Jones, Richard Kade, Curtis E.A. Karnou, Nisar Keshvani, Julien Knebusch, Daniela Kutschat, Mike Legget, Roger F. Malina, Jacques Mandelbrojt, Robert A. Mitchell, Rick Mitchell, Mike Mosher, Axel Mulder, Kevin Murray, Frieder Nake, Maureen A. Nappi, Angela Ndalianis, Simone Osthoff, Jack Ox, Robert Pepperell, Kjell yngve Petersen, Cliff Pickover, Patricia Pisters, Michael Punt, Harry Rand, Sonya Rapoport, Edward Shanken, Aparna Sharma, Shirley Shor, George K. Shortess, Joel Slayton, Christa Sommerer, Yvonne Spielmann, David Surman, Pia Tikka, David Topper, Rene van Peer, Stefaan Van Ryssen, Ian Verstegen, Stephen Wilson, Arthur Woods, Soh Yeong.

LIMINAL LIVES: IMAGINING THE HUMAN AT THE FRONTIERS OF BIOSCIENCE

by Susan Merrill Squier. Duke Univ. Press, Durham, NC, U.S.A., 2004. 368 pp., illus. Trade, paper. ISBN: 0-8223-3381-3; ISBN: 0-8223-3366-X.

Reviewed by Eugene Thacker, School of Literature, Communication, and Culture, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, U.S.A. E-mail: <eugene.thacker@lcc.gatech.edu>.

“Biotechnology” is a strange term. Does it denote a set of scientific practices (e.g. cloning, genetic engineering); an array of new technologies (e.g. gene sequencing machines, artificial wombs); a research field that produces particular kinds of knowledge (e.g. genomics, proteomics); a discipline linked to institutions and industry; or simply something that is, in the most relativistic way (e.g. farming, breeding, fermentation), isomorphic with human civilization itself? Today, in an era in which “twice dead” human beings kept alive by medical technologies make news headlines, an era in which individual cells with the capacity for regeneration polemicize political elections—biotechnology seems to be at once the most visible and the least legible aspect of technologically advanced cultures. We “see” biotechnology everywhere, even in science fiction, cartoons and TV commercials, and yet its pervasive visibility always seems to point to its inherent illegibility as a specialized discourse. In a nutshell: You, the average consumer, are free to try Celebrex, but this is always on the condition that you first “ask your doctor” for more information.

Susan Merrill Squier’s book *Liminal Lives* is a welcome intervention in this cultural landscape. Her book takes a look at the inescapably biocultural aspects of new medical technologies such as stem cell research, new reproductive technologies, and regenerative medicine. But Squier does not simply take these scientific fields as self-evident; her method is to consider how a multiplicity of narratives, metaphors and imagery are an inseparable part of how “life itself” is recontextualized and redefined. Squier’s book combines approaches from literary studies, feminist science studies, the history of medicine and cultural analyses of gender, age and the practice of

science fiction. Her analyses are not simply the scientific fields in themselves, but also the variable lenses through which science co-emerges with culture. Thus biotechnology cartoons, poem-writing scientists, science fiction from *Amazing Stories*, anatomical art and a storytelling seminar for those living with Alzheimer’s are all part of her “biomedical imaginary.” The focus of *Liminal Lives* is, as Squier notes, “the ways literature and science collaborate on, and contest, a new vision of human life” (p. 3). Squier’s approach is welcome because it asks us to carefully avoid distinguishing “narrative” as a practice exclusive to literature or film. *Liminal Lives* prompts us to consider the ways in which “science fiction” is a verb and not simply a literary or film genre. “Science fictioning” would therefore be a way of understanding a practice in which the very relation between medicine and culture, science and fiction is constantly expressed, reflected, distorted and worked through. This science fictioning is, by turns, melodramatic, ironic, critical, playful and above all performative.

The concept Squier develops to describe this negotiated zone is the “liminal life”: “Those beings marginal to human life who hold rich potential for our ongoing biomedical negotiations with, and interventions in, the paradigmatic life crises: birth, growth, aging, and death” (p. 9). The liminal life is the life that is at once biological and more-than-biological (legal, ethical, cultural, economic), the life that is at once unmoored from the determinism of age and death and redetermined via a host of medical interventions, the life that hovers between being unbelievable and everyday. Squier’s chapters consider a kind of “liminal life span,” including stem cells, tissue cultures, hybrid embryos, organ transplantation, the “rejuvenate” and finally the idea of “regenerative medicine” and renewable life. Above all, the concept of the liminal life points to the way in which we are all liminal lives, and this is indeed one of the broader effects of Squier’s book. Certainly there is a sense in which “biotechnology” is inevitably abstract, surreal and “science fictional.” Yet, at the same time, biotechnology is also narrated in many different ways outside of the so-called specialist discourses, and popular culture is one domain in which this is especially true. Furthermore, each of us is also a “vir-

tual” patient, a medical subject in potentiality, and we exist in some relation to the everyday, even banal, reality of health insurance, diet, fitness, visits to the doctor, reproduction, aging, prescription drugs, “medical” TV shows and a broader “care of the self” contextualized by this intersection between medicine and culture.

THE TRANSPARENT BODY: A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL IMAGING

by Jose Van Dijck. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA, U.S.A., 2005. 208 pp., illus. Paper. ISBN: 0-295-98490-2.

Reviewed by Jan Baetens, Katholiek Universiteit Leuven, Faculty of Arts, Blijde Inkomst 21, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. E-mail: <jan.baetens@arts.kuleuven.ac.be>.

In the endlessly growing field of studies on the representation of the body, Jose Van Dijck’s book on medical imaging should be welcomed for more than one reason. Written from the triple background of literary studies, cultural studies and science studies (more specifically the SCOT, or social construction of technology, approach), *The Transparent Body* offers in a sense the best of both worlds: on the one hand a series of seductive and astute close readings of very concrete and highly diverse cultural artifacts such as Thomas Mann’s *Magical Mountain*, the classic science fiction film *Fantastic Voyage* or the plastinated cadavers of the touring exhibition *Bodyworlds*; and on the other hand an overall theory of the way medical imaging techniques such as X-rays, endoscopy or ultrasound imaging of fetuses interact with cultural interpretations and re-uses of these techniques outside the medical world.

In seven concise and well-illustrated chapters, Jose Van Dijck accomplishes the tour de force, first, to introduce her readers to the (pre)history of the most current applied techniques of medical imaging and their social representations; second, to explain their main issues and stakes on a technical as well as an ethical and ideological level; and third, to relate these techniques to a broad set of cultural longings, hopes, fears, (mis)understandings and reconstructions. Following the basic claims of the SCOT approach, which already informed her two previous books (*Imagination: Popular Genetics and Manufacturing Babies* and *Public Consent: Debating*

the *New Reproductive Technologies*), Van Dijck demonstrates the dialectical relationship of society and technology, each of them constructing, miscon-structing and reconstructing each other.

The major qualities of this book are primarily rooted in its acute awareness of the very historicity of representation. If *The Transparent Body* is much more than a work of cultural studies, then it is not only because it exhibits a thorough knowledge of the technologies involved in medical imaging, but also because of the attention paid to the historical frameworks that surround the invention and use of specific techniques. *The Transparent Body* is, hence, also a media history of medical imaging, and the reader can only feel grateful for the clarity of the author's journey through modern Western representational techniques inside and outside medicine.

However, in order to avoid information overkill as well as the temptation of overwhelming generalizations, Van Dijck has rightly decided not to propose one single history. Each chapter focuses neatly on one specific medical imaging technique, following a simple but very efficient triadic scheme: a historical introduction, a close reading of a particularly well-chosen case study and a political reflection on the contemporary cultural interpretations and implications of the given technique. Although not necessarily presented in this order, this schema provides the reader with an exemplary didactic framework that never prevents the author from giving many original insights on the phenomena studied.

The real pleasure the reader takes from this book is not only intellectual. It should be stressed that Van Dijck's style has a kind of elegance that has become too rare in current scholarship. *The Transparent Body* displays from its very first to its very last sentence a real sense of rhythm, of wit, of rhetorical devices, a perfect balance of theory and anecdote, a sound feeling of how to dispatch information without ever giving the impression of being too slow or too fast and finally a strong moral and political commitment (yes, this is style, too!).

Together with the wonderfully rich range of objects treated, all these qualities make *The Transparent Body* a fascinating book for all readers eager to learn about a crucial aspect of their daily lives and the technological culture that is impregnating their body.

ROBERT SMITHSON

edited by Eugenie Tsai. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, U.S.A., 2004. 280 pp., illus. Paper. ISBN: 0-520-24409-5.

ROBERT SMITHSON: LEARNING FROM NEW JERSEY AND ELSEWHERE

by Ann Reynolds. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A., 2005. 384 pp., illus. Paper. ISBN: 0-262-68155-2.

Reviewed by Amy Ione, the Diatropé Institute, P.O. Box 6813, Santa Rosa, CA 95406-0813, U.S.A. E-mail: <ione@diatropé.com>.

Jorge Luis Borges, one of the most celebrated authors of the 20th century, once penned a series of book reviews critiquing books that had never been written. In true Borgesian fashion, he explained that since people seemed more inclined to read the reviews, sometimes not finding time for the book itself, it seemed that producing only the critique was a better approach. His caricature of reading habits in our fast-paced lives came to mind as I wondered how I might enthusiastically encourage others to read *Robert Smithson* and *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere*, the two books that are the subject of this review. Neither of these full-bodied volumes can be captured in this short piece. Given this, let me begin by saying that all who have an interest in Robert Smithson's impact on contemporary art should put this review aside and turn to the books directly.

Robert Smithson, fully illustrated and augmented by writings by Eugenie Tsai, Alexander Alberro, Suzaan Boettger, Mark Linder, Ann Reynolds, Jennifer L. Roberts, Richard Sieburth, Robert A. Sobieszek, Moira Roth, Robert Smithson, Cornelia H. Butler and Thomas E. Crow, was conceived for the comprehensive American retrospective of Smithson's work, opening at the Whitney Museum in June. (It began at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and recently closed at the Dallas Museum of Art.) Smithson's knack for bridging incongruent perspectives comes across well in this over-size volume, as does his multi-layered legacy. Well-chosen photographs of his works (drawings, sculptures, nonsites, etc.) are mixed with cultural images as well as photographs of his excursions,

giving this artist a dynamic presence despite being confined to the staid pages of the book. As one would expect of a catalogue, this publication offers many topical essays on the artist's complex and highly influential career as well as an overview of his short life. Born in 1938, Smithson died prematurely in 1973 when the plane he was using to survey a site crashed. Yet, as the catalogue details, the reach of his work is extraordinary.

What I liked most about the presentation was the way his drawing, "A Surd View for an Afternoon, 1970," used on the cover, captured his coarseness, complex mind and range of thought. A surd is defined as something that is irrational and voiceless. Sketched during an interview conducted in 1969, and signed in 1970, Smithson's surd map spins us around the time and space he develops, deploys and re-configures in his projects. The scratchy composite, on a piece of graph paper, offers a glimpse of the gyrations of his mind. Composed of diagrammatic markings, explanatory words, directions and several of his signature motifs (the spiral, a map of New Jersey, and words we tend to find in discussions of his work such as "perception," "nonsite" and "entropy"), it is a map, a mirror and a plan. Its vertiginous quality is explained to some degree in the book's foreword, written by Jeremy Stick. Stick tells the reader that the difficulty in coming to grips with this far-reaching and paradoxical artist is due to the way Smithson extended the scope of his work outward to more and more distant locations. Yet, at the same time, he continued to integrate an awareness of the museum, gallery and art world in general in his projects. How this worked within his practice is unpacked by Thomas Crow to some degree when he speaks of Smithson's pursuit of the spiral. Homing in on this one motif, Crow illustrates this artist's remarkable intellectual reach. Similarly, the interview with Moira Roth, taped in 1973, allows us to see him through his own words. For example, although he is frequently coupled with Marcel Duchamp in discussions about the evolution of art in the 20th century, it is intriguing to find that Smithson expressed some negativity toward Duchamp during the interview with Roth. Also of note are the essays by Suzaan Boettger and Ann Reynolds. Both offer unique and insightful views of Smithson's mind and practice.

Ann Reynolds's own, quite different

volume, *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere*, is a wonderful companion to the catalogue. She effectively situates Smithson in terms of both contemporary art and history. In doing so, she demonstrates how deeply she has thought about his work and why it continues to feel contemporary even as our relation to its historical moment fades. Her decision to open a dialogue with earlier Smithson scholars adds to the book's readability. When this author stakes out her space and places herself in terms of earlier scholars (e.g. Craig Owens), she adds her voice in a way that encourages the reader to want to closely read her research. We are rewarded by her ability to express Smithson's practice and to explain how it was informed by his interest in repetition, as well as her grasp of much that went beyond his earthworks and the construction of the Spiral Jetty. Some projects, for example his *Untitled (Map on Mirror-Passaic, New Jersey)* (1967), establish Smithson's uncanny ability to simplify a complexity of threads into a coherent work. In this case, the work consists of seven square pieces of stacked glass of incrementally decreasing sizes. The artist mounted a black-and-white photocopy of a square section of the Weehawken, New Jersey, quadrangle on each stacked glass piece. The completed object thus creates a tension between the 2D map and the 3D work, while also commenting on Smithson's New Jersey. (How effectively Reynolds takes us into the mind of the artist is perhaps clearer when one turns to her very short contribution to the *Robert Smithson* catalogue.)

Overall Reynolds grapples with the blind spots at the center of established ways of seeing and thinking, conveying Smithson in a sympathetic way throughout. She introduces us to his background and, in doing so, brings to life the way Smithson saw his home state of New Jersey as such a blind spot. Her inclusion of small details further humanizes his life. For example, she mentions that the poet William Carlos Williams was Smithson's pediatrician and describes the impact his poetry had on this boy from New Jersey. A key to her success is her lengthy discussion of Smithson's early sculpture (1963–1967), which aids in exposing his early perceptual experiments. This, in turn, supports her claims that Smithson passionately embraced questions related to how we perceive the world during this period and that Smithson's rejection from the exhibition *The*

Responsive Eye at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965 had an impact on his later work. Smithson's submission for this legendary show (which brought together many "optical artists," such as Victor Vasarely, Bridget Riley and Frank Stella) was rejected by the curator, William Seitz, who wrote that "although interesting and relevant to the scope of the exhibition," the work did not "have an individuality that other artists on our list have expressed" [1]. Reynolds proposes that this dismissal propelled Smithson toward sculpture and 3D work. Within months he turned to free-standing enantiomorphic experiments in distortion of familiar objects, which allowed him to more fully experiment with the processes of perception and the interplay between art and culture.

Given my lifelong passion for works on paper, the reproductions of Smithson's drawings and diagrams in the Reynolds book particularly fascinated me. This aspect of his legacy is often given less attention, so finding so many reproductions was a real treat. Studying them raised many questions; however, I was surprised to find that much of his graphic work brought Paul Klee to mind. The catalogues of his library (which differed in the two books discussed in this review) included no books by Klee. While this might suggest that Smithson did not closely examine Klee's graphic experiments and that the similarities were coincidental, I do not feel comfortable drawing this conclusion. He surely must have come across Klee's work in his travels. What I did find interesting, when I perused the two lists detailing his massive cross-disciplinary book collection to see if he knew Klee's work, was that Smithson collected fewer books about artists and art history than volumes catalogued in other subject areas (fiction, philosophy, science, etc.). Moreover, the volumes listed under art leaned toward theory and criticism rather than studies of individual artists. In other words, scanning his library provided the best evidence of how this ground-breaking artist and autodidact reached far beyond art practice and the art world in formulating the ideas that are so intertwined with his legacy.

When the catalogue is juxtaposed with the Reynolds publication, it is clear that they offer complementary perspectives. Even the covers point toward this conclusion. Both were designed with the titles superimposed over a Smithson image. The Reynolds image, a 1967 photograph, *The Bridge*

Monument Showing Wooden Sidewalks, is not a picture reminiscent of Smithson ruminating so much as an illustration that demonstrates his early perceptual experiments. Looking at it we see that he chose an angle that could present the two sides of the bridge walkway converging toward a vanishing point. This quite standard perspectival choice brings to mind that Smithson's relationship with perceptual views evolved over the course of his career. While it is generally recalled that in his last years he voiced some skepticism toward art's fixation on sensory perception, much of his early work shows he participated in sensory investigation as well. Indeed, the most accurate way of summing this up would be to say that his fascination with how we perceive was a defining tension throughout his life, and one that his work reveals he viewed from several vantage points.

In summary, both books convey that Robert Smithson was among the artists who pushed the boundaries of art in the 1960s and 1970s. Both also contextualize his historical position and offer a wealth of delicious details. The complementary perspectives they offer greatly enhance our knowledge of this well-regarded artist and give us a genuine feel for how he combined art and culture in the eclectic projects that his fertile, creative mind brought into being.

Reference

1. William Seitz, *The Responsive Eye* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1965) p. 57.

AFTER ADORNO: RETHINKING MUSIC SOCIOLOGY

by Tia DeNora. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2003. 192 pp., illus. Trade, paper. ISBN: 0-521-53724-X; ISBN: 0-521-83025-7.

Reviewed by David Beer, University of York and York St John College, York, U.K. E-mail: <david.beer@britishlibrary.net>.

The writings of Theodor Adorno often attract fairly firm criticism. His work is often dismissed on the grounds of its deterministic, curmudgeonly or elitist nature. This criticism has perhaps snowballed as these dominant critical readings have become increasingly ingrained in contemporary social theory. With this in mind, it is perhaps surprising to find that in much of the recent literature on popular music, music technology and, in the case of

DeNora's work, music in everyday life, the critique and application of Adorno's work has taken center stage in the development of new approaches and theoretical frameworks. We have now reached a point, as foreseen by DeNora, where a reappraisal of Adorno's legacy has become near essential for the future of the sociology of music, and, more broadly, I would argue, for a sociology of technology and culture.

Often close readings of Adorno's work uncover new dimensions and new intricacies that contradict both his own writings and the dominant readings of his work. The contradictions inherent within Adorno's work, and between dominant readings of his work, make the construction of monological or totalizing interpretations extremely problematic.

In this text DeNora is concerned with reconsidering Adorno's work by formulating a detailed critique of his theoretical conceptualizations and then attempting to apply these within empirical research practices. The objective is to overcome the problems that DeNora identifies in Adorno's work, which are, first, that he theorizes on a level that is too general, and, second, that his work is abstract and does not attempt to access music in the everyday lives of listeners. The angle that DeNora adopts here could well have descended into an unconstrained celebration of Adorno's failings. However, DeNora treats Adorno's work with a great deal of care. Her critical evaluations of his work do not overly dwell upon the perceived problems. Rather Adorno's work is used here as a point of departure for a reassessment of DeNora's own research projects. The problem that DeNora inevitably encounters is that as she moves toward an analysis of her own data she tends to leave Adorno behind. As a result the text feels like it is constructed around two poles. On one side, we find the abstract, the theory and the concept; on the other, we find the microscopic analysis, the case study and the analysis of music in people's everyday lives. I would suggest that this is an almost insurmountable problem, because, as it seems clear from a reading of DeNora's text, Adorno did not intend for his writings to be used in this type of research. DeNora must therefore be offered a good deal of credit for facilitating such a successful empirical application of Adorno's work, a practice that is tantamount to inserting a square peg in a round hole.

With this aside, and perhaps ignoring Adorno's own attempts at empirical research—in his analysis of the symphony on the radio or the opera on the long-playing record—DeNora has constructed a valuable text that, through the critical evaluation of Adorno's writings, has created a pragmatic reference point for the study of music, and for the study of the ways in which music affects, either passively or actively, people's everyday lives. This is not an easily obtainable objective. Music is one of those black boxes, those hidden elements, those concealed practices and cultural forms that cannot be illuminated without small-scale case studies of the type used by DeNora.

Overall this is an interesting text that creates a variety of opportunities for future research. The development of further understandings of the ways in which music is appropriated in the reflexive stimulation of memory and emotions is one among a set of opportunities that emerge from a reading of this text. However, I would like to suggest that the next step requires a detailed critique of DeNora's approach and of the empirical techniques that form the foundation of the text, so that the strategy of critique and application adopted by DeNora is reflected back upon *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology*.

TELEVISION AFTER TV: ESSAYS ON A MEDIUM IN TRANSITION

edited by Lynn Spigel. Duke Univ. Press, Durham, NC, U.S.A., 2005. 480 pp., illus. Paper. ISBN: 0-8223-3393-7.

Reviewed by Kathleen Quillian.
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Undoubtedly the Internet has changed the nature of mass communication from a centralized one-way model to a decentralized multi-directional model. How this will affect the industry of broadcast media has yet to be fully decided. While producers are falling over themselves to try to figure out how to successfully negotiate the media landscape in the age of the Internet, scholars are building upon their cache of expertise to develop a new dialogue of communications studies. In an attempt to give this new era some kind of identifiable form, Lynn Spigel has brought together the perspectives of several leading television scholars in *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*.

It seems that while the dialogue is still developing around the new nature of mass communication, so too is the language. Throughout the collection, no less than a dozen different terms are given in the attempt to identify the scope of contemporary media communications—terms ranging from “omni-media” (Martha Stewart's term for her own media empire) and “post-broadcasting” to “the neo-network era.” The book is divided into four sections that, broadly speaking, focus on: changes in the television industry in the age of the Internet; television's social context in the larger scope of culture; how television defines or redefines community; and the educational potential of television studies. Aside from two essays devoted specifically to European television (lifestyle programming in Britain and the introduction of television in Sweden, respectively) and a look at the development of Hong Kong as a media capital, the majority of the book is devoted to the many ways that the industry of (U.S.) commercial television has evolved and how it influences, or is influenced by, the Internet. To those of us who cannot conceive of life without the all-pervasive influence of commercial television, this collection of essays certainly gives one pause to think as we work our way through the next generation of mass media. One of the more interesting angles on this is given in “Flexible Microcasting: Gender, Generation, and Television-Internet Convergence,” by Lisa Parks, in which the author surmises how the rise and popularity of television game shows foreshadowed the interactivity of the Internet. She then goes on to address how certain forward-thinking big-budget television producers have successfully (or unsuccessfully) negotiated the territory between television and the Internet with programs designed to encourage the involvement of women and youth while still maintaining the dominant ideologies perpetuated by commercial television.

The “flow” of the book (referencing a term coined by early television scholar Raymond Williams, one mentioned consistently throughout this collection of essays) moves from a rather focused look at new forms of marketing in the television industry to a broader look at the influence of television on culture and society. Two notable contributions presented toward the latter end of the flow are by Anna McCarthy and Lynn Spigel, whose respective essays give two very different

spins on power and broadcast media. In "The Rhythms of the Reception Area: Crisis, Capitalism, and the Waiting Room TV," Anna McCarthy discusses how the market of closed-circuit television programs both manifests and perpetuates certain social and economic strata in relation to the measurement of time in public waiting areas. Spiegel's own contribution to this collection, "Television, the Housewife, and the Museum of Modern Art," chronicles a lesser-known and otherwise short-lived era in the early days of television when the Museum of Modern Art experimented with the potential gains offered by the new, avant-garde medium. In this essay, Spiegel weaves an interesting narrative around leisure time, niche marketing and the clash between "high" and "low" culture in post-war America. An image of Barbara Streisand posing while singing in the museum gallery, wearing a designer gown similar to the modernist paintings on the wall next to her, illustrates this essay quite well.

In the attempt to position so many ideas in one conversation, however, inevitably some parts of the discussion get left out. In this case, it seems that while much thought is developed around the industry of commercial television and the social consequences of the medium in the age of the Internet, the roles of journalists and media activists—those individuals who negotiate and shape the media landscape on a daily basis—were overlooked altogether. The few times the news media is given attention in this collection is only in terms of its absence. Anna Everett's essay "Double Click: The Million Woman March on Television and the Internet," describes how the organizers of the Million Woman March utilized the resources of the Internet to fill in the gaps that were left in coverage of this event by mainstream media. Similarly, in "Pocho.com: Reimagining Television on the Internet," Priscilla Pena Ovalle discusses the lack of media attention directed toward the Hispanic community and how one web site in particular succeeds in shaping an alternative community by subverting mainstream media. The discussion of television in the age of the Internet would greatly benefit from a focused look at independent media organizations such as the Independent Media Center, Democracy Now! and MoveOn.org, which are forced to find their way through and around the tightly regulated confines of broadcast

media to bring alternative perspectives to the table. These organizations largely rely on the power of the Internet as well as what little room is left in public access and public-sponsored media channels to develop dialogues that are sorely lacking in corporate-controlled, mainstream media. We could learn a thing or two from their experiences of communicating through new and alternative avenues in broadcast media.

This collection of essays comes at a critical time, one when we are looking at not just a change in media but a change in form, practice and consequence. Whether or not television producers succeed in steering the market in their favor, governments succeed in maintaining hegemony through regulation, or citizens succeed in claiming their rightful territory within the new terrain of mass communications really only comes down to who figures things out first. By revisiting the history of television in terms of the new media landscape, we may be able to pick up some valuable clues as to how to go about shaping some kind of acceptable future for broadcast communications.

ARTE TELEMÁTICA. DOS INTERCÂMBIOS PONTUAIS AOS AMBIENTES VIRTUAIS MULTIUSUÁRIO

by Gilberto Prado. Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil, 2003. 128 pp., illus. CD-ROM included. ISBN: 85-85291-40-0.

Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen, Hogeschool Gent, Jan Delvinlaan 115, 9000 Gent, Belgium. E-mail: <stefaan.vanryssen@pandora.be>.

Arte Telemática. Dos intercâmbios pontuais aos ambientes virtuais multiusuário (Telematic Art: From Instant Exchanges to Virtual Multiuser Environments) is one in a series of three books on the contemporary Brazilian arts scene published by Itaú Cultural, a very active Brazilian cultural foundation sponsored by Itaú Banking Company (the other books are on dance and literature). The book's scope is the field of artistic experiments with new technological means, their transformations and derivatives. It reflects on these realizations as the "new poetics" of a dynamic universe of digital images, as a necessary means to understand and explore technological progress. It ranges from the fax and modem pieces of the 1970s and 1980s to the Internet

works of the 1990s and the multiuser virtual environments that contemporary Brazilian artists are building.

Gilberto Prado is a professor in the department of Fine Arts at ECA/USP (University of São Paulo) and has been the curator of the Welcomet Mr. Halley exhibition and the 12th Brazilian Symposium of Graphic Computing and Image Processing. He has participated in numerous shows in Brazil and abroad, including Paris, Athens, Milan and Barcelona. As such, he certainly is in the right position to present a well-documented overview of what Brazilian artists have been producing over the past 40 years. He does so in four chapters. In the first, which is devoted to artistic experiments with telecommunication networks, he analyzes networks of artists, collaboration and complementarity, technical opportunities and limitations and the role of exchange and participation. Chapter 2 presents a chronology of the pre-web years 1977–1994. Chapter 3 is about the Internet years and work on and with the Web. In the final chapter, multiuser virtual environments are discussed.

The book includes a CD-ROM with the full text, about 20 video clips and a large number of images related to the works described in the book.

Even though this book is in Portuguese, it will prove an invaluable source of information and reference for anyone who is interested in the history and practice of new media art. With some background knowledge of Spanish (or Latin), the gist of the text will be clear enough; or one may run it through some free on-line translator and simply browse the CD-ROM and enjoy.

ABY WARBURG AND THE IMAGE IN MOTION

by Philippe-Alain Michaud. Sophie Hawkes, trans. Zone Books, New York, NY, U.S.A., 2004. 382 pp., illus. Trade. ISBN: 1-890951-39-0.

Reviewed by Michael Punt, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth, U.K. E-mail: <Mpunt@easynet.co.uk>.

Philippe-Alain Michaud's new book, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, does three things. Two it does rather well, and the third it leaves open for other scholars and artists to pick up. The first thing that it does well is to remind us who Aby Warburg was and why he is important today. In 1892 Aby

Warburg, the eldest son and heir to the M.M. Warburg Bank, defended his doctoral thesis on Botticelli's paintings of the *Birth of Venus* and the *Primavera*. His thesis revealed these paintings as works in which the programmed interactions of classical and modern forms were juxtaposed in such a way that in their surrender to a contemporary context there was a release of spirit. This exposed the function of art as the ritualistic liberation of the contained, and reiterated the Dionysian impulse that had been driven underground (at least in the arts) by the stoic rationalism of the classical period. By following what might be called an ethicalist vision, Warburg showed the limitation of bounded disciplines in art history and the insufficiency of canonical terms such as "the Renaissance" to fully account for the acts of human consciousness during its prescribed period.

Warburg (1866–1929) recognized that art could not be understood exclusively as an epistemology of objects; it was also the trace of a historically persistent human obsession with movement and one of many activities that ritually re-enacted the transient moment of "becoming." Art, according to Warburg, was crucial because in painting and sculpture, for example, in the bringing into being of an intention, matter was subordinated to human consciousness. His approach was informed by a rising confidence in cultural anthropology and (although it seldom appeared in his work directly) the emergence of cinema. The effect of these two key influences can be seen in the organization of his library in Hamburg, the Kultur-wissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg (KBW), which in addition to books also contained over 20,000 images. Toward the end of his life he used this collection to produce a series of black painted boards on which he attached images of artifacts from quite different time periods and cultures to reveal a continuity of ideas that operated in contradiction to their temporal and geographic provenance. These boards, of which we have an incomplete record, were subsequently called the Mnemosyne Atlas. They were stood purposefully against the shelves in his library and in this arrangement proposed a relationship between memory and culture that refused to reduce the human ritual of art to artifacts in the service of master narratives of influence and attribution. They epitomized Warburg's idea that the origins of the obsession with movements lay in a

worldview that revelled in excess and boundless possibility.

What is at stake in Warburg's intellectual approach and his Mnemosyne Atlas extends beyond the boundaries of art into a broader set of concerns that embrace science and technology. As with some late-19th-century theoretical physicists, his real object of study was the distance between the individual and the object. In this context the crucial condition for movement was not the incompatibility between the magical and the logical but rather the impossibility of connection between them: In the dark gap of indeterminate dimension between one state and another, the only possible connection is the pulse of ahistorical consciousness. Michaud's way of retelling of Warburg's life and ideas (and credit here must also go to the translator) is compelling and evocative of the current debates that occupy us at the fringes of art and science. At times Michaud's discussion of the way that Warburg saw the Renaissance resonates with some of the philosophical writings of Varela and a more radical constructivist view of the world. However, Michaud's rhetorical tactic of situating Warburg in a contemporary context of ideas also amplifies the injustice that Warburg has been subjected to by historians and art educators. Although his ideas were influential, his own unique contribution fell into a certain obscurity, and his work became known primarily through his students (Wind, Saxl and Panofsky especially) and certain forms of art practice. His ideas arguably lie at the core of the postwar art-school movement and the fascination with collage and montage editing that more or less shaped the aesthetic of video art and performance. And his understanding of art as universal impulse inflected by style but never subordinated to it, together with his use of the image as an epistemological object and his method of practice research (the mnemosynes and rearranging the library in order to express the inexpressible, etc.), is the essence of much current thinking.

Michaud can claim great credit for making this evident in the way that he tells the story in an engaging style that wears its knowledge lightly. Sophie Hawkes, the translator, has done a good job in presenting complex concepts without the need for endless rereading that most translations of French theory used to insist upon as a badge of seriousness. It is, however, dealing with the relationship between Warburg and

the cinema that Michaud does less well, which, given that he is the curator at the Musée national d'art moderne at the Centre Georges-Pompidou, may be surprising. It is also surprising that when Michaud talks of early cinema and its invention, there are some historical errors, and a still from Griffith's *Way Down East* used as an illustration is titled incorrectly (this may be an editorial slip, since it is correct in another paper elsewhere). The larger difficulty is that while Michaud reveals the intellectual significance of Warburg's ideas with enthusiasm, they seem to have had little impact on his own profoundly teleological conception of history. As a consequence, the more one becomes engrossed in the connections that Michaud's text makes and the implications that flow from them, the more frustrated one becomes by the way that he tells the history of cinema as a technological and formal inevitability. What the book finally misses is Warburg's significance for the enterprise of history as it is currently understood as a contingent view of something we choose to call the past.

Warburg forms part of a corpus of European ideas that developed on the cusp of the 20th century and were too quickly overlooked. I am thinking in particular of the subtle philosophical thinking of Henri Bergson, which was displaced by the more mechanistic intellectual paradigms of psychoanalysis and semiotics at precisely the moment when science needed the tools to manage contingent truth and relativism. That said, Michaud does a great service in the way that he reopens the problem of history as he accounts for Warburg in such an engaging way. In doing so, his book is a considerable contribution to the growing intellectual enthusiasm for articulating those ideas epitomized not only in the work of Bergson but also in more contemporary thinkers such as Vilém Flusser, Edgar Morin and Barbara Maria Stafford.

STUFF IT: THE VIDEO ESSAY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

edited by Ursula Biemann. Springer, Vienna, Austria, 2003. 166 pp., illus. 155 col. Paper. ISBN: 3-211-20318-4.

*Reviewed by Dene Grigar, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX, U.S.A.
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The metaphor of compression sits at the heart of Ursula Biemann's anthol-

ogy *Stuff It: The Video Essay in the Digital Age*, for it suggests such physical states as contraction, pressure, squeezing, crowding, reduction and deflation. According to the back cover, these are the very issues the collection of 15 essays addresses about the

art, theory and critical practice [of the video essay] in all its variations: from monologues of disembodiment to cartographies of diaspora experiences and transnational conditions, from the essay as the organization of complex social shifts to its technological mutation and increasing digitalization.

Biemann's introduction sets the tone for the book and elaborates on the origins and trends of the video essay: As she tells us, the film essay was first introduced in the early 1980s by Chris Marker in *Sans Soleil*. Intrigued by what happened to the genre in the digital age, she hosted a conference, also named "Stuff It," in 2002. The book, like the conference, "recontextualize[s] the audio-visual essay both technologically and culturally," focusing on a

wider development of new media, the Internet and digital image production and understand how these technologies emphasize or mutate the characteristics of the essay while opening up new possibilities for a critical engagement with them (p. 8).

Two other essays, Nora Alter's "Memory Essays" and Jorg Huber's "On the Theory-Practice of the Transitional," help to further expand on Biemann's introduction. Alter's essay situates the video essay in the long tradition of the essay genre, beginning with *Essais*, Montaigne's 16th-century work, progressing through time to de Sade, Emerson, Nietzsche, Lukacs, Adorno and Barthes. No one who has taught any form of the essay recently will disagree with Alter's stance that the essay is "critique of ideology" or that "since film, video, or literature is the work of re-presentation, veracity is an impossibility" (pp. 13–14). Her final statement that the video essay is now a "full fledged peer of the narrative and documentary films" (p. 21) is substantiated by the other essays that follow, particularly Huber's, who focuses his attention on theoretical underpinnings of the video essay.

It is Huber's essay, in fact, that explains to the novice of the genre the reasons surrounding the shift to a post-colonial, cultural-studies approach. As he says,

Practical experience shows that traditional forms of knowledge production with their enclosure into disciplines and dogmatic methods are hardly adequate to this task. It rather requires an approach that understands itself as an open, interminable and transdisciplinary process which is self-reflective of its procedure, also in terms of its style (p. 92).

Traditional literary studies, particularly those ensconced in formalist and even new critical approaches, insist on objectivity fixed upon a static object, while the

video essayistic mode exposes the process of subjective perception and associative thinking; ... is involved in translation and transition; [and] ... focuses on the ambulatory character of imagination, far removed from any programmatic statements (p. 93).

Thus, the video essay is symptomatic of the general ambiguity that emerged in the late 20th century—what Huber describes as a "general sliding, gliding and shifting, where any discourse can transform into any other discourse, where it can be continued in other fields, be grafted onto anything and placed anywhere else" (p. 96).

The general nervousness about utilizing theories involving language for discussing the video essay is echoed in Jan Verwoert's "Double Viewing: The Significance of the 'Pictorial Turn' to the Critical Use of Visual Media in Video Art." Verwoert argues for an approach to the video essay that turns away from semiotics (or a linguistic approach) to a "post-linguistic, post-semiotic rediscovery of the visual image as a complex interplay involving visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurativity" (p. 25). His notion of "double viewing" offers, he suggests, a "model of a mobile, pleasure-oriented, yet emancipated recipient of the media of popular culture ... based on the presumption of the multidimensional character of identification and consumption processes" (p. 26). His own term for "double viewing" is "disjunctive synthesis," a method that

seeks to make use of the two contradictory principles of fascination and skepticism, exploiting the power of fascination in the images to the maximum at the formal level, taking advantage of the possibilities for establishing coherency through traditional narrative means (voice-overs, continuous flow of image)—thus using all of the tools that contribute to narrative closure and thereby maximizing the effect of a work of video (p. 29).

No doubt the most provocative essay in the book—and one that exemplifies cultural and political compression—is Walid Ra'ad and the Atlas Group's "Civilizationally, We Do Not Dig Holes to Bury Ourselves." This essay is a "public interview" with Souheil Bachar, a Lebanese man held captive for 10 years—a 3-month period of it with the five Americans captives held in Lebanon during the event that came to be known as the arms-for-hostages scandal. The interview was conducted by Maha Traboulsi, a media artist representing the Atlas Group, instrumental in helping Bachar to make videotapes of his experience. At the time of the interview he had made 53 short videotapes about his captivity. Only two of them would he allow to be viewed in North America and Western Europe. His characterization of the kidnapping of Benjamin Weir, Terry Anderson and the others as a political act, rather than a criminal one, born from frustration and anger at American policies toward the Middle East, has been applied to more recent hostilities between the U.S.A. and the Middle East. What catalyzed Bachar into action in 1999 to make his videos, however, was the way the "contested narratives" (p. 39) that emerged from the investigations into American foreign policy following the scandal were distilled into a single myth of American righteousness. That discovery led him to explore "how this kind of experience can be documented and represented," something the American stories stemming from this experience "failed miserably" at, he believes (p. 43).

Other notable essays include Rinaldo Walcott's "But I Don't Want to Talk about That: Postcolonial and Black Diaspora in Video Art," which applies postcolonial theory to video essays on issues relating to "black modernity" (p. 58); "En la calle: From an Interview on TropiCola," a discussion of the *timba*, the complex and political music of Cuban youth culture; and Christa Blumlinger's "Harun Farocki: The Art of the Possible," which questions the "conceptual opposition of analog or videographic media and digital or post-photographic images" (p. 110), which she suggests is derived from a purely technological standpoint. Also, those interested in narrative and cognition will find Maurizio Lazzarato and Angela Melitopoulos's essay "Digital Montage and Weaving: An Ecology of the Brain for Machine Subjectivities" helpful. They argue that

the montage technique makes it possible to speak of the second aspect of Bergson's concept of memory, which involves changing the duration of the input-output relationship through deliberate influence. This function of the human brain can be simulated in the imaging processes used in montage (p. 121).

The book also provides critiques of 11 video essays, a selected videography, selected bibliography and author biographies. Missing from this rich trove of resources, though, is an index, which would have been useful for retracing ideas, names and events mentioned in the book.

While the publisher claims that the book is written for "experts and laymen interested in media theory, history of art, cultural science, social theory," I would add to this list those working in the areas of visual rhetoric, composition studies, electronic literature and digital culture. Certainly it should find its way onto the reading lists of any scholar interested in new media.

FESTIVAL

2ND FILM MUSEUM BIENNALE: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES MEET EARLY CINEMA

Netherlands Filmmuseum,
Amsterdam, the Netherlands,
5–10 April 2005.
Web: <www.filmmuseum.nl/>.

Reviewed by Martha Blassnigg,
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Alongside the two renowned annual festivals of film restoration in Bologna and Pordenone, Italy, the Filmmuseum in Amsterdam has established its own biennial festival, the *Biennale*. Drawing wide public and international attention in its second edition, the festival is beginning to reveal its specialty as recent restorations, newly rediscovered films and the accompaniment of silent films with contemporary music scores. The result was a most ambitious program comprising 35 films, almost all rediscovered film jewels, screened over 5 days and a sequence of presentations and discussion forums focusing on specific restoration issues such as digital restoration. This ambition and

courage was to be expected, since the Netherlands Filmmuseum is well known for its openness to experiments with new (and digital) technologies and alternative treatments of the aesthetics and ethics of film preservation and presentation. In the late 1980s it was one of the first archives to experiment with the duplication of tinted, toned and stenciled early films on color stock, and also stood out with its famous "Bits & Pieces Collection" (compilations of remarkable early film fragments), as well as its experimental musical accompaniments to "silent" films.

One of the most memorable events of the 2005 Biennale was the screening of one of the many lost silent Hollywood films, a worthy topic as more than 80% of the nitrate film heritage made between 1895 and the mid-1950s is considered "lost." This discovery was *Beyond the Rocks*, a melodramatic star vehicle made by Sam Wood (U.S.A.) in 1922. The film features Rudolph Valentino and Gloria Swanson, two of the most celebrated stars of the time, in their only film together. The six reels of the Dutch release of *Beyond the Rocks* were discovered in the conservation department of the Netherlands Filmmuseum between 2000 and 2004 during the registration work of a recently acquired private collection of about 2,000 rusty film cans. The tinted 35mm nitrate positive print was in relatively good condition, with some parts of greater damage and chemical decomposition (still visible in the restored copy), which coincidentally affected the most emotionally intense and dramatic scenes of the film. Because of the international interest in this remarkable film, extra funds for the restoration process became available, and the Filmmuseum found itself in the luxurious position of being able to restore a feature-length film digitally. To dispel the common misconception of digital restoration as a substitution process, curator Giovanna Fossati, responsible for the restoration of *Beyond the Rocks* and for digital restoration technologies within the conservation department, pointed out that for an archive, digital technology complements the photochemical duplication process but in no way replaces it. One reason for this is that digital technologies still change too quickly and do not yet offer reliable tools for archives to transfer their entire collection to digital formats for preservation. So far to date, good old celluloid

is still the most reliable material for preserving film heritage under the best conditions.

Nonetheless, Fossati was very positive about the various new possibilities that digital restoration technologies offer for active film restoration. She showed some "before" and "after" examples from *Beyond the Rocks* and demonstrated the values of image manipulation using Diamant software (developed by HS-Art Graz in collaboration with the Filmmuseum; see <www.hs-art.com/>). Next to de-flickering, stabilization of the image and dust removal, digital intervention includes interpolation—one example of which is the restoration of an almost completely damaged frame by copying image fragments from the neighboring frames. The newly created frame is similar to the original, but has not existed before, and as a consequence raises ethical issues. On the one hand, there are more orthodox and "safe" approaches that avoid any elaborate image manipulation, but on the other hand, the experiment-friendly approaches resonate with the Filmmuseum's innovative spirit.

The addition of a musical score to *Beyond the Rocks* created technical, ethical and aesthetic problems for the restoration process. In order to duplicate a print for cinema distribution, the soundstripe had to be added to the film and the silent 35mm images had to be resized in order to make space for the soundtrack without losing the original ratio. It was also necessary to increase the frame rate from the original 18fps to 24fps, the standard speed in European cinema projection. To achieve this effect, every third frame in the film was repeated, a trick that remains invisible for the general audience; only some of the archive specialists claimed to have noticed it during the screening. While opinions on the ethical and aesthetic decisions on the restoration of *Beyond the Rocks* may have differed, Fossati made very it clear on behalf of the Filmmuseum that in the first instance, even before the public announcement of the discovery of *Beyond the Rocks*, the Filmmuseum had duplicated the original nitrate print via the photochemical process in the laboratory to ensure the immediate preservation of the decaying material. In this preservation, the original copy is duplicated one to one without any manipulation; the digital restoration was made in addition to this copy in order to gain a cleaner version of the film with its new soundtrack for

worldwide distribution in cinemas and on DVD. And while the Biennale was unfolding, the computers in the laboratory of Haghefilm at Cineco were running continuously to create the English inter-titles for the international distribution copy of *Beyond the Rocks*, raising a further ethical issue around the topic of authenticity.

The case of this new production, comprising a digital restoration with a new soundtrack, opened up a substantial discussion about digital technology for film preservation and presentation that was continuous with issues reflected in other parts of the Biennale program. For example, the additional value of digital technology for film preservation and presentation was a topic in the section "Archives and Education," where the Filmmuseum presented its collaborations with the professional master's program "Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image," at the University of Amsterdam (see <www.hum.uva.nl/graduateschool>).

For the early cinema connoisseur the Biennale offered an ambitious program of unique discoveries and recently restored films, for example Germaine Dulac's *La Coquille et le Clergyman* from 1927, based on Antonin Artaud's screenplay; and the 1941 version of *Regen* (Rain), by Joris Ivens and M.H.K. Franken (Netherlands, 1929 and 1932), with the famous score by Hans Eisler ("Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain"), which no longer existed in its original form. Elsewhere on offer there was the most complete version of *The Robber Symphony* (Friedrich Feher, U.K., 1936) newly restored, and the most recent restoration of *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, U.S.A., 1950), presented and introduced by Barry Allen, the head of restoration at Paramount Pictures. The Danish Film Institute also presented a program showing such treasures as *Afgrunden* (1910), by Peter Urban Gad (starring Asta Nielsen in her debut), accompanied by, among other films, a documentary on Nielsen, *The Talking Muse*, by Torben Skjodt Jensen (2003). The "Danish Day" concluded with another discussion about the issue of restoration and digital technologies, with a particular emphasis on the approach of the Danish Film Institute, which is well known for its outstanding restorations and its purist approach (in contrast to the more experimental Netherlands Filmmuseum).

Music, so essential to cinema, constituted another key focus of the Bien-

nale, which featured contemporary scores in some most impressive musical evening performances, such as the adventure film *Le mystère de la Tour Eiffel*, by Julien Duvivier (1927). This performance was one of the highlights of the week, both in its unique restoration by the Filmmuseum, presented for the first time, and in its musical accompaniment by composer Fay Lovsky together with an ensemble of Dutch musicians. Another highlight was the screening of *Menschen am Sonntag* (Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer, Germany, 1930), restored by Martin Koerber in collaboration with the Netherlands Filmmuseum, with a new soundtrack performed live by the Alliage Orchestra (available on DVD). The performance of *Spinvis*, by Erik de Jong and his ensemble, created a true soundscape for the "Bits & Pieces" compilation from the Filmmuseum, as did DJ Aardvarck (Mike Kivits), who turned the tables until late on Saturday night, when half of one of the Cinerama theaters was transformed into a dance floor so that the Biennale audiences could shake off their film festival stiffness, and again in an engagement with a "Bits & Pieces" compilation titled "Human Bits."

Much more could be said about the rich program of the Biennale; for a complete overview, please visit the Netherlands Filmmuseum's web site at <www.filmmuseum.nl>. Hardly ever has there been so much fresh and experimental breath in an early cinema festival as at the Filmmuseum Biennale, and it is a credit to the team of innovative, engaging specialists who were responsible for bringing it all together. More significantly, the Biennale successfully reached out for both a broad audience and specialists from the field of film archives and set a trend with its innovative and experimental approach. It also set high expectations for its next edition in 2007, when, one hopes, the audience can share again some of the excitement of the Filmmuseum staff working in the cool vaults, opening rusty film cans that once in a while reveal small or bigger jewels of film heritage. The Biennale shows some of these jewels in an excellent festival created by a brilliant team at the Filmmuseum in Amsterdam and deserves all the credit for having created a new forum where historical material is approached with innovative ideas that keep pace with contemporary technological developments and anticipates visions of the future.

FILMS

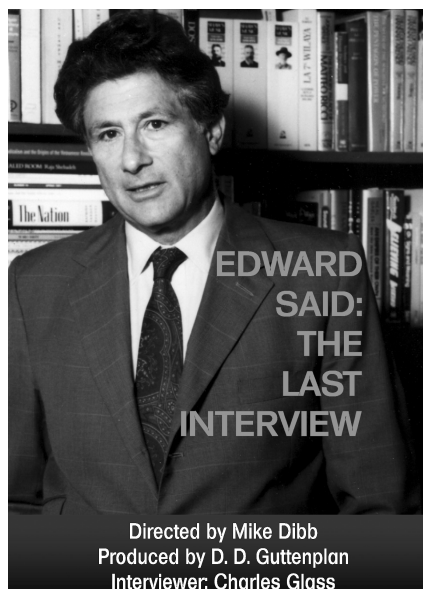
EDWARD SAID: THE LAST INTERVIEW

by Mike Dibb. 2004. VHS/DVD, 114 min., color. Available from First Run/Icarus Films, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A.,

Reviewed by Andrea Dahlberg.
E-mail: <dahlberg@bakernet.com>.

Less than a year before his death on 25 September 2003, Edward Said gave his final interview over the course of three days. This interview is recorded in Mike Dibb's film. Said speaks of his illness and how he was virtually unable to read, write or listen to music. But there is no sign in this remarkable film of any abatement of Said's immense intellectual energy or passionate engagement with life. Said speaks for almost two hours about his life, his major works, including *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, his films, his role as a member of the Palestine National Council and his subsequent profound disillusionment with Arafat and the Oslo Accords. It is hard to think of another individual who could carry an entire film of this length merely by speaking to an appropriately low-key interviewer such as Charles Glass.

Said is blazingly articulate, with a face that could have been painted by El Greco. He illustrates his points with references to Vico, Foucault, Jane Austen, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Conrad, Graham Greene, Daumier, Tagore, Faulkner, Shakespeare, Hemingway, Mailer, Eliot, Roth, Chomsky and Napoleon. He describes his obsession with counterpoint and his preference for Rossellini over Verdi (Verdi is always "in italics"). Said also discusses American self-identity, the U.S. educational system and the provincial nature of its intellectuals, such as Philip Roth and Norman Mailer, who remain focused on the interior life of the country and do not engage with its immense impact in the world. Yet Said is always accessible and engaging. Whether describing his schooling in Cairo and the U.S.A., his views of his parents, his existential experiences of exile or his intellectual and political passions, Said makes sparks fly. His words paint a vast, vivid world, one that he inhabits more intensely than most. His emotional and imaginative range is as great as his



intellect. I had the pleasure of watching this film with people who are well versed in Said's work and with others who had barely heard of him. Not one of them failed to be drawn in or energized and left wanting to respond to Said's ideas.

The director of this film, Mike Dibb, was a friend of Said's who knew his subject sufficiently well to make the roles of the interviewer and the camera as unobtrusive as possible. Said wears the same clothes over the three-day period of the film's shooting, which helps create the illusion that the viewer is the third party in a small room listening to Said and, to a lesser extent, Glass conversing. The result is an intimate portrait of a great mind.

With the passing of Edward Said, the world lost a great intellectual and an articulate and credible spokesman for Palestine. This film captures the man himself.

PROTEUS: A NINETEENTH CENTURY VISION

by David Lebrun. 2004. VHS/DVD, 61 min., color and black-and-white. Available from First Run/Icarus Films, Brooklyn, NY, U.S.A.

Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens, Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, U.S.A. E-mail: <ballast@netins.net>.

My favorite statement by German scientist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) is not mentioned in this film. A zoologist, scientific illustrator and advocate of pantheism ("God is everywhere"), he

wrote in 1899, in *The Riddle of the Universe*, that the typical Christian description of God is that of "a gaseous vertebrate." This wonderfully interesting, prize-winning film provides an informative overview of Haeckel's intellectual growth, the social setting in which his ideas matured, and the progress of his writings on evolutionary biology (he popularized the "tree of descent," the notion of ecology, and the biogenetic assumption that the development of an individual [ontogeny] is indicative of the stages by which its species evolved [phylogeny]). Haeckel was among the most widely read writers of the 19th century and yet he is all but forgotten today. When his name is mentioned, it may be not for his scientific writings, but for his innumerable drawings made (using a microscope connected to a camera lucida tracing device) from live specimens of astonishing one-celled animals called radiolarians. These tiny sea creatures were called that because their silicon skeletons are examples of radial symmetry; yet (like snowflakes) no two are identical, and their variety is truly amazing.

I have been aware of Haeckel's work for years because I own a copy of *Art Forms in Nature*, a book of his drawings and paintings that was first published in 1904 and was more recently reissued (with the plates only, without his scientific text) by Dover Publications in 1974. Those same images are used inventively throughout this film to produce animated sequences of the similarities and differences of radiolarians and other protozoa, a term that alludes to Proteus, a Greek god of the sea, who (like radiolarians) could appear in countless varied forms. Haeckel's greatest influence was Charles Darwin, but, as this film postulates, he may have been equally influenced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's attempts to reconcile art with science; by *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the epic poem about the

sea and creativity by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who described the ocean as "the reservoir of the soul"; and, most surprisingly, by the inadvertent research of ocean life that came from the laying of the first transatlantic telegraph cable by Cyrus Fields in 1866. When this film premiered in 2004, it was deservedly given awards at several film festivals as the "best documentary." In watching it, I learned quite a lot about Ernst Haeckel as a person, Darwinian evolution theory, the beginnings of oceanography, the Victorian era, and society's age-old equation of the quixotic moods of the ocean with madness and the imagination—so much so that, prior to the formation of mental institutions, people who were mentally ill were sometimes set adrift on ships, in ill-fated crafts that were commonly known as "ships of fools."

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BAUHAUS: LESS IS MORE

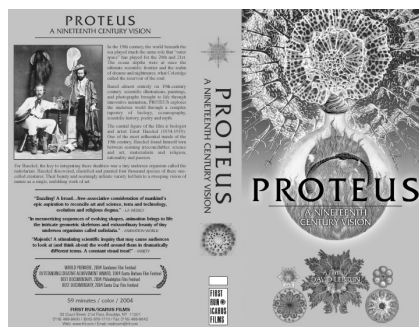
by Eliseo Alvarez. 2005. VHS/DVD, 32 min., color. ISBN: 1-4213-0360-4; ISBN: 1-4213-1429-0.

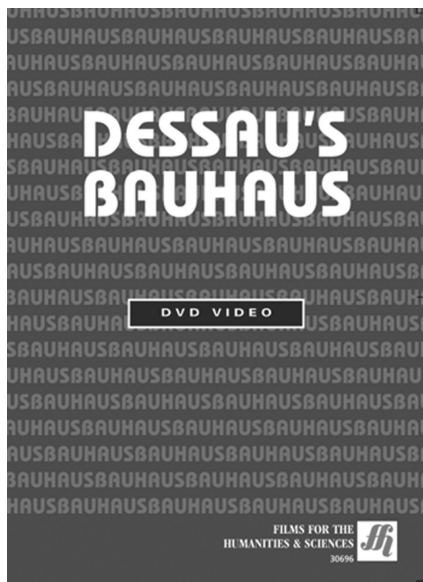
DESSAU'S BAUHAUS

by Frederic Compain. 2000. VHS/DVD, 29 min., color. ISBN: 0-7365-5124-7. Both films available in the United States and Canada from Films for the Arts and Humanities, P.O. Box 2053, Princeton, NJ 08543-2053, U.S.A. Web: <www.films.com>.

Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens, Department of Art, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, U.S.A. E-mail: <ballast@netins.net>.

These are two current educational films on the Bauhaus, the most influential art, design and architectural school of the 20th century. It began (at the risk of repeating what everyone knows) in 1919 in Weimar, Germany, moved in 1927 to an important new building designed by Walter Gropius in Dessau, and was eventually forced to relocate in 1933 to a Berlin warehouse, where it was closed by the Nazis. Currently available to school libraries are two longer, more compelling films on this same subject: One is a balanced, well-edited view of the school's history and legacy by British historian Frank Whitford, titled *Bauhaus: Face of the 20th Century* (available from the distributor of these films), while the other is a





memorable, detailed account of the school's American influence (enriched by brief excerpts from rare historic films and recent candid interviews with eyewitness participants), by Judith Pearlman, titled *Bauhaus in America* (available from ClioFilm at <cliofilm@mindspring.com>).

Of the two new films considered here, neither stands up to the quality of those earlier films, and, of the two, the newer one, titled *Bauhaus: Less Is More*, is easily more disappointing. In an ironic misuse of the slogan "less is more" (popularized by Bauhaus architect Mies van der Rohe), the film consists of a jam-packed overview of the 13-year history of the Bauhaus in a mere 32 minutes (an average allocation of about two minutes per year). Despite such excess ambitions, it is still a helpful, informative mix of images that have to do with Bauhaus personalities, products, buildings and historic events, backed up by a monotone voiceover text. Unfortunately, whatever its visual virtues, the film is effectively ruined by what, in the credits, is called a "music mix," and which sounds like canned music ad nauseum ("chewing gum for the ears"), of the sort that we all are condemned to endure in the waiting rooms of dentists or on the telephone whenever we get put on hold. No doubt canned music has its place, but the subject of this film is artistic innovation (at the Bauhaus), and the annoying use of auditory wallpaper (along with other oddities) is a conspicuous contradiction of that—the film preaches one thing but practices the opposite. In contrast, at the real Bauhaus, the students formed a makeshift band (not unlike

today's student rock bands) that played improvisational jazz at school parties, mixed in with avant-garde classical scores.

The second of these two new films, called *Dessau's Bauhaus* (which is also half an hour long), is far more successful, in part because it focuses on a single, central aspect of Bauhaus history. Produced in cooperation with the Pompidou Center, it too provides a historical context, but it does so while always remaining within the topic of the Dessau Bauhaus, the now-famous cluster of buildings designed by Gropius. The film offers an in-depth analysis of this architectural classic, making ample use of sketches, vintage photographs, historic film footage and even comparative aerial views, showing its changes in setting, then and now. Of particular value is extensive footage from a tour of the buildings in their current state (all aspects are being precisely restored), photographs of the wartime damage and animated diagrams of the plan of the buildings, which clearly reveal how the architect made a structure that would effectively function in support of the school he envisioned.

(Reprinted by permission from *Ballast Quarterly Review*, Volume 20, Number 3, Spring 2005.)

LEONARDO REVIEWS ON-LINE

The reviews published in print are but a small selection of the reviews available on the *Leonardo Reviews* web site. Below is a full list of reviews published in *LR* March–April 2005 <leonardoreviews.mit.edu>.

September 2005

The 2005 Venice Biennale: William Kentridge and the Limbo of Contemporary Art. Reviewed by Simone Osthoff.

Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion, by Philippe-Alain Michaud. Reviewed by Michael Punt.

Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power, edited by Ron Eglash et al. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

The Cinema, or the Imaginary Man, by Edgar Morin. Reviewed by Martha Blassnigg.

Cognitive Science, Literature and the Arts, by Patrick Colm Hogan. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture, by Georges Bataille. Reviewed by Allan Graubard.

Eyes, Lies and Illusions: The Art of Deception, by Laurent Mannoni, Werner Nekes and Marina Warner. Reviewed by Martha Blassnigg.

The Frankenfood Myth: How Protest and Politics Threaten the Biotech Revolution, by Henry I. Miller and Gregory Conko. Reviewed by Craig Hilton.

Gehry Draws, edited by Mark Rappolt and Robert Violette. Reviewed by Rob Harle (Australia).

Human Factors Methods for Design: Making Systems Human-Centred, by Christopher P Nemeth. Reviewed by John Knight.

Kurt Schwitters, from the Discovery of Art Series. Reviewed by Artur Golczewski.

The Network Society (Key Concepts), by Darin Barney. Reviewed by John Knight.

The Paradoxes of Art: A Phenomenological Investigation, by Alan Paskow. Reviewed by Robert Pepperell.

Qatar Foundation: Innovations in Education: The Art and Science Partnership. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

Ramshackle Pier, by Andy Bole. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

Read_Me: Software Art and Culture, edited by Olga Goriunova and Alexei Shulgin. Reviewed by John Knight.

Red Persimmons, by Shinsuke Ogawa and Peng Xiaolian. Reviewed by Soo C. Hostetler.

Santiago Calatrava's Travels, by Christoph Schwab. Reviewed by Artur Golczewski.

The Shunned Country and Venus Handcuffs, by Bob Drake. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

The Situationist International: A User's Guide, by Simon Ford. Reviewed by Claudia Westermann.

A Visit to Ogawa Productions, directed by Oshige Jun' ichiro; produced by Yasui Yoshio. Reviewed by Soo C. Hostetler.

August 2005

The 2005 Venice Biennale: William Kentridge and the Limbo of Contemporary Art. Reviewed by Simone Osthoff.

Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power, edited by Ron Eglash et al. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

Artificial Life IX: Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on the Simulation and Synthesis of Living Systems, edited by Jordan Pollack et al. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

La Biennale di Venezia, 51st International Art Exhibition. Reviewed by Yvonne Spielmann.

Carnal Art: Orlan's Refacing, by C. Jill O'Bryan. Reviewed by Rob Harle.

The Curvature of Spacetime: Newton, Einstein, and Gravitation, by Harald Fritzsche. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

Disruptive Pattern Material: An Encyclopedia of Camouflage, by Hardy Blechman. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

Encounter: Merce. Reviewed by Richard Kade.

Hans Haacke, by Walter Grasskamp. Reviewed by Artur Golczewski.

Infinite Variety: The Life and Legend of the Marchesa Casati, by Scot D. Ryerson and Michael Orlando Yaccarino. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art, by Susan L. Aberth. Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.

Proteus: A Nineteenth Century Vision, by David Lebrun. Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.

Shades of Black: Assembling Black Art in 1980s Britain, edited by David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom and Sonia Boyce. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

Symmetry 2000: Part 1 and Part 2, edited by I. Hargittai and T.C. Laurent. Reviewed by Rob Harle.

Talking Drum and Rogue Wave, by Chris Brown. Reviewed by René van Peer.

Technology as Experience, by John McCarthy and Peter Wright. Reviewed by John Knight.

Them: A Memoir of Parents, by Francine du Plessix Gray. Reviewed by Roy R. Behrens.

Visionary Anatomies, by Harvey Fineberg, J.D. Talesk and Michael Sappol. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

July 2005

Le arti e la psicologia, by Lucia Pizzo Russo. Reviewed by Ian Verstegen.

Baikal Ice, by Peter Cusack. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art, by Jill Bennett. Reviewed by Alex Rotas.

For Ever Godard, edited by Michael Temple, James S. Williams and Michael Witt. Reviewed by Jan Baetens.

Innovation and Its Discontents: How Our Broken Patent System Is Endangering Innovation and Progress, and What to Do About It, by Adam B. Jaffe and Josh Lerner. Reviewed by Zainub Verjee.

Leap Second Neutral, by Machine and the Synergetic Nuts, *Pork Chop Blue*

around The Rind, by Fast n' Bulbous and *Emissaries*, by Radio Massacre International. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

Light/Image/Illusion—The Aegina Academy, A Forum for Art and Science, by Gustav Deutsch and Hanna Schimek. Reviewed by Martha Blassnigg.

Masterworks of Technology: The Story of Creative Engineering, Architecture, and Design, by E.E. Lewis. Reviewed by Rob Harle.

The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely, by Elizabeth Grosz. Reviewed by Rob Harle.

The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue, edited by Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble, with an introduction by Ingrid Monson. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995, by Elizabeth Harney. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity, by Maeda Ai. Reviewed by Andrea Dahlberg.

Unsorted: An A to Z for SonicActsX, by Arie Altena et al., with an introduction by Taco Stolk. Reviewed by René Beekman.

VAS: An Opera in Flatland, by Steve Tomasula; art and design by Stephen Farrell. Reviewed by Eugene Thacker.

A Visit to Ogawa Productions, directed by Oshige Jun' Ichiro; produced by Yasui Yoshio. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.

Vocals, by Ian Breakwell. Reviewed by Mike Leggett.

Walter Benjamin and Art, edited by Andrew Benjamin. Reviewed by Michael R. (Mike) Mosher.