
From the Editor

In this issue of *Afterimage* (Volume 48, no. 1), several of our contributors—of reports, essays, features, peer-reviewed articles, and multiple book reviews—look at historical and current issues around the politics of race and knowledge production, as well as position contemporary artworks in relation to the Anthropocene. In the United States in recent months it has appeared as though some humans are in favor of the extinction of our species, or at least for forgoing certain elements of our common humanity. Myriad pieces in this issue tackle these challenging topics head on through careful consideration and adroit analysis.

Although many art events continue to be postponed or cancelled, some have pivoted quite successfully to online delivery, resulting in increased attendance and more widespread engagement. As an example, Nancy Keefe Rhodes shares the rich conversations that transpired during the Center for Photography at Woodstock's online "Race, Activism and Photography: 2020 Social Justice Symposium." Nearly twenty presentations (panels, screenings, and artist's talks) culminated in photographer Carrie Mae Weems delivering the first of the new endowed Arnold Newman Lectures at Woodstock. As Rhodes writes, it was a "singularly eloquent and moving talk" in which among other projects, Weems made a point of noting that she has "always [sought] to unpack questions of power." Kathryn Armstrong reports on how the world's film festival circuit has adapted to changes necessitated by the global pandemic—and what these changes might mean in terms of financing, screening rights, accessibility, and technological collaboration for a diverse array of festivals going forward.

In the essay "Pictures of Half-Truth: On Politics & Photography," James Fleming revisits the vagaries of photographic truth through an exploration of war photography, fine art, censorship, and propaganda. He notes that in the Vietnam War, for example, "the photographs came thick and fast, shells of truth firing out of the TV and newspaper," a stark contrast to the ongoing, alarming defamation of the media as "fake news."

In the feature "Aesthetic and Industrial Rupture in the Work of Edward Burtynsky and Justin Brice Guariglia," Cynthia Veloric analyzes how two photographers of industrial sites "meet mining rupture with aesthetic rupture" highlighting "the notion of rupture in thinking about art and the Anthropocene, via consideration of mining as a hyperobject." Veloric teases out how both Burtynsky and Guariglia disrupt viewers' "perceptual processes by 'mining' our neurological, psychological, and intellectual depths while we gaze at landscapes shaped by humans in the Anthropocene epoch."

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In our reviews sections, we first offer another project review—a new initiative providing coverage of singular projects that might, or might not, find exhibition in a physical space during these days of closures, travel restrictions, and physical distancing. In this issue, John Aäsp looks at Eric Kunsman’s *The Fake News Archive Project*, a thirteen-volume set of artist’s books comprised of screenshots of the front pages of news media outlets including Fox News, CNN, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*, beginning in 2016 with the election of Donald J. Trump. As Aäsp explains, “Instead of rewriting and manipulating elements of news, labeling them as ‘truth,’ Kunsman presents unaltered screenshots of news media pages as they appeared, on the date they were seen, unchanged, as ‘fake.’” Despite the Orwellian echoes he notes, Aäsp concludes that although it will be some time before “we gain a less tainted perspective on the years archived in these tomes, *Fake News Archive Project* will at least have some honest evidence to show for it.”

Suzanna E. Szucs reviews *Holy*, a compendium of photographer Donna Ferrato’s fifty-year career in which she has privileged bodies and in which she “seeks to shift the Catholic paradigm from a male-dominated trinity to one centered on woman.” In this monograph Ferrato highlights her professed goal “to illustrate the totality of women’s lives.” Ferrato writes, “my mission is to cut out the noise and listen to women” and Szucs questions the ultimate prioritization evident in these admittedly powerful and important documentary images.

Byron Fong, in his review of Lev Manovich’s latest book, *Cultural Analytics*, explores what the author means when he writes, “we need to reinvent what it means to study culture.” Manovich’s strategies include what Fong terms “a new set of terms, tools, theories, and methodologies for studying cultural artifacts, experiences, and dynamics that [Manovich] collectively calls ‘cultural analytics’—a congregate field that includes media studies, digital culture studies, and data science.

Jay Murphy delves into *The Ahuman Manifesto: Activism for the End of the Anthropocene*, the latest book by the sometimes controversial posthumanist philosopher and author Patricia MacCormack. Murphy navigates what he refers to as the “many contradictions” of the wide-ranging and “heavily theorized” text (with chapters including “All action is art,” “Occulture: Secular spirituality,” and “The future in the age of the Apocalypse”) while sharing MacCormack’s own various disclaimers about her project and approach. Ultimately, Murphy argues that “MacCormack’s version of the universe . . . is a radically fore-closed one” although the manifesto does employ “often skillful tactical polemics.”

Brian Arnold explores three new texts by David Levi Strauss, one of our most prolific writers and consistently engaging thinkers on contemporary photography. Making connections between two recent book-length works and a book chapter by Strauss, Arnold notes that although this digital age might lead many to believe that we live in a post-truth culture, “we all actively construct our realities—perhaps more so than ever—using photographs.” Strauss acknowledges the current chaos of our world but, as Arnold assures us, Strauss “is also here to tell us that new possibilities might be out there.”

Both of this issue’s peer-reviewed articles examine works by contemporary women filmmakers, offering vital new scholarship with evocative overlap. In “Vernacular

Landscapes: Reading the Anthropocene in the Films of Kelly Reichardt,” Mercedes Chavez brings, as she writes, “film studies approaches into conversation with key concepts that define the epoch: time, scale, and the collapse of boundaries between the human and an exteriorized nature.” Chavez applies Gilles Deleuze’s notion of “the fold” and Donna J. Haraway’s “situated knowledges” to the work of Reichardt to highlight the positionality of these films in a vernacular landscape. “Reading the film aesthetic through Anthropocene concepts of time, scale, and entanglement,” Chavez offers a close examination of how Reichardt’s films “evoke structures on human, global, and planetary scales, and provide a political critique of US mythologies and imperial past.” In her analysis, Chavez takes readers through the three major themes of scalar conflict, manufactured landscapes, and the use of sound “to critique human positionality both in nature and social hierarchies.” She concludes that “analyzing cinema aesthetics of and in the Anthropocene can offer a crucial cultural component to its theorization,” and reveals “the political and potentially activist implications that might help mitigate coming crises or better assert accountability for the epoch that will remain a shared planetary present and future.”

Matthew Holtmeier and Chelsea Wessels trace the ecofeminist and political aesthetics in the films *Meek’s Cutoff* (2010) by Kelly Reichardt and *Eden* (2012) by Megan Griffiths. As the authors explain, these two films are examples of “explicitly political cinema, particularly through the ways in which they develop and communicate political subjectivity.” Holtmeier and Wessels focus on how these film works, shot in the Pacific Northwest, illustrate “the value of regional production in providing a cinematic politics of solidarity and sustainability.” Staking a claim for “two frameworks that have not been applied in the analysis of film production and aesthetics: ecofeminism and bioregionalism,” the authors tease out how these “political frameworks make a natural pairing through their concomitant focus on extraction,” and positioning these works within a catalog of “more environmentally minded films [in which a] concern with the exploitation of women is also reflected in the physical environments of the films.”

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We continue to review scholarly submissions on an ongoing basis, and welcome reports on events and happenings such as online conferences and symposia; essays; photo essays; interviews; and exhibition, book, film/video, and project reviews. As we begin a new year, let’s look forward together.

Take good care,
 Karen vanMeenen
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