Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art
By Andrew V. Uroskie/The University of Chicago Press/2014/288 pp./$90.00 (hb), $30.00 (sb)

At one point in Between the Black Box and the White Cube, Andrew Uroskie discusses Marcel Duchamp’s “recovery” of Victorian-era optical toys—“philosophical” toys—in his artmaking practice. The reintroduction and recreation of his prewar works of the nineteen-teens and twenties and his postwar works of the 1940s served as conceptual and aesthetic models for a range of artists in the following decades. Similarly, Uroskie undertakes his own act of recovery in this important new book, an engaging art historical/theoretical exploration of the beginnings of what was later to be termed “expanded cinema.” Uroskie casts his net wider than the mainline expanded cinema works of the 1960s and ’70s—works that often focused on modernist concerns of materiality, self-reflexivity, and apparatus—instead exploring a range of works, performances, and exhibitions that are more engaged with issues of spectatorship: how a viewer encounters, interacts with, or is challenged by a work and its situation within spaces or contexts that don’t fit comfortably with the common experiences of the cinema theater (the black box) or the gallery/museum (the white cube).

Uroskie grounds his investigation in Cagean principles and ideas surrounding minimalist sculpture’s move toward site specificity, and provides some 1960s reference points (multiscreen films at the 1964 World’s Fair, Nam June Paik’s 1964 Zen for Film, Claes Oldenburg’s 1965 Moveyhouse performance) before circling back to the 1950s and moving roughly chronologically through close readings of key examples from the 1950s and 60s of the ways artists pushed against exhibition and viewing limitations placed on artistic practices that sought to occupy a space in between the two dominant modes of viewer engagement. Among the works discussed are films by Parisian Letterists Jean–Isidore Isou and Maurice Lemaitre, proto-cinema mutoscope sculptures by Robert Breer, film–centered installations and performances by Robert Whitman, and Andy Warhol’s two-projector film Outer and Inner Space (1965). Uroskie addresses these and other works with sensitive and detailed analyses, singling out the ways in which they expand understandings of filmmaking and artmaking practices and demonstrating how they mirror other non–cinematic work of the time—including a variety of sculptural, filmic, performative, and some combinatory practices that also problematized and opened up the interaction of audience and object. Uroskie ultimately provides a valuable consideration of works that have fallen out of the discourse and a fruitful reconsideration of still–celebrated works through a different prism.

PATRICK FRIEL is a Chicago-based film programmer, instructor, and writer who currently runs the Onion City Experimental Film and Video Festival and his own White Light Cinema screening series.

BOOKS

Akira Kurosawa, by Peter Wild. Reaktion Books/207 pp./$16.95 (sb).


Cinema, Slavery, and Brazilian Nationalism, by Richard A. Gordon. University of Texas Press/272 pp./$55.00 (hb).

Derek Jarman Super 8, by James Mackay. Thames & Hudson/288 pp./$29.95 (hb).


Green Documentary: Environmental Documentary in the 21st Century, by Helen Hughes. Intellect/175 pp./$36.00 (sb).


Magnum Contact Sheets, edited by Kristen Lubben. Thames & Hudson/524 pp./$75.00 (hb).


Moments That Made the Movies, by David Thomson. Thames & Hudson/319 pp./$29.95 (sb).


Porn Archives, edited by Tim Dean, Steven Ruzeczky, and David Squires. Duke University Press/503 pp./$29.95 (sb).

Real Objects in Unreal Situations: Modern Art in Fiction Films, by Susan Felleman. Intellect/203 pp./$28.00 (sb).
MEDIA RECEIVED


TV Museum: Contemporary Art and the Age of Television, by Maeve Connolly. Intellect/332 pp./$43.00 (sb).


Yves Klein, by Nuit Banai et al. Reaktion Books/204 pp./$16.95 (sb).

MONOGRAPHS

Chuck Close: Photographer, by Colin Westerbeck, with texts by Chuck Close and Terrie Sultan. Prestel/203 pp./$65.00 (hb).

The Home and the World: A View of Calcutta, photographs by Laura McPhee. Yale University Press/159 pp./$50.00 (hb).


EXHIBITION CATALOGS

Aaron Siskind: Another Photographic Reality, by Gilles Mora. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at Pallav Populaire, Montpellier, France, Nov. 28, 2014–Feb. 23, 2015. University of Texas Press in association with the Center for Creative Photography/199 pp./$65.00 (hb).


Diary/Landscape, by James Welling. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Art Institute of Chicago, Nov. 1, 2014–April 12, 2015. University of Chicago Press/147 pp./$45.00 (hb).


Larry Sultan: Here and Home, by Rebecca Morse. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Nov. 9, 2014–March 22, 2015; Milwaukee Art Museum, Oct. 23, 2015–Jan. 24, 2016; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Summer 2017. Prestel in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art./ 207 pp./$50.00 (hb).


Martin Parr: We Love Britain!, by Martin Parr. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at Sprengel Museum Hannover, Germany, Oct. 18, 2014–Feb. 22, 2015. Schirmer/Mosel in association with Sprengel Museum Hannover/125 pp./$39.95 (hb).

Paris: City of Light, photographs by Christopher Thomas, edited by Ira Stehmann. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at Bernheimer Fine Art Photography, Munich, Germany, Oct. 2–Nov. 15, 2014. Prestel/159 pp./$60.00 (hb).


Sze Tsung Leong: Horizons, texts by Charlotte Cotton et al. Published in conjunction with the exhibition Horizons at Yossi Milo Gallery, New York City, April 3–May 17, 2008. Hatje Cantz/176 pp./$95.00 (hb).