how the universe was first set into motion; medieval scholasticism later translated Aristotle’s “Prime Mover” into the Christian God).

The strength of the film is its multidimensional quality. Visual elements such as historical engravings, paintings, animations and manuscripts aid the presentation immensely and bring a realistic element into play that knits the ideas of several periods of history together into a seamless fabric. Much of this is quite subtle. For example, showing manuscript pages and still artwork might seem mundane, but in this case I found that the variety of these backdrops created a visual sense of the cultural life of the times.

Particularly insightful are the discussions of topics involving the clash between science and religion, exemplified by the treatment of Galileo (and the Pope’s 1992 apology for the legal process against Galileo). In this case, George Coyne, former director of the Vatican Observatory, points out that the Church’s lukewarm admission of responsibility for its persecution of Galileo much too was desired and that the conflict between science and religion evident at that time is still a part of cultural discussions. (Coyne’s candor isn’t totally surprising. He is also a vocal opponent of intelligent design theory, which often sneaks a Creator God into the back door. Indeed, some say Coyne was forced out of his Vatican position because of his willingness to speak publicly about his views opposing intelligent design.)

One of the most powerful unstated aspects of this production is the way it brought to mind debates outside its topics. The producer understood the power of these old manuscripts in conveying the ideas of the thinkers the film presented. Looking at the repeated use of the physical volumes, I wondered how the e-books that are repeated use of the physical volumes, had previously taken for granted. I was enthralled even though I was familiar with many of the details and found myself moved to think about details I had previously taken for granted.

Still, a marriage of these artifacts with new technologies occurs. Many of the visuals that accompany the film are “moving” because of the nature of the work. One good example of how the director used new technologies to his advantage is the animation of the notes on a page of Kepler’s Harmonices Mundi (The Harmony of the Worlds, 1619). Here, watching the notes as one listens to them succeeds in elevating the discussion of Kepler’s work relating the harmony and congruence in geometrical forms and physical phenomena to the harmonic proportions in music.
I believe the portraits of Tycho Brahe and Kepler were the strongest, at least in terms of presenting new details on their work that stoked my curiosity. For example, I never before thought about whether Kepler conceived all of the images in his publications or had an artist do this work for him. Many, like his Platonic solid model of the solar system from Mysterium Cosmographicum (1600), are well known. I had always assumed he did them himself, but I did not fully conceptualize how many drawings were in the book. Others, like the frontispiece of the Rudolphine Tables, seem unlikely to be his.

By extension, I found that the abundance of visual material, which added immensely to the script, also left me disappointed in terms of its informational value. Indeed, my one complaint with the production is that so many of the paintings, drawings and prints, which appeared to be from the period discussed, are not attributed. That said, citing the creator of the work during the script would have been distracting, so perhaps this criticism is unfair. Moreover, when I looked one up myself, a painting of Cardinal Bellarmine (the "Hammer of the Heretics" who served as one of the judges at the trial of Giordano Bruno and concurred in the decision that condemned him to be burnt to death as an obstinate heretic), I found that the painter is unknown.

One of the points frequently mentioned in The Moving Earth is that, before the work of these 17th-century scientists combined the movements of the earth with those of the heavens, it was believed that the Earth was the center of the universe and that other objects go around it. In addition, heaven was considered a domain separate from Earth. Listening to quantum theorists explain that the quantum domain is unlike that of our Newtonian reality has always reminded me of the debates that ushered in modern science. At the end of this film, the astronomer Owen Gingerich points out that the actual "proof" of the Newtonian framework was not provided until the 19th century (with Herschel's discovery of Uranus, measurements of parallax and Foucault's pendulum showing the rotation of the earth). He then goes on to say that cases such as this show that proofs do not play too strong a role in our understanding of science. Rather, what we are looking for is a coherent picture, and that was provided by the mathematics of Isaac Newton. In effect, this sequence also puts its finger on something that kept coming to mind as I watched the film. The sequence on Tycho Brahe, who is known for his accurate and comprehensive astronomical and planetary observations, reminded me of Niels Bohr, another Danish scientist, who did transformative research in physics. Bohr, of course, lived much later and is known for his foundational contributions to understanding atomic structure and quantum mechanics, for which he received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1922. Yet, both were involved in cosmological frameworks that they propelled forward for others to finish.

Like many, I was introduced to the key figures and events in this production at a young age. Thus I am aware of this film's potential as a classroom tool. Having looked at the details from many perspectives over the years, I find it astonishing that this presentation is so refreshing, because much of the narrative did not present new ideas or change my thinking. It is how this production is brought to life with manuscripts, paintings, superb animations and dramatic re-creations of key events that sets it apart. The script brings the events to life and captures scientific creativity as well as a cultural climate governed by a Church that felt threatened by the new ideas of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Galileo, Johannes Kepler, Giordano Bruno and Isaac Newton. Another component of note is that the commentary by experts (Simon Schaffer of Cambridge University, John Christianson of Luther College, Gingerich of Harvard University, Coyne of the Vatican Observatory and Patricia Fara of Cambridge University) adds immensely to the performance and carefully chosen visuals. Others, too, have noted the excellence of this presentation. To date, The Moving Earth has won several awards. These include the Grand Prix at the 13th AVICOM Film Festival, Turin; the Best Documentary Film at the Vedere la Scienza Festival, Milan; and the Grand Prix at the 46th International Festival TECHFILM 2009, Prague. If Leonardo had a rating system, I would give The Moving Earth five stars.

As I prepared to turn in this review, it became clear that a postscript is necessary. As noted above, this film conveys that the details surrounding moving-earth research are still alive in cultural discourse, particularly when science and religion are discussed in tandem. Even as I write, a new event has arisen to add to the chronology. On 22 May 2010, Polish priests reburied the 16th century astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus and declared him a universal hero. Nearly 500 years after he was put to rest in an unmarked grave, his remains were sprinkled with holy water. The new tombstone, which is decorated with a model of the solar system, identifies this revolutionary astronomer as the founder of heliocentric theory and a church canon (a cleric ranking below a priest).

**BOOKS**

**NORTH OF EMPIRE: ESSAYS ON THE CULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES OF SPACE**


Reviewed by Jan Baetens, Belgium. E-mail: <jan.baetens@arts.kuleuven.be>.

Written by the editor of TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies, this book is a major contribution to the theoretical and methodological innovation of the cultural studies field. Despite the very local focus of the work—Berland’s topic is Canada—one can be sure that it will play a major role in the reconceptualization of the discipline, curiously abandoned for more or less a decade. Much work has undoubtedly been done in cultural studies in these years, but...
with very few theoretical and methodological innovations. North of Empire is a good example of what a renewed interest in a dialogue between theory and practice in cultural analysis may signify—and why it is a good thing to go back to the basic question of what cultural studies stands for.

The specific input the book offers is the result of three converging moves. First is the emphasis on the material media properties of the works and practices under analysis. In this regard, one can only welcome with great enthusiasm the great interest in the medium of radio, that most forgotten of modern media. More generally, however, what matters here is the foregrounding of the technological aspect of culture, not just in those respects that can only beg for such an approach, for instance, weather forecasts or map-making, but also in cultural goods and uses that seem to downsize the importance of technology, such as jokes and painting. Second is the study of the discursive and other networks in which these media objects are involved. The “local,” that is “typically Canadian,” theoretical insights that Jody Berland discusses in this respect are a more-than-necessary improvement on some “global,” that is, “typically American,” visions of cultural analysis. Third is the critical and very often self-critical and ironic view of what identity means. Needless to say, this self-criticism is exactly what Berland misses in much critical thinking in cultural studies. None of these perspectives may be very new in themselves, but the way Berland manages to put these strands together in a solid theoretical yet analytically astute knot deserves our admiration. Moreover, she is also a talented writer, with a great sense of humor, as well as a sharp tongue always eager to spit her venom on the “becoming empire” of her own country. (As a Belgian reviewer who belongs to a country as split as Canada, I regret of course that Berland does not delve a little more into the ongoing cultural wars between the two major linguistic communities, but it would be unfair to ask more from a book that already gives us so much.)

The most encompassing innovation of the book is its reinterpretation of the spatial turn in cultural studies (of which Hardt and Negri’s Empire can be seen as a belated example). Contrary to most studies that have foregrounded the tension between center and periphery, metropolises and colonies, East and West, etc., Berland makes a plea for a much more material and medium-oriented reading of spatiality, emphasizing on the one hand the role of medium technology and on the other hand the importance of material routes, networks, communication tools and services. Rather than indulging in overwhelmingly abstract and generalizing speculations on nations and postcolonial cultures, Berland tries to see how nations are indebted to communication structures and vice versa. In short, space, in Berland’s thinking, helps describe “the connections between politics and culture” (p. 14).

Chapter Two of the book, a critical rereading of the almost forgotten Canadian media theorist Harold Innis, an author perhaps as important although unfortunately less influential, at least abroad, as Marshall McLuhan, should be compulsory reading in all cultural studies classes throughout the word. Thanks to Innis, Berland can articulate a useful innovation of the discipline, with less weight on culture as representation and more room for culture as communication (in the sense of materially realized and performing networks of goods, people and ideas), while also offering very inspirational thoughts on allegedly well-known concepts such as frontier, nation-building and limits.

With bittersweet irony, the author opens her book by explaining the difficulties she had in finding a publisher, and the time and painstaking efforts it took before an “Empire”-based press accepted this volume, gathering her best essays over a 20-year period. The essays are still as fresh now as they were at the moment of their original publication, and one can only say that it is a terrible pity that voices such as those of Berland have such difficulties in getting a captive ear in the cacophony of the modern academic debate.

RELATIONSCAPES: MOVEMENT, ART, PHILOSOPHY

Reviewed by Martha Blossnig. University of Plymouth, U.K. E-mail: <martha.blossnig@gmail.com>.

Relationscapes by Erin Manning addresses a wide range of movement analysis and key terms in movement studies (such as elasticity, intensity, inflection, porosity, interval, hesitation, etc.) in the context of a philosophical framework with a focus on philosophies of immanence. It exercises a creative synthesis of Whitehead’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s thought. In particulars it builds on Bergson’s and James’s conception of perception as activity and creative event in the spectrum between what Manning refers to as objectness (or, in Heidegger’s terms, wortlndung) and experience. She introduces the concept of preacceleration as a way to address a vocabulary of movement that foregrounds incipience rather than displacement. By this means the author draws on aspects of Bergson’s conception of motion as duration (duree) prior to the emergence of form, as force or dynamism of qualitative states that underlie creativity prior to actualization in various forms of expression.

Informed by the works and thoughts of dancers such as Merce Cunningham, William Forsythe, Mark Coniglio, Scott deLahunta and Antonio Camurri, Relationscapes proposes a thinking and writing of ideas on movement from a practice-led perspective through the filters of sensation and personal reflection. In doing so it addresses phenomena of movement prior to actualization from different disciplinary contexts. These include key figures in 19th century scientific visual movement studies by glossing the innovative work by the French physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey. A similar treatment is applied to the animation films by Norman McLaren, Leni Riefenstahl’s films, David Spriggs’ sculptures and examples of contemporary Aboriginal art. Her treatment allows Manning to draw in references to neural necessity of
causal efficacy in mental health and to propose a body-emergent technogenesis in the relationscapes of dance in the context of new media technologies. The deductive modality in the development of the argument for preacceleration provides the rationale for the choices of the materials discussed, which is a pity, since this concept could potentially have been much more firmly situated and extracted from within the materials presented. Consequently Relationscapes does not treat historical material on its own terms or in the specific relational context of its time. This is important since, as in the case of Étienne-Jules Marey’s work, for example, there is first-hand evidence to use. Instead Manning overlays contemporary continental philosophical terminology, occasionally referenced, onto original creative thinking that informs a number of works, which are to some degree arbitrarily chosen.

Although this way of working might be regarded as a radical interpretation of Deleuze’s conception of philosophy, the reader needs to be critically informed about these original works and the philosophical concepts applied in order to detect the subtle moves by the author—a requirement made more difficult because they mostly are not clearly demarked or referenced through established academic conventions. This might be seen as a lack of academic clarity; however, this is clearly not the foremost concern of the book. Rather, it seems to attempt to invent a new kind of language of expression—one that uses words and terms as markers for a dynamic of ideas that is constantly in movement and changing. Almost like a new form of expression for dance, it holds up a temporary framework of reference in order to grasp an idea in anticipation of its next step—“preacceleration” ad verbum.

In order to grasp the meaning of some of the ideas proposed, pre-requisites for a critical reading are both a sophisticated prior knowledge of the terms and philosophical ideas discussed and an easy approach to the rigor and original frameworks of these ideas. This is a challenging conflict to balance, and it can be expected that each reader will undergo a slightly different experience depending on prior knowledge, motivation and ability to let a creative flow overtake sensory perception and reasoning. The exercise, in this reviewer’s experience, fluctuates between informed creative writing and moments in which ideas take a line of flight.

Although insightful, the work, as such, remains inconclusive, since the method applied could potentially be extended to any object, any thing alive with movement. As Manning concludes in one chapter: “Relationscapes abound.”

**GREENING THROUGH IT: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**


*Reviewed by Rob Harle (Australia). Email: <harle@dodo.com.au>.*

*Greening through IT* is well written, incredibly well researched and most timely. There is no doubt now that the planet is in trouble and that our present energy-consumption levels, waste (both personal and industrial) and pollution levels are far too high to allow life to continue as we know it. How long it will take before catastrophic changes occur is a matter of speculation—some say 10 years, some say one hundred! Whichever, these time spans are minuscule compared to the time it has taken earth, and all the various species (including humans) to evolve to this point. One of Tomlinson’s main arguments throughout this book is the inability of humans to understand long time spans. As he points out, we are going to have to improve this faculty and implement long-term changes that consider future generations.

This book is almost like a workbook for the development of a truly sustainable future. There are “numerous opportunities for people to make the way we live more sustainable. Helping people and institutions discover, understand, and act on these and other environmental possibilities is the primary goal of Green IT” and of course this book (p. 10). The book is suitable for all levels of readership, including older schoolchildren. The arguments presented are based on scientific facts and sound statistics but presented in such a way as to be easily understood by non-scientists and nonacademics. Tomlinson and associates developed a virtual ecosystem in 2006 called EcoRaft, which enabled children to work together to restore damaged ecosystems (p. 118).

There are nine chapters, followed by an excellent reference section and an index. Chapter 1, “Introduction to Green IT,” introduces the whole concept of using information technology and devices to help achieve sustainability. In a really fascinating example of how IT can work, this chapter relates how the fishermen in Kerala (southern India) started using mobile phones to communicate with each other and their commercial buyers. As the case study shows, their approach resulted in a complete streamlining of the fishing industry, no more wasted fish, more profits for the fishermen and lower prices for the consumer (p. 1). This chapter is a little long winded, tending to repeat information, which is then repeated again further on in the book.

Chapter 2, “Environmental Horizons,” describes most of the main challenges facing humanity. Here the author deals with such facts as the extinction of species, world population explosion figures and so on. In Chapter 3, “Human Horizons,” the discussion turns to how we approach, understand and act on the various challenges facing us. The topic of Chapter 4 is “The Role of Technology,” especially computing and communication technologies, and the way this knowledge and its associated devices can help or hinder sustainability.

Chapter 5, “Survey of Green IT Systems,” introduces the various ways in which IT, green and otherwise, currently impacts global sustainability. Such devices as smart electronics that control engines to maximize fuel efficiency are discussed. How IT can help mitigate deforestation, manage food production more efficiently and many other similar issues are discussed in this chapter. The focus of Chapter 6, “Green IT and Education,” highlights
what is perhaps Tomlinson’s greatest contribution to sustainability, outlining his efforts in education. He is associate professor of informatics at the University of California and as mentioned above has developed IT education systems for children and also for adults. This chapter discusses these tools and many other facets of educating all individuals in the importance of moving toward sustainability.

Chapter 7, “Green IT and Personal Change,” looks at how all of us have to change the way we live to bring about sustainability. Trackulous, a web-based application, can help in this regard. How we can get together with others to share ideas, work in groups and establish networks to increase the overall awareness of the enormity of the problems facing us so they can no longer be ignored is the subject of Chapter 8, “Green IT and Collective Action.” GreenScanner, another Tomlinson IT tool, is discussed and offered as very useful for providing such group information.

Finally, in Chapter 9, “Ways Forward,” Tomlinson suggests where we are going and where we need to go and generally takes a philosophical approach. “This book has sought to propose tools that can enable people to work together to turn the ideas of researchers into positive environmental change, thereby becoming collectively a kind of distributed Alexander the Great for the environmental movement” (p. 178).

Many individuals care about the state of the planet but are somewhat at a loss how to ameliorate the situation in a real rather than token way. This book will help individuals, institutions and educational organizations take positive action, in both small and larger ways, toward achieving a sustainable future for our “children’s children’s children.”

MAPPING THE MOVING IMAGE: GESTURE, THOUGHT AND CINEMA CIRCA 1900


Reviewed by Jan Baetens, Belgium. E-mail: <jan.baetens@arts.kuleuven.be>.

Mapping the Moving Image is without any doubt the most ambitious work on film theory that I have read recently. It opens, I believe, truly new perspectives for a better understanding of the medium’s history—or rather, the medium’s genealogy, because the theoretical framework engaged in this book is not that of empirical historical studies (as illustrated in certain types of audience and moviegoing studies) but that of Foucault’s biopolitics, Deleuze’s philosophy of becoming and Kittler’s medium theory. The book ends symptomatically, with a dialogue with Sean Cubitt’s postmodern film semiotics (see his work The Cinema Effect, 2004). Moreover, its last sentence before the concluding remarks is a critical homage to Stanley Cavell: “Cinema, then, is the world viewed anew” (p. 181). (This is a clear allusion to Cavell’s masterwork The World Viewed, 1979, in which he defends a powerful yet quite traditional realist stance on cinema, in the tradition of André Bazin). All these references, to which one should add a permanent conversation with the best that has been said around the notion of cinema as cinema of attraction and around the cultural history of cinema, make it clear that the stakes of this publication are very high and that Väliaho has the aspiration to make it all anew. Perhaps not all the ideas discussed in this book are totally new in themselves, but their gathering and synoptic presentation certainly are. And perhaps not all the hypotheses are automatically convincing as well, but the sharpness and intelligence of the book’s argumentation will seduce the most reluctant reader. In short, the impressive depth and breadth of Väliaho’s work make Mapping the Moving Image a true event, which may become an important stepping-stone in the history of film theory.

In his reading of film’s genealogy, Väliaho defends a number of hypotheses that imply a dramatic reinterpretation of how we see the emergence of the film medium. The most important, perhaps, is the idea that the basic context of film is neither optics nor theater but recording. For Väliaho, cinema is not an expanded version of previously elaborated forms of optical-mechanical reproduction. To put it more simply, it is not (only, or mainly) a remediation of photography as animated or moving photography (this shift also implies why Mapping the Moving Image does not dwell very much on the notion of gaze). Correspondingly, cinema is not the encounter of moving and projected images with the existent culture of theatrical and non-theatrical entertainment and performance, as a narrow interpretation of the concept of cinema of attraction may have suggested. With-out, of course, rejecting the historical importance of these two aspects, Väliaho emphasizes on the contrary the relationship between the moving image and other techniques of recording “life” (such as illustrated for instance in the first attempts to establish psychology laboratories or the first examples of visual inscription of what is beyond the reach of our eyes and the normal use of our senses). Most importantly, what all these innovations disclose is a major crisis in the relationship between subject and object, whose frontiers become blurred, and in the age-old distinction between knowledge and self-knowledge, whose parting becomes questionable as well. The cinema is part of a larger cultural shift in the West, which led many to recognize that the division between inside and outside, (the former knowable through mental introspection, the latter knowable through sensory perception) and the link between both being guaranteed by the concept of representation did not hold. One could say that Väliaho radicalizes Jonathan Crary’s work in Techniques of the Observer (1991), although he does so in a framework that is broader than the biopolitical stance taken by Crary. Cinema is a crucial aspect of this change, for the filmic moving image exemplifies a new way of thinking that is no longer that of classic mimesis. Cinema as a recording techniques shows that the self, that is, the way in which we define and experience ourselves, is no longer...
a retrospective self but a produced self, more specifically a self produced via the media that disclose discontinuous, unpredictable, automated, ghostlike, haunted, spatialized and temporalized forms of life. The perception of “reality” as pervasive through the traditional Kantian a priori categories of time and space, and the experience of “oneself,” as a given essence and accessible as a steering conscience, are not only modified by the appearance of all kinds of new recording techniques, of which cinema is just the most “popular” one; they are also, and deeply, reshaping each other. The self is no longer experienced as a knowable whole but is both dissolved and reinvented by its contact with a newly recorded outer world, and vice versa.

A second major innovation put forward by Mapping the Moving Image, besides the reinterpretation of cinema of attraction in relationship to the traditions of recording techniques, has to do with its very broad cultural approach, which brings to mind Erwin Panofsky’s work on cultural history (and perhaps psychologically compensates, in its strongly synthesizing efforts, for the very disintegration that is at work in Väliahö’s material). Apparently, what is lost on one side (a traditional view of self and the world) is re-established on the other (a new Grand Theory). Indeed, what Väliahö proposes in his book is a breathtaking synthesis of (almost) everything that was changing in late-19th-century and early-20th-century Western modernism: Everything fits so nicely together that it becomes almost suspect. By making a clever distinction between cinema (as a social phenomenon) and the concept of the moving image (which is a real “concept” in the Deleuzian sense of the word, i.e. an intellectual philosophical creation aiming at producing new knowledge), Väliahö manages to split his object into a number of supplementary concepts, each of them representing a specific aspect of the moving image, helping him link the emergence of cinema with the major thinkers and the major innovations of Western modern culture. The moving image becomes, then, a “lens” through which it becomes possible to reread, for instance, Freud, Nietzsche, and Bergson. The converse is also true, for the idea is not only to disclose how these thinkers were indebted to the new ways of thinking made possible by the new forms of recording such as the (pre)cinema but also to demonstrate that the moving image is a truly philosophical mechanism that produces in the field of the automatically produced image the same effects as what the typewriter meant for Nietzsche’s writing and thinking, for instance. The key reference here is of course Kittler, but Väliahö’s rereading of Nietzsche’s Schein (“semblance”) and “eternal return” (as extreme and permanently reborn potentiality) in the light of the cinema’s moving image is extremely convincing and very illuminating. Mapping the Moving Image is a significant piece of scholarship and theory that is also a vibrant defense of Theory with a capital T—a highly salutary position in a period of increased empiricism in film studies. Many hypotheses defended by Väliahö should stimulate intense discussion, as should his attempt to rewrite in a finally quite homogenizing way a history of dissolution of old categories. This, however, is the price to pay for this great example of challenging scholarship and audacious theory.

**ART + SCIENCE NOW**


Reviewed by Hannah Star Rogers, Science & Technology Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, U.S.A. E-mail: <hsr9@cornell.edu>.

In *Art + Science Now*, Stephen Wilson has provided us with an excellent catalogue of art that engages with science and technology. Ranging from Beatriz da Costa’s air quality mapping with pigeons (*PigeonBlog*, 2006) to Haruki Nishijima’s butterfly nets that can capture electromagnetic waves (*Remain in Light*, 2001), Wilson’s book offers images and descriptions of artwork inspired by science and work that critiques science in some way. There are few comprehensive texts that bring together artworks that deal with different sciences, so Wilson’s book will be of use for scholarly reference and general interest, especially by those in the science community who are wondering about artistic research in their fields. Wilson raises important questions about this type of work. How should we think of art-inspired research or science-inspired art? What is its future? How much science do audiences need to know to engage with the material? And how should we assess it?

Wilson supplies an introduction to each section, which helps to orient readers to the artwork. This book succeeds in gesturing at some historical and contemporary influences without imposing a singular history, specific trajectory or central set of goals for these artists. The artists and topics are selected and the book only covers works completed between 2000 and 2007. Even so, organizing this huge breadth of material must have been a chore, yet this book is both attractive and explanatory. Maybe this is because it must also have been a lot of fun to work with everything from Wim Delvoye’s robotic digestion (*Cloaca Original*, 2000) to Austin Richards’s performance art with Tesla coils (*Dr. Megavolt*, 2006).

Wilson has organized the volume by science or technology topic: “Molecular Biology,” “Living Systems,” “Human Biology,” “Physical Science” and “Kinetics & Robotics.” This allows him to write coherent and interesting overviews of each section and give the novice some sense of the science and technical aspects involved. This organizational structure will also probably appeal to science-oriented readers who want to find artwork on a particular subject. However, it creates a situation in which artists appear in several chapters if their work deals with more than one of the science themes. For example, Natalie Jeremijenko’s work appears in three chapters: Molecular Biology, Living Systems and Kinetics & Robotics.

This may leave readers lost in the scientific categorization, although it is not clear that the artists would have divided their work in this way. It is not clear that the organizational divisions reflect how the artists divide their world, as reflected in the myriad types of science and technology individual artists are engaged in, not to mention the variety of scientific topics represented at festi-
ners and even individual shows. While perhaps this division is as good as any other at this moment of considerable foment in the field, and practitioners who require similar skills do in many cases seem to gravitate together, scientific or technical categories do not seem to be what is at stake for these practitioners.

In the Introduction, Wilson reminds readers that one way to think about the definition of art is to use its institutions to determine what counts as art. Science-engaged art appears to have built its own sustaining institutions, separate from the traditional art world, although something similar could be said of the French Secessionists and many others. Indeed, the book makes the case for Wilson’s conviction that there is value beyond mainstream art.

STANCE: IDEAS ABOUT EMOTION, STYLE, AND MEANING FOR THE STUDY OF EXPRESSIVE CULTURE

Reviewed by Jan Baetens, Belgium. Email: <jan.baetens@arts.kuleuven.be>.

A former president of the U.S. branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music and co-editor of the Journal of American Folklore, Harris M. Berger has written an interesting study on the way we make meaning of music. The “we” in the previous sentence is highly inclusive, since it entails not just the listener, but also the composer, the performer, the teacher, the critic—in short all those involved in music as a cultural practice.

Berger’s ambition in this book is twofold. First of all, he wants to criticize what he calls the obscurantism of Yeats’s famous line on the impossibility of telling the dancer from the dance. What Berger aims to do here is exactly the opposite: Instead of confusing the various roles, positions, objects, acts and senses in a global approach as to some holistic phenomenon (which music also is, of course), he tries to distinguish and to “decompose” (yet not to “deconstruct”!) the various aspects of this phenomenon with unusual meticulousness. Second, he also proposes to defend and illustrate a scientific method that has been insufficiently used in the analysis of music: phenomenology—more particularly the type of phenomenology represented by philosophers such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, who were interested in both the dialectics of the intentionality of our consciousness (i.e. the fact that our attention is always turned toward something else) and the noema (i.e. the physical or nonphysical objects that we are engaged with).

The first key word here is experience, whose various modes can be labeled as perception, imagination, memory, judgment and anticipation, while their corresponding objects can be called things in the world—fantasies, memories, judgments and anticipations. The second key word is stance, which Berger defines very generally as “the affective, stylistic, or valual quality with which a person engages with an element of her experience” (Introduction, p. xiv). In a sense, the aim of the book is not only to demonstrate the validity of this approach but also to develop an appropriate vocabulary for the analysis of the dizzying diversity of stances that can be discovered while exploring our engagement with music and other forms of expressive culture.

Both aspects of this program are exemplarily performed in this book. From a theoretical point of view, it is important to stress the great clarity of Berger’s writing, which manages to focus on the twin notions of stance and experience without leaving out too much in the field of phenomenology. Although the author offers a very rich description of what the conception of stance may entail, he resists the temptation to add to his book a reading of stance and experience in related fields: His starting point is exclusively phenomenological, and he sticks to it in a way that explains a lot of the pedagogical qualities and merits of the book. One can always regret that Berger does not start any discussion with the American pragmatist tradition, more specifically with John Dewey’s notion of experience (as developed in his classic book Art and Experience) or with Simon Frith’s more sociologically oriented readings of the musical experience. Yet this restriction is also what makes a prize of Stance, which is the kind of study that many can only envy for its plain and WYSIWYG approach.

From a more practical point of view, Berger succeeds in showing the great utility of phenomenology by introducing a wealth of real-life examples from all kinds of fields (from heavy metal to boxing or dancing, although with a slight preference for the former rather than the latter). One feels throughout this book that the author is not only putting in practice what he is defending at a theoretical level, namely the absolute necessity to study expressive culture in a lived, concrete, personal and material experience, but that this practice and this experience are also his own. It is rare to read a book in which the examples and even more the discussion of these examples feel so authentic, and this makes the reading always illuminating, even in those cases where the average reader does not have field experience of the cases under discussion. (Not all Leonardo reviewers are specialists on the different ways amateurs and would-be rock stars, without any formal training, change their techniques of, for instance, striking a chord when they enter a class room and start taking lessons. Yet Berger explains very well how stance plays a crucial role in what is happening in this process.)

Bringing together folk studies and philosophy, Berger had to meet of course cultural studies and sociology of culture, and his reading of Bourdieu and other theoreticians in the last chapter of his book is also very useful in their typical mix of ecumenism (Berger is not someone who attacks or criticizes other theories) and precision (he knows the art of making other theories accessible and including other insights and concepts in his own way of thinking, which never indulges in jargon or complexity for the sake of complexity).
A Mysterious Masterpiece: The World of the Linder Gallery


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A Mysterious Masterpiece: The World of the Linder Gallery introduces the Linder Gallery painting to a broad audience through an in situ conversation of six specialists and generalists who discuss the work in the living room of the owner (Ron Cordover). Thus, it is an unusual book about an unusual painting that was virtually unknown until now. The decision to use a lively conversation instead of a dry, scholarly narrative approach (with all of its annotations, footnotes and a long bibliography) makes the volume accessible and adds a measure of appeal to the ideas as well, because the participants draw out each other’s knowledge as they talk.

What is perhaps most exciting about the book is the subject matter itself. Although the walk through the details of the piece is rudimentary, this quick survey does expose how many facets of a unique moment in the history of ideas are contained within its parameters. As Gorman and Bradburne note in their introduction:

This is . . . a world looking Janus-like both forward to Boyle’s “chemistry” and Newton’s physics, and backward to Nostradamus’ astrology and Sendivogius’ alchemy. The 1620s was the world of Rubens, Brueghel, Van Dyck and Galileo, but it was also only recently the world of Shakespeare and Tycho Brahe. It was a world that stood at the threshold of the Thirty Years’ War. It was a world alive with experiments and exploration, but also a world that remembered the Wars of Religion and the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, the Spanish Armada, and the assassination of Henry IV. This painting is a document that holds the clue to understanding the political, intellectual, artistic and scientific issues of the time. While images of the contemporary world constantly bombarded us with competing ideas, in earlier times works such as gallery interiors would bring many competing ideas into focus.

In the case of the Linder Gallery, three people conceived the specific theme of the work. One was the unknown painter. One was a wealthy German merchant, Peter Linder, living in Milan in the early 1620s, who commissioned the Linder Gallery. In addition, Muzio Oddi, an Urbino mathematician and architect, played a key role in informing the selection of elements that comprise the pictorial commentary. The composition itself is centered around the intellectual understanding of the cosmos through measurement and mathematics, although there are many other threads evident, particularly in the allegorical works on the wall. Still, it is the cosmological specifics that are most striking because they separate this work from other gallery interiors of the 17th century. While the gallery interior genre itself frequently includes scientific instruments, maps, globes, etc., most of these paintings do not include explicit references to the actual cosmological debates of the era.

In the Linder Gallery, the central table is particularly alluring in how it accentuates the cosmological theme. Renderings of a large astrolabe by Guerlatus Arsenius and the celestial globe, probably by Jodocus Hondius the Younger, are fascinating examples of the period. More compelling from an intellectual standpoint is a paper bearing the three cosmological systems that were competing at that time. These include the earth-centered Ptolemaic view, the sun-centered Copernican framework and the composite system of Tycho Brahe, in which the inner planets orbit the sun and the outer planets revolve around the earth. Beneath the diagram are the words “ALY ET ALIA VIDENT,” which is translated “Different people see it differently.” The three books on the table further accentuate the importance of the cosmological discussion at this time. Two are by Kepler (Harmony of the Worlds [1619] and Rudolphine Tables [1627]); the third is John Napier’s Description of the Admirable Tables of Logarithms (1614).

In trying to think of a comparable statement in our time, nothing seemed quite as comprehensive and enticing. It is not difficult to find correlates for the scientific creativity, as in Einstein’s five exceptional papers of 1905 or in the work of the quantum physicist. My attempts to think of an artistic commentary that included scientific disputes were less successful. Perhaps the power of objects grows when people look back retrospectively, and thus fertile pairings are less evident in their own time. If this is the case, our works today will become more powerful when others look back at how our minds were grappling with the information at hand.

Another aspect of the Linder conversation that I found quite illuminating was the discussion of the preparatory drawings, now in the Royal Collection in Windsor Castle. A pen and ink rendering with wash over graphite seems to offer a wonderful entry into the painting’s evolution. While the pen and ink drawing and the final painting are similarly conceived, there are striking points of deviation. For example, the drawing does not have the same vaulted ceiling and has a door on the left side rather than a window. The scale is also different, but some of the paintings on the wall seem to match those in the Linder work. As the book’s commentators note, what stands out is that the oddly shaped table in the painting, which appears out of perspective, is quite unlike the accomplished perspective table of the drawing.

From my viewpoint, one of the most intriguing aspects of the work is that its striking content is matched by an extraordinary story. In this case, the work was a part of the Rothschild collection in Vienna and was confiscated by the Nazis at the beginning of the Second World War. The Nazis kept it in a salt mine in Salzkammergut, where they stored many paintings taken from museums and collectors. We now know that this work was among those intended for the Führermuseum in Linz. Cordover states that when he and his wife bought the painting, much of its history was unknown. He was attracted to its level of detail, its special
character (it is executed on a copper substrate) and the subject matter. The discussion in this book shows that much information about the work’s origins has been gathered in the last few years.

Overall, I liked the conversational tone of the book. It was strikingly rich in ideas and yet created a sense of one of those memorable conversations with friends that come about when discussing a marvelous work that stimulates on many levels. In the book, this casual conversational tone was often stimulating, although it was a bit trying when some of the smaller works on the wall of the interior were discussed. The illustrations in the book were not always easy to find. Rather than sift through the volume trying to figure out which part of the painting is being discussed and where the best illustration is, I would recommend that readers begin by familiarizing themselves with the list of 74 identified features at the end. Better still is the website, www.mysteriousmas terpiece.com, which allows a reader to zoom in and out. As with many books that focus on readability rather than scholarship, it is fun to read the book but hard to go back to find discussions that focus on specific details afterwards. The lack of an index, for example, left me frustrated many times when trying to pull together my thoughts for this review.

Finally, and perhaps it goes without saying, it is the contributors to this innovative discussion who are responsible for the breadth of material and for looking at the work in a way that remains stimulating to those of us who “listen in” remotely: Lawrence Wechsler, who has written about Robert Irwin, David Hockney, Athanasius Kircher and Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet, is also the Director of the New York Institute for the Humanities. Pamela Smith is a professor of history at Columbia University, and her book The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution demonstrates how much early modern science owed to artists and artisans. Also present in the room was Alexander Marr, a lecturer in art history at the University of St. Andrews, who specializes in early modern art and the history of science and technology. Michael John Gorman, who is now the Director of the Science Gallery, Trinity College, Dublin, edited the volume; he has participated in many projects that bring art and science together. James Bradburne, the Director General, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, and the owner of the piece, art collector and businessman Ron Cordover, were also involved.

All in all, this is a fine volume for art historians, generalists, students of the history of science, and anyone who is interested in the history of ideas. The book also includes many reproductions of scientific material of the time that are not included in the painting. These images aid the reader in contextualizing the period’s thought and discoveries. In my case, I was impressed with the depth of detail in what is basically a fairly cursory work. For example, in my last Leonardo review [1], I mentioned that I did not think Kepler did the frontispiece of the Rudolphine Tables but I was not able to find who did the work. Ironically, The Mysterious Masterpiece unearthed the information that Georg Celer was the artist. While I do not know that everyone will find a nourishing tidbit like this, I do think this book is a nice supplement to the art/science/technology diet, particularly for those who yearn for more historical information.

Reference

Fireworks: Pyrotechnic Arts and Sciences in European History

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Simone Werrett’s investigation of pyrotechnics from the 14th through the 19th centuries explores relationships among philosophical fireworks, art and science as a significant expression of European beliefs, aspirations and authority throughout the modern era. Reflecting a timeless fascination with fire, its archaic divine and magical associations, and an identification of human potentiality with Prometheus—the archetypal hero who stole fire from heaven and presided over the human arts, Fireworks asserts the “status of the artificer” within a performative context. As such, it purports to epitomize pyrotechnic artistry as a philosophical platform from which to view the interaction of art and science from the Renaissance to the Scientific Revolution.

The book takes a comparative approach to the history of fireworks, focusing on centers such as Paris, London and St. Petersburg. It examines distinctive aspects of the pyrotechnic histories of these cities, practices of knowledge, philosophical undercurrents and exchanges that contributed to identifiable and enduring traditions in each of these locales. In these centers, fireworks stimulated valuable conduits of scientific learning among such areas as meteorology, electrical physics, astronomy and navigation, utilizing techniques adapted from rhetoric, optics, mathematics and alchemy.

Fireworks opens with a description of an Enlightenment spectacle staged on New Year’s Eve 1748 in St. Petersburg, in which wooden jetties, rockets, wheels and fire fountains lit up the night sky in the image of a Siberian pine tree in a garden of parterres and greenery. As a literary frontispiece to the comprehensive study that follows, it is intended to illustrate the allegorical significance of pyrotechnical displays to 18th century aficionados, in this case representative of the growth in prosperity of the Russian state.

Werrett’s history of pyrotechnic arts and sciences sets out to document fireworks as a representative Enlightenment era phenomenon (with roots in the 15th century), intended primarily as a spectacular demonstration of temporal power. Through displays staged amid elaborate architectural machines erected largely within the province of the Catholic Church and princely courts of Europe and Russia, artificers aspired to recreations of cosmic phenomena, allying earthly events with Providence and cosmic order. However, Werrett’s larger objective is to explore the reshaping of a military, alchemical craft into an ideological discourse, whereby pyrotechnical displays provided the focus for the progress of intellectualism and debates centered on politics, religion, economy and history. Fireworks and its broader rationalistic context, Werrett argues, in many ways emblemize the transformation of Western society from a largely religious culture to a scientific one. Indicative of this transition is the progression of alchemical chemistry (composed of equal parts myth, metaphor, fantasy and experimentation) toward the physical and mechanical sciences and the evolution of belief structures from those founded on faith and allegory to others.
governed by philosophical reason and acquired knowledge. Composed of the interdisciplinary arts of artillerymen, painters, architects, chemists, entrepreneurs and natural philosophers, this text illustrates the manner in which pyrotechnical performances provided a metaphor for human knowledge at the dawn of the scientific era, igniting new interpretations of history and sovereignty based on variable combinations of contraries as combustible elements.

Issues considered include the impact of regional geography on epistemology; the convergence of empirical science and artisanship; aspects of pyrotechny that contributed to the transformation of culture from an analogical foundation in allegory to one of empirical inquiry; contestations of warfare, artifice and philosophy; the design of pyrotechnical displays and their programmatic basis in the liberal arts; the propagandistic uses of theatricality in the service of political legitimacy and power; interrelationships between the arts of artillery production (gunnery) and the craft of spectacle (ingegno); transmission of technique and regionality; and festival entertainment and boulevard commercialism.

Among the book’s many strengths are chapters dedicated to key centers of pyrotechnic science, such as the Royal Society of London and the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, which not only showcase two of the most important centers of intellectualism during the 18th century beyond the pyrotechnical studies confined to France, Italy and the Hapsburg Empire but offer crystallizing optics for the study of ideological polarities. His examination of the relevance of the Frézier-Perrinet debates on the value of art and philosophical reflection to a scientific method, a crucial focus of Diderot and d’Alembert’s Encyclopédie, critically anchors Werrett’s arguments. But there are also other very interesting sections devoted to alchemy and the liberal arts, ephemeral architecture and the talented, itinerant artificers of Italy such as Giovanni Nicolo Servandoni, Giuseppe Sarti and the Ruggieri family, who not only designed princely spectacles for the courts of King George III of England, Louis XV of France and the heirs of Peter the Great but contributed to the dissemination of Enlightenment ideals throughout Europe during the 17th century. Stories of foundational archetypes (Prometheus) and vanquishers of evil (St. George and Perseus), flying dragons, volcanoes and gian-dolas enliven Werrett’s narrative with legendary tales of pyrotechnic lore and descriptions of its imaginative signs and emblems. His detailed accounts of controversies such as England’s Green Park Folly and Mikhail Vasil’evich Lomonosov’s 1756 orations to the Russian Academy of Sciences on color and light surrounding introductions of secret, sensational “green fire” into Russian fireworks by Danilov and Marynov provide a fascinating glimpse into pyrotechnic history.

Werrett’s view of the importance of pyrotechny to the history of ideas as a “seminal” basis of 18th-century sociopolitical and philosophical debates tends at times to overstatement in light of similar claims that could be made for other branches of the “tree of knowledge” such as mathematics, physics and ontology. Generalizing summaries tend at times to overshadow the wealth of historical documentation that could be better served in chronologies of events and personages and appendices of festival book citations and chemical recipes.

At the same time, this book points up the need for further study in areas that relate the history of pyrotechny to fields of criticism and performance theory, political science, philosophy and religion, art history, theater, anthropology and chemistry. Further investigation into underlying questions of patronage, intersections of pageantry and military history, the ritualistic prehistory of fireworks, hermetic and esoteric traditions, design and iconography, and relationships to stagecraft will also prove fruitful.

Werrett’s Fireworks augments many treatments of the subject published previously, including technological studies and selective exhibitions of museum print collections, by offering a comprehensive, scholarly survey of events and ideas linked to the intellectual history of pyrotechny in Western Europe. Complete with illustrations, color plates and three introductory maps that identify locations described in the text, it is amply footnoted with an extensive bibliography, chapter summaries and an inclusive index. As a “Geography of Art and Science,” it presents a formidable overview of one of the 18th century’s most spectacular paradigms, one whose complex interrelationships between artifice and philosophical speculation provide a conceptual framework for continuing associations between art, natural science and theater.

The so-called “golden age” of radio (the 1920s through the 1950s) is often cited as a time of focused listening to live, commercially sponsored national network broadcasts. Radio, according to several historians and critics of the medium, unified the nation during this time, not only in terms of programming, but also, as part of or resulting from that programming, socially, politically and culturally. Points on the Dial: Golden Age Radio beyond the Networks by Alexander Russo disputes and disrupts this vision of network-centered radio, positing instead a vision of intermingled national, regional and local programming, along with distinctly different regional and local sponsorship patterns and methods of distribution. The result is a diversity of practices, obscured until now by the network-centric focus of current radio history, which set the stage for radio in the second half of the 20th century.

Current, consensual histories of radio view the development of network-centric systems of content production...
and distribution as “a natural function of consumer choice and democratic action,” says Russo (p. 188). Radio networks responded to consumer desires for new products and diversions and built systems to highlight the production and distribution of live content meant to convince audiences that they were hearing exactly what they would hear were they present at the site of the original production/presentation. Russo’s account of radio broadcasting’s development challenges this view. For example, Russo argues that the rise of radio networks was based on the desire for a larger share of the potential national advertising market rather than on national unification as the networks claimed. Networks forced local stations to carry specific programming and the accompanying advertising. Local stations often acquiesced, as this was the only way to obtain the most popular programming then demanded by audiences. Advertisers were forced to place advertising buys in markets that did not represent their customer base. This packaging of content and access provided best benefit to the networks but not always to advertisers, local stations or audiences.

Rather than and despite a unified network-centric model, Russo says much of radio’s historical record always exhibited “a hybrid system with local, regional and national interests, tastes and concerns intermingling throughout institutions, programming and audience responses” (p. 189). Such internetworks “required constant revision and modification” (p. 19) in order to influence the construction and maintenance of imagined communities and audiences. This work of the network, although it appeared uniform, consistent and singular, was, in fact, limited, unstable and hybrid.

To develop this point, Russo devotes chapters to radio’s geographies, as he calls them: national, regional and local information networks alternatively seen as sites of community and conflict; sound-on-disc recordings as an alternative distributive technology to wired networks; the spatial and temporal flow of spot advertising; and locating human attention in a world increasingly mobile and not focused on a single radio. National networks were unable to extend their wired connection capabilities to every market, every community, leaving gaps that were filled by regional and local broadcasters more attuned to the wants and needs of their audiences. These audiences needed content, and program producers and distributors responded with electrical recording technologies such as sound-on-disc transcriptions of live events that avoided the problems and outright prohibitions associated with using recordings. Whether regional or national, programming was increasingly produced with intentional content gaps that could be filled with spot advertisements and programming that focused on genres or content tailored to specific locations and identities, thus localizing national brands by giving them seemingly local presences.

Finally, changing and often distracted practices of listening to radio programming resulted in local radio stations developing programs based around talk and music, both of which could be location specific in their appeal. As a result, rather than specific content that required listening at specific times, radio became more of an accompaniment to one’s life, an endeavor that could be entered and exited with little loss of meaning or potential for confusion. Localized spot sales via station representatives, ad hoc arrangements of regional networks for live programs, locally assembled news and music programs, block programming facilitated by disk jockeys, record and tape libraries and the tension between disk jockeys and single owners of groups of regional radio stations all led to new forms of radio production and listening. These heretofore hidden aspects of radio’s golden years, often missing from consensus histories, function, according to Russo, as increasingly autonomous actors, all figuring in the fragmentation of radio production, text and audience in the 1950s and the rebirth of radio throughout the remainder of the 20th century.

Points on the Dial: Golden Age Radio beyond the Networks is not only interesting but also informative. If Russo’s read on radio is right, history may help inform the nature of radio as it proceeds into a digital era where geographies of consumption and listening are drastically altered by the technologies of production and distribution.

Now Is the Time: Art & Theory in the 21st Century


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Thus, Terry Eagleton and Borys Groys (“Faith”) present two views on how the image of faith operative today is independent of belief (Eagleton) or science (Groys). Faith, whether Western or Islamic-fundamentalist, is content to use repetition of ritual—which fits strangely and effectively with digital media—without recourse to reason. Similarly, W.J.T. Mitchell and artist Sean Snyder show how between American and terrorist practices. Mitchell examines the uses of “biodigital” practices (iconoclasm and decapitation), while Snyder looks at the hardware and presentation techniques terrorists have used for their recruitment videos. Both argue, at different levels, against regarding acts as savage at the risk of understanding their core logic.

Turning to “Globalization,” Julian Stallabrass and Hanrou Hu suggest that the global transformation of expanded art markets and new biennials is only apparently liberating. New artists and art capitals have emerged, but to serve the new global rich; in different ways the authors expose the backside of spectacularly staged global capitalism. Here, the focus of the section, “Design,” fits in well. Although Rick Poyner has more hope for “critical design,” a critical, self-initiated kind of design that resists the industry and embraces gallery and art practices, Camiel van Winkel notes that art since the 1980s has increasingly assimilated the twin goals of “visibility” and “professionalism.” The artist makes art that is easy to understand, presented as an ethical mandate of constructive communication.

The pair of essays on “Canon”—by Robert Nelson and curator Ruth Noack—address issues of “Globalization” in that both seek ways to foreground constructed meaning in the contemporary curatorial scene. Nelson considers positively the role of canons in our understanding of the world as a way of organizing collective agency. Noack, curator of documenta 12, accepted the historical embeddedness of the contemporary art shown there and she positioned herself frankly as a constructor of a canon. In the end, she and Nelson see canon formation as a social negotiation that individuals should consciously take part in. Turning to “Media,” Kaja Silverman and Laura Marks address mediatity in historical and contemporary art. Silverman uses a Leonardo exhibition to reflect on media, as Marks does Islamic art. Silverman is interested in the way in which the clear genealogy of Leonardo and progeny is frustrated in a constant state of metamorphosis, a fact underscored by the postmodern artistic practice of James Coleman, whose ephemeral installation—which has left no trace—accompanied the Leonardo show.

The last section, “Romanticism,” is a fitting conclusion to the book, because Romanticism in this sense is another way of saying modernity, and Jos de Mul and Jörg Heiser locate our position, “now,” in the title of the book. Giving a genealogy of romantic ideas, de Mul endorses Schiller’s definition of romantic desire as an “eternal oscillation between enthusiasm and irony.” Heiser seeks out more artists to explore a similar opposition between Romanticism and conceptualism. Good art combines both. For de Mul, the path between enthusiasm and irony is a “tightrope.” For both, instructively, this means that we are neither modern nor postmodern. In light of the global focus of the book as a whole, this suggests that oppositional discursive practices will not save us, but those moored in modernity itself that have not left us and indeed inform the rest of the world’s activities.

**Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design**


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Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design is a well-written and fluid discussion of an often underappreciated area of design history: the role of designed objects in the propaganda war between the United States and the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R. In this book, Castillo focuses on the use of “Soft Power,” or the coercive attraction of such intangibles as ideology, beliefs AND culture, and the perceived moral authority demonstrated via propaganda materials and designed artifacts. This fascinating book opens with a discussion of “Domesticity as a Weapon,” as deployed in a landmark 1959 exhibition at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, featuring the use of such ideological munitions as women’s nylons, refrigerators, clothing and toys. Associate Professor Greg Castillo proceeds through a series of exhibitions presented across the globe, featuring such titles as America at Home, Industry and Craft Create New Home Furnishings in the USA and People’s Capitalism, and fluently traces the use of soft design over the decades of the Cold War. These exhibitions were inspired by the deliberately formulated propaganda effort sponsored by the United States—arguably the most extensive international peace-time propaganda effort to date—that intended to compare and contrast the rewards of the capitalist way of life versus the Spartan fruits of the communist way of life.

Beautifully crafted by Castillo, this book skillfully covers the ideological tension between capitalism and communism as evidenced by propaganda and designed objects during the Cold War era. Castillo’s lively narrative and the carefully selected photographs and illustrations should engage the most discerning scholars of design and political science and yet the book is readable enough to appeal to advanced undergraduate and graduate students in architecture, graphic design, and industrial design programs.

This book was a true pleasure to read, combining fascinating historical facts with keen insight into the subversive ideological influence of design on culture and values.
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Liverpool Biennial: International Festival of Contemporary Art

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