FASTWÜRMS DONKY@NINJA@WITCH: A LIVING RETROSPECTIVE

by Philip Monk. The Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada, 2011. 112 pp., illus. ISBN: 978-0-921972-60-0.

Reviewed by Rob Harle, Australia. E-mail: <harle@robharle.com>.

This book will cast a wonderful spell on your imagination. It is a combination of documentation, catalogue and critical discussion of the living retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) by the zany artistic combo of Dai Skuse and Kim Kozzi, a.k.a. FASTWÜRMS.

The AGYU steals, but only with good will and the best of intentions. And it only steals from the best. Mimicking artists’ strategies, the AGYU is already in on the anti-establishment game. Our collaboration with FASTWÜRMS to produce DONKY@NINJA@WITCH was a highly unusual venture: a hybrid interspecies code of, ‘do what you will, harm unto none’” (p. 47). An entertaining, inspiring and radical book about a pair of entertaining, inspiring and radical artists.

The Würms love animals for their own sake, especially cats, but then these feline creatures have a long connection with witches, of course. A fundamental aspect of Skuse and Kozzi’s art and life. They cast spells wherever they go, in whatever materials are at hand. Their ethical system, or personal manifesto, ‘which brings together the most radical and compelling elements of witch and queer cultures is, the witches’ code of, ‘do what you will, harm unto none’” (p. 47). An entertaining, inspiring and radical book about a pair of entertaining, inspiring and radical artists.

LEONARDO REVIEWS

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EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL: PRIMITIVE


Reviewed by Aparna Sharma, Department of World Arts and Cultures, University of California at Los Angeles, U.S.A. E-mail: <a.sharma@arts.ucla.edu>.

New York’s New Museum is exhibiting internationally acclaimed Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s multi-platform video installation Primitive, an ambitious work that raises our awareness of the links between class struggle and memory through a pronouncedly reflexive cinematic vocabulary that reinstates early cinema and classical film theory’s interrogations of the moving image as constituting a representation of “reality.” This is a crucial intervention in the medium of moving image at a time when boundaries between fiction and fact, and commercial and home movies, are increasingly understood as having been dissolved. While in the Western hemisphere, as in the neoliberal...
mediascapes of postcolonial societies such as in South and Southeast Asia, this dissolution of boundaries has
translated into celebratory discourses claiming the democratization of mov-
ing image media and technology.
Weerasethakul's 
Primitive problematizes dominant and normative visual cultures transported under the aegis of "globalization." It presents a site-
specific vocabulary (site understood both geographically and historically) through which we are empathetically
alerted to the naïveté of claims of
digital media as democratic. 

Primitive makes critical observations and raises incisive questions about the scope and extent of working class struggles that do not necessarily translate into desired revolutions. How do people live after their voices and relationships to their environments have been brutally repressed? What legends and practices do they conjure to make meaning out of their existence? And how can digital media enter such contexts while preserving the integrity of the voices and experiences repressed by the incessant onward march of History?

Primitive is set in a Thai farming village, Nabua, that in the 1960s and 1970s was the seat of clashes between the Thai military and communist-sympathizing farmers. The tensions peaked so high that they altered the demographic profile of the region. Although Weerasethakul enters this community a generation after the clashes subsided, Primitive resonates with recent confrontations between the Thai military and Bangkok’s working classes, many of whom hail from rural communities such as Nabua. Primitive was conceived during the research for Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall Past Lives (2010), a project that won the prestigious Palme d’Or Prize at Cannes in 2010. Weerasethakul recruits and follows a group of young Nabua men, mostly teenagers, to explore and share how the young Nabua men's sense of masculinity. As viewers we are constructed to witness actions we see and to appreciate Nabua and its people as emic or insider view. Many images are accompanied by conversations or gestures that reference the site's checkered political history. These references are always oblique and suggestive. In many instances we are witness to long durations of actions such as lightning, music, sleep, eating and games. These long durations are as punctuated with spontaneity as they are laden with idleness. Cumulatively they allow us to appreciate how memory permeates the young Nabua men’s sense of masculinity. As viewers we are constructed to both witness actions we see and to follow those indirect, shared sentiments—anticipation, anxiety, loss, absence, idleness, energy—that quietly yet heavily linger in the air. As we navigate between what we literally see and the obliquely referenced, our viewing contract is pushed out of a comfortable realm of looking into a position where we are compelled to ask of the images we see whether they are real or imaginary; fiction or faction; or both.

Weerasethakul’s cinematic vocabulary is clearly reflexive. Common techniques we have seen in a range of world cinema contexts surface in Primitive. These include exaggerated durations, explicit cutting and distanced tracking shots juxtaposed with handheld camera. But Primitive’s reflexivity exceeds, both ontologically and philosophically, the reflexive impulse as understood in classical and political modernist film theory and discourse. In Phantoms of Nabua, we follow the group of boys playing football in the night. The ball is on fire. In the background is a screen depicting the very scene we are seeing, subtly resonant with Vertov’s Man with the Movie Camera (1929). At one instance in the game, the ball is kicked towards the screen and the screen catches fire. Eventually, it burns completely and the image of what we were seeing on the screen disappears. This moment edges a sensation of violence upon the viewer. We are pushed from the realm of seeing the represented representation back to the primary representation. Is this a choreographed accident? Is Weerasethakul gesturing the death of cinema, positioning it as coincidental with the contradictions of working class struggles? Not literally, because the light of the back projector continues—peering directly and sharply at the viewer’s eyes. Moving shadows—the shadows of the Nabua men who we see on screen—remain.

Cinema is the dance of shadows. As Primitive resituates the viewer into this most elementary feature of the medium, we can understand that the work’s title—Primitive—is an acute rewriting of colonial imperatives; a rewriting that disassembles “global” mass-mediated visual cultures that often support an orientalist imaginary. It is as if in Weerasethakul the deconstruction of cinema collapses into and cannot be performed without the deconstruction of dominant, colonially inflected visual cultures. These are not two separate projects. Rather, one is the relief imprint of the other. Primitive does not grieve over or valorize the working-class disposition. Nabua, its people and their histories are not objectified, ordered or presented in any didactic or determinist terms of reference.

Many postcolonial and minoritarian cinema cultures suffer and fail by regurgitating the very codes of representation that they set out to critique.
**Primitive** is a marked contrast, a unique formal approach free from any celebratory or determined notions of local politics and visual aesthetics. It concludes by claiming that a people-centered cinema is as responsive to working-class consciousness as it is active in deconstructing its own means and mechanisms of production. This is tightly in line with Vertov’s practice, but in Weerasethakul the euphoria surrounding post-revolution Moscow that characterized Vertov has been fully replaced by the irreconcilable contradictions of postcoloniality. As one leaves the installation, one cannot but be reminded of *La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon*, whose focus on workers has appealed to generations of Marxist film critics. *Primitive* continues the promise of that cinematic instance from 1895, and neither art history nor film theory can afford to overlook this work.

### EAST BAY OPEN STUDIOS PREVIEW EXHIBITION


Reviewed by Amy Ione, U.S.A. E-mail: <ione@diatrope.com>

After reviewing the 7th Creativity and Cognition Conference [1], held in Berkeley in 2009, two thoughts kept reverberating in my mind. First, I thought about the many reviews I have written about art and events in the San Francisco Bay Area and wondered why I have never looked at the vibrant art produced here. I also thought quite a bit about Cathy Treadaway’s paper, mentioned in that review, in which she outlined her approach to integrating newer technologies into her hand-crafted art. To put these thoughts to rest, I decided to review the annual East Bay Pro Arts Exhibition (EBOS) this year. This two-weekend event highlights the work of over 400 artists located in the San Francisco Bay Area, many of whom open their studios to the public. While perhaps not as well known as other locally based projects (such as Burning Man, which has achieved global recognition), EBOS does offer a noteworthy mix of innovative art, groundbreaking museum and gallery exhibitions, live concerts and great food.

The focal point of the show is the Pro Arts gallery in downtown Oakland, where each artist can include a small example of his or her work. The resulting collage is remarkably strong and immediately highlights the talent in the community. Perhaps the most creative contribution in art, science and technology was by Raines Cohen. He mounted a large postcard for the exhibition inside a locked box. Just before the opening reception, he unlocked the box and placed inside an iPad that was running a video presentation of his work and photographs. Watching it throughout the opening reception made it become clear that the postcard was a clever placeholder, and the purpose of the locked box was to use it for the video invitation that he ran during the opening. Needless to say, the video was intended to entice people to visit his space. (I assume that the postcard was returned to the locked box after the opening reception.)

The purpose of the Pro Arts gallery space is to help art enthusiasts devise their visitation plan. I must admit that although I mapped out a plan from the gallery pieces, once I got going, I found it hard to stay on track. I was lured into spaces by posters on the street and comments from artists as I visited them in their studios. Other visitors I encountered along the way also changed my course. I am not sure if I recommend this approach because I am certain I missed studios of interest. Still, I was glad I took advantage of this opportunity because I found some gems along the way.

The first day of the four-day event I traveled around with a colleague. We picked as one of our first stops a building where several prominent Bay Area artists (Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, William Theophilus Brown and Paul Wonner) had had their studios in the 1950s. Together with David Park, who had a studio in downtown Berkeley, Bischoff and Diebenkorn founded the Bay Area Figurative style. Moreover, it was in this space, in the mid-1950s, that Diebenkorn created his famous “Berkeley Series” of abstract landscapes. We found a particularly robust studio there, Marty McCutcheon’s space. It was set up as if it was a gallery exhibition of his work with a large sculpture/installation around the walls that was uniformly whitewashed (although with bits of unpainted colors showing through). The all-white artwork was put together with found and discarded objects (a chair, a television, old paint brushes, etc.) constructed in a flattened format resembling a synthetic cubist painting. While my companion saw shades of Diebenkorn in the asymmetrical geometry (suggesting some resonance with where the studio space was located), I thought more about Kurt Schwitters’s *Merzbau*. I was also reminded of Louise Nevelson’s unique assemblages made from cast-off wood and other materials that she, too, transformed into works of art. Like Nevelson’s work, I think the monochromatic color added a mysterious quality that made the work alluring. The installation also incorporated a video projection that complemented the assemblage and truly elevated the presentation, because in the video McCutcheon showed his hands drawing. Within the work we saw him working on the work itself. Indeed, these clips, which were pieced together, were even more fascinating when I realized that I could see him create some of the whitewashed pages of text that were part of the assemblage.

At first I was surprised that McCutcheon’s space was set up to highlight his work more than his studio. As it turned out, many of the folks I visited did not highlight their working space. I found this a bit disappointing. For example, there were many locations where artists decided to group together to increase foot traffic. One of the largest was at a former bookstore. Here the large box was transformed into an art fair, with 43 artists displaying their work. The result was a mixed bag. In some ways the setup made the “studio” aspect of Open Studios seem quite remote. Yet I did find the work intriguing. Many artists there also integrated art, science and technology themes into their projects. Maryl Snow, for example, brought to mind that while digital art is still a relatively recent phenomenon, artists have used art, science and technology for a long time in various forms (e.g. printmaking and photography). Her work was quite representative of the way artists now mix and match, often using printmaking as a technique to create works that offer a commentary on scientific and mathematical ideas. Briefly, she works with “appropriated” images, finding ways to reassemble them and make them her own. She had several bubble chamber images on display. Her web page says these are from the Law-

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ence Berkeley Labs. She also showed her Art for Physicists portfolio and photocollages, which are quite unlike those of David Hockney. Whereas he keeps the multiple pieces in the presentation, Snow assembles the collage with tape and then rephotographs it so that the pieces become "whole" again.

Of the places I visited, I thought Benny Alba’s studio/gallery was perhaps the best mix in terms of combining a number of artists with a "studio" feel. Benny greets visitors as they walk in, making one feel like a guest in her home. The studio itself, with 11 artists inside, seemed quite cohesive and had the kind of community feel that was missing at the bookstore site. The work of Vicky Mei Chen, a printmaker, stood out. She produces small, handmade artist books (in slipcases) exploring the relationship between urban landscape and the entities that occupy the space. Another artist of note here was Jennifer Downey, a painter whose work centers on nature and how humans interact with nature.

Although I found that traveling to so many studios has its ups and downs, the ups are more prevalent than the downs. There are also both rewards and challenges. Visiting one multiple-space environment, with a maze-like interior, was annoying because it was surprisingly difficult to find the artists that I wanted to see. Thinking about it later, this layout probably offered the artists who worked there more privacy. Cluttered locations showed more of "the artist" but, in some cases, this meant there was not enough room for visitors (because the space was so taken up by the art). It is harder to visit artists who work in spaces that are not shared with others. (Of those I visited, I particularly liked Barbara Mariele’s; she displayed some mixed media prints that included old architectural blueprints and other materials.)

One of the enjoyable things about this type of event is that going here and there exposes things that are ordinarily invisible. Ironically, one building with an open studio introduced me to an exciting work that was just “sitting there” in the lobby. Called The Tide Wave, the piece is a large-scale kinetic sculpture by Berkeley-born Reuben Margolin. It consists of a small electric motor located overhead that rotates a pulley, which in turn imparts movement to 241 Dacron strings. The strings then pass through brass grommets in a tension grid and descend to support 1,140 sections of tule reed and more than 3,000 brass beads [2]. Installed at the David Brower Center in Berkeley in 2010, it is in a location I walk by daily. Yet I had never been inside and had no idea that this extraordinary artwork was housed there. With so much attention given to museums, exhibitions and art-designated spaces, I wonder how many similar gems we miss as we live our lives. In this case, I find it hard to describe the dynamic and overall presence of this hanging work.

While I found the organization of the Pro Arts event extraordinary overall, there were a few things that were less successful in my view. The web site itself is a valuable tool in planning one’s itinerary, so I can understand why many of the artists decided to display multiple images, but several of these links were broken. I also would have liked an option for saving my itinerary in the online gallery.

Still, all in all, East Bay Pro Arts Open Studios confirmed my sense that art, science and technology is quite evident across the board these days. This event, which mixes well-established masters with younger artists, highlighted many aspects of creativity and also allowed many artists to show what goes on inside their working space. It was particularly evident in the studios of the artists using what are often considered more traditional tools (from conversations and their libraries) that creative people have a knack for integrating the old and the new.

References
2. I urge readers to visit <www.reubenmargolin.com/waves/Tide/> for an image of the piece and more information about how it was made.

Books

BAUHAUS DREAM-HOUSE—MODERNITY AND GLOBALIZATION


Reviewed by Florence Martellini, U.K.
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Research about the Bauhaus has mainly emphasized art-historical scholarship based on formal and empirical approaches. Bauhaus Dream-house is the first book on the Bauhaus that presents the institution through the fascinating lens of critical social theory. The author examines its institutional formation as well as the spread and influence of its ideas worldwide. Putting the Bauhaus into its daily context allows the reader to de-mystify it by realizing the extent of its challenges. The impressive tenacity and creativity of its leaders in keeping the school open and disseminating its ideas is also covered.

The Bauhaus was both an educational establishment and a business with a development strategy, a combination that is very familiar to us today but was less common almost 100 years ago when initiated by this institution. The book starts by contextualizing the birth of the Bauhaus. It then focuses on the life of the Bauhaus itself, explaining how social, economic and political pressures influenced its original ideals and how it responded to the former. The last chapter traces its legacy, looking at the dissemination of its curriculum and the impact of its thinking on cultural identity and modernity.

The first part of the book, “Histories and Theories,” relates the history of architecture, design and art education that led to the creation of the Bauhaus. This survey starts with the medieval guild and progresses on to the late 18th century, when new institutions were created in opposition to the expensive and “out-of-touch” classical learning, an approach that prevailed at that time. In Germany, the Werbund tried to integrate art and industry, romanticizing the guild model of uniting imagination and production. It aimed to ennable products with art on the principle that mass production can lead to quality product and that quality of industrial goods improves when designed by artists. Commodity design at the Bauhaus emerged from this history.

For those interested, Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical framework that informs the historical narration. Interestingly, the author explains that change is brought about through fantasy, which helps construct new objects and practices. This often occurs during periods of drama (eco-crisis, war). Fantasy is essential in capitalism because it gives “meaning” to mass-produced commodities. And the Bauhaus did harness fantasy to represent socio-cultural change. It is heralded not only as a beacon of artistic, design and architectural modernism but also...
as the epitome of modernity. Hence, its history is also synonymous of that of the Weimar Republic, as it became part of identity experiments by the new nation-state.

Part 2, “Weimar Republic,” gives the reader some insight into the life of the school and its challenges. Founded in 1919 by Walter Gropius, who fused the Weimar Academy of Fine Arts and the Arts and Craft School, the new institution was located in the provincial cities of Weimar (1919–1924), Dessau (1925–1932) and Berlin (1933) and had three consecutive directors: Walter Gropius, Hans Meyer and Mies van der Rohe. Being an open admission school, it employed its Basic Course as a gatekeeper. This course offered formal and technical education but no history. The Bauhaus tried to straddle academy, technical and craft education, adopting during its first period medi eval ideals to integrate them.

The First World War led to a rejection of history and the creation of a collective identity—a space where people acquire embodied cultural capital, the *habitus*. The latter became the focus of critique and playful transformation. Gropius recognized the local political consequences of the Bauhaus’s initial rejection of social and gender traditions and gradually re-established social conformity. As economic stability returned in 1924, the Bauhaus increasingly embraced a more conventional corporate identity with its growing focus on standardization, mass production and collaboration with industry. In addition, design being seen as key to the appeal of German products in international competition, the Bauhaus was under pressure in two respects. On the one hand, it was an educational institution in regional and local systems without money. On the other hand, it was a design school with national economic potential. This positioning forced a stronger focus on marketing Bauhaus work. By 1924, workshops were working at full capacity, but after the 1924 election, the new right-wing Thuringian government questioned the school’s future. The attempt to fight politics with economics by making the school less dependent on state funding was ultimately unsuccessful—politics supervened. In 1925 the state terminated the contract with the school. Gropius fore saw the crisis and had the school moved to Dessau.

The second Bauhaus director, Hans Meyer, further strengthened business initiatives but had a different idea of the Bauhaus market. He saw popular necessities as more important than elitist luxuries. With this in mind, he rationalized and restructured the workshops to improve productivity through standardization. Meyer also disliked marketing. Through a collaboration with Rasch, a wallpaper company, wallpaper sales became central to the school’s economy. The school’s growing economic success, as well as its collectivization of production, formed a greater threat to the state than its economic problems. It was this rather than Meyer’s Communist sympathies that allegedly became one of the reasons he had to resign in 1930.

Unlike Gropius or Meyer, the third director, Mies van der Rohe, felt no urge to create designs for mass consumption. When the Communist cell rebelled against his leadership, he called the army, ending the “proletarianization” of the Bauhaus. He attempted to escape political conflict by denying the school a political role. Still, when in 1933 the National Socialists, amongst others, demanded he remove several masters for their ideology, van der Rohe closed the school.

Part 3, “Europe and Beyond,” explains how the Bauhaus achieved its global presence. When the school closed in 1933, Bauhaus products were being bought or licensed mostly by German businesses. However, the school’s images, writings and pedagogies had already acquired international presence and impact during the early days of the Weimar Bauhaus. In achieving such a global presence, corporeal and corporate identities, extensive networking and publicity were at the heart of its management. These communication efforts, which occurred through both personal networks and mass media, transformed the Bauhaus into an international phenomenon. Although political and financial problems finally closed the Bauhaus, the school dispersed across the globe—in particular to the U.S.A., the former U.S.S.R., Mexico and Czechoslovakia, where some of its leaders and students established their work. The last chapter focuses on how the Bauhaus ideals continued to spread globally, with its tools used differently in various contexts. However, the author does not really explain why neither the school’s identity experiments nor its business models were adopted in its offspring’s institutions.

Overall, the book praises the Bauhaus for its indisputable and pivotal role in 20th-century modernity and globalization. Freed from “dead conventions,” the school became itself a sort of commodity by uniquely combining design education, commodity production, marketing and sales. The author argues that it made visible “dangerous knowledge” [1] and challenged social norms. The Bauhaus’ androgyny and ahistoricism suited private, public and corporate interests of industry, colonialism and globalization, distancing social issues from visual and spatial practice. The institution remained silent on social-relations discourse. Instead, its curriculum became a commodity brand, allowing bourgeois exploitation, control of resources and alienation of workers to continue. However, the author admits that the Bauhaus failed to fulfill its potential because it could not and was not permitted to continue experimenting to adjust to realpolitik. The institution lived and died in extreme economic and social conditions.

This critical approach, which takes the Bauhaus as a case study, shows how ideas about education impact institutional culture, how educational programs are interlinked with regional, national and international policy and how institutions connect to cultural networks and flows of ideas. Hence this book can appeal to an extensive readership not only in the field of visual arts education but also in history, pedagogy and even business. Anyone who is curious about the phenomenon of the Bauhaus will also find this book fascinating.

**Note**

1. That is, knowledge safeguarded by professionals to ensure monopoly and control.
**Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History**


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

The study of sound in cinema, together with the rediscovery of the (falsely called silent) primitive cinema, has been one of the privileged channels of the great renewal of film studies since the late 1970s. That we were still missing a comprehensive textbook on the history of the soundtrack within the broader frame of film history itself had become a historical anachronism, which this collection admirably rectifies.

Carefully and very didactically edited by Julie Hubbert, this book offers a combination of three lines of research that had been developed in relative isolation in the past few decades. First, there is a critical analysis of film music; second, the book offers a technical study of the soundtrack; third, we find the examination of contextual information related to sound technology. *Celluloid Symphonies* brings these three threads together, knitting them into an excellent survey of the mutations of the filmic medium itself. Yet the qualities of this book cannot be reduced to its merger of already existing research tracks. However, Hubbert does not aim to propose new, close readings of specific works—her focus is as much on the contexts as on the texts. In other words, her approach provides us with much more than just a new, musically expanded version of Hollywood, adding music, dialogue and sound or noise to the already known shifts from before and after the great paradigm shift of the talkies.

First of all, what her book offers is a really new history. This new history is both broad and microscopic. Broad, because it encompasses the complete history of Hollywood cinema, as shaped and transformed by its relationship with sound; microscopic, because it refuses the traditional vision of film as a sequence of autonomous periods, each rapidly replacing and remediating a previous, technologically lower-performance era. True, in Hubbert’s meticulous account, the history of Hollywood cinema is nicely divided into five different eras, whose dominant features and respective frontiers will not come as a surprise, as the global structure of the book seems to follow almost slavishly what we all know about the watershed moments of the American film business: 1895–1925: the silent film; 1926–1935: the early sound film; 1935–1959: the Hollywood score; 1960–1977: the soundtrack during the years of the studio system’s crisis; 1978–present: the postmodern soundtrack in the New Hollywood era. But Hubbert’s well-documented research and detailed introductions succeed in an exemplary manner in complicating this history without ever blurring the clear lines of the evolution. Particularly noteworthy is that each of the five parts has an editorial presentation of some 30 pages. These, in effect, are small books themselves.

The complexification is twofold: On the one hand, Hubbert shows the amazing diversity that is at work within each of the great historical periods that she distinguishes; on the other hand, she demonstrates very persuasively that transition does not mean rupture, and that the study of historical change has to pay as much attention to continuity as to revolution. Her program follows this idea in each of the five parts, which produces often-astonishing revisions of the often over-generalized claims one finds in traditional textbooks and in specialized case studies on film music. Good points are made in relation to the analysis of the gradual emergence of the score, which does not arrive overnight but can be seen as a technologically and contextually enabled continuation and transformation of the treatment of the motif structure during the silent era. At the other end of the historical spectrum is the foregrounding of the increasing convergence between film music and music in the game industry.

The second great achievement of this book, besides its clever rewriting of Hollywood’s history, is the perfect balance that it strikes between major and minor voices and names. Once again, Hubbert respects the existing hierarchies, such as the great names of Hollywood film music (Steiner, Korngold, Goldsmith, Bernstein, Shore, Herrmann, Mancini, Williams, etc.). Although in a different mode, Adorno and Eisler are the great names of this book, which is always very keen to disclose the internal multi-layeredness of the discourse as well as the practice of all these artists. Simultaneously, Hubbert also provides us with an incredible wealth of other, often neglected voices and testimonies. Each part of her book is structured around 10 to 15 historical documents, mostly rather brief, but very diverse and always extremely instructive or pleasant to read. These documents constitute the perfect historical background of the history. Their great value stems from their context. They are often borrowed from non-academic publications (professional magazines such as *Variety*, interviews on radio stations) while also giving the floor to a whole set of persons who are not frequently quoted at length in academic studies (such as highly commercial composers or anonymous reporters). Thanks to the intelligent editorial comments in Hubbert’s introductions, these voices become part of a polyphonic tapestry that helps us better see manifold meanings of this new reading of film.

**The History of Jungle Gardens**


**Reviewed by Allan Graubard, U.S.A. E-mail: <graubarda@gmail.com>**

In 1850, E.A. Poe wrote “The Domain of Arnheim,” a tale startling as much for its sense of beauty through the medium of the landscape garden as for...
its description of that very place, "seem-
ing the phantom handiwork . . . of
the Sylphs, of the Fairies, of the Genii
and of the Gnomes." In literature, I do
not believe that anything equal to the
domain of Arnheim has since appeared
with the kind of élan that Poe was able
to bring to it. This tale, poetic in set-
ting, with its flowers, bushes, trees,
water, sky and their inhabitants, how-
ever unintentional it might seem to us
now, 161 years later, is an apt frame by
which to view an actual place that I have
had the pleasure to visit many times.

Three miles from the Gulf of Mexico
in southwest Louisiana, fringed by
Bayou Petite Anse, atop a deep salt
dome left by the ancient sea and an
ever-more-archaic volcano, is Avery
Island, with its marvelous Jungle Gar-
dens. If the name of the island seems
familiar, I can only tell you that per-
haps you have used its most renowned
product on your food. For this is where
Edmund McIlhenny first created
Tabasco sauce to spice up, as historians
tell us, the bland fare then available
in the Reconstruction South. Decades
after its first commercial release in
1868, the sauce would bring to the
McIlhennys the kind of plenty that
would facilitate the creation of Jungle
Gardens by the founder’s second son,
E. Avery McIlhenny.

First opened to the public in 1935,
Jungle Gardens is with us today, much
as originally laid out, ever drawing
us there whenever we are visiting the area. And it is the
kind of book that can offer a view of
what one man did from his love and
respect for the land, knowledge of the
life burgeoning around him, and care
for a red pepper, measured for ripeness
against a red stick (le Baton rouge), which
appears transformed in restaurants and
on grocery shelves worldwide. There
is every reason to get to know E. Avery
McIlhenny again and to experience his
legacy of enchantment, ecology and
decoation for women’s hats. And thus
slaughter of the Louisiana egret in the
early 20th century; the delightfully frail
white plumes were used as a popular
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I in this essay, which expands in a more
systematic way on some of the ideas
already defended in his previous book
USERInfoTechnoDemo (2005), Peter
Lunenfeld puts the stakes very high.
Well known as one of the best analysts
development of digital culture, he opens here a
certain number of historical, cultural,
political and ideological questions that
make this book a real must-read for all
those looking for new answers to the
problems that modern technoculture
has been facing since the end of what
he calls 89/11 ("eighty-nine eleven,"
the years of transition between the fall
of the Wall of Berlin to the Twin Tower
attacks). Despite the author’s modesty,
he emphasizes participative and collab-
orative action and thinking throughout
The Secret War between Downloading and
Uploading. Without a doubt, it is a book
whose political importance can be
compared to that of McLuhan, Adorno
and Dewey. Readers of this book, which
proposes an inspiring blend of meta-
phorical short-cuts and more classic
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The Secret War between Downloading and
Uploading: Tales of the Computer as Culture
Machine

by Peter Lunenfeld.
The MIT Press,

Reviewed by Jan Baetens, Belgium. E-mail:
Jan.Baetens@arts.kuleuven.ac.be.

In this essay, which expands in a more
systematic way on some of the ideas
already defended in his previous book
USERInfoTechnoDemo (2005), Peter
Lunenfeld puts the stakes very high.
Well known as one of the best analysts
development of digital culture, he opens here a
certain number of historical, cultural,
political and ideological questions that
make this book a real must-read for all
those looking for new answers to the
problems that modern technoculture
has been facing since the end of what
he calls 89/11 ("eighty-nine eleven,"
the years of transition between the fall
of the Wall of Berlin to the Twin Tower
attacks). Despite the author’s modesty,
he emphasizes participative and collab-
orative action and thinking throughout
The Secret War between Downloading and
Uploading. Without a doubt, it is a book
whose political importance can be
compared to that of McLuhan, Adorno
and Dewey. Readers of this book, which
proposes an inspiring blend of meta-
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second half of the 19th century, cinema in the first half of the 20th century and television in its second half), or at least virtually different. The problem with the computer is, indeed, that it allows for two possible uses, downloading (reception, consumption) and uploading (creation, participation), whose necessary balance is now dramatically disturbed to the sole profit of the former. We use the computer mainly as a downloading device, thus continuing and exacerbating what Lunenfeld considers the major failure of television culture: its exclusive focus on dissemination and on passive reception by its users, who suffer in various degrees a disease termed “cultural diabetes.”

In the television age, 24/7 quantity has wiped out the search for quality, and the cultural and ideological consequences of this tendency are utterly deleterious: on the one hand, the reduction of culture to entertainment; on the other hand, the incapacity to invent new and hopeful answers to the problems and threats coming from all those, both from the left and the right, who challenge the heritage of the Enlightenment’s secular and optimistic culture. From the left: Lunenfeld is targeting the negative self-criticism of modernist culture, its refusal to counter the anti-universalist stances of contemporary obscurantism, its refusal to recognize the deleterious effects of the vanishing of high culture and its difficulty in finding positive models for future action and creation. From the right: here the author gives a thorough critique of all forms of—mostly theocratically inspired—anti-pluralism, outside the West but also within our Western technoculture.

At the same time, The Secret War between Downloading and Uploading takes very seriously the radical condemnation of modern civilization as a purely market-driven and amusement-oriented zombie or couch potato culture. Yet the answer Lunenfeld suggests is not a return to a mythical past, to a unified, patriarchal and theocratic society, but an attempt to rethink the openness, complexity, creativity and collective dimension of secular, technologically enhanced enlightenment. This attempt, which Lunenfeld does not present as a set of tailor-made answers, is very critical of some movements that have tried to bring cultural uploading to the fore: The author admits that the avant-garde has proven perfectly compatible with the lowest and most despicable forms of the culture industry, just as he is aware of the limits of the “prosumer” (producer-consumer) culture (which does not always escape the only alternative of modern interactivity: either “buy now” or “buy later”).

Lunenfeld’s book is a cry for freedom—freedom from the market, which forces us to download and prevents us from uploading, but also freedom from all the reactionary forces whose hidden or overt agenda goes even much further. It does so by making four claims. First, he speaks of the necessity of facing the reality of technoculture. By this he means we need to face it as something positive (i.e. the machine is not a devil, but part of our humanity). Second, there is the belief that these positive aspects have to do with the possibility of inventing. In other words, without the invention of a new future, there is the risk of repeating the errors of the television era, which infamously continues to destroy our culture. Third, there is the urgency of doing so, for after 9/11 we live in a culture of fear that is crippling us. Fourth, there is the craving for a collective that is collaborative and the shared use of the possibilities of the computer, which is more than a “personal” or individual tool. Hence, for instance, Lunenfeld presents an insistence on Creative Commons and the aesthetics of “unfinishing.”

The Secret War between Downloading and Uploading is a deeply committed book by a man who is a no less a passionate lover of modern (i.e. both man- and machine-made) culture than a critical voice eager to make a plea for values that are heavily under attack: pluralism, high culture, gift economy. Its highly appealing style and healthy sense of polemic and provocation should make it a hotly debated work in the years to come.

The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing


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

This is not, as the author modestly acknowledges in the very beginning of his book, a timely publication. This work on the cultural meaning of the “horizon” does not propose, indeed, the fashionable mix of empirical research and critical critique that attracts today’s Ph.D. students. Nor does it reject the almost encyclopedic and semi-abstract style of the books that were so typical of immediate academic writing until the 1950s (I could not stop thinking of Auerbach’s Mimesis, for instance). Moreover, it embraces and links subjects that modern specialization tends to keep apart: mostly philosophy, religion and art. Finally, it accepts limiting its research to the Western, more specifically Greek- and Jewish-inspired, traditions of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Yet despite all these (apparent) restrictions, The Horizon is a great book and one that should be read also as a defense of the kind of broad cultural studies that can be highly profitable to contemporary humanities and, even more, to their reception by a broader audience (for the ideal reader of Maleuvre is the interested layperson, not the disciplinary specialist).

The Horizon turns on two simple questions: What is the horizon? and What does it mean? For Didier Maleuvre, the horizon is much more than the line where the land or the sea meets the sky. The horizon is the place of encounter between immanency and transcendentalism, and therefore one of life’s aspects or elements that is most open to all the fundamental questions that Man has been struggling with since the very dawn of civilization: What is the world that I am living in? Is there something beyond the horizon? Is there a God? Who am I? Eternal questions, perhaps, but not questions that travel
through time without changes. Maleuvre explains very well how the notion of the horizon has permanently been reshaped and how our interpretation of its meaning cannot be separated from the way in which we define the horizon and our culture.

This inquiry takes mainly two forms. First of all, Maleuvre describes in large brushstrokes the various types of (once again: Western) civilizations that have one after another tried to cope with the problem of the horizon: the archaic age (Egypt, Ancient Greece and the invention of life as a journey, translating space in temporal terms, as in Israel’s exile in the desert), the philosophical age (centered on classic Greek philosophy), the theological age (from the first Christendom and Augustine to the Gothic culture and the discovery of perspective), the scientific age (Renaissance and baroque), the scientific age (Enlightenment), the subjective age (Romanticism and beyond, with a great emphasis on the confusion of man and God in American religions such as Mormonism, which Maleuvre paradoxically identifies as a religion of atheism), and finally the mathematical age (our science-dominated times, which tend to “solve” the problem of the horizon by declaring it irrelevant). In each period, he foregrounds a certain paradigm, or a set of paradigms, that establishes a certain relationship between man and what is beyond man’s understanding. Each period, moreover, is described as an answer to the problems and difficulties raised in the previous one. And even if the author refrains from suggesting that the history of the horizon obeys a certain teleological path, he demonstrates that the transformations of the frontier between the immanent and the transcendent do follow a certain line: Our Western culture tends to “reason away” the problem of the horizon. Yet although it is perfectly thinkable that one day our culture will have evacuated or forgotten the question of the horizon, this question still remains open today, and there is no reason to think that we will live tomorrow in a purely immanent culture.

Second, Maleuvre succeeds very well in putting some meat on these abstract bones by linking philosophical and cultural issues with illuminating cultural analyses. The metaphysical interrogations that lead humanity from one answer and one era to another are always connected with the major cultural productions of that period, and this back-and-forth movement between cultural artifacts and highly abstract questions is, undoubtedly, one of the great forces of the book (the other qualities being, besides the great originality of the approach, the admirable clarity of the style and the incredible depth and breadth of information selected, summarized and re-mastered by the author). None of these analyses may be entirely new, but the overall story certainly is, as it is the rhetorical tour de force by Didier Maleuvre, who manages to show the both eternal and permanently shifting nature of questions that we may have become afraid to discuss so openly and directly as he does.

**DESIGN THINKING: UNDERSTANDING HOW DESIGNERS THINK AND WORK**


Reviewed by Dene Grigar, The Creative Media & Digital Culture Program, Washington State University Vancouver, Canada. E-mail: <dgrigar@vancouver.wsu.edu>.

Nigel Cross, Emeritus Professor of Design Studies at The Open University, has written Design Thinking: Understanding How Designers Think and Work, a brilliant little book that contains a large amount of information. Little is not meant to be a pejorative comment about the quality of the book but rather descriptive of its actual size: a mere 6.25 × 7.5 × .5 in. But the information Cross manages to pack into that small space speaks to the very skills he discusses about great design. Extremely well organized and compellingly written and argued, Design Thinking makes for good reading and will be useful for teaching, particularly those “interested . . . [in] develop[ing] their understanding of how designers think and work” (p. 1). The book is divided into eight chapters, each with a subsection; all are noted and numbered in the Table of Contents, making them easy to find. Cross, an expert in design methodology and epistemology, is interested in “reveal[ing] and articulat[ing] the apparently mysterious . . . cognitive and creative abilities of designers” (p. 1).

To that end Cross employs interview- and experiment-based research methods as well as an interdisciplinary approach to design to arrive at his find-
both Murray and Grange, for example, take “a broad ‘systems’ approach to the problem,” “fram[ed] the problem in a distinctive and . . . personal way,” and “design[ed] from first principles” (p. 75). Chapter 5, “Designing to Use,” introduces experiment-based research methods, looking specifically at “design thinking in action” (p. 79). This method asks subjects to work through a design and provide a “verbal account . . . of their own cognitive activities” (p. 80). Here Cross follows Victor Scheinman as the engineer designs a device that will allow a backpack to be carried on a mountain bike. Chapter 6, “Designing Together,” continues with this method, this time with a team of three as they take on the same design problem as Scheinman was given. Chapter 7 follows the organizational strategy introduced previously by comparing the design thinking utilized by the designers featured in Chapters 5 and 6. What emerges from Cross’s findings is a recapitulation of the notion of the “creative leap” (p. 127). He sees it rather as an “accumulat[ion of] a lot of prior concepts, examples and discussion,” a “formulation of an ‘apposite’ proposal,” that is then “explored and possibly reframed,” resulting in “a resolu-
tion between the design requirements and the design structure of a potential new product.” For Cross, a creative leap is actually “more like building a ‘creative bridge’ between the problem space and the solution space” (p. 129) than it is a leap across two unknown territories.

Chapter 8, “Design Expertise,” concludes with a summary of Cross’s findings: that design thinking consists of “multifaceted cognitive skills” and is a “form of natural intelligence in its own right.” It is more than problem solving, he says; rather, it requires “intense, reflective interaction with representations of problems and solutions” and “an ability to shift easily and rapidly between . . . doing and thinking” (pp. 135–136). Cross also shows that “education is not only about the development of knowledge but also about developing ways of thinking and acting” (p. 140). We learn that mastery takes “sustained involvement” as well as “motivation, concentration, and willingness to work hard” (p. 141). “Everyone is capable of designing,” Cross tells us (p. 1). For that reason—and the fact that the book provides insights into design and is enjoyable to read—I recommend it for everyone. I, for one, will be using it in my undergraduate multimedia design course in the fall and plan to add it as a resource for my faculty.

**ARNHEIM FOR FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES**


*Reviewed by Ian Verstegen, Moore College of Art & Design, U.S.A.*

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Although he has enjoyed a reputation among the great theoreticians in Europe, Rudolf Arnheim has suffered in the English-speaking world as slightly too formalistic, modernist and conser-

native to be truly interesting. However, this book—coming from the progressive fields of film and media studies—changes all of this history. Arnheim is back, contextualized, put to work and updated. It may be the case that this book has single-handedly brought him back, or at least captured the sea change in thinking that allows us to look at him again in a new light.

Part of the major change is how the chapters in this book interpret Arnheim. There is clarity in concert with historical contextualization. For example, authors reading Arnheim’s *Film as Art* in the 1957 edition come across a strange passage. Instead of adopting ideas from secondary sources, they look at Arnheim’s larger theoretical commitments and thus provide a rounded picture.

The bigger picture is provided in David Bordwell’s short essay and in Meraj Dhir’s more synoptic chapter. Stressing Arnheim’s psychological commitments, Dhir urges us to withhold judgment on Arnheim’s apparently normative statements in favor of interpretations of the expressive properties of experience. In a remarkable essay, Malcolm Turim discusses Arnheim’s connections to the New York experimental scene in the 1950s and 1960s. Although many would see Arnheim as opposed to such filmmaking, their opposition to the narrative and language-based effects of mainstream Hollywood cinema led them quite comfortably to Arnheim.

Several authors branch out from film to comment on other or newer media.
For example, Shawn Vancour discusses Arnheim’s contribution to radio, suggesting that Arnheim’s thinking is open to “extra-formalist” considerations of the kind he demonstrated in his more sociological work at Columbia University during World War II. Doron Galili’s chapter on television sees Arnheim in his most progressive light, suggesting that Arnheim understood television as both convergent (combining film and radio) and remediative (of theater). Another chapter considers a new medium that Arnheim never studied: comics. Greg Smith uses Arnheim’s “New Laocoon,” which tried to settle the aesthetic question of the combination of media definitively, to understand the relative balance of image and text in a comic, and recommends using the “processual” or psychological elements of Arnheim’s theory over those that are “prescriptive,” which often stall discussion. Finally, Colin Burnett treats Arnheim’s approach to the comic medium, and not “essentialist.” This difference is dynamic and stratified individually as they shift words with random images. Where is the story? one may be fooled into asking.

Here is where Joseph Tabbi’s essay “Graphic Sublime: On the Art and Designwriting of Kate Armstrong and Michael Tippett,” provides some guidance. This essay and examples from the work comprise the book—in reality, an exhibit catalog—published by The Prairie Gallery, the gallery where the work was shown from 1 April–30 June 2008. Tabbi, in discussing the “habits of attention” we use when engaging with digital works (p. 10), reminds us of our inability to avoid coherence, and “the sense of a narrative, the impression of history in the making, [that] persists in what we see” (p. 12). Alluding to Thomas Pynchon, Tabbi tells us that “[t]echnology and information, in the worlds of Gravity’s Rainbow and Grafik Dynamo, each can inflict its own violence on the texture of everyday life, but each is also capable of evolving . . . . [Comics, graphic novels, the “funnies”] are ways that people learn to live with technological violence” (p. 15). Clarifying this statement further, he says:

Now that technologies facilitate the viewing of atrocities, deaths, events that occur at every instant worldwide, the call of narrative is no longer to locate such events in our own lives. What is required, rather, is a space where events can be written, not as commentary or analysis, but as affective outbursts, capable of combining but only randomly, never through authorial purpose or intention (p.22).

Thus, the shift from reflecting upon the world to reflecting on our feelings about a world overly exposed to human misery lies at the heart of what Grafik Dynamo addresses about narrativity, according to Tabbi. The “sublime” referred to in the essay’s title showed up twice in Armstrong’s captions and bubbles when Tabbi examined the work. This repetition led him to see it not in the way suggested by Romantic poets as the “presence of nature,” but rather, in the context of violence and technoculture, as the absence of “what is not said” (author’s emphasis, p. 24), what perhaps we do not want to face. “McCloud’s work is not criticism, and Armstrong/Tippett’s work . . . is not narrative,” he says, “[b]ut these works have the virtue of letting us know, sensually, what it is we’re missing—in an era that systematically denies the development of critical and narrative experience” (p. 27).

Grafik Dynamo

Reviewed by Dene Grigar, The Creative Media & Digital Culture Program, Washington State University Vancouver, Canada. E-mail: <dgrigar@vancouver.wsu.edu>.

Superman, Batman, Spiderman, The Legion of Superheroes, Archie—as a child I was a lover of them all and held on to my vast collection of comics until it was sold without my permission at a family garage sale while I was away at college. (For a long time I harbored a grudge for my brother for selling my original Batman comic at that sale.) Now, The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Watchmen and Fables keeps me faithful to graphically enhanced books, whether they are comics or graphic novels. Aficionados like me liken Scott McCloud’s work to a god for legitimizing comics in the lofty world of academic scholarship. We believe that the women behind New Radio and Performing Arts should be canonized for promoting the art form with this commission for Grafik Dynamo by Kate Armstrong and Michael Tippett.

First, a few words about the project from which the “book” under review originates: In 2005 New Radio and Performing Arts, under the direction of Jo-Anne Green and Helen Thorington, commissioned Canadian artists Kate Armstrong and Michael Tippett to produce a work for its Turbulence website [1]. Their work, Grafik Dynamo, experiments with social media, dynamic systems and storytelling in a way that challenges our general assumptions about narrativity. Specifically, for three years Armstrong and Tippett took live images from LiveJournal and combined them with “narrative fragments . . . dynamically loaded into speech and thought bubbles and randomly displayed,” and produced what some have erroneously called a “random comic strip generator” [2]. Actually, it is more, which I will get to in a moment, but the term does help to explain the process in a very simplistic way. The work is still available but now draws its images from Flickr.

In preparing for this review, I revisited the site and watched as the triptych of panels randomly changed one at a time or, sometimes, two in close succession. A black-and-white close-up of a man with short-cropped hair and glasses, for example, had the caption: “He had taken a horrified interest in the doings of the court.” The panel to its left showed a collage of food and stoves with a bubble stating, “Surely it is the problem of faith!” and its caption below telling us, “but the prostitute had some startling news.” The panel to the right was blank with no image, the bubble announcing, “The Earth’s splitting!” Watching the work long enough reveals that the words produced by Armstrong remain stable, finding their way as captions or bubbles while the images themselves constantly change. Thus, the challenge in “reading” this dynamic graphic novel lies in making sense of the three panels together and personally as we shift words with random images. Where is the story? one may be fooled into asking.

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For those of us invested in media art, visual rhetoric and digital storytelling, the book, funded by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, is well worth hunting down for the essay and full-color reproduction of 16 pages of panels from the live site. Its comic-book-style presentation and unique way of referencing sources make it a lively and informative take on this area of media art. It is also a compelling invitation to visit the original work, which, as mentioned above, is still available for viewing.

References

ZONES OF RE-MEMBERING: TIME, MEMORY, AND (UN)CONSCIOUSNESS

Reviewed by Rob Harle, Australia. E-mail: <harle@robharle.com>.

Reading this book is like taking a trip down memory lane (pun intended). Each chapter is a lecture given by Professor Gifford at Massachusetts in 1995. It is not so much the 16 years since he gave the lectures, although much has certainly changed in academia since then, but more that Gifford was a traditional “old-school”-style scholar. As Donald Morse, the editor of this collection of lectures, says, “Don Gifford was a formidable lecturer and a great teacher in the tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson in that he provoked his listeners into learning” (p. 8). The late Don Gifford was incredibly well read and the kind of intellectual who questions everything in true Socratic manner. He was not afraid to challenge any “established” truth, and throughout these lectures he continually sorts the wheat from the chaff concerning the functioning of memory. He does this with a sense of humor, which makes the mostly unedited lectures a pleasure to read.

The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 is titled “Time, Memory, and Consciousness.” This section presents six lectures given in 1995, as follows:

1. Zones of Re-membering
2. Ancient Greeks and Aboriginal Australians
3. Doing Memory and Doing Language
4. The Intertwining of Language and Memory
5. The Sign Stream of Our Histories
6. Memory and the Self and Art as a Way of Knowing.

Part 2 covers “Time, Memory, and the Unconscious.” This section presents a lecture and an essay. The Chapter 7 lecture is entitled “The Imitation of Dream in Literature.” The Chapter 8 essay is “A Chip on His Shoulder or One for the James Joyce Centennial.”

The main thrust of Gifford’s investigation was to explore memory and how this relates to the complexity of human experience. He discusses both individual and collective memory and suggests that memory is stored in the arts, “which in turn provide a way of knowing and of nourishing Memory and consciousness.” Gifford does not discuss memory from a neuroscience-neuroanatomical perspective. Rather, it is through the humanities, and especially literature, that he develops what he believes constitutes the nature of memory.

Robert Adolph, in his Introduction, “Assaulting ‘Newton’s Sleep,’” notes that Gifford’s goal “is not to solve the mind-body problem, or define the nature of consciousness and time, or show us how the brain works. . . . His first aim, I think, is to show us no single, blinkered explanation can account for the depth and complexity of human experience, and in particular its grounding in Memory” (p. 11). Gifford achieves this goal reasonably well. After finishing the lectures, I felt as though I had gained a great deal of knowledge concerning literature, history, romanticism (his fundamental approach) and the complexities of human action. However, I had to keep reminding myself that this was supposed to be a book about memory and consciousness, not literature per se. I think this failure to stay on target came about for two reasons: Firstly, Gifford is a chronic digresser and wonderful storyteller, and one tends to get lost in these digressions; secondly, his openly stated bias against the claims of science to provide ultimate answers, which is perhaps valid to a certain extent, tends to leave his overall result wanting.

Further on, in his Introduction, Adolph states, “A major theme of this book is how consciousness is a function of Memory” [my emphasis] (p. 12). Now this assertion is clearly open to fairly hostile criticism from both scientific and certain spiritual views of the nature of consciousness. Gifford does not discuss these at all. For this reason I found the book somewhat disappoint- ing. Having said this, however, I still recommend the book as a great read for those interested in the history of human thought and also how human memory, from the earliest times, has become integrated and enmeshed with literature specifically and the arts generally.

AFFECT AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Reviewed by Jussi Parikka, Winchester School of Art/University of Southampton, UK. E-mail: <j.parikka@soton.ac.uk>.

Giggling. That is something that you would not expect to be emphasized in a book about early artificial intelligence and cultural theory. Instead of just wanting to go through the in-itself depressive, homophobic culture that surrounded Alan Turing and probably contributed to his suicide, Elizabeth A. Wilson wants to paint a different kind of a picture of the intertwining of affect and research into cultures of computerized rationality. Hence, Turing is not seen only as the unfortunate victim of state persecution and enforced chemical castration; she also wants to emphasize the overflowing positive affect-worlds that were intimately linked with Turing’s analytical questioning. The “positive affects,” such as Turing’s giggling and delight, are carried over to the analysis, which intertwines theory with historical material, insights from his personal life, and his work—and succeeds in this really difficult genre of cultural analysis really well. Hence, the often disembodied—and also what critics have persistently labeled as narrowly defined—boundaries of intelligence that the early research into AI of the 1950s and 1960s suggested were actually embedded in a complex circulation of affects, motivations, desires, emphases and investments. Wilson’s book on affective worlds is not just a critique of AI for neglecting such drives and affective tendencies. Rather, she
demonstrates through archival work and theoretical insights that we can do more as cultural theorists.

Wilson starts the book with an epigraph from Bruno Latour and the insistence on thinking of critique as multiplication. Critical theorists should not be content to stay in the paranoid mode of criticizing what went wrong: for instance, the seeming lack of embodiment in such AI discourses, the phallocentric rationality and homosocial gender bias of the past. The question to address today is how to use material affirmatively (but no less critically) to come up with novel ideas—that is, something more. As such, some of Wilson’s positions and underlying methodological insistence reminds us not only of Latour but also of such material feminists as Karen Barad and Rosi Braidotti.

Wilson’s readings of the affective registers of people such as Turing or, for instance, Walter Pitts (of 1940s fame for the McCullough-Pitts model of neurons, which was the first to ground the McCullough-Pitts model of neurons, which was the first to ground)

ical, but even more concerned with the environments of creation in which relations between people, mathematical theories and engineering of such machines was completely filled with various affective registers.

Wilson emphasizes this point at the beginning her archival work, but that could be even more visible and richer in the actual analysis (as I am sure she did a lot of groundwork with materials). Wilson never distinguishes between affect, emotion and feeling, which might lead to some questions. At times affect means more or less emotions, but at the same time she does hint towards a richer, relational notion of affect arising from relations—even physical relations—between people and things. The book also elaborates affect as an affordance—as more than a categorical “drive” and as an intensification of our engagement with the world. As such, it is a great intervention into the numerous debates concerning our relations with machines—most recently by such figures as Jaron Lanier and Sherry Turkle in rather pessimistic tones. What Wilson is saying with her elaborated, theoretically refined and exciting take is that we need more introjection, less projection. We are already intermingled with our machines, with object-relations and in affective circuits that include not only people but machines too. Bruno Bettelheim’s case study of the “robotic boy” “Joey,” analyzed by Wilson (pp. 29–30), is a case in point.

In addition to the chosen case studies, the work, for instance, of “machine-machine” relations of “affect”—when affect is understood as triggering relationality—would have been a good addition (I am thinking about the work of W. Grey Walter and his robotic tortoises). In addition, where she uses affect as a way to think through “intersubjectivity” (p. 27)—instead, for instance, of seeing it as the pre-individual social as does Brian Massumi—it would have been interesting to elaborate the point a bit. Is affect only between subjects, or constitutive of the subjectivity itself, already partly swallowed in other people’s and things’ world (as she otherwise seems to suggest)? In any case, this, just like her previous book *Psychosomatic*, is a great read and engages the reader in a kind of connect-the-dots practice: The book has numerous implicit links to current theoretical discussions, and *Affect & Artificial Intelligence* offers a nicely grounded perspective on many of these.
Green Light: Toward an Art of Evolution by George Gessert. Reviewed by Craig Hilton.


Remixthebook by Mark Amerika. Reviewed by Jan Baelens.


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Malamp: The Occurrence of Deformities in Amphibians, edited by Brandon Ballengée, Nicola Triscott and Miranda Pope. Reviewed by Mike Leggett.


Situated Aesthetics: Art beyond the Skin by Riccardo Manzotti. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

Spacesuit: Fashioning Apollo by Nicolas de Monchaux. Reviewed by Valérie Lamontagne.