

Week 40: October 4-8, 2021

Abstract

The Western visual language has long been modeled on the human experience. Images were created to represent the world as it was seen by a single person. Mechanical photography both strengthened this regime by producing vast amounts of images that claimed to represent external reality, but also began to undermine it by separating the visual capacity from the human eye. In the 1920s Russian avant-garde director Dziga Vertov built a visual theory and aesthetics on this separation and the potential of mechanization.

Today, digital image-making has unsettled the relationship between images and human experience is more than ever. Ubiquitous pre- and post-processing mean that images are more generated than recorded, often never to be seen by humans but used for automated processes. Moreover, contemporary realities have become so complex, abstract, and stretched out over time and space, that the individual visual experience is less and less able to make sense of it. After all, how much can documentary photography reveal about data-centers or climate change?

In this module, we are investigating visual theory and artistic approaches that, like Vertov 100 years ago, respond to these contemporary challenges by creating a new type of “realism”, which the artist Paolo Cirio calls “evidentiary”. A visual language that is able to account for the reality we are living in. We are, among others, focussing on works by Trevor Paglen, Suzanne Treister, Marc Lombardi, and Forensic Architecture.

Monday

Human/Post-human Photography

Robert Frank: Americans, 1959 <https://www.lensculture.com/articles/robert-frank-the-americans>

Nan Goldin <http://www.artnet.com/artists/nan-goldin>

Michael Aschauer

- River Studies <https://m.ash.to/en/Projects/riverstudies>
- Rivers as lines <https://m.ash.to/en/Projects/WhatIfYouWouldPullRiversToAStraightLine>
- 7C-Days <https://m.ash.to/en/Projects/7cdays>

Abu Ishaq al-Istakhri, 10th Century

<http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/211-al-istakhri-world-map/211-istakhri.pdf>

Harry Beck. London Subway Map, 1933

<https://www.theverge.com/2013/3/29/4160028/harry-beck-designer-of-iconic-london-underground-map>

Google Maps, London Subway System 2021

<https://www.google.com/maps/@51.5075274,-0.0849736,11.26z/data=!5m1!1e2?hl=de>

Reading:

Rubinstein, Daniel. 2018. "Posthuman Photography." In *The Evolution of the Image: Political Action and the Digital Self*, edited by Marco Bohr and Basia Sliwinska, 100–112. Routledge.

https://www.academia.edu/31425877/Posthuman_Photography

Foster, Hal. 2017. "Real Fictions. Alternatives to Alternative Facts." *Artforum International*, <https://www.artforum.com/print/201704/real-fictions-alternatives-to-alternative-facts-67192>.

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