

1 Kitty), and Chalfen and Murui argue intriguingly that because these are after all photographic images, teenage girls are not merely consuming, they are consuming themselves, a form of management of social experience.

5 Although all the contributions to the volume deal with the materiality of photographs, they do so in a number of different ways. Some of the historical chapters (Schwartz, Batchen on nineteenth-century uses of photographs in jewellery, Nordström on a collection of late-nineteenth-century American travel scrapbooks) examine the objects themselves minutely but must remain mute or guarded when it comes to social use, while some of the more ethnographic chapters (Harris, Hanganu, Chalfen and Murui) are able to investigate the circumstances of use more closely. While Edwards and Hart argue in their introduction that the chapters foreground the specificities of the various kinds of image/object relationship discussed and keep general theory 'close to the ground', there is an undercurrent of phenomenological understanding running throughout the book. Batchen, for example, begins his article with a description of the experience of holding a photo-locket, and most of the authors discuss the ways in which particular material forms are associated with particular bodily practices – the tilting of a daguerreotype to the right angle, the leaning forward into a stereograph holder or to view down a lupe, the concealment of proscribed religious images within pockets or folds of clothing. All the contributions also touch on the biographies and trajectories of photographic images as they circulate in what Poole has called a visual economy. Legène's piece on an apparently ephemeral set of playing cards illustrating and inculcating Dutch 'home-colonialist' culture is particularly good at showing the rupture undergone by the original photographic images of Dutch-Indonesian colonial subjects in their cropping and reframing as colonial types for the playing cards.

40 I noted at the beginning of this review that Edwards and Hart comment on the lack of studies of photographic materiality and that the contributors to the volume provide a number of reasons why this might be so. A further question might be asked: what is to be gained from approaching photography in this way? The first response might be that the sheer ubiquity of photographic forms that demonstrably gain social meaning as much from their material properties as from their image content (e.g. mourning jewellery, Photo Club stickers) demands that this be taken into account. More generally, however, there are now several decades of research, from Bourdieu's work onwards, that indicate that the view of photo-as-image, the old-fashioned art-historical approach, is ideological and economic, not merely aesthetic. There is, of course, always the danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, of

1 disregarding the image content entirely, but most of the contributors to the volume evade this trap. This timely book showcases the latest work in what promises to be an ever-expanding field, and while there is a bias towards the historical, sociologists and anthropologists should also gain much insight.

Visual worlds

10 edited by John R. Hall, Blake Stimson and Lisa Tamiris Becker

London and New York/Routledge, 2005, 262 pages
ISBN: 0-415-36212-1 Price £70.00

15 Review by Sam Binkley, Emerson College

15 *Visual Worlds* offers a varied choice of writings from across traditional disciplines, whose authors share a common engagement with the problematic of contemporary visuality, understood in a historically conjunctural and culturally variable sense. Indeed, the historical looms powerfully as a backdrop to this selection: drawn from a conference of the same name held barely a month after the September 11 attacks, these works read alternately as prematurely aged, 'documents of the late twentieth century', as Martin Jay writes in the volume's epilogue, or (where post 9/11 revisions were possible) as testimonies infected with the giddy sense of millenarianism and apocalyptic anxiety that hung over those unhappy final months of 2001.

20 The volume is conceived with several purposes in mind, clearly stated in the book's introduction. The editors set out to combine methodological and disciplinary reflections on the social and historical conditions of visuality with a broader sense of the immanent political possibilities of the present moment. How, the book asks, does the unique juncture of globalisation and technological innovation define a uniquely contemporary moment of visuality, and what potential does this moment hold for artists, critics and others? Combining topical, descriptive case studies with theoretical and polemical theses on the changing character of visuality and representation, these works promise to update a theoretical tradition, inaugurated perhaps in the 1980s with Martin Jay's thesis on the 'scopic regimes of modernity', with more contemporary insights into the advance of neo-liberal policies, the acceleration of cultural change, the erosion of public space and the ever more ubiquitous influence of visual technologies on identity, culture and daily life.

25 Yet high on the list of editorial priorities is a desire that originates with the very eclecticism of the editorial

1 choices themselves: to probe the fault line separating the
 arts and the social sciences. Indeed, this desire is
 reflected in the choice of the term ‘worlds’ (in place of
 more familiar nomenclature of visual studies
 5 scholarship, such as ‘culture’), here deployed, as volume
 co-editor Blake Stimson argues, in a specifically
 phenomenological sense to denote the perceptual
 standpoint of a ‘worldview’. *Visual Worlds*, he argues,
 mediates the positivism of the social sciences with the
 10 aestheticism of art historians, literary scholars and artists
 themselves, by contextualising vision in the unique
 times and spaces within which it occurs. This aim is not
 surprising considering the composition of this editorial
 team (which includes John R. Hall, a sociologist better
 15 known for his work on religion and methodology, Lisa
 Tamiris Becker, a museum curator, and Stimson, an art
 historian). And the result is a collection that alternates
 between the reflexive essay mode used by artists in
 sometimes searching explanations for the meanings of
 20 their works, the flat-footedness of sociologists careful to
 state in the first sentence the concrete aims of their
 investigations, and the stylishly evocative prose of
 scholars variously rooted in cultural studies. It is not
 long before one gets the hang of things, and the flips to
 25 the front of the book for checks on authors’ affiliations
 become unnecessary.

Given this range of styles, however, the editors are
 careful not to let awkward company mix too casually,
 30 preferring instead to congregate authors around their
 respective concerns. The book’s first part, titled
 ‘Cultures’, while ostensibly divided between political
 and visual realms, is largely the turf of artists and others
 with a sense of the aesthetic. After a few pieces that
 35 might pass for relatively straightforward studies of
 media and its effects on the public sphere (one dealing
 with sentimentality and citizenship, the other with
 television and the death of Princess Diana), our
 scholarly expectations are upset by a rousing artist’s
 40 statement from RTMark, a creative duo known for their
 Internet activist projects. Articles dealing with visual
 culture (the second group under the more general
 heading of ‘Cultures’) deal with the art world itself – a
 terrain, following on Howard Becker’s influential *Art*
 45 *Worlds*, not unfamiliar to sociologists. But it would be a
 lucky sociologist who could capture on paper the views
 of artists like Gregory Sholette, whose lambaste of the
 New York gallery system’s horse-traders and bean-
 counters shows the smothering effect such institutions
 50 have on the creative vibrancy of art. Similarly,
 sociologists of institutional life would be hard pressed to
 deliver as succinct an analysis of the museum industry as
 Andrea Fraser’s very Bourdieuan commentary on her

own performance work, shaped by a tradition of
 1 institutional critique that goes back to the conceptualists
 of the 1960s. Having no truck with any presumed ‘value
 neutrality’, these commentaries apply the tools of social
 5 theory to a critique of the art world’s function (or failure
 to function) as an arena for the advancement of the
 social and moral imaginary.

But it is in the second part – titled ‘Worlds’, and
 composed of two subsections, ‘Social Worlds’ and
 10 ‘Warring Worlds’ – that the sense of history comes
 creeping in. ‘Social Worlds’ examines visual
 representations in real social environments, such as Los
 Angeles, where, sociologist Darnell Hunt tells us, images
 and representations of the city are perpetually up for
 15 grabs in an ongoing struggle over the meaning and
 identity of the city itself. Similarly, another sociologist,
 Marshall Battani, describes the role of snap shots and
 family photos in organising memories and temporal
 narratives, immersed in melancholy recollections.
 20 ‘Warring Worlds’ reflects on the relationship between
 visibility and violence, the role of the spectator as
 witness, and the wider ethical implications of the
 September 11 attacks for the practice of artists.

Robin Wagner-Pacifici’s ‘Witness to Surrender’, perhaps
 25 the most striking piece in this collection, builds on her
 previous inquiries into the social construction and
 ordering of crises with a reflection on the certifying
 function of witnesses. Mary Kelly’s short piece on the
 ethical implications of 9/11 for artists seems to extend
 30 Wagner-Pacifici’s inquiry to the now-contemporary
 situation of artists coping with the trauma of the towers’
 collapse. But it is in Martin Jay’s epilogue that the
 retrospective focus of the collection is delivered with
 clarity, even as Jay’s own commentary is itself seemingly
 35 traumatised, in Kelly’s sense, by the events that
 immediately preceded the conference. Jay writes:

I, like all of us, have recently witnessed a
 40 moment of danger, flight, mutability,
 transformation and perhaps even surrendering,
 which cannot but have its effect on my
 response ... As a result, virtually all the essays,
 at least the written versions I was given before
 the conference, now seem to me documents of
 45 the late twentieth century, whereas we have
 now been forced by the events of September 11
 into the twenty-first in ways that we are still
 only beginning to register. (244)

Indeed, Jay takes to task the greater share of authors in
 50 this collection in the light of the new post-9/11
 paradigm, redressing their critical tendencies and calling
 on them to hold their fire, however temporarily, in their

attacks on what, back in the twentieth century, were derided as the 'new world order'. 'Those tactics,' Jay writes, 'have been literally hijacked by real, not imagined enemies of the vastly complex, mixed bag we call Western Culture, many of whose core values we cannot now avoid defending' (247). One wonders how well such appeals sit with other authors of *Visual Worlds*, particularly as 9/11's new paradigm (or at least the Bush administration's version of it) appears to have foundered in the rising waters of Hurricane Katrina.

In sum, *Visual Worlds*' encounter between aesthetic and sociological viewpoints opens a much-needed and long-overdue dialogue between the social sciences and more critically developed practitioners in the visual arts. In addition to appealing to the general follower of contemporary cultural debates, it will augment syllabi in a variety of art history, visual culture and cultural sociology courses, both on the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Seeing is believing: Handicams, human rights and the news

A film by Katerina Cizek and Peter Wintonick.
First Run/Icarus Films, 2002, 58 minutes, colour
Review by Richard Chalfen, *Center on Media and Child Health, Boston*

Cizek and Wintonick have put together a very engaging film about the multi-functional qualities of handycam technology. Claiming the 'greatest technological shift since the Industrial Revolution', the film integrates expected uses of consumer models of video cameras in home media, in news surveillance extending to highly charged contexts of political advocacy, amply illustrating the potential of any piece of 'neutral' technology. The filmmakers address the question: 'What happens when ordinary people pick up handycams to document what they see?'

This documentary is book-ended by questioning whether the amateur use of handycams in politically charged contexts prevents violence and saves lives or actually jeopardises lives. The narrative is framed around the work of Joey Lozano, a video activist and member of Witness, a non-profit international human-rights organisation, formed in 1992 by Peter Gabriel (see <http://www.witness.org>). We see Joey documenting human-rights abuses on Mindanao Island in the southern Philippines, where tribal peoples are fighting 'hired thugs' while being ignored by local police as they try to reclaim their ancestral lands from plantation

owners, often resulting in violent conflict. To quote the soundtrack: 'This is the story of how Joey and amateur videographers around the globe have turned video technology into political weaponry'. This process is broken and intercut with examples of mini-cam use in several parts of the world, including South Africa, Prague, Bosnia, Chechnya, Eritrea, Wales, the Congo and Manila, among others. Viewers see segments of naïve amateur video (weddings, parties and related family life), fortuitous news coverage (Rodney King, Serbian atrocities, tornadoes, fires), intentional surveillance of rights abuse (by neo-Nazi skinheads, by Greenpeace, in psychiatric wards), intentional political propaganda (tapes made by Osama Bin Laden, members of the Heaven's Gate cult) and intentional fact-finding efforts (kite-cams, sonograms, underwater cams) addressing the journalistic-sensitive question: 'How does handycam activity affect what we see in the evening news?'

The film calls attention to ongoing convergences and blurrings. We are made aware of the role of consumer-produced technology in a series of post-industrial 'revolutions' aside from the computer (Xerox, fax, cell phones and handycams as discussed by sociology professor, Alex Magno) – all in the context of political activism. Blurrings (genre and otherwise) include the overlap of media contexts – for example, how personal/private media can relate to impersonal/mass media, and how professional and amateur journalism might overlap or conflict with one another. Modern blogging practices are not mentioned.

Students of indigenous media will find some interest regarding controversies surrounding the problematic introduction of alien/unfamiliar media technology to Third World peoples. Again, local culture reigns supreme when we see members of Nakamara community accepting and anointing the mini-cam delivered by Joey with a sacrificed chicken's blood as the proper way of welcoming new material culture. Anthropology students may find particular interest in the mention of Luis Fondebrider, an Argentine forensic anthropologist who is using videocams to study and document mass graves in war zones and groups of people who are missing under questionable circumstances.

Cizek's and Wintonick's video offers a rather bland assessment of 'seeing is believing', complete with Joey stating that a picture can 'paint a thousand words'. Viewers get other lessons in the uncritical power of producing visible/pictorial evidence, of 'legal authority' and being able to produce audio-visual documentary records sometimes in comparison with and direct contradiction of images disseminated by the dominant culture. We hear of the 'infallible witness' qualities of amateur-produced visual evidence; but we hear nothing