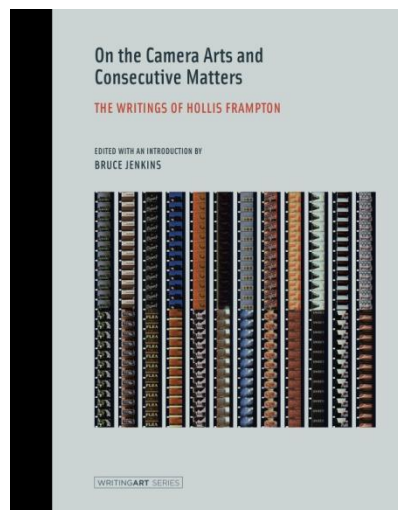


On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: the Writings of Hollis Frampton / Edited by Bruce Jenkins.—(Writing art).—Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, April 2009.—352 p.: ill.—ISBN 9780262062763 (cl., alk. paper): \$39.95.



Hollis Frampton (1936–1984) began his artistic career as a photographer but, by the end of the 1960s, was directing almost all of his creative energy towards a detailed investigation of the conditions and processes of filmmaking. Over the next decade Frampton would become one of experimental cinema’s most prolific and challenging artists, creating deeply influential works exploring the paradoxical limitations of cinema in the contexts of its relationships to language, temporality and narrative. *On the Camera Arts...* presents a portrait of Frampton as a gifted philosopher obsessed with the passage of time, the relationship between image and referent, and irreconcilabilities of linguistic and non-linguistic thought.

The book contains nearly fifty texts and creative text/image artworks by Frampton, including published and unpublished writings, interviews, letters and transcriptions from films. Divided into five sections, the book largely focuses on Frampton’s writings on film and photography but includes several creative texts and brief sections on “Video and Digital Arts” and “The Other Arts.” Following a loose chronology, the book succeeds in largely tracing the evolution of Frampton’s thought as he ponders each medium’s qualities with the conceptual rigor of a scientist. What emerges is a portrait of a thinker seeking to articulate a profound paradigm shift in human evolution, one in which film, photography, video and the then-emerging digital arts embody nothing less than the emergence of a “counter-machine for the machine of language” and the emergence of an non-linguistic, image-based consciousness.

In short, Frampton’s writings anticipate current discourse on the aesthetics of contemporary image- and database-based media forms. In this sense, *On the Camera Arts...* is essential reading for contemporary media scholars and sits comfortably next to Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media* and Peter Lunenfeld’s *Snap to Grid* (both of which discuss Frampton at length). The book also features insightful writing on James Joyce, Eadweard Muybridge and photographers Paul Strand and Edward Weston. It is also noteworthy that this volume contains the complete essays published in 1983 as *Circles of Confusion*, the previously canonical Frampton text, long out of print. The casual reader seeking a basic introduction to Frampton’s work may find *On the Camera Arts...* somewhat esoteric (these readers are directed to Scott McDonald’s work on Frampton, notably his *A Critical Cinema*). But, in the collection and presentation of these profound texts, this book is essential for any library dealing with film, photography or media arts.

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