

PROCESS AND PRACTICE: NEW DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE SENSIBLE

Editorial

While open access publishing of *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* enters its sixth year, we can state that the number of downloads from the journal's website has more than doubled this fall. The increase is most significant from countries that are outside the actual centers of power, that is, the Anglo-Saxon countries. Although the Internet has not been the democratic force that many hoped for, electronic open access publishing has for sure changed the way we access and use information. Previously, physical location and material resources used to be the determinants of how information was accessed and knowledge distributed. Those hard facts of academia fostered a hermeneutical approach in which places were accessed and objects interpreted. Today, the depositories for information are made accessible virtually everywhere, a fact that not only entails democratization but also a change in how we use and make sense of information. Ubiquitous information is rather used than interpreted, rather processed and shared than appropriated.

In this volume of *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, we will include some of the articles that answered on our last call for papers, "Process and practice: New distributions of the sensible." We will continue this year with a related theme, albeit now with media in focus, because we consider that the humanities and cultural studies is still too tied to what Samuel Weber has called the "representational-aesthetic" regime.

CALL FOR PAPERS: MEDIA AS PROCESS

In her article from 2000, "A voyage on the North Sea: Art in the age of the post-medium condition," Rosalind Krauss discusses the fate of "purity" in contemporary visual arts after the advent of television and conceptual art, which she

sees reflected in post-structuralist theory. The term post-medium alludes to a contemporary condition in which both the quest for purity within an art form or a medium, and the idea of "the essence of art itself" has long since faded. This might occasion an artistic research into the (with Walter Benjamin) "redemptive" powers of various (outmoded) media forms. Such an art practice of different media forms, labeled "differential specificity" by Krauss, is proposed as a new artistic realm—able to critically negotiate with capital enterprises.

While Krauss's article is preoccupied with securing a platform for artistic statements, Samuel Weber, who also grabbles with media, discusses the meaning of the word in relation to theatre—and to film and electronic media—in *Theatricality as Medium* (2004). Among other theoretical grips, he brings the non-aesthetic, "military," use of theatre to the fore:

in which conflicting forces strive to secure the perimeter of a place in dispute. "Theater" signifies the imposition of borders rather than a representational-aesthetic genre. The former focuses upon the manner in which a place is secured, whereas the latter regards the place as already taken or given, and therefore as a means or instrument of that which is to be represented. In respect to its mediality, then, theatricality is defined as a problematic process of placing, framing, situating rather than as a process of representation. (Weber 2004, 315. Weber's italics)

Weber exemplifies this statement by an analysis of the way the Spike Jonze film *Being John Malkovich* (1999) "doubles and thereby divides the convergence of image and person that otherwise functions as the condition of Hollywood stardom"—and thus deconstructs the idea of "individuality as a

self-contained subject” (2004, 316–317). This positioning of Weber’s—questioning “What is media?” from within a classic art form—undermines from within the idea of subjectivity and shows that the idea of a “differential specificity” proposed, among others, by Krauss “runs the risk of transforming, albeit unawares, a *differential determination* into a *positive* and *universal essence*” (Weber 1996, 106). In Spike Jonze’s recent film, *Her* (2013), the question of subjectivity in relation to a bodiless performance of an operating system, named Samantha, is raised anew. This time the “placing, framing and situating” of the body in relation to outer and inner space is further extended by time as something that might sometimes convey and sometimes prevent encounters and subjectivities to become.

In Samuel Weber’s sense the question of media cannot be raised without also putting the idea of identity at stake. In his recent collection of essays, *Benjamin’s abilities* (2008), he considers the medium of language to be “a dynamic space ‘in’ which something happens” (118). Weber underlines that Benjamin opposes the instrumentalist idea of something “passing through” a medium as well as the medium itself being the message. Instead Weber emphasizes that to Benjamin “all identity, whether of subjects, objects, things, or meanings—appears only in and through the process of parting company with itself, and in so doing, imparting itself to others” (119). This is to Weber the defi-

nition of communication in which is presupposed “the parting of imparting, which alone opens up the space ‘in’ which relations, whether social, semantic, or semiotic, can ‘take place’” (ibid.).

Weber’s definition (with Benjamin) of media is inherently socially imbedded, and technology takes part in this “taking place” of communication. In this sense, all media form dynamic spaces that continuously have to question, to reterritorialize, to part and renew its particular borders in relation to the communication that is taking place. Thus, communication not just eventuates messages but also generates events that constantly form new styles, genres and media, as well as, identities.

We hereby invite papers that explore Samuel Weber’s philosophy of media and medium, and/or that address media as process, of the “taking place” of communication and “the parting of imparting.”

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