Edited collection: Documenting the Visual Arts

Deadline: Nov 1, 2016

Roger Hallas

The proliferation and popularity of visual arts documentaries are a major component of the recent international documentary boom, but they tend to be overlooked in film criticism and scholarship in favor of documentaries framed more explicitly in social and political terms. Yet visual arts documentaries remain on the cutting edge of documentary innovation, from 3D cinema (Cave of Forgotten Dreams) to questioning documentary truths (Exit Through the Gift Shop). Moreover, visual arts documentaries have long played significant roles in various historical formations around documentary politics (e.g. USIA films in the Cold War, the Left Bank essay films of 1950s and Channel Four programming in the 1980s).
This edited collection will examine the significance of visual arts documentaries from a range of critical perspectives and methodologies. The book will explore not only how documentaries from around the globe exploit the formal properties of film and video to illuminate the aesthetic specificities and intersections of other visual arts, but also how they elucidate the material and cultural conditions in which visual arts are produced and experienced (e.g. the discourse of the artist, museums and galleries, activist art, religious practice, commercial design etc.). To complement these interpretative contributions, the book will also include critical analyses of the political economy of visual arts documentaries, especially the geopolitics of the genre. As an interdisciplinary and intermedial project, I am particularly interested in contributions that connect film studies to other disciplines and fields, including anthropology, art history, architecture, communication, rhetoric, performance studies and visual studies, among others. Consideration will be given to submissions about any historical period or cultural/national/regional context (the book aims for genuinely global scope). Contributions may focus on a single film, a body of work (organized around filmmaker, artist or subject) or a particular institutional context. I am defining visual arts broadly to include applied arts, such as fashion, architecture and design, as well as film, video, photography, painting, sculpture, illustration and performance art etc.
- Possible topics include (but are not limited to):
- Medium specificity and the visual arts documentary
- Cultural politics of visual arts television programming
- Documentary film and arts education
- Visual arts documentary as cultural diplomacy
- Post/colonial appropriation and resistance in visual arts documentaries
- Representing visual aesthetic practices in ethnographic film
- Documenting performance and collaboration in the visual arts
- Documenting activist art practices
- Discourses of the visual artist in documentary film
- Documentaries about art institutions and markets

- Visual arts documentary as paratext (making of documentaries, exhibition documentaries)
- Relationship between documentary filmmaking and archival documentation of visual arts
- Histories of arts television networks and series
- Film technologies and the visual arts documentary
- Fakery, forgery and mockumentary

Deadline for electronic submission of 350-400 word abstract (plus brief biographical statement and sample 5-item bibliography): November 1, 2016. Notification by December 1, 2016. Commissioned chapters should not exceed 5,000 words and must be completed by October 1, 2017.
Please send submissions and inquiries via email to Roger Hallas, Associate Professor of English (Film & Screen Studies), Syracuse University, USA: rhallas@syr.edu

Reference:
CFP: Edited collection: Documenting the Visual Arts. In: ArtHist.net, Jul 3, 2016 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/13401>.