

New Visual Narratives

Deadline: Sep 18, 2020

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New Visual Narratives - View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture

Today, more than ever, it seems that while the 20th century could be called the age of film, the future of visual narration will be multi-genre; it emerges at the interface between traditional media and the modern, digital tools of visual communication.

Over the last decade, new, hybrid audiovisual forms have been developing rapidly. On the one hand, these were forms that departed from linearity and the traditional dramatic structure: from generative films, to interactive forms (from i-docs to Bandersnatch), to ambitious computer games. To create their stories, the creators of contemporary audiovisual narratives have also used communicators such as WhatsApp and Messenger, and social media apps, such as Instagram. More and more audiences are watching movies on their mobile devices, which is why the creators of modern series began experimenting with screen layouts and editing techniques. In each of these areas, new sets of conventions and criteria of artistic quality are emerging, for example as a result of exploring, in digital space, analogue media such as the “exhibition” and the “book”. The deepest change in our viewing habits is probably driven by film and interactive works using VR/AR technology – we are only just learning the grammar of this medium, whose speed of development cannot be compared with any other.

The COVID-19 epidemic, limiting us to our homes, has led to an unprecedented activity in the digital realm, not only forcing entire areas of culture and education to explore these spaces as a site for ambitious and large-scale projects, but also leading to the re-discovery and recognition of artists who have been active in this field for years. However, the feverish activity of recent months has also shown how limited the awareness of the possibilities of digital culture is among creators and cultural institutions – the digital realm is usually treated as a locus of “flat”, secondary content, limiting it in advance to the documentary function (i.e. “exhibitions” that mimic the real space of a gallery). The principal argument – that digital forms are devoid of materiality – does not allow us to see that they also work in a multisensory way and are in fact able to activate the audience’s bodies in various ways. The set of false beliefs, according to which there exists a real life that is essentially separate from the digital realm, understood as virtual – that is artificial, make-believe – Nathan Jurgensen dubbed digital dualism. To understand where visual storytelling is headed, we need to acknowledge its phantasmatic character.

It is high time to take a look at the recent history of the forms and activities in question, in search of exemplary or breakthrough gestures, ideas, and solutions; not only in terms of form, but also the distribution of audiovisual content. At the same time, we will be interested in the limitations,

crises and cul-de-sacs of this dynamically developing field. One of the most acute limitations is the dynamics of technological change, which makes a work from a decade ago already object of the archaeology, rather than the history, of the field of digital practices. This raises the problem of the availability of digital works, which too often disappear without a trace, because practical methodologies for archiving and making available technologically obsolescent works have not yet been developed. A lack of business models and recognized paths of reaching the desired audiences complements the precarious, second face of the emergent field of the new visual narrations.

We invite you to think together about what kind of horizon is emerging before us, where is it leading us? What kind of audiences is it evoking, what kind of communities of listeners, watchers, players?

We welcome abstracts (max. 1800 chars.) until September 18th. The deadline for submitting the first version of the text: October 30th, 2020. Please attach biographical note with ORCID number, abstract, and bibliography (Chicago-style format) to the submission.

Please send your proposal to: redakcja@pismowidok.org.

For editorial and technical requirements, see <https://www.pismowidok.org/en/about/submissions>.

Reference:

CFP: New Visual Narratives. In: ArtHist.net, Sep 10, 2020 (accessed Jul 17, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/23449>>.