

## View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture, Issues 6–8

Poland

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"View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture"

Issue 6

Deadline: May 20, 2014

Issue 7

Deadline: July 20, 2014

Issue 8

Deadline: October 20, 2014

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Issue 6

Deadline: May 20, 2014

One of the first lessons Western civilization taught itself was the lesson of suffering, expressed in the abrupt formula of Greek tragedy—*pathei mathos*—the obligation to learn from suffering. This was also the first development of a specific form of expression: *pathos*, understood as the presentation of suffering, the field of unresolved tensions and enacting a confrontation with the magnitude of a hostile or indifferent destiny. The importance of this primary lesson is hardly evident in contemporary culture. On the one hand, artists and critics are not afraid of anything so much as getting too emotional, or displaying excessive engagement, often taken for a lack of criticality. Such a restrained emotional attitude toward a cultural artifact was—not without the influence of the otherwise meritorious and complex political thought of Brecht or Adorno—almost entirely identified with a more or less explicit iconoclasm, a fundamental suspicion towards every sign of illusion. Thus, today *pathos* is understood most often as a symptom of naivety and affectation, one which by all means should be avoided. On the other hand, contemporary mass culture—from cinema blockbusters to computer games—draws from the depths of pathetic discourse, directly derived from historical times, as if modernity was not only over or late, but had never even started.

The sixth issue of "View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture" (2/2014) is focused on a ques-

tion concerning the possible existence of fully modern, creative and critical forms of pathos. A main point of reference—but in no way an obligatory framework for submitted texts—is the renewed interest in the writing of Aby Warburg, and his theory of culture based on the concept of “formulas of pathos” [Pathosformeln], understood as elements useful in analyzing not only intensities of visual representations, but also their historical wanderings. We would also like to analyze contemporary culture from the perspective of its expressive formulas of intensive affect, formulas that even if modern and functioning in contemporary political, social and cultural contexts, can still respond to a lesson addressed to us by a remote past.

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#### Issue 7

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“These archives smell of vinegar and not of ashes. They are not grey. Their colors are white, light blue and green, and sepia. These are not shades of total destruction but rather of an ongoing decay.” This poetic description by Tobias Hering concerns African film archives, their condition, and our (lack of) memory of them. It might also reveal a certain aspect of a Western way of thinking which forces us to represent postcolonial countries as colorful and entropic landscapes of ruin. However this image seems much more complex, multilayered and (while acknowledging the controversial status of this term) hybrid. What is the character of the images sitting in these archives?

As a point of departure in issue 7 of “View”(3/2014) we would like to take precisely the colors and smells of non-European visual archives, and examine the narratives surrounding them. We would like to analyze the meaning of archiving / collecting / gathering in a context other than Western, and those discourses that allow one to speak of it. We would also like to address the ambivalence of Western narratives and images which depict the “postcolonial situation”: do they reveal more of ourselves than of the countries and problems they directly relate to? Last but not least, we would like to ask: is there such a thing as a “postcolonial image” what is it like?

We are especially interested in visual archives devoted to the postcolonial condition that are either institutional (e.g. Southern African Freedom Struggles, c.1950-1994) or private (e.g. Gadalla Gubara’s film archive), as well as projects dealing with the history and decline of postcolonial archives (eg. Filipa César’s work with Guinea-Bissau film archives), projects concentrated on the production of images in a postcolonial context (e.g. Jan Simon working in Nigeria, Catarina Simão undertaking the theme of film production in Mozambique), and projects devoted to images of postcolonial amnesia (e.g. Christine Meissner). We would also like to comment on images of (postcolonial) ambivalence: both historical examples (such as the films of Jean Rouch, Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil*, Glauber Rocha’s *O Leão de Sete Cabeças*), and contemporary (Renzo Martens’ *Enjoy Poverty*, Jørgen Leth’s *Haiti. Untitled*). We are also interested in institutional aspects of this phenomenon: in the way non-European museums of photography establish their collections (e.g. Instituto Moreira Salles), and the way “postcolonial images” and their curators (e.g. Okwui Enwezor) function in the art field.

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#### Issue 8

Deadline: October 20, 2014

The dominant stance in many academic disciplines concerned with the subject of landscape—from humanistic geography to visual culture to art history—is that landscape, understood as a genre of representation, has lost its crucial position in the hierarchy of genres. The belief that landscape is an “exhausted medium, no longer viable as a mode of artistic expression” [Mitchell], has been further authenticated by the huge wave of criticism cast upon historical landscape painting. Over the past twenty years, classical landscape painting has been interpreted mainly as an expression of imperial ideology, and as an effective tool for the naturalization of social distinctions (both literally—inscribing them into nature; and metaphorically—rendering them transparent).

However inspiring, such an impassioned critique of historical landscape is surely simultaneously rooted in a conviction of the “power of landscape.” For this reason, the radical diagnosis of the death of landscape as a genre may also provoke a search for important artistic realizations which would contradict its demise, as well as the analysis of non-artistic examples of the genre.

The idea of exploring contemporary landscape images has its origin in distrust of the iconoclastic and universalizing critique of landscape (often exemplified in a disdain towards “kitschy” views). In the eighth issue of “View,” we would like to investigate the critical potential of the landscape genre, the possibility of reshaping it into a medium that is not only self-reflexive but also important in redefining the dominant contemporary “complexes of visibility” [Mirzoeff] or “scopic regimes” [Jay]. We are thus interested both in artistic and non-artistic contemporary landscapes (e.g. also those created by electronic devices or through architectural renderings). Landscape is also considered as an important theme for visual culture studies, allowing one to combine critical analysis of pictures with an investigation into practices of seeing. Bearing in mind that landscapes and views are (and have been for some time now), partitioned and sold at high prices (from hotel windows or apartments for sale), we ask: is it possible to locate within landscape a subversive political potential?

Reference:

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