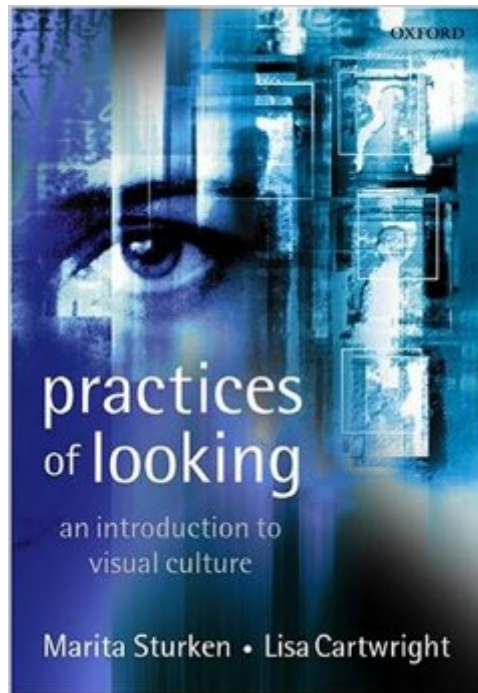


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Practices Of Looking: An Introduction To Visual Culture



Synopsis

Ideal for students studying visual culture for the first time, *Practices of Looking* explores the ways we use and understand images. Truly interdisciplinary, this comprehensive and engaging introduction can be used in courses across a range of disciplines including media and film studies, communications, art history, and photography. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright examine the diverse range of recent approaches to visual analysis and lead students through key theories on visual culture, providing explanations of the fundamentals of these theories and presenting visual examples of how they function. Using over 175 illustrations, they examine how images--paintings, prints, photographs, film, television, video, advertisements, news images, the Internet, digital images, and images from science--gain meaning in different cultural arenas, from art and commerce to science and the law. They also consider how these images travel globally and in distinct cultures; how they are an integral and important aspect of our lives. The images are analyzed in relation to a range of cultural and representational issues (desire, power, the gaze, bodies, sexuality, ethnicity) and methodologies (semiotics, marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism, postcolonial theory). Central topics such as ideology, the concept of the spectator, the role of reproduction in visual culture, the mass media and the public sphere, consumer culture, and postmodernism are explained in depth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is by far the best introductory text on visual culture I have personally come across. I strongly disagree with some previous reviewers that say the writing is "pompous" or "needlessly complex"; I

am by no means an expert on the subject and I found the writing to be extremely comprehensive and even generous when it comes to explanations. The authors seem to make a great effort to be understood and a lot of really complex concepts are presented in a surprisingly and refreshing clear manner. I also disagree with a previous review that claimed that technical terms are frequently unexplained (I, in fact, think quite the opposite). Maybe the complaints about it being "unnecessarily long" could be somewhat justified if you consider that illustrating the concepts through concrete examples is "unnecessary". I think that the examples (although I admit I sometimes skimmed through them) present the rich context of visual culture and even make the text quite pleasant and colorful. That, in my opinion, is really something to be thankful for when it comes to "academic" texts. That said, I have some complaints about the quality-price ratio of the actual materiality of the book itself. I initially borrowed the first edition from my university library (where they gave it a hardcover treatment for durability) and read it almost completely through. As I already said, I thought it was great (and wanted to read the new sections added on the second edition) so I decided to buy it regardless of the surprisingly high \$80 price tag. I was quite disappointed when it arrived.

Visual culture is one of the most difficult subjects that I have taken in four years of college. Sturken and Cartwright attempt to combine the study of art, philosophy, and sociology into a single book. Still, I feel that *Practices of Looking* is overall well written and does a good job at simplifying the writings and ideas of some of the centuries most noteworthy theorists. Each chapter and subject is clearly laid out and described, while examples and images are effectively and abundantly used. Although I felt that the book is a good introduction for those who have no prior background with the subject, I found there to be several problems. One problem was that Sturken and Cartwright occasionally either contradicts themselves, or poorly phrases their ideas. For example, on pages 160 and 161, they state that "As distance transmission was facilitated through cables ... long distance broadcasting networks became a reality." However, they later say that "the emergence of cable in the USA reintroduced the narrowcast model." In addition, they state that Black Entertainment Television (received throughout the USA), and Telemundo (more globally received), are two examples of narrowcast television, even though the glossary defines narrowcast media as having "a limited range through which to reach audiences". I would hardly consider a globally received television network to have "limited range." Another problem that I found was that there are no in text citations (aside from when a source is directly quoted). This would have been very useful in several instances, especially when I was unsure of the validity or accuracy of the information, or

simply wished to further examine the subject.

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