

people feel the need to document themselves obsessively.

As a Nuyorican (an artist based in the cosmopolitanism of NYC but from Porto Rican heritage) artists, ADÁL, approaches his *'autopportrait'* via the complexity of his assumed double identity. ADÁL's visual perceptions of Latin culture is underpinned with humour, punning on literal meanings; he depicts himself as a waiter, a lover, a terrorist, using humorous descriptions such as 'Air with Conditions' or 'Man with Toilet Tissue'. ADÁL indulges in satire, absurdity and mockery, employing Spanglish Language as part of his theatrical irony, in a series called 'Go Fuck your Selfie', a body of 50 photographs. The tension in ADÁL's photographs derives from a desire to preserve himself and his culture under pressures of migration, loss of identity and trauma of displacement. Stavans attributes his own heightened sensitivity to migration and Latin culture to having immigrated to the US from Mexico. According to Stavans, *ADÁL is one of the most provocative visual innovators today; his photographs are an immensely imaginative way of looking at oneself as an entity in a constant state of self-creation and self-immolation.* The form in which Stavans weaves ideas, thoughts, images, dreams, memories and associations in his writing is innovative. Stavans contains Holbein, Spinoza, Narcissus, Pope Francis, Much, Goya, Berger, Steve McCurry, Pope Paul, Nabokov into a chapter of light reading. Stavans' ability to observe, feel, enjoy, frame, define, and describe this satire in his essay is compelling. He writes about selfies, cellfies (images created on cellphones), falsies (false selfies), selfhood and selfness. His writing is associative; there is no linear progression of ideas or a systematic logic. His witty, wry humour and candid form of writing contribute to the edgy outlook he presents on modern culture. He incorporates freedom and creativity by creating joint selfies of himself with ADÁL.

Spinoza's philosophy serves as one of the theoretical pivots of the essay. Spinoza defined man's desire to preserve existence, regardless of where one is located and the need to be eternal (*conatus*). According to Spinoza, each thing, including mankind, tries to preserve its existence and avoid its destruction. Our capacity as human beings to preserve ourselves generates our will of self-preservation. Based on this concept Stavans elaborates on a range of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, culture, and science. Additionally, Stavans refers to art history, (Rembrandt, Magritte and Van Gogh, Mapplethorpe, Frida Kahlo, Andy Warhol, Cindy

Sherman, Lucas Samaras) in search of the original concept of a selfie/self-portraiture of the artists. The core is that humankind has been creating 'selfies' forever. The need to observe one's own likings and reflection is an inherent need of human nature. It is this idea of self-preservation that Stavans describes, outlining that we are drawn to such self-expression as an inherent passion that now presently manifests in selfies, which as he claims, an action we love to do. In spite of the essay's eccentric, out of the box style, I would consider recommending this book as background material for graduate research students in Visual Culture.

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Immediations – the humanitarian impulse in documentary

by Pooja Rangan

Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 254 pages

ISBN: 978-0-8223-6371-2 (paperback) Price: \$25.95

Reviewed by Gianpaolo Bucci, University of the Arts London

'What is at stake in the gift of documentary? What does documentary give the other, and what, if anything, does the other give back to documentary?' (191) asks Pooja Rangan at the end of her excursions through audiovisual texts animated by the humanitarian impulse of 'giving the camera to the other'.

In this book, she determinedly opposes the common assumption that documentary empowers disenfranchised subjects by "giving a voice to the voiceless". Her arguments are inviting us to rethink the gesture of dispensing cameras, instead, as a constraint for the so-called dehumanised other to imitate the privileged members of a group united by a construed notion of humanity.

'Immediations', she proposes, 'are the ritualized representational tropes or conventions through which these claims of belonging are articulated' (193). The neologism is meant 'in order to emphasise the mediated quality of their emphasis on immediacy' (4).

Contesting a real capacity of participatory documentary to abate the practice of othering, Rangan's observations are then articulated around aesthetic tropes of documentary immediacy. In her claims, the modern and democratic humanitarian impulse to inclusiveness is only controversially reinforcing the status of

disenfranchised individuals as other. Her focus is primarily on aspects such as liveness and voice, that are attributed to dehumanised subjects who are thought to have been denied them. She joins scholars Cartwright and Chouliaraki 'in objecting to instrumental approaches to humanitarian mediation that view the documentary image as means of engineering humanist sentiments' (15), and as 'thoroughly implicated in the work of regulating what does and does not count as human' (8).

The book is structured in four chapters. Chapter 1 mainly revolves around Zana Briski's *Born into Brothels* (2004) for connecting contemporary child media advocacy with cinematic representations of "feral innocence": the principal references are Francois Truffaut's *The Wild Child* (1970) and experiments in participatory ethnographic filmmaking, including the pioneering *Navajo Film Themselves Project* (1966) by Worth and Adair. Problematisations of voicing are initially delineated here.

On the other hand, chapter 2 is centred on 'the televisual rhetoric of liveness and documentary representations of catastrophe', reading audio-visual texts related to the 2010 Haitian earthquake and Hurricane Katrina. According to Rangan, 'liveness resides not in the technological capacity to overcome the poor visibility (...) These impoverished images and sounds do not exist to provide any actual informational content – their value lies instead in their role as second-order signs that signify "exposure to death"' (76). An amplification of testimonial tropes such as handheld cinema-vérité reinforces immediacy and appears as a conveyor of unmediated truth.

In chapter 3, possible autistic voicing as in Wurzburg's *Autism is a World* (2004) and Mel Baggs's "In My Language" (2007) opens up opportunities of examining the trope of the first-person documentary voice over, so challenging the documentary politics of "having a voice". While in chapter 4, a viral video of an elephant painting its self-portrait leads to reflections on self-representation as a mimesis of humanity for justifying its own existence. The circular plot with some children advocacy projects discussed in chapter 1 is evident here. An analysis of three artistic experiments on surrendering cameras to animals, then, nurtures the final proposition 'to experience the exhilarating openings of nonhuman modes of being in the world, even if this means giving up our humanist modes of viewing,

interpreting, and reading documentary as a discourse of immediation' (190).

Chapters 3 and 4 are, therefore, questioning the possibility of developing a noninterventionist mode of encountering the other. As readers of early drafts of this book have already objected, if neither portraying disenfranchised subjects or giving them a camera can lead to their empowerment (being the first a form of domination and the latter a coercion to conform to a constructed notion of humanity), is Rangan possibly arguing that media practitioners should refuse to represent suffering individuals because of the impossibility of using images as an appropriate political tool?

She is wisely deflecting similar concerns by inviting to express problematic representations via a "third voice", which 'exceeds the dualistic horizons of humanity defined by the other two and that persists in its alterity – a voice that initially may seem unintelligible' (18) and that she dubs as "autistic". The concept of a third voice is not new to scholars who have problematised participatory documentary: Marc Kaminsky in an article appeared on *Social Text* (1992, n.33) credits Barbara Myerhoff as one of the first theorists of such notion in 1983, and for having later described it as a drift from monologism towards dialogism. While Myerhoff concentrated on the anthropological discourse though, Rangan pragmatically locates this dialectic on the level of image production. She argues that 'once the camera is handed over (...) it is entirely possible for the encounter between the medium and the recipient to generate an unexpected response that undermines the documentary logic of immediations and their embedded visions of humanity' (194). Therefore, 'when I refer to a participatory documentary practice informed by surrender, (...) I refer to a practice that is open to the gift returning in an unexpected, "improper", minor form that opens up new vistas of relationality' (194). 'Is this openness not the defining quality of documentary?' (194), she finally asks.

While I welcome as a possible solution to the initial dilemma Rangan's final invitation to surrender editorial control over the creative act, I sense her analyses were narrowed to filmmakers who appear to be unvaryingly situated in a hegemonic culture. Hence, I would draw on her conclusions by inviting filmmakers to approach their positionality as in need to be constantly revisited rather than being static. In this light, I suggest the adoption of reciprocity with the portrayed subjects as an essential anthropological approach to inform their visual

representations. Reciprocity means openness to listening to the other's needs and placing oneself in her situation, in order to approach practices of othering from a transcultural perspective.

My conclusive speculation is that openness should not only be a defining quality of documentary, but of its authors too. This seems to resonate well with Rangan's claims, in the hope a humanisation of the entities behind documentary practice does not sound as controversial as other construed notions analysed in this brilliant book.

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Feminism and art history now: Radical critiques of theory and practice

edited by Victoria Horne and Lara Perry

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Reviewed by Ceren Özpınar, University of Brighton

Through their compelling collection of essays, *Feminism and Art History Now*, Horne and Perry strive to answer what constitutes feminist art history writing today. Divided into twelve chapters under four thematic sections on storytelling, intervention, spatiality and temporality, the volume foregrounds a cross-section of recent research in the field of feminist art histories. Illustrated with artworks by Zoe Leonard, Cherry Smiley and Val Murray, the volume also deploys Suzanne van Rossenberg's humorous and astute art.

Whilst the introduction of the editors gives a well-grounded account of prominent approaches in feminist art historiography today, the first section opens with an extensive discussion by Horne and Amy Tobin of feminist interventions in the history of art in the UK and US. As the authors emphasise the significance of 'various voices and positions' (33), they reinscribe the potential of feminist collectives in generating diverse and fresh modes of art historical knowledge production. In the subsequent chapter, Laura Guy looks at Zoe Leonard's manifesto-work *I Want a Dyke for a President* (1992), in the interstices of queer theory and feminist thinking. Considering manifestos not only as forms to assert political subjectivities but also challenges to 'the progressive logic of generational thinking in feminist history writing' (43), Guy examines the collective re-readings of manifestos as 'translations' into new 'temporal and spatial coordinates' (55–6). Correspondingly, the first section concludes with an essay by Cherry Smiley that presents storytelling as an 'act of

resistance' against patriarchal nationalist/colonial histories (71). Acquiring further meaning in the context of the 'politicised memory' of Indigenous peoples of Canada, the essay asserts the possibility for decolonised feminist futures (66–7).

In the following section, Andrew Hardman examines Lee Krasner's place in art history with regard to her positioning within the Krasner-Pollock studio. Revisiting the writings of several art historians, Hardman eloquently disrupts 'the institutional structures that worked ... against Krasner' (89). Similarly, Giovanna Zapperi ponders art writings of Carla Lonzi as they were written out of history. Zapperi suggests a conflation of 'creative process of becoming a subject' and 'shared experience of liberation' (105) in Lonzi's life and work, unravelling some of the key concepts she introduced to feminist thinking. The closing chapter is a dialogue between Lara Perry and Angela Dimitrakaki, which extends across the associations of identifying oneself as feminist and the predicaments of being one while navigating through the institutional boundaries of university, capital, artworld and today's political landscape.

Elke Krasny's opening chapter to section three concerns the art salons of the 1800s, suggesting present-day curators are inheritors of women who organised them. Particularly centring on Jewish salonnieres of Vienna and Berlin, Krasny foregrounds the inclusive nature of these salons contrasting their historical feminisation (156). In the following essay, Hannah Hamblin investigates two exhibitions in comparison – Chicago and Schapiro's 'Womanhouse' in Los Angeles (1972) and 'Castlemilk Womanhouse' in Glasgow (1990) – with an intention to write the latter into art history (164). Indeed, reviewing how the works in these shows were politically dissimilar, Hamblin considers the act of reclaiming past feminist artworks as a model of feminist history production (169). The last chapter presents an elaborate analysis of Martha Rosler's *If You Lived Here ...* (1989) thinking through the questions of homelessness and social reproduction, whilst reasserting the feminist premise of the work.

In the final section, reflecting on the role of temporalities that renders 'geographical differences' visible in the construction of art histories (210), Francesco Ventrella examines three exhibitions from Italy. Drawing upon Clare Hemmings' seminal analysis of feminist narratives, Ventrella unfolds how they contribute to imagining feminism in/for the Italian context. In the following chapter, exploring one of the recent feminist revival exhibitions, 'Global Feminisms' (2007), Kimberley Lamm elucidates the engagement of feminism with capitalism

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