

Christine N. Brinkmann: Color and Empathy: Essays on Two Aspects of Film

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Founder of the department of Film Studies of the University of Zurich, Christine N. Brinkmann has published widely on the aesthetics and poetics of film, on documentary and experimental work, on narrative and viewer response. In her newest book, Brinkmann chose to discuss in a number of essays two key aspects of film that have been at the core of her work in the past – color and empathy. One of the leading thoughts that guide the reader through the book is by Rudolf Arnheim: „As soon as a piece of nature becomes an image, we consider it with different eyes“ (p.10).

The book features sixteen essays. Firstly, Brinkmann discusses more generally the “Cinematic Color as Likeness and as Artifact“, „Chords of Color“, and „The Tension of Colors in Colorized Silent Films“; these chapters are followed by detailed observations on the Structural Film (*Still Life* [1976]), Film Noir (*Desert Fury* [1947]) and the work of the camera within *Beau Travail* (1999). The second half of the book is then dedicated to the aspect of empathy. Firstly, Brinkmann focuses on animals within Hitchcock’s movies regarding the „motor mimicry“ (p.135). The ninth essay is about the „Abstraction and Empathy in the Early German Avant-garde“, followed by a case study on „The Role of Empathy in Documentary Film“. The book’s last three chapters are again dedicated to certain specific

movies and the chosen examples are *Top Spot* (2004), *Primate* (1973), and *Casta Diva* (1982). Brinkman analyzes them regarding the aspects of genre conflict, viewer empathy, and empathetic reading. She also describes why she uses the films she chose for the analysis and what their structure and particularities made them worthy of discussing in this book.

Brinkmann’s analysis is always quite detailed and with a lot of love for describing emotions, viewer reactions, and colors by giving vivid examples. The pictures, which she refers to in the text, are mostly placed near the text or on the following pages so that the person reading the book does not need to look it up him or herself. The quality of the pictures is really good although they show some really old colorized silent films, which did not have a great resolution in the first place. Brinkmann describes various colors and different emotions within the spectrum of films and never really deviates from the medium itself, which also shows her focus within her work. Giving from the book’s title, it seemed that Brinkmann intended to open a discussion or discourse on the connection between color and empathy in film. Unfortunately, this is not going to be the case, which you learn quite quickly while reading the book. What really motivates Brinkmann is to make

people feel passionate about colors and what they reveal as well as to convey her feelings of empathy with animals and other creatures. At the beginning of an idea, she takes the reader – whatever knowledge they might have – from an

,everyday life' point to an in-depth and detailed journey through cinema with great respect for their readers angle and individual points of view.

Leonie Biebricher