

NECSUS Editorial Board

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Editorial NECSUS

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This issue of NECSUS has been compiled, if not written, during the COVID-19 pandemic which has produced a shock across various existential domains: personal, social, political, economic, public health — the list goes on. Some of us may already have settled into new habits and routines that make this situation livable; yet a sense of loss is undeniable and, for many, lasting. As researchers, we are only beginning to engage with the fallout of COVID-19 and think of ways to build more just societies. NECSUS is determined to contribute to this task by publishing research committed to social and environmental justice, and to the enquiry into the role of media in shaping a (post-)pandemic imagination. Given how recent these developments are, this issue cannot yet fully address the impact and durability of the changes brought about by the emergence of the novel coronavirus. But the research presented here opens avenues for thinking and rethinking the relation between culture, society and our media environment in the aftermath of the unfolding crisis — from the special section dedicated to the theme #Intelligence, to the Features articles, and the reviews about transformational (media-based) politics.

For the special section, our guest editors Patricia Pisters and Ruggero Eugeni have compiled a set of articles that address artificial intelligence through the lens of media studies in a variety of ways. For instance, the special section includes a study of cutting-edge AI software in (Hollywood) production processes as well as an investigation into the Golem, a figure from Jewish mythology, as an early ‘prototype’ for artificial intelligence. Readers will also find exciting new research on expanded cinema as machine learning and the role of AI in video games. For a more detailed overview, please read the introduction to the special section by Patricia Pisters and Ruggero Eugeni.

The Features section includes a rich interview with the important film scholars and programmers Heide Schlüppmann and Karola Gramann. The interview, written by Julia Leyda and Chris Tedjasukmana, charts the field of early film studies (mainly in West Germany but also internationally) as experienced by Schlüppmann and Gramann. The interview emphasises the central role of feminist film studies in these developments. In fact, the reader will learn that feminist film studies makes up the larger part of institutional film studies in 1970s West Germany. The interview also addresses the two subjects' long-standing curatorial practice — for instance for the Kinothek Asta Nielsen — and what they perceive as the political, cultural, and aesthetic stakes of curation, or 'programming' as Gramann prefers to call it for political reasons.

The research article by Kata Szita assesses smartphone spectatorship and its impact in film culture more broadly. First, the article pays close attention to the ways in which smartphones have changed the aesthetic and embodied experience of cinema. What does the experience we call 'cinema' turn into when it is facilitated through a smartphone? Second, Szita considers how the smartphone as delivery device feeds back into production and distribution practices. Importantly, Szita relates smartphone spectatorship to Juan García Espinosa's concept of imperfect cinema to show that the still widespread resistance to smartphone-facilitated cinema is part and parcel of an elitist and exclusionary conception of industrial cinema. Smartphone cinema, by contrast, provides new opportunities for participatory and community-based cinematic practices.

Ian Garwood's article reflects on the possibility of the videographic monograph. Garwood's general answer is yes, affirmed throughout this article and the wider project *Indy Vinyl* to which the article belongs. The more specific contribution of the article consists in the ways it addresses the tensions between the more conventional monograph as a finished, long-form scholarly work and the more process-driven, exploratory, and experimental character of (digital) videographic work. Readers will discover how various methods of videographic scholarship, including the explanatory essay, the supercut, and even social media posts, can be integrated into an overarching video-monograph — or mono-videograph?

In her article on Lars von Trier's *The House That Jack Built*, Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen expands on her previous research to explore how von Trier uses the iconic aspect of the cinematic image to propose an argument on iconicity in art more generally. Tracing the relations between von Trier's

various investments in *The House that Jack Built* — the principles of artistic creation, the aestheticisation of violence, the marketisation of aesthetics — Thomsen’s argument toggles between the iconic as a semiotic diagram (following C.S. Peirce) and ‘the iconic’ as a market-ready, commodifiable image. The result of Thomsen’s reading is an impressive account of how von Trier both affirms and questions the icon or iconicity in its various guises.

Richard Misek is the guest editor of this issue’s audiovisual essay section. Misek presents Oscar Raby’s ‘Manual for a Disassembly of Cinema’ and Charlie Shackleton’s ‘A Frame of the Mind’. In addition, the section includes Richard Misek’s own piece ‘A Machine for Viewing; A Pillow of Light’. Together these three pieces form an exciting compilation experiment with live VR, which premiered IRL at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2020 and makes its online premiere here in NECSUS.

Lavinia Brydon and Victoria Pastor-González have assembled a book review section in which Malgorzata Bugaj reviews the volume *Futurist Cinema: Studies on Italian Avant-Garde Film* and the monograph *Cubism and Futurism: Spiritual Machines and the Cinematic Effect*. Nace Zavrl reviews the volumes *Celuloïd Revolt: German Screen Cultures and the Long 1968* in addition to *1968 and Global Cinema*. Bianka-Isabell Scharmann reviews the monograph *Film and Fashion amidst the Ruins of Berlin* and the volume *Film, Fashion and the 1960s*. Marijke de Valck and Antoine Damiens have compiled the following festival reviews: Zeynep Kartal writes about Queer City Cinema’s ‘Qaleidoscope’; Niv Fux provides an assessment of VR at IDFA and IFFR; and Juan Velasquez Buritica interviews Frank Saptel of the Canadian Labour International Film Festival. The exhibition review section edited by Miriam de Rosa and Leo Goldsmith includes Raquel Schefer writing about photography and shamanism in the exhibition Claudia Andujar: The Yanomami Struggle at Fondation Cartier, Paris, also Occitane Lacurie and Bernabé Sauvage conducting an interview with Antonio Somaini, curator of the exhibition Time Machine: Cinematic Temporalities at Palazzo del Governatore in Parma.

Enjoy reading the issue, stay safe, and stay healthy.