

NECSUS Editorial Board

Editorial NECSUS

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Gesturality is the source of signifying practices overall. The body set in motion generates meaning, and all other modes and matters of expression ensue this pristine act of signification. Soviet-Russian film director and theoretician Sergei Eisenstein started from here – from ‘expressive movement’ – in tracing the pathway of meaning throughout all the different artistic layers (line, light, colour, sound, and obviously editing). This issue’s special section is devoted to #Gesture and is guest edited by Miriam de Rosa. It lines up a wide array of thrilling contributions, epitomising the significance of gestures for our media understanding and experience.

In recent scholarship focusing on gesture, film and media studies have taken a quasi-anthropological turn. At a time when our bodily engagement with the world becomes increasingly mediated and determined by technology, a number of key texts (see, amongst others, recent work by Giorgio Agamben, Yves Citton, and Laura Mulvey) have pointed to cinema’s renewed import as both an archive of gestures and a record of recent evolutions, and as a carrier of technological and gestural changes: gesture is both that of the filmed body and of the filming subject. As Christa Blümlinger and Mathias Lavin put it in their introduction to the volume *Geste filmé, gestes filmiques*: ‘Gesture can thus be understood as a locus of exchange, an interface between a subject and other (who might be plural), and between a subject and techniques.’ The special section picks up the topic from where these studies left it, and hones in on the issue of the body-machine relationship and mediated gesture. The contributors to the special section explore gesture in film (including documentary footage and animation) but also in connection with online digital media such as the selfie, ASMR, and Vine videos. Articles in the section include descriptions and analyses of machinic, aberrant, tactile, and performative gestures that involve not only the body of the photographing,

filming, and filmed subject, but also the perception, comprehension, and attention of the spectator in specific ways.

The Features section offers our readership a compelling selection of articles. Jiří Anger resumes a seminal discussion on melodrama, as the previous work of Peter Brooks, Linda Williams, and others have substantiated it, as a mode suspending narration and showcasing highly polarised emotions and translating them into an excess of expression. However, Anger relocates this theoretical framework onto a body of work not immediately associated with it: experimental filmmakers such as Werner Schroeter, Carmelo Bene, and Kenneth Anger. The overall aim is moving forward with affect studies and demonstrating how experimental cinema benefits from a melodramatic mode to explore affective possibilities, and conversely how a melodramatic mode is a specific form of affect. In the work of Ursula Biemann Ljudmila Bilkić finds alternative ways of coming to grips with the refugee crisis through the complex notion of 'critical knowledgescape'. Pedro Querido taps into an important chapter in media history, albeit often overlooked: radio art and the instability of its text. According to Querido the tension between the technical potential for recording and the emergence of a culture of oblivion marked the inherent ontology of this form of production. Calum Watt focuses on the experimental work of a Parisian art cooperative named Société Réaliste. In 2010 this group reshuffled King Vidor's *The Fountainhead* (1949), by deleting all actors' traces and sound; the haunting outcome of this operation sheds a light on the liberal ideology undepinning Vidor's work and the role of actors' faces as value. Finally, the article by Franziska Weidle and Kai Matuszkiewicz counters traditional approaches to videogaming, mostly scrutinising narratives, and advocates for shifting to the creation of a virtual world whose users are also creators, i.e. users that through gestures originate new worlds and related experiences.

Complementing the special section is an audiovisual essay section also on gesture, guest edited by Tracy Cox-Stanton. Through her own practice-based research and that of the other audiovisual writers she has selected, gesture is approached through various forms of screen-based performance and also through performing theory. The book review section and the exhibition review section offer their usual array of revealing looks into the current landscape of their respective areas. We would also like to acknowledge the work of a new member of the section editor team for film festival reviews, Antoine Damiens, who is properly introduced with his own piece on queer film festival studies. The publication of this Autumn 2019 issue sadly coincides with

the passing of Professor Thomas Elsaesser. A towering figure in the field, Thomas' work and presence has supported and accompanied the development of NECSUS from its inception. We would like to join the academic community in sending our deepest condolences to his family and those close to him.