
The publisher of this text does it the injustice of qualifying its subject matter as that of “video art.” Video art is only one small component of this well constructed history of “screen-reliant installation art.” The latest in the Electronic Mediations series from the University of Minnesota Press, this volume stands alone in its ability to finally situate this medium in its art historical and theoretical contexts.

In just 96 short pages of text, Mondloch builds a history of this specific medium by moving through a strong range of examples by artists from the US and Europe, such as Bruce Nauman, VALIE EXPORT and Doug Aitken, among many others. Each work is framed by a systematic approach to description which details the physical nature of the installation, and includes diagrams and documented critical reception to the work. The book is concisely written, and rather than indulging in an overly theoretical framework, there are enough notes and textual references that the curious reader has ample opportunity to read further from other texts. At the heart of the book is a basic text that establishes a medium and set of guidelines for its study.

Mondloch sets screen-reliant installation art within an art historical context, rather than the usual rooting in cinema theory. In doing this, she looks at the screen as art object, which allows her to enter into discussions of viewership, the gaze and spectatorship. Rather than relying on purely contemporary works for her examples, she positions this medium from the 1960s onward within installation practice as well as the use of screens in these environments. For her, the type of screen does not factor into the discussion, rather its relationship with the viewer is the focal point. The author discusses works that include screens such as cathode ray, film/video projection and internet sites, focusing on the primary task to situate the viewer within the larger installation. The concluding chapter is left open to new technologies with methodological frameworks that are flexible enough to accommodate an ever-evolving means of viewership.

The reviewed edition is a small paperback, with 32 black and white illustrations and diagrams specific to examples discussed in the text. The text is easy to read and understand without the reader possessing a strong background in theory. Some knowledge of theory would certainly enrich the reading, so the title is highly recommended for upper division undergraduates and graduate students at any art history library with a program in contemporary art. The binding is somewhat insubstantial, so the hardcover copy is recommended for library purchase.

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