

Edward
Slopek

Bodies of Art: the Shaping of Aesthetic Experience

Quodlibet Elements

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Over the course of the last two decades, a novel and innovative *corporeal imagination* has overtaken social theory, cultural studies, philosophy, psychology and the humanities. With sustained interdisciplinary attention being paid to human embodiment, current efforts to understand meaning-making have precipitated a reconceptualization of the lived body as a matrix of significance flourishing within the spatial, corporeal, and incarnate. This move continues to be driven by a desire to challenge the prevalent Western, and Cartesian, notion of the self as a discrete, interior consciousness constituted by brain states and processes located exclusively inside the head of the person, with priority being given to reason and language. In response, a non-Cartesian approach can take as its starting point the *Spread Mind* identity theory developed by Riccardo Manzotti which claims that the mind is not produced by or in the brain, but rather, the brain is formed and constantly modified by the mind, which is your embodied experience in the world.

Countering notions and concepts imported from the natural sciences, and drawing on the observations of the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, a distinction is made between the human body as a physical and biological entity with objective features (or *Korper*), including weight, height, etc., and the human body as an experienced or lived entity (or *Leib*). Going against the grain of the *cerebral mystique*, a neurocentric approach which idealizes and mythologizes the brain as an omnipotent structure wherein everything we think, do, and refrain from doing is restricted to what's physically in your head, this book proposes an alternative approach to the study of movement, mind, and, in particular, aesthetics, called "Spread Body-Mind Aesthetics."

Through an exploration of a host of ways of novel cinematic watching, such as *The Centipede Cinema*, *The Floating Archipelago Cinema*, Stan van der Beek's *Movie-Drome*, and Lis Rhodes *Light Music*, this book introduces and develops the key conceptual features of "Spread Mind Aesthetics." Defined in part as the study of the influence of body position and motion on perception and meaning-making in non-conventional cinematic viewing spaces, or performative architectures of reception, it is, in more technical terms, the study of the impact of the lived-body's vestibular, somatosensory, and kinesthetic senses on our interpretations of actual and virtual media worlds. The specific concern here is how the orientation or positioning and heightened awareness of the lived-body (e.g., standing, reclining, sitting, walking, etc.) actively "figures in" our experience of these media spaces.

L'AUTORE

Edward Slopek (1953) is a multimedia artist, performer, musician, painter, writer and teacher, holding degrees from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts School of Art and Design, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), the University of Leicester Centre for Mass Communication Research (Masters), and the Graduate Program in Communication at McGill University (Montreal, PhD). He has taught at NSCAD, McGill University, the University of Calgary and is now Emeritus Professor in the School of Image Arts at Ryerson University (Toronto). Since the mid-70s, he has exhibited his video work and art installations globally, was a founding member and Director of the Centre for Art Tapes in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Assistant Editor of the Canadian Journal of Communication, and Program Director of the New Media Option in the School of Image Arts. He has written and published on a host of topics (including "ReEXPOsitioning the Screen: The Past of the Future at Montreal's World's Fair," in Louise Poissant and Pierre Tremblay (eds.), *Prolifération des écrans/of screens*, 2008; "Grand Tours: Gifts, Cybernauts, First Life - Traveling with the Likes of Charles Babbage, Raymond Roussel, and Vachel Lindsay," in Louise Poissant and Pierre Tremblay (eds.), *Ensemble Ailleurs/ Together Elsewhere*, 2010) and presented at numerous international conferences. Currently, he is composing two operas, the first on the life of Marcel Duchamp, and the second, on America's greatest philosopher and founder of Pragmatism and modern Semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce.