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By Nicholas Mirzoeff Dept of Art, the life of SUNY Stony Brook Modern takes place on screen. Life in industrial countries is increasingly living under constant video surveillance from cameras in buses and shopping malls, on highways and bridges, and next to cash machines. More and more people are looking back, using devices ranging from traditional cameras to camcorders and webcams. At the same time, work and recreation centers on visual media from computer to Digital Video Disk. The human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever from satellite images to medical images of the interior of the human body. In the era of visual screens, your point of view is very important. For most people in the United States, life is mediated through television and, for lower movies. The average eighteen-year-old American sees only eight movies a year but watches four hours of television a day. This form of visualization is now being challenged by interactive visual media such as the Internet and virtual reality applications. Twenty-three million Americans were online in 1998, with many more joining every day. In this vortex of imagery, looking is much more than believing. It's not just part of everyday life, it's everyday life. Let's take some examples of the constant vortex of global villages. The abduction of Jamie Bulger from a Liverpool shopping centre was captured impersonally by surveillance video cameras, providing chilling evidence of the ease with which the crime was committed and detected. At the same time, despite the theory that constant surveillance provides increased security, it actually does nothing to help prevent child abduction and eventual murder. The bombing at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics was captured for endless replay by a relaxed interface of visual technology involving amateur camcorders and a German cable TV station interviewing American swimmer Janet Evans. Someone almost always watches and records. Yet no one has been prosecuted to date for the crime. To visualize everyday life doesn't mean we should know what we're seeing. When TWA Flight 800 crashed off Long Island, New York in July 1996 scores of people witnessed the incident. Their accounts differed so widely that the FBI ended up excreted only the least sensational and unenth decorated accounts. In 1997, the FBI released computer animations of the crash, using materials ranging from radar to satellite imagery. Everything can be displayed except the actual cause of the accident–that is, the reason why the fuel tank exploded. Without this answer, animation is basically useless. Even more strikingly, the world watched in 1991 when the American armed forces replayed video of their 'smart' bombs during the Gulf War. The film seems to show what Paul Paul is have called perception automation, machines that can see their way to their destination (Virilio 1994: 59). But five years later it emerged that while weapons certainly saw something, they were no more accurate than traditional ammunition in actually hitting the intended mark. In September 1996, American cruise missiles hit iraqi aircraft defenses twice in two days, only for American aircraft to be fired by Iraq a few days later. Did the Gulf War never happen because Jean Baudrillard had provocatively asserted? What should we believe if we see that we no longer believe? The gap between the wealth of visual experience in postmodern culture and the ability to analyze that observation marks an opportunity and a need for visual study: a field of study. While different visual media have usually been studied independently, there is now a need to interpret postmodern globalization as everyday life. Critics in disciplines ranging from extensive art history, film, media studies and sociology have begun to describe this emerging field as a visual culture. Visual culture deals with visual events where information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by consumers in interfaces with visual technology. With visual technology, I mean any form of tool designed either to be seen or to improve natural vision, from oil painting to television and the Internet. Postmodernism is often defined as the crisis of modernism. In this context, this implies that postmodernism is a crisis caused by modernism and modern culture facing the failure of its own visualization strategy. In other words, it was the visual crisis of culture that created postmodernity, not its textuality. While print culture certainly won't go away, the fascination with visuals and their effects that mark modernism has given rise to the most postmodern culture when it comes to visuals. This proliferation of visualities has made film and television entertainment the second largest export of the United States after aerospace, amounting to $3.7 billion to Europe alone in 1992 (Barber 1995: 90). Postmodernism is not, of course, just a visual experience. In what Arjun Appadurai calls a complex, overlapping, disjunctive sequence of postmodernism, jealousy is not expected (Appadurai 1994 [1990]: 328). Nor can one be found in the past, whether one sees the public culture of the eighteenth-century coffee house celebrated by Jurgen Habermas, or the nineteenth-century print capitalism of newspapers and publications described by Benedict Anderson. In the same way that this author highlights certain characteristics of the period as a means of analyzing them, although various alternatives, visual culture is to learn the genealogy, definition and function of the postmodern daily life from the point of view of consumers, not manufacturers. The divided and fragmented culture we call postmodernism is best imagined and visually understood, just as the nineteenth century was classically represented in newspapers and novels. It is not suggested, however, that a simple sorting line can be drawn between the past (modern) and present (postmodern). As Geoffrey Batchen says, the dissolution of borders and the threatened opposition [postmodern] is considered to represent nothing strange for any particular technology or postmodern discourse but is more one of the fundamental conditions of modernity itself (Batchen 1996: 28). Understood in this mode, visual culture has a pedigree, which needs to be explored and defined in modern and postmodern periods (Foucault 1998). For some critics, visual culture is simply a history of images that dealt with the idea of semiotic representation (Bryson, Holly and Moxey, 1994: xvi). This definition creates a body of material so vast that no one person or even a department can cover the field. For others it is a means of creating a visual cultural sociology that will build the theory of social visuality (Jenks 1995: 1). This approach seems open to accusations that visuals are given artificial independence from other senses that have little bearing on real experience. In this volume, visual culture is used in a much more active sense, concentrating on the role of visual culture determinants in the broader culture it has. Such a visual cultural history will highlight moments where visuals are contested, debated and altered as places of constantly challenging social interaction and definition in terms of class identity, gender, sexual and race. It is an unequivocally interdisciplinary subject, in the sense given on the term by Roland Barthes: To do interdisciplinary work, it is not enough to take the 'subject' (theme) and to organize two or three sciences around it. Interdisciplinary studies consist of creating new objects, which are included in noone (Barthes). As one critic in a recent communications study argued, this work requires a greater degree of uncertainty, risk, and arbitrariness than is often used today (McNair 1995: xi). There will be little point in breaking down old disciplinary barriers just to put new one in their place. For some, visual culture may seem to claim scope that is too broad to be used practically. It is true that visual culture will not sit comfortably in existing university structures. It is part of a body that arises from the postdisciplinary academic efforts of cultural studies, gays and lesbians, to African-American studies, and so on, whose focus is on crossing traditional borders discipline. In this sense, visual culture is a tactic, not an academic discipline. It is a fluid interpretive structure, centered on understanding the response to the visual media of individuals and groups. The definition comes from the questions he raises and the issues he wants to ask. Like the other approaches mentioned above, he hopes to reach beyond the traditional boundaries of universities to interact with people's daily lives. Visualizing One of the most striking features of the new visual culture is the growing tendency to visualize things that are not in their visuals. Linked to this intellectual move is the increasing capacity of technology to make things visible that our eyes cannot see unharvested, ranging from Roentgen's accidental indisposition from X-rays in 1895 to hubble telescope images of distant galaxies that are actually frequencies transpositions that our eyes cannot detect. One of the first to draw attention to this development was the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who called it the emergence of a picture of the world. He argues that the picture of the world... does not mean the image of the world but the world is conceived and grasped as a picture.... The picture of the world has not changed from the previous middle ages to the modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes a picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of modern times (Heidegger 1977: 130). Consider drivers on typical North American highways. The vehicle's progress depends on a series of visual assessments made by the driver regarding the relative speed of the other vehicle, and any maneuvers required to complete the journey. At the same time, he was bombarded with other information: traffic lights, road signs, turn signals, advertising hoardings, gasoline prices, store signs, local time and temperature and so on. But most people consider the process so routine that they play music to keep them from getting bored. Even music videos, which saturate visual fields with distractions and come with soundtracks, must now be embellished by textual pop-ups. This extraordinary ability to absorb and interpret visual information is fundamental to industrial society and is becoming more important in the information age. These are not natural human attributes but relatively recently learned skills. For the medieval philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas, vision is not trusted to make perception judgments by itself: Thus the vision will prove to fail is one to try to judge by looking at what the colored thing is or where it is (Aquinas 1951: 275). According to one recent estimate, the retina contains 100 million nerve cells capable of approximately 10 billion processing operations per The hyper-stimulus of modern visual culture from the nineteenth to the present has been dedicated to trying to saturate the visual field, a process constantly failing as we learn to see and connect faster and faster. In other words, visual culture depends not on the image itself but the modern tendency to imagine or visualize existence. This visualization makes the modern era radically different from the ancient and medieval worlds. Although such visualizations have been common throughout the modern period, it has now become all but mandatory. This history is probably said to have begun with an economic visualization in the eighteenth century by François Quesnay, who said of the economic picture of his society that it brought before your eyes closely intertwined ideas whose intelligence alone would have many difficulties in grasping, parsing and coming to terms with the method of discourse (Buck-Morss 1995 : 116). The prevailing quesnay expresses the principle of visualizing in general - it does not replace discourse but makes it easier to understand, faster and more effective. Visualization has had the most dramatic effect in medicine, where everything from brain activity to heart rate is now transformed into visual patterns by complex technologies. Recent visualizations of computer environments have generated a new sense of excitement around visual possibilities. Computers are not, however, inherently visual tools. The machine processes the data using a binary system of which and zero, while the software makes the results understandable to human users. Early computer languages such as ASCII and Pascal were highly textual, involving commands that were not intuitive but had to be studied. The operating system promoted by Microsoft's company, better known as MS-DOS, retains this technocratic feature until it is challenged by Apple's point-and-click interface. This system, relying on icons and drop-down menus, has become standard with Microsoft's conversion to a Windows environment. With the development of the Internet, Java computer code now allows unauthorized home computer users access to graphics that were once the preserve of elite institutions such as the MIT Media Lab. Because computer memory has fallen in price and with the arrival of programs like Realplayer and Shockwave, often available for free over the Net, personal computers can play realtime videos with colorful graphics. It's important to remember that these changes are as much consumers as technology-driven. There is no inherent reason that computers should use the dominant visual interface, except that people now prefer it this way. The new visual culture is precisely because it focuses on visuals as a place where meaning is created and contested. Western culture has consistently specialized the spoken word as the highest form of intellectual practice and sees visual representation as second-rate ideas. The advent of visual culture developed what was W.J.T. W.J.T. it has been called image theory, the sense that some aspects of Western philosophy and science have come to adopt an image, rather than a textual, worldview. If so, it marks a significant challenge to the idea of the world as a written text that dominates so many intellectual discussions after linguistic-based movements such as structuralism and poststructuralism. In Mitchell's view, image theory stems from the realization that the audience (views, gazes, views, observational practices, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as the various forms of reading (deciphering, deciphering, interpretation, etc.) and that 'visual experience' or 'visual literacy' may not be entirely explainable in the textual model (Mitchell 1994: 1694: Mitchell 1994: 16 While those already working in visual media may find such comments somewhat patronizing , they are a measure of the extent to which even literary studies have been forced to conclude that the world-as-a-text has been replaced by world-as-picture. Such images of the world cannot be purely visual, but with the same tokens, visually disturbing and challenging every attempt to define culture in purely linguistic terms. One of the main tasks of visual culture is to understand how these complex images come together. They are not made from one medium or in one place because too precise an academic divide will have them. Visual culture steers our attention away from formally structured viewing settings such as cinemas and art galleries to the centrality of the visual experience in everyday life. Today, different ideas about viewing and audiences today are both within and among all the various visual subdisciplines. Of course it makes sense to discriminate. Our attitude varies according to whether we will see movies, watch television, or attend art exhibitions. However, most of our visual experiences occur apart from these formally structured moments. A painting can be noticed on a book jacket or advertisement, television is consumed as part of domestic life rather than as the only viewer activity, and movies tend to be seen on video, in airplanes or on cables like in traditional cinemas. Just as cultural studies have sought to understand the ways in which people create meaning from mass cultural consumption, so too does visual culture prioritize visual everyday experiences from snapshots to VCR and even blockbuster art exhibitions. If cultural studies are to have a future as an intellectual strategy, it should take a visual turn that has passed through daily life. The first step towards visual culture studies is the recognition that visual images are unstable but turn their realizations into exterior realities certain moments of modernity. As a Jean-Francois Lyotard has argued: Modernity, wherever it arises, does not happen without destroying belief, without finding a lack of reality in reality - a discovery associated with the discovery of another reality (Lyotard 1993: 9). As one mode represents the reality of losing another land takes its place without first disappearing. In the first part of the book, I point out that the formal logic of the image of régime ancien (1650-1820) first gave way to the dialectic logic of images in the modern period (1820-1975). This dialectic image in turn has been challenged by paradoxical or virtual images in the last twenty years (Virilio 1994: 63). Traditional imagery adheres to its own rules independent of exterior reality. The perspective system, for example, depends on the viewer examining the image from one point only, using only one eye. No one really does this but the image is internally coherent and thus credible. As the perspective claims to be the reality of losing ground, film and photography create a new, direct relationship with reality, in such a way that we accept the actuality of what we see in the image. A photo always shows us something that is at a certain point actually before the camera lens. This image is dialectic because it governs the relationship between the present audience and the past moments of space or time it represents. However, it is not dialectical in the Hegelian sense of the term -which would say that the thesis of formal images was first countered by the antithesis of photography and then resolved into synthesis. The perspective image seeks to make the world understandable by a powerful figure standing at the single point from which it is drawn. The photos offer a much more democratic visual map of the world. Now images filmed or photographic no longer index reality because everyone knows they can be manipulated unexpectedly by computers. As the example of a smart bomb shows, paradoxical virtual images appear when real-time images dominate the thing represented, real time then prevails over real space, virtuality dominates actuality and twists the concept of reality on its head (Virilio 1994: 63). This postmodern image virtuality seems to constantly circumvent our grasp, creating a visual crisis that is more than just a local problem. Instead, postmodernism marks an era in which visual images and visualization of things that are not necessarily visuals have increased dramatically, so the global circulation of images has become an end in itself, taking place at a dramatic pace on the internet. The idea of a picture of the world is no longer sufficient to analyze this changing and changing situation. The proliferation of incredible images cannot be often one explanation for Intellectual property. Visual culture is a crisis of information and visual overload in everyday life. He is trying to find a way to work in this new (virtual) reality. To adapt Michel de Certeau's description of everyday life, visual culture is a tactic, to place tactics belonging to others (de Certeau 1984: xix). Tactics are carried out in full view of the enemy, the control society in which we live (de Certeau 1984: 37). While some may find the tone of military tactics regrettable, it can also be said that in an ongoing culture war, tactics are necessary to avoid defeat. Just as previous inquiries into everyday life seek to prioritize the ways in which consumers create different meanings for themselves from mass culture, so too does visual culture explore the atmosphere, interstic and places of resistance in postmodern daily life from a consumer point of view. Visual power, visual pleasure Most postmodern theorists agree that one of its distinctive features is the dominance of images. With the rise of virtual reality and the Internet in the West, combined with the global popularity of television, video and film footage, this trend seems set to continue. The strange dimension to such theory is, however, that it automatically assumes that a culture dominated by visuals should be second rate. This almost reflexive act seems to betray broader doubts about popular culture itself. Such criticism has a long history, since there is always animosity to visual culture in Western thought, derived from Plato's philosophy. Plato believes that the objects found in everyday life, including people, are just bad copies of the perfect ideals of them. He compares this reproduction as like a shadow cast by fire on a cave wall - you can see who or what casts a shadow but the image is definitely distorted from its original appearance. In other words, everything we see in the real world is already a copy of it. For an artist to make a representation of what looks will make a copy of a copy, increases the likelihood of distortion. Moreover, the ideal state of imaginable Plato requires a resilient and disciplined individual, but art appeals to our emotions and desires. So there is no place for visual art in its Republic: Paintings and imitations are far from the truth when they produce their works;... in addition, imitation keeps the company with the worst part of us away from prudence and not friends or friends for a healthy or true purpose (Plato 1991: 286). Hostility to this image has had an influence long-lasting western thinking to this day. Some images are considered so dangerous to exist, leading iconoclases to seek their destruction or removal from public view. In such campaigns, the difference between high art and popular culture Which carries little good will. in contemporary words, the number of indecent paintings and sculptures, many of them masterpieces of great masters, with books, lutes and collections of love songs (Freedberg 1989: 348), just as Senator Jesse Helms and his colleagues in the United States Senate have been eager to restrict pornography on the Internet to cut money from the National Endowment for the Arts to punish it for sponsoring by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Contemporary hostility to visuals in some contemporary criticism thus has deep roots. All of these critics share the assumption that a visually dominated culture should be poor or even schizophrenic. Although television, for example, has won a place in the academic establishment, there is still a strong suspicion about visual pleasure among intellectuals. Television is often depicted in David Morley's phrase as a radio with pictures, as if the pictures were just mere decorations. Concentration on the textual dimensions to television may be appropriate for news and other talking head formats but it has nothing to say about typical television formats such as soap operas, game shows, natural programs, and sports coverage. It appears that the remote control always comes with a mute button but never a device to remove images. Programs can be easily followed by a dead voice, a common domestic device to allow televisions to be part of household activities, not the center. We watch television, don't listen to it. This simple fact caused many intellectuals to lose patience. Intellectuals such as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu have joined campaign groups such as The British White Spot and a string of university professors to lament that television has permotic western society. Particular anger poured on universities for turning away from studies of what has become known as the Great Book against television and other visual media. Michel de Certeau talks about the growth of cancer vision (de Certeau 1984: xxi). Fredric Jameson vents on his hostility to greater length: Visuals are essentially pornography, i.e. saying it has an end in itself, plunging into rapt, mindless enjoyment; think about the attribute being an addition to it, if it does not want to betray the object; while the most austere films certainly draw their energy from attempts to suppress (rather than from a mere selfless attempt to discipline the viewer). Even this only potent in general, that asks us to look at the world as if it were a naked body.... The mysterious thing of reading [being] some superstitious and mature force, imagined by inferior art is incomprehensible, because animals may dream of the strangeness of human thought (Jameson 1990: 1-2). The peculiarity of this position is that it makes America's leading Marxist critic a diehard defender of bourgeois subjects, as classically expressed through novels. Narrative archetypes such as the coming story, Bildungsroman, and the twentieth-century staples of novels about writing novels, all express the centrality of literature to the formation of bourgeois, individual subjects. Viewing visual images, by contrast, is very often a collective experience, as in cinema. Computer technology now allows visitors to websites to attend at the same time as perhaps hundreds or thousands of others and, in the case of chat rooms or bulletin boards, to interact with them. Furthermore, the versatility inherent in the possible angles of view available to interpret any visual image makes it a potentially much more democratic medium than written text. In Jameson's view, those who have the temerity to enjoy visual pleasure, rather than the discipline of reading, are pornographic at best, visual physicality marks it as a humbling lecture for Jameson, while reading is somehow divorced from the physical process of perception. His position stems from Christian Metz's film theory and other film theories of the 1970s, which saw cinema as an apparatus for the spread of ideology, in which audiences were reduced to fully passive consumers. However, Jameson transcended such intellectual theories by presenting moviegoers as inferior human beings, more comparable to animals than serious intellectuals like himself. Undoubtedly echoes of racist thinking in this depiction are unpleasant but certainly implied by his colonial need to master the visuals by writing. Indeed, the general intellectual antipathy towards popular visual representation may be a derelict hostility to those who participate and enjoy mass culture. In the eighteenth century, this hostility was directed at the theater. Now focused on film, television and increasingly the Internet. In each case, the source of hostility is the masses, the popular audience, not the media itself. From this perspective, the media is not the message. On the other hand, cultural studies - which seek to privilege popular culture - have an awkward gap around visuals, leading to the bizarre situation that any Star Trek viewer can be defined as an opposition, while every art viewer is a dupe of the dominant class. To borrow Meaghan Morris, it's just as important to dismiss everyone who's ever seen art as it is celebrate every consumer's mass culture. In short methodological pieces, art has become another oppression for cultural studies that allows popular culture to define itself as popular. The empirical basis for this division of casual culture in two often stems from Pierre Bourdieu's sociological study of cultural use, conducted in a sample of 1200 people, Bourdieu argues that social class determines how a person can respond to cultural production. Instead of a sense of being a highly individualized attribute, Bourdieu sees it as a product by-product of education and access, generating cultural capital that strengthens and enhances class economic differences. His study is an important rejoining for those who believe that high cultural appreciation is just a sign of intellectual quality that serves to distinguish between the intellectual elite and the masses. Art is one of the most obvious divisions in Bourdieu's survey. Museums go almost exclusively middle and upper class provinces (in the European sense of this class difference) while the working classes are almost unanimous in underestimating the value of art in general and modern art in particular. But the questions posed to respondents seem to look for such answers, making it easier to give a general negative response to art. People were asked to choose between five statements, three of which gave general negative responses to art and two specific cases of consent. You can't answer that you like art in general (Bourdieu 516-17). Bourdieu's findings only confirm the prejudice instilled into his questions, that they will not like our elite culture and should be studied as a discrete phenomenon, which is popular. Moreover, it is reasonable to question whether surveys based on the stuffy and traditional French museums of the 1960s should continue to determine our attitude to museum culture in the 1990s. Bourdieu's survey was conducted before the advent of blockbuster museum exhibitions and before the shift of grants and donor attention to the museum's diverse audience. While there is no denying that there is still a long road to go, the situation is not as clear as it seemed thirty years ago. When one million people visit monet exhibitions in Chicago and five million visit the New York Metropolitan Museum every year, art and museums in a sense are part of mass culture, not the other way around. Bourdieu's account also carries no historical weight. The annual exhibition of Parisian paintings and sculptures known as salons attracted an audience of one million viewers in the mid-nineteenth century and was as popular as the show could have imagined. we expand the definition of art beyond the formal realm of formal art galleries and museums to incorporate practices such as carnivals, blankets, photography, and computer-generated media, it quickly became clear that the neat divide between progressive popular culture and repressive high art did not last. The role played by cultures of all varieties is too complex and too important to be reduced to such slogans. This intellectual history creates a difficult legacy for visual cultural studies. Visual culture seeks to combine historical perspectives of art history and film studies with the characteristics of a specific and intellectually engaged approach to cultural studies. Since this integration is precisely what many scholars in this field have sought to prevent by defining their field as the visual, visual culture should proceed by defining both the visual pedigree it wants to use and its interpretation of loaded cultural terms. Visuality Instead of dividing visual culture into opposite parts, I'll instead examine how visuality has come to play a central role in modern life. As such, I will seek to create what Michel Foucault calls a cultural pedigree, marking a broad trajectory for the emergence of contemporary visuality, without pretending to consume the richness of the field. That is, the task at hand is not a futile search for the origins of modern visuality in the past but a strategic reinterpretation of modern visual media history understood collectively, rather than fragmented into disciplinary units such as film, television, art and video. In stead of the traditional purpose of encyclopedic knowledge, visual culture must accept temporary and changing status, given the constant shifting of various contemporary visual media and their use. Constituent parts of visual culture, then, are not defined by the media so much by interaction between viewers and views, which I engage with visual experiences. When I engage with visual experience, media, and technology, I experience visual events. By visual events, I mean visual sign interaction, the technology that enables and maintains that mark, and the viewer. In drawing attention to some of these interactions, I sought to advance interpretive strategies beyond the now familiar use of semiotic terminology. .... [discussion of semiotics and structuralism eliminated....] Because in concentrating only on liguistic meaning, such readings deny the elements that make visual imagery of all kinds different from the text, that is, its sensual closeness. This is in no way the same as simplicity but there is an undeniable impact at first glance that cannot be replicated by written text. It's a feeling created by the opening scene space filled the screen in 2001: A Space Odyssey, by watching the Berlin Wall descend on live television, or by facing the face blue and green of the Cézanne landscape. That edge, the buzz that separates the extraordinary from the humdrum. It is this surplus of experience that drives various components of visual signs or semiotic circuits into each other's relationships. Moments such as intense and surprising visual power evoke, in David Freedberg's phrase, admiration, admiration, terror and desire (Freedberg 1989: 433). This dimension to visual culture is at the core of all visual events. Let's name this feeling: the sublime. The sublime is a pleasant experience in representation of what would be painful or frightening in reality, leading to the realization of human boundaries and the power of nature. The sublime was first theorized in ancient times by Longinus who famously described how our souls were lifted up by the true sublime; it takes a flight that boasts and is filled with joy and vaunting, as if it had produced what has been heard (Bukatman 1995: 266). The classic sculpture known as Laocoon is a typical of sublime artwork. It shows the Trojan soldier and his children fighting the serpent that will soon kill them. Their futile struggle has evoked sublime ity for generations of viewers. The sublime was given new importance by the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant who called it satisfaction mixed with horror. Kant contrasts sublimely with the beautiful, seeing the former as a more complex and visceral emotion leading someone with a taste for the sublime to hate all chains, from the diseptic varieties worn in court to the irons that burden kitchen slaves. This preference for ethics or simple aesthetics has led Lyotard to revive the sublime as a key term for postmodern criticism. He sees it as a combination of pleasure and pain: pleasure in reason exceeds all presentation, pain in imagination or sensibility proves inadequate for concept (Lyotard 1993: 15). The sublime task is then to present an unrepresented, appropriate role for the relentless visualization of the postmodern era. Moreover, because logic is determined by efforts to present ideas that do not have a coelative in the natural world – for example, peace, equality, freedom –the experience of sublime feelings demands sensitivity to Ideas that are not natural but obtained through culture (Lyotard 1993: 71). while the beautiful that can be experienced in nature or culture, the sublime are cultural beings and hence are the center of visual culture. Of course, the representation of natural subjects can be sublime, as in classic examples of shipwrecks or storms at sea. However, a firsthand experience of a shipwreck cannot be sublime as one will probably only experience the pain and dimension of pleasure will be lost. However, there is no question about support for Kant's Lyotard rework. On the one hand, Kant dismissed all African art and religion as trifling, as far removed from the sublime as he could have imagined. For the less prejudiced eye, African sculptures such as the nail-laden minkisi power figure (see chapter five) are a remarkable example of the combination of pleasure and pain that creates sublime, and motivated by a desire to show the unscholadable. This naïve Eurocentrism was not directly commented on by Lyotard but resonated in his support of the very traditional chronology of the avant-garde, in which impressionism gave way to Cézanne being destroyed by cubists, in turn challenged by Marcel Duchamp. Any student who has taken an introductory art history class will recognize this pattern, which questions the rise of abstraction as the main story of modern art. But now, and even as Lyotard wrote in 1982, it is clear that abstraction has stopped being useful in destroying a sense of contemporary reality. Indeed, it has become a trivial part of that reality, signifying primarily by the predilection of corporate buyers and sponsors for abstract art. When great works of abstraction sit comfortably in corporate boardrooms, can it really continue to be a means to challenge what Lyotard correctly calls the triumph of capitalist technology? When Philip Morris, a multinational tobacco company, enjoyed sponsoring retrospectives of modern art, such as picasso and Robert Rauschenberg in New York, under the slogan The Spirit of Innovation-suggested of course that true innovators defied convention and smoke - then the history of modernism has been repeated as a joke. (Post) the modern destruction of reality is achieved in everyday life, not in avant-garde studios. Just as Situationists collected examples of strange events that pass as normality from newspapers, so can we now see the collapse of reality in the daily lives of the mass visual media. In the early 1980s, postmodern photographers such as Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince attempted to question the authenticity of photography by approving photos taken by others. The dismissal of this photographic claim to represent the truth is now a staple of popular culture. The cover story in Weekly World News for February 25, 1997 is a follow-up to their 1992 story about the discovery of Adam and Eve's skeleton in Denver, Colorado. Further analysis of the photo now shows the baby girl's skeleton, revealing that the first couple had an unknown daughter hitherto. The subtitle reads: Confused Bible experts ask: Do Cain and Abel have younger sisters? Technique of zooming in on photos to reveal significant details regularly surveillance and spy operations and is a standard device in like Bladerunner and Rising Sun, allowing heroes to make key inroads in their cases. Parody Weekly World News offers a funny companion to such a belief in the power of photography to reveal hidden truths. At the same time, it contributed to a climate of suspicion in which O.J.Simpson's lawyers could clearly reject photos showing his client wearing rare Bruno Magli shoes worn by the killer as fake, only to lose when thirty more images were found. One photo alone no longer shows the truth. ... [omission of soap opera/comic book discussion] At this point, many readers will be tempted to use a common sense rhetoric. That is, common sense tells us that there is no need to over-enser the moment of searching. It's absolutely clear who saw it, who saw it and why. However, some reflections may lead us to conclude that seeing is not as simple an activity as it should be. Why, for example, can the United States Supreme Court not give a better definition of fornication than I knew it when I saw it? The court has distinguished between permitted profanity and obscene not. However, while everyone understands the concept of pornography, it is difficult to get a large number of people to consent to what becomes obscene and should therefore be banned. When the city of Cincinnati sued its own museum for exhibiting photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, prosecutors felt the obscenity of his work was such that it only needed to be shown to a jury to be convinced to follow. After listening to a number of museum curators and art historians, the jury disagreed. Similarly, in challenging the Communications Decency Act (1996), which sought to ban indecent material on the Internet, the United States Third Circuit Court of Appeals found the Act's definition of hopeless indecency vague. This Law is considered indecent of any kind which: in the context, depicts or describes, in the event of a patent offensive as measured by contemporary community standards, sexual activities or organs or excretion. Chief Justice Dolores K. Sloviter saw no possibility that such a definition of pornography could be used to prosecute the contemporary equivalent of James Joyce Ulysses's novel, banned for obscenity on publication and now universally regarded as a classic. Neither the truth nor the fornication is clear-cut. Milos Forman made his film The People vs. Larry Flint as a Celebration of the First Amendment, but many feminists see it instead as glorifying the degradation of women in Hustler. This crisis of truth, reality, and visualization in everyday life is the basis on which visual cultural studies seek to act. Culture Share critics, the real problem with visual culture lies not in its emphasis on the importance of visuality but in its use of it to explain the visual field. A 1996 survey published in an October art journal seemed to show widespread nervousness among art historians that cultural change would lead to the relativization of all critical judgments. Speaking of Yale University excellence, art historian Thomas Crow sees visual culture as an art history of what new age mysticism is about philosophy. He thundered: To submit [discipline to a universally misguided populist impulse would be regarded as an abrogation of fundamental responsibility (October 1996: 35). Crow's view is that his derogatory reference to mass-market bookstores - his only argument for why a democratic approach to the visual media would be misguided- would result in a shudder of sympathetic horror to his readers. Most other surveys are devoted to destroying what Carol Armstrong calls a predilection for disembodied images strangely associated with visual culture (October 1996: 27). It may seem surprising that formalist art historians would be deeply concerned at these supposed practices, but, as Tom Conley points out, they use fraudulent scare tactics designed to distract

from the pleasure of realizing that visual culture cannot find a disciplinary place (October 1996: 32) and hence challenge the comfortable familiarity of traditional university power structures. The rush to condemn culture as a frame of reference for visual studies relies on it perhaps to distinguish between cultural products and those of art. However, every term check, quickly indicates that this is a false opposition. Art is a culture both in a high cultural sense and in the anthropological sense of human artifacts. Nothing outside the culture. Instead of discarding the term, we need to ask what it means to describe a particular type of historical change in terms of culture How does visual culture relate to other uses of the term culture? Using culture as a reference term is problematic and inescapable. Culture carries a difficult legacy of race and racism that cannot be taken for granted by arguing that in the modern (postal) period we no longer act as our intellectual predecessors did, while continuing to use their terminology. Nor can it assert the importance of art - whether as painting, avant-garde film or video - escaping from the cultural framework. Because, as Raymond Williams famously observed, culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. The term gained two meanings in the nineteenth century that continued to shape popular and academic understanding of culture. In 1869, the English scholar Matthew Arnold an influential book called Culture and Anarchy, which gave rise to two terms as opposed to conflict. Arnold Arnold then influential to define culture as the product of the elite: the best that has been thought of and known. For many scholars and general consumers of literature and art, this sense of culture as a high culture remains the most important meaning of the term. The film was adopted by art critic Clement Greenberg in his famous essay Avant-garde and Kitsch (1939), which defended the avant-garde project of modernist high art against mass-produced kitsch vulgarity. However, culture is also used in a different sense as the entire social network of a particular society. It is in this sense that we are talking about someone of a certain culture. For Victorian anthropologist E.B. Tylor and many subsequent anthropologists, the main question is not to determine what is the best intellectual product of a particular time and place but to understand how human societies came to build an artificial, non-natural and hence cultural way of life. Tylor introduces the idea in his book Primitive Culture (1871): Culture or Civilization, taken in its broadest ethnographic sense, is that the whole complex includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other abilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Young 1995: 45). Anthropology thus reduced not only visual arts and crafts but all human activity as the field of its enterprise. Clearly, the study of visual culture and culture owes their sense of culture as an interpretive framework far more to Tylor than Arnold. This legacy is not without its problems. Tylor was a firm believer in the science of race, arguing that race could retain its special character for more than thirty centuries, or a hundred generations (Young 1995: 140). Thus while the evolution of different races is possible in theory, Tylor here asserts that no significant changes throughout human history are recorded, establishing different races at very different levels of achievement. In other words, different human societies manifest different stages of human evolution, allowing anthropologists to read stories backwards. A sense of anthropological culture came to rely on the contrast between the current modern time of anthropologists (white, Western) and the pre-modern past of its subjects (non-white, non-western). This linear evolutionary model is intelligently visualized, a process anthropologist Johannes Fabian has called visualism: The ability to visualize culture or society almost becomes synonymous with understanding it (Fabian 1983: 106). This visualism is very similar to the postmodern desire to visualize knowledge and force us to examine whether visual culture can escape this racial heritage. In finding a way from the cultural labyrinth, visual culture develops cultural ideas as expressed by Stuart Hall: Cultural Culture then it becomes a realm where one engages with and deciphers politics. Politics does not refer to party politics but to feel that culture is where people define their identity and that it changes according to the needs of individuals and communities to express that identity. In the global diaspora of the postmodern world, a transcultural approach will be a key tool. Both anthropological and artistic cultural models rest on being able to make a difference between one ethnic, national, or human and other cultures. While it has been important to disseminate what Gayatri Spivak calls strategic essentialism to validate the study of non-white and non-Western visual cultures in its own right, it is now important to do the hard work of moving beyond that essentialism towards understanding the plural reality that coexists and conflicts with each other both in the present and in the past. The wrong way to do this is already a lot of evidence, as an insistence on a return to the High Modernist tradition. Visual culture, by contrast, should describe what Martin J. Powers calls fractal networks, pervasive with patterns from around the world. There are several implications for re-airing visual culture as fractal, not linear. First, it precludes the possibility that one overarching narrative can contain all the possibilities a new global/local system for fractals can always extend. Second, fractal networks have important interface points and interactions that are more than the usual complexities and interests. For example, details of Mandelbrot patterns can be observed more and closer until it suddenly opens to another layer of the pattern. Thus the cultural section of this volume looks at a number of specific examples of racial, class, and gender intersections in visual media to enhance their complex operations. While Modernism may have thrown these patterns into the disciplinary grid, networking is now a much more satisfying model for the spread of visual culture. Power not only argues for an all-inclusive web around the world from visual images, but emphasizes power differentials across the network. Nowadays, it must be acknowledged that visual culture remains a Western discourse about the West but in terms of that the problem, as David Morley reminds us, is how to think of modernity, not so much in particular or necessarily Europe... but only contingently so (Morley 1996: 350) [see chapters four through six]. Seen in the long span of history, euramerik, to use the Japanese term, has dominated modernity for a relatively short period of time which may now be interesting to close. Western culture has sought to naturalize the history of this power. Perhaps the most striking example of conformity in recent times 1984 exhibition Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Tribal and Modern Affinity at the New York Museum of Modern Art. Here the works of leading European modernists such as Picasso and Giacometti are exhibited alongside artworks from African and Oceanic cultures as if the only function of these objects should be appropriate as a formal influence by Western artists. The pieces featured have no value or meaning in themselves except as a source for superior modernist artists the exhibition expects its audience to focus on. A decade later curator William Rubin saw nothing wrong in this strategy: Modernism is a modern Western tradition, not an African or Polynesian one. What should be wrong with MoMA showing tribal art in the context of this exhibition? (Grimes 1996: 39) The problem lies in the assumption that the West is a tightly closed cultural entity, whose border patrols can allow in other cultures as a source for Western ideas but never as an equal and interactive entity. In shaping the approach of visual culture, the main task is to find a means of writing and narrative that enables cultural transcultural permeability and identity instability. Because despite the recent focus on identity as a means of resolving cultural and political dilemmas, it is increasingly clear that identity is a problem as much as it is a solution for those who are among the cultures -which, in today's global diaspora, means all of us. Peruvian-born artist Kukuli Verlade Barrioneuvo has given an eloquent expression of this dilemma: I am a western individual. I'm not saying I'm a Western individual, because I didn't create this culture - I was the product of colonization.... We have to face that reality. To deal with it is to acknowledge my mixed race, to admit that I am not Indian, and that I am not white. That doesn't mean I have ambiguity, but that I have a new identity: the identity of a colonized individual. I feel hurt when I see colonization of what is made of the people I come from - mixed race. I am not Indian, I have both legacies (Miller 1995: 95). The experience these two legacies combine to form a new third form is what I would call transculture, following Fernando Ortiz. Culture in visual culture will strive to be this ever-changing transculture dynamic, rather than a static edifice of culture (See chapter four). Daily life The visual transcultural experience in everyday life is, then, the territory of visual culture. How can we determine what to call daily life? Henri Lefebvre argues in his Introduction to Everyday Life that it is a key site of interaction between and modern: two connected and correlated phenomena that are not absolute or entities: daily life and modernity, which crown and and others, revealing it and covering it up (Lefebvre 1971: 24). The visual experience in this sense is an event resulting from the daily and modern intersections that occur in the wandering lines marked by consumers crossing the grid of modernism (de Certeau 1984: xviii). In his analysis of The Practice of Daily Life, Michel de Certeau celebrates the pattern of [d]welling, moving about, talking, reading, shopping and cooking that seems to offer a variety of tactics to consumers beyond the reach of modern society's supervision (de Certeau 1984: 40). Consumers are key agents in a postmodern capitalist society. Capital starts as money, means of exchange between goods, and accumulated through trade. It achieves independence in the early stages of capitalist culture as financial capital, generating investment interest and borrowing. In Marxist analysis, capitalism creates profits by exploiting the difference between the income generated by the hired workforce and the amount of cost to hire that workforce. This surplus was the basis for Marxist economics and politics for a century after the publication of the Capital in 1867. But it is now clear that capital continues to generate profits far exceeding the surplus value that can be extracted from individual workers. Capital has modified all aspects of daily life, including the human body and even the process of seeing itself. In 1967 situationist critic Guy Debord named what he called a spectacle society, that is, a culture that entirely swayed a spectacular consumer culture whose function was to make history forgotten in culture (Debord 1977: 191). In a spectacle society, individuals fascinated by spectacle become a passive presence in mass consumer culture, aspiring only to acquire more products. The emergence of a picture-dominated culture is due to the fact that[t]he spectacle is capital for such an accumulation rate so that it becomes an image (Debord 1977: 32). The relationship between labor and capital is lost in dazzling spectacle. In spectacular society we are sold sizzle rather than steak, images rather than objects. Jonathan L. Beller has called this development a theory of value of concern (Beller 1994: 5). The media is trying to attract our attention and thus create profit. Thus modern films spend spectacular amounts of money to attract our jaded attention and thus generate a return on its investment. However, given that more than three-quarters of Hollywood films fail, it is a high-risk company capable only of being written by the wealthiest companies. Cinema is actually the archetype of a capitalist company in Beller's analysis: Production of assembly lines, which material/capital cutting and editing is while commodity circulation is a proto-cinema-image form, abstracted from the human world and flowing only out of reach (Beller 1996: 215). But as consumer capitalism continued to rise, it soon became clear that the Debord society of spectacle itself was the product of a postwar consumer boom, rather than a newly stable form of modern society. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard announced the end of the spectacle society in 1983. Instead, it states the age of the simulacrum, that is, a copy without the original. Simulacrum is the final stage of the history of the image, moving from a state in which it masks the absence of basic reality to a new age in which it has nothing to do with any reality: it is its own pure simulacrum (Baudrillard 1984: 256). Baudrillard's famous example is the Disneyland theme park which he sees as to hide the fact that it is a 'real' country, all 'real' America, namely Disneyland (Baudrillard 1984: 262). Behind this simulacrum lies the capacity of murder images, real killers. Baudrillard's nostalgia for a past in which basic reality can actually be experienced is analogous to the Marxist critique of American critic Fredric Jameson about what he sees as the image culture of late capitalism (Jameson 1991). For the pattern of modernity described by Lefebvre and de Certeau can no longer be used as the background of daily life. Far from being unknown, consumption patterns are mapped with remarkable precision by ATMs, credit cards, and check-out scanners, while urban movements are recorded by police and other security scanners. There is a general sense of crisis in daily life, with no clear solution available. In his analysis of the global culture of postmodernism, Arjun Appadurai has highlighted some of the new components of contemporary life that move us beyond the celebration of de Certeau's local resistance. First, Appadurai notes the consistent tension between local and global, which affects the other and vice versa that it terms the interaction between homogenization and heterogeneization (Appadurai 1990: 6). As a result, it makes no longer sense to find cultural activity solely within national or geographic boundaries, such as in Western cultural terms, French film, or African music. To take the latter example, much of African music is now distributed and produced in Paris rather than on the continent itself. That's not to say that it's no longer Africa and has become French but that the geographical location of cultural practice is not the key to its definition. The local and subcultural approach of so many works of cultural studies has been struck by the complexity of the global cultural economy. Appadurai proposes this economy is dominated A new role for imagination in social life. To understand this new role, we need to unite: the old idea of images, especially mechanically produced images...; imagined community ideas (in Anderson's sense); and the French idea of the imaginary, as a landscape of collective aspiration built.... Images, imagined and imaginary–these are all terms that lead us to something critical and new in the global cultural process: imagination as a social practice (Appadurai 1990: 5). At stake is the link between cultural globalization, new forms of modernity and mass migration and the diaspora that marks this moment as different from the past. For many, the difficulty of imaging and imagining this ever-changing situation is experienced as a crisis. Describing the collapse of daily life in Cameroon that has unfolded since 1990, Achille Mbembe points to the damage to modern apparatus circulation, such as traffic regulations, skyscapers, electric lighting and cars. At the moment, physical crises reduce people to precarious positions that affect the way they define themselves. The sudden failure of capitalist circulation mode leads not only to poverty but to a situation where the old capacity of Cameroonian society to 'imagine' itself in a certain way-to mental writers, and from this, the institute itself-has been contradicted and now seems to be thrown into question (Mbembe 1995). Of course, such dilemmas are not limited to Central Africa but could equally apply to parts of Russia, Italy and American cities such as Washington DC. In order for these new forms of social practice to be understood, they must be imagined and visualized-in ways that transcend the imagined community of nation-states or the daily lives envisioned by individuals in de Certeau's analysis. Appadurai asserts that: Works of imagination... not purely emansipatori or fully disciplined but is a contested space where individuals and groups seek to annex globally into their own practices from the modern.... Ordinary people have begun to exert their imagination in the practice of their daily lives (Appadurai 1997: 4-5). In this new situation, cultural studies should abandon its traditional preference for identifying and celebrating sites of resistance in daily life, while eliminating other aspects of the kuotidian as unlawful or even reactionary. New patterns of imagination are being created in a very unexpected way. Who, for example, might have anticipated that the death of a flamboyant princess would mobilize the global popular imagination as it did in September 1997 (see chapter seven)? As Irit Rogoff observed, individuals create unexpected in the daily life of the image snippet [which] is connected to the sequence of the film and with the corner of the bill board or the display of the shop window that we have passed (Rogoff 1998). Such everyday visual experiences, from the Internet to the Met, are still beyond the reach of spin doctors, pollsters, and other demons of the contemporary imagination. At this time, it became clear that a new pixelated mode of global visuality was being formed that differed from the cinematic assembly images and from the simulacrum of postmodern culture of the 1980s. In the nineteenth century, photography turned human memory into a visual archive. In the early twentieth century, Georges Duhamel complained that: I could no longer think what I wanted to think, moving images replaced with my own thoughts. Faced with the question of whether photography is art, Marcel Duchamp said that he hoped photography would make people hate painting until something else would make photography irresistible. Pixelated images have made photography irresistible, both literally as Princess Diana's relationship with the paparazzi proves, but also metaphorically. In the work of contemporary photographers such as Cindy Sherman, David Wojnarowicz and Christian Boltanski, photography is irresistible in the sense that it is sublime. Pixelated images may be overly contested and at odds with sublime media. As a means of creating images, pixelated screens are created from electronic signals and free space. Pixels, a term derived from the phrase image element, compose electronic images of televisions or computer monitors. Pixels are not only points of light but also units of memory, with the number of pixels may depend on the computer's memory or signal bandwidth. Even the most advanced screens have a certain void to it, even if that space is not visible in high bandwidth media such as television, but that can be clearly seen in the low-resolution media favored by many contemporary filmmakers and videos, not to mention the computer screens that most people use. Unlike photography and film that prove the necessary presence of some exterior reality, pixelated images remind us of its necessary articulation and absence. It is here and not here at once. It's interactive but along a clear line set by a global company that manufactures the necessary computer and television equipment. The global freedom of the Internet itself is only possible because the Cold War needs to create an indestructible communication network. Like in pixel zones is certainly ambivalent. For those providers who used to be called artists, filmmakers and video, television programmers and so on–what's at stake is a difficult task titled Eyeball Capture by futuristic Wired magazine (Oct. This task is such heavy for new forms of capitalist economics that it has turned leisure time into a new form of work. This process has been fully realized in the United States film industry. On any given Friday night in the two peak summer seasons and the Christmas holiday season, as many as a dozen major new films can open in American theaters. On Saturday night, their fate will be determined by the first two days of acceptance. The next screen booking, the length of the theatrical release and the speed down to the hell of airplane movies and video programming are all set in motion. For consumers, this means that going to the movies represents a strategic choice about what will be available in the following weeks and beyond. Serious fans of Woody Allen or Star Trek movies can choose to capture what they suspect to be a lower version of the genre just to make sure that there will be another, hopefully better, one. Titanic fans who were heavily involved in creating images, pixelated screens by constantly viewing movies over and over again. As a result, media ranging from tabloid TV show Entertainment Tonight to austere New York Times all carry box-office receipt details that would previously only be published on Variety. This visual engagement has extended not only to individual programming in film, television and the Internet but to what kind of visual media will continue to be available. We're all involved in the search business. Where our eyes go down determines what is possible to see. You can choose to use Netscape as your Internet browser, only to find that certain sites cannot be accessed without Microsoft Explorer. That option will help determine the future of the Internet. All formats, such as Digital Video Disk and WebTV, will succeed or fail according to their ability to attract new users. In this complex interface of reality and virtuality, there is nothing everyday about everyday life anymore. Visual culture used to be seen as a distraction from the serious business of text and history. Now the lokus of cultural and historical change. From: Introduction to Visual Culture (Routledge, 1999) All rights reserved. nmirzoeff/IVC.htm For more than American Suburb X, become a fan on Facebook and follow the ASX on Twitter. For enquiries, please contact American Suburb X at: . .