

Editorial

This issue of *Visual Studies* can be seen as a sampler of what we encourage prospective authors to publish. It's far from comprehensive but it does provide a taste of the varied work that we are eager to receive. Put simply, we at *Visual Studies* are committed to figuring out just what a sustained engagement with the "visual" aspects of our diverse ways of life might yield; and how this contributes to the ways our many different disciplines examine and evaluate social and cultural worlds.

Luke O'Sullivan's "Eyemaginary unity" is a bracingly theoretical move to ground visual studies in experience rather than ideology. He suggests that we turn our attention from the Marxism of Walter Benjamin to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. O'Sullivan believes that while visual representation can indeed be an ideological weapon, its expression in social life involves far more than politics. He recommends that any consideration of the visual should begin with the eye: our capacity to see in the life-world, represent what we have perceived, and utilize the technologies that we create to memorialize experience. In his view, acknowledging the centrality of the existential act of seeing should not define a particular object of visual studies, but rather its elemental pre-conditions: what makes any sort of study of the visual possible and meaningful.

Lauren O'Hagan is a historian who argues that a close look at visual artifacts – in this case, illustrated postcards – illuminates aspects of a period that otherwise might be overlooked by just relying on the written documentary materials that are the common fare of historical accounts. Her story of the Northern Irish opposition to the predominantly Roman Catholic independence movement from Great Britain at the turn of the last century shows that the iconography deployed in the postcards reveal a very effective propaganda medium that complemented the messages in other means of political persuasion. Additionally, the cards also augur the violence that was to come, which has so damaged Irish life.

Jacqueline Low argues that advertising images – as well as publicity shots in fashion imagery – suggest a new development in managing representations of disability. What is novel in these pictures is not what a specific person's particular body image looks like. Rather, it is that they actually celebrate physical diversity by putting disfigured people on the runway along with more conventional models. Low argues that an emerging social trend like this suggests a welcome modification of Erving Goffman's bleakly realistic account of stigma management in his sociological classic *Stigma*. Low demonstrates how an empirical investigation of visual evidence not only documents important changes in how values are represented, but also constitutes a way of deepening theoretical sensitivity and building a more robust social and cultural analysis.

Zlatinka Blaber, Donald Brady and Guergana Gougoumanova set out to use the extraordinary database of cartoons from *The New Yorker* – around 80,000 and counting – to examine how stereotypes of accounting as a profession may have changed since the 1960s. What they find is a shift of emphasis from a professional identity – where accountants are depicted as the

necessary killjoys of organizational life – to an eager embrace of commercialism, and their enlistment as enthusiastic participants in the pirate crew of modern neo-liberalism. Their findings complement what the business and sociological literature has established about changes in the occupation during the period from the 1990s through the present. Cartoons have played an important role in mass culture since the turn of the last century. Analyzing them poses complex interpretive challenges to scholars, and our authors show that it is well worth the effort.

“And”, as Monty Python used to say “Now for something completely different...” Markus Gamper and Michael Schönhuth bring us to the world of visualization, a field that of necessity bridges quantitative and qualitative sensibilities. Their paper is an important attempt to define a new and evolving field: Visual Network Research (VNR). The study of social networks documents how patterns of relationships and communications constitute our worlds. What is fascinating about our authors’ approach is the ease with which they move between what can be accomplished by studying social networks with digital interfaces (obviously so!) to the use of more subjective and ready to hand methods: paper and pencil, post-it notes, and more three-dimensional techniques. The reader is left considering what else can we all learn when disciplines immersed in the quantitative exploration of social life expand their imaginative repertoire.

This issue also allows us to introduce one of the new projects developed in the past months by our Editorial Board: the translation of foreign essays. And what better way to inaugurate this initiative than Maxime Boidy’s “I hate Visual Culture”, initially published in 2017 in the French journal *Revue d’anthropologie des connaissances*. Throughout his article, Boidy proposes a politically anchored archaeology of visual studies as a controversial and pluralistic interdisciplinary field. As our Editors’ note suggests at the beginning of the translation, Boidy’s analysis allows us to revisit (and re-engage in) these debates in regard to our journal’s identity, while also reflecting on the reception of Anglo-American visual studies in the French academic field.

We would like our readers to see this first publication of a translation in *Visual Studies* as an invitation to propose similar articles for future publication in the journal. While *Visual Studies* aims to set the standard for visually-oriented scholarly research around the globe, there is a need to expand the journal’s content beyond the Anglophone world. Since their development, visual studies and visual sociology have been largely institutionalised in Anglophone academic spaces. Yet, the past decades have also seen the emergence of major methodological and theoretical trends in the rest of the world, often resulting in publications limited in their circulation by language barriers. The development of particular currents often result from the institutional and intellectual evolution of disciplines in national academic fields. *Visual Studies* aims to be an inclusive platform for the circulation of visually-engaged research. By translating foreign essays that deeply marked the field in non-English-speaking countries we aim to further expand the spaces of knowledge conveyed within the journal, by making important non-Anglophone publications available to its readers.

However, expanding translations in *Visual Studies* is not only about decentering its content. It is also part of a broader reflexive discussion we want to have in regard to the social conditions of the international circulation of ideas and methods, considering that such circulation is never neutral. The language(s) we use in the transmission of knowledge, as well as the cultural origin of some theories or methodological approaches, are politically shaped and socially localised. Thus, translations of foreign essays to the English language can only be a way to enlarge the journal's discussion if we recognize this non-neutrality of languages and how that frames our understanding of our disciplines, practices and schools of thought. This is why each translation published in the journal will include an introductory text in which the editors and/or translators critically reflect on their choice to translate the text and the translation process—just as we have done for Maxime Boidy's essay in this issue.

We are looking for untranslated essays published in a language other than English and from a wide range of disciplines, that could relevantly reflect the scope of *Visual Studies* and feed the debates in which the journal is involved. But these articles shouldn't just be good. They should be pathbreaking or paradigm-shifting. They should be well reasoned and have a strong takeaway that could illuminate the journal's aims, whether their primary focus is empirical or theoretical, historical or present day, examining the visual in general or images in particular. They should critically contribute to the dialogue surrounding 'the visual' across the social sciences, humanities, and visual arts, even if that means they are controversial. They should contribute to what makes *Visual Studies* a forum for exchanging ideas, discussing methods and theories, and exploring creative approaches to the visual. They should be significant contributions that make other readers think "why haven't I encountered this piece before?".

If you have an article like this in mind, whether it has been published in the past months or ten years ago, please feel free to get in touch with us. When proposing a translation, you might want to explain what specifically is so special about your essay and how it might contribute to the journal's debates: what it is about? Is it written beautifully or are the visuals especially stunning? Has the author developed a breakthrough idea? Is the methodology particularly innovative? Is the author defending a controversial position? Please also don't forget to specify how you plan to handle the translation process: will you contact the author and the original journal? Will you translate the text yourself? If not, do you know someone who could do the translation? Each proposal will be reviewed by the Editorial Board according to their potential contribution to the journal's scope and its interdisciplinary diversity.

Finally, we are very pleased with the cover for this issue of *Visual Studies*. Manon Ott has offered us a still from her film, *Ashes and Embers* (2018), completed for her PhD thesis in visual sociology defended in 2019 at the University of Evry Paris-Saclay (France), and which won a Rieger Prize from the IVSA. This image, and Ott's explanatory text, is reproduced below.



“Film as research: *Ash and Ember*”. Photograph ©Manon Ott.

“This photograph is taken from the film *Ash and Ember* (2018). Yannick, one of the protagonists, is sitting at night on the roof of a tower in the neighbourhood where he grew up. He looks at his city: Les Mureaux, located 25 miles from Paris. It is a small town composed of several working-class districts built in the 1960’s to house the workers of the famous Renault-Flins car factory. While this factory had as many as 24,000 workers in the 1970’s, today it has fewer than 4,000 and is in danger of closing soon. Urban history here intersects with labor history and the history of immigration. Like many children of former Renault workers who live in Les Mureaux, Yannick is an heir to this history. In the film, he tells us about a dream. The night before, he saw himself flying over his city, when suddenly he was in a free fall. He saw himself fall for a long time before he could catch onto a ledge. He survived. I like this part of the film because we are dreaming with Yannick. In front of us the lights of the many apartments in the towers of the city come on and then go out in turn. The inhabitants go to bed one after the other. And soon, in the dark night, these city lights that we watch with Yannick seem to turn into fireflies. Fireflies soaring in the sky. Like little crackling fires. It’s a very dreamlike moment, which reminds us how much to survive we also need dreams and imagination.”