

CRITICAL ARTS

A Journal for Media Studies



Special Issue: Visual Anthropology

March 1981 Vol 1 No 4

CRITICAL ARTS

CRITICAL ARTS is the only journal in South Africa devoted entirely to the study of the relations between the media (in the widest sense) and society at large. Areas of interest include Television, Film, Radio, the Performing Arts, Theatre, Music, the Press, and informal media channels.

CRITICAL ARTS has a radical perspective and concerns itself with media and communication in a Third World context. The journal is polemic. It seeks to establish relevant critical frameworks for the study of the media in an apartheid society and offers interpretations from the point of view of popular culture.

CRITICAL ARTS aims to challenge the existing social structures and social relations which govern the status quo orientation of South Africa's media institutions.



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A Journal for Media Studies

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EDITORIAL

This fourth issue marks the culmination of the first year of Critical Arts: A Journal for Media Studies. The Editors believe that the prime objective of establishing a journal which paves the way towards a theoretical grounding for the study of communications media in South Africa has been established within this initial volume. The perspective which has emerged is a contextual one, studying the media and the arts in terms of history, popular culture and social structures. Special issues have sought to derive relevant problematics for specific areas of study which include South African Cinema, Censorship, South African Drama and Theatre, Advertising, and in this edition, Visual Anthropology. Future issues will deal with Performance in Southern Africa and Broadcasting in Africa.

Our paradigm reposes within a radical context and for this reason we intend extending our interests into Third World issues in general. The Editors are furthermore of the opinion that the study of media should be seen against the background of a critical assessment of development, social history and the political economy. We therefore invite submissions from scholars involved in the study of media within this framework. With this expansion of interests in mind, we have appointed Robert Stam, who is an associate professor in Cinema Studies at New York State University, to the Editorial Board. Bob's special interest is Third World media, particularly, Brazilian cinema.

The unifying theme of this issue is that of visual anthropology. This discipline has attracted a great deal of interest over the last decade and has been largely informed by eminent anthropologists such as Margret Mead, Frances MacGregor, Gregory Bateson and Sol Worth. In the first article Jay Ruby sets out a research design to construct an anthropology of visual communication of a particular middle American community. This paper has relevance to South Africa where similar studies are lacking. Susan Gardner's article points to the conclusion that even though Breaker Morant is about an event which occurred during the Anglo-Boer War, its inherent ideology tells the viewer as much about Australian social relationships as it does about the event itself. Here, the anthropology of visual communication is informed by Australian ideology which has circumscribed lived relationships within the film's text. The article which follows by Victor Nell on Apocalypse Now examines the concept of evil in terms of neo-colonial relations of exploitation. He shows how both fiction and cinema are forms which can be used to explore relations between dominant and dominated.

The article by Lester Switzer on Steyn Commission 1 is included in this issue to provide the background for understanding the objectives of the second Steyn Commission into the Mass Media.

Finally, we should like to thank all those who assisted the Editorial Board in refereeing articles submitted for publication during the past year: Sue Bagg, Ampie Coetzee, Heinrich Dahms, Clem Druker, Drene Nupen, Tony Parr, Paul Roumanoff, Jay Ruby and Ruth Tomaselli.