

Introduction

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PUBLIC: Screens is dedicated to the ways screens are used, viewed, imagined, placed, and made worldwide. In the plural form, *Screens* takes into account the dynamism of objects, ontologies, and communities that are reciprocally represented and constructed by surfaces that are, in this sense, anything but stable. In developed countries, the exclusive consumption and use of contemporary moving images has shifted off the Cineplex screen, the living room, and out of the traditional museum space, onto billboards, buildings, outdoor screenings, and more privately (though used in public) to iPods, cellphones, computers and commuters. In many developing countries where movie theatres have always been sparse, and TV service sporadic and unreliable, informal DVD circulation and generations of mobile screens technologies continue to pass through cities and rural areas. The internet and communication networks enable screens to become sites of a multiplicity of localities, cultures and citizenship practices. While the increased presence of screens in a variety of art forms and public places complicates and enriches patterns of consumption, cameras and screens are also used for surveillance of nearly every aspect of civilian life. Although screens have always consolidated publics (national TV, early film actualities, etc.), they are increasingly becoming the platform by which we are indexing our lives in various ways. Our interface with “public” events is largely through screens, as is our expression of private experience (from YouTube, to Augmented Reality and “social” media networks which screens individual perception for all to see). Collectively, the articles in this issue suggest that screen technology embodies a tension between the mobility/immobility of citizens. While mobile screens make new forms of citizenship possible for mobile citizens, the issue concludes with a reminder that mobility does not extend to everyone. The screen can reaffirm how the politics of actual locations (nations and sites) are relevant to our lived experiences in this world.

PUBLIC: Screens features twenty artists, curators and researchers who investigate and respond to these new spaces of viewing and changing patterns of consumption with a variety of aesthetic, technological and distribution tactics.

This issue is dedicated to Anne Friedberg (August 29, 1952–October 9, 2009), pioneer of screen theory and history.