



Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media

Giuliana Bruno

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What is the place of materiality—the expression or condition of physical substance—in our visual age of rapidly changing materials and media? How is it fashioned in the arts or manifested in virtual forms? In *Surface*, cultural critic and theorist Giuliana Bruno deftly explores these questions, seeking to understand materiality in the contemporary world.

Arguing that materiality is not a question of the materials themselves but rather the substance of material relations, Bruno investigates the space of those relations, examining how they appear on the surface of different media—on film and video screens, in gallery installations, or on the skins of buildings and people. The object of visual studies, she contends, goes well beyond the image and engages the surface as a place of contact between people and art objects. As Bruno threads through these surface encounters, she unveils the fabrics of the visual—the textural qualities of works of art, whether manifested on canvas, wall, or screen. Illuminating the modern surface condition, she notes how façades are becoming virtual screens and the art of projection is reinvented on gallery walls. She traverses the light spaces of artists Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Tacita Dean, and Anthony McCall; touches on the textured surfaces of Isaac Julien's and Wong Kar-wai's filmic screens; and travels across the surface materiality in the architectural practices of Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Herzog & de Meuron to the art of Doris Salcedo and Rachel Whiteread, where the surface tension of media becomes concrete. In performing these critical operations on the surface, she articulates it as a site in which different forms of mediation, memory, and transformation can take place.

Surveying object relations across art, architecture, fashion, design, film, and new media, *Surface* is a magisterial account of contemporary visual culture.

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