
You Get the Picture

By Alexandra Juhasz

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I was not born again when film studies went digital because I was always and already post-film. Starting in graduate school in Cinema Studies at New York University in the 1980s, my medium of choice was (activist) video, and by this I don't mean simply that I thought and wrote and taught about the medium, but that I also made it, and this in relation to the [communities and political issues that matter to me](#). (1) Hence, like many others at the edges of the field of Film Studies, I have always done my scholarly writing as an activist/art practice and visa versa. This I call my [media praxis](#), (2) where I join those who "theorize and make media towards stated projects of world and self-changing. This ongoing project, as old as cinema itself, links culture, theory, and politics, in the 20th century, through mediation technologies and indebted to Marxist theories." (3)

I took my media praxis online because I could and it was there. I don't mean to be cavalier. Quite the opposite. If one engages in film and moving images studies as part of a committed practice of world and self-changing (through a range of social, intellectual, and political practices that include [teaching](#), (4) [mentoring](#), (5) [writing](#) (6), [organizing](#) (7) about and [making media](#) (8)) then one is compelled to make use of (all) the resources at hand. I learned this early through films, books, articles, classes, videos and conversations with a range of teachers, friends, and colleagues both actual and virtual: Laura Mulvey, Raymond Williams, Isaac Julien, Dziga Vertov ... You get the picture:

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True Femi-Digi-Praxis (Mp:me part 2)

SCALEthedoc + Subscribe 45 videos



0:02 / 0:21

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I see no connection between true femi-digi-praxis (the integration of media theory, digital production, and feminist politics in an historical context) and the cunning and calculation of the cine-profiteers. (After "WE: Variant of a Manifesto," Dziga Vertov, 1922)

Category:
Film & Animation

Tags:
MPme Alexandra Juhasz Dziga Vertov Manifesto video camcorder feminist media documentary experimental theory politics

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Once there, of course you quickly realize that [writing media scholarship online](#) (9) really means that you get the picture, and the video, and sounds and [montage](#), (10) too. Once there, who could miss the demands for [new forms of writing](#) (11) for [new audiences?](#) (12)

(13)

So at this point, you've seen a jpeg, and a video by my students—but have you noticed all the links? (and, better yet, have you clicked?) They indicate volumes, troves, nay piles of thinking and writing by me that sit,

freely and readily available, online (I told Catherine I'd write a simple 500 words, and I'm almost there, but as you see, that kind of [tabulation \(14\)](#) is nonsensical in this environment. [Please do click that last link on [tabulation](#) {or see footnote 14}, which leads to the self-referential online reprinting of my contract negotiations with Doug Sery at the MIT Press, and our debates about the obsolescence of word-counts and other holdovers of paper publishing, as I labored with him to create a contract that made sense for digital publishing]).

Thus, while it may be true that by moving one's media studies writing online, access expands and uses and users shift, it remains unclear how thorough or attentive or committed one's online readers will ever be (given the volumes of undifferentiated stuff, not to mention readers' altered reading practices in this medium. [That's why I put in honest-to-goodness footnotes: holding on to an earlier and clunkier but somehow still satisfying system of validation or authentication or verification. {Now these brackets inside of paragraphs are another matter, but I think fruitful when trying to stay flat and yet also signify new depths and layerings of writing systems}]). And this, at last, gets me to what I really want to say here (and also how I want to write it: through a series of arrows to or redactions of what and how I've already written online).

The Internet, and digital media more generally are simply new tools with which we write and share ideas to readers with the hopes of being understood and perhaps thereby changing our reader, our field, and/or thus, the world.

Thus, I'd suggest that the "digital" part, while being primarily the new technology of the day, is perhaps what was needed to push more scholars to engage with the personal and political [implications \(15\)](#) of their practices. ("[Digital Humanities](#)," Alex Juhasz) ([16](#))

I write some of my "media scholarship" on my blog because this happens in pretty much real time and to a small, living and lively community of readers and fellow bloggers. It is at once a platform, a record, and the real possibility of an exchange (as was writing on paper, surely, which was merely slower and less obvious in its associations). Online, we efficiently interact with each other, across discipline, rank, oceans, and medium (which is how I "met" Catherine, by the way, who then asked me to write this, which isn't exactly a blog, although I'm writing it like it is one, given the casual nature of the online world, and given that I believe our writing forms need to change to acknowledge new audiences, new distribution, and new reading practices). For example, I recently shared this comment on [Miriam Posner's blog](#) post, ([17](#)) "Things We Share." I've never met her, but I hope to:

Just got turned on to your blog. How thrilling! When I think (and write and do) about doing as making as thinking I have often made [videos](#) (18) as well as [books](#) (19), and more currently “[video-books](#)” (20) (which are really just big web-pages), so what I think has been lost in this “all Digital Humanities are communities of practice speak” (and particularly that this is a radicalizing moment for humanists) is not simply that people crafted before in that twee sense, but that academic writing is and always was doing, as it was craft, and that these added digital technologies have merely exposed that scholars were always making things, in ritualized ways, for particular users, with machines and for special(ized) uses (and now actually have to be accountable for this). I spoke with Victoria Szabo about this [at length](#) (21) for a panel she co-ran recently, [Evaluating Digital Work for Tenure and Promotion: A Workshop for Evaluators and Candidates at the 2012 MLA Convention](#). (22) I love your four points at the end for the reason that it marks practice as political, and hope you’ll take a peek at some of the similar principles I’m working through at my [Feminist Online Spaces](#) (23) site (a work in progress to be sure).

Get the picture? Some of my film writing is now video on Vimeo. And that is where I started. (24) (And you do need to watch this to “get” all of my argument. Don’t worry, it’s short).

[MLA 2012 Workshop Case Study #5 – Public Intellectuals and Politics](#) from [Victoria Szabo](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Endnotes:

(1) Link to Amazon.com, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video* (Console-ing Passions) [Paperback], Alexandra Juhasz.

(2) Link to my website, [MediaPraxis.org](#).

(3) “What is Media Praxis,” Alexandra Juhasz, [www.mediapraxis.org](#).

(4) Link to the YouTube page for *Learning from YouTube*, my 2006-2012 course about and on YouTube.

(5) Link to “Anxiety Is a State of Media/Mind: On SCMS and Feminist Blogging,” Alexandra Juhasz, *Media Praxis* blog, March 6, 2011.

(6) Link to “A Place in the Online Feminist Documentary Cyber-Closet,” Alexandra Juhasz, *Media Fields Journal* 4.

(7) Link to the website for my documentary *Scale: Measuring Might in the Media Age*.

(8) Link to the website for *The Owls*, the feature film I produced in 2010.

(9) Link to The MIT Press online catalogue, *Learning from YouTube*, Alexandra Juhasz.

(10) Link to “On Publishing My YouTube ‘Book’ Online (September 24, 2009),” *Learning from YouTube*.

(11) Link to “Comments as Writing,” Alexandra Juhasz, *Hactivision*, February 8, 2012.

(12) Link to “A Truly New Genre,” Alexandra Juhasz, *Inside Higher Ed*, May 3, 2011.

(13) “10 Views on YouTube,” wehave2saveurparentz (my students James Shickich and Zachary Shpizner).

(14) Link to “The Absurdities of Moving from Paper to Digital in Academic Publishing (June 11, 2010),” Alexandra Juhasz, *Learning from YouTube*.

(15) Link to JSTOR: “No Woman is an Object,” Alexandra Juhasz, *Camera Obscura* 18 (2003): 71-97.

(16) Link to “Digital Humanities,” Alexandra Juhasz, *Media Praxis* blog, July 17, 2009.

(17) Link to *Miriam Posner*, blog.

(18) Link to “Videos & Films,” Alexandra Juhasz, personal website.

(19) Link to Amazon.com, *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video*, Alexandra Juhasz.

(20) Link to MIT Press digital catalogue, *Learning from YouTube*.

(21) Link to MLA Wiki, “Learning: Case Study 5: Learning from YouTube,” Victoria Szabo.

(22) Link to “MLA Workshop 2012,” Alison Byerly, Middlebury Coll.; Stephen Olsen, MLA; Katherine A. Rowe, Bryn Mawr Coll.; Susan Schreibman, Trinity Coll. Dublin; Victoria E. Szabo, Duke Univ.

(23) Link to my Feminist Online Spaces website.

(24) Link to “MLA Workshop Case Study #5 Public Intellectuals and Politics” video on Vimeo.

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