



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Algorithmic Aesthetics

Bodies and Subjects in the Era of Big Data

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Though the authors in this general issue of *Screen Bodies* engage with a wide array of media, they express a shared group of concerns. Namely, how recent technological advancements and the big data cultures of the Information Age are altering social norms concerning the body, the subject, and intimacy. The first two articles focus on increasingly data-oriented cultures that have given rise to aesthetics derived from quantification and mathematics. In “Qualities Over Quantities: Metric and Narrative Identities in Dataveillant Art Practice,” Amy Christmas examines the “surveillant aesthetic” present in three multimedia art projects—Hasan Elahi’s *Tracking Transience* (2002 to present), Jill Magid’s *Composite* (2005), and Heather Dewey-Hagborg’s *Stranger Visions* (2012–2013). Christmas argues that these artists explore new modes of subject constitution and constraint, and reveal the potential of “dataveillance” to bridge formerly disconnected processes of “quantitative (metric) and qualitative (narrative)” self-formation. Similarly taking up questions of aesthetics, the “quantified self,” and its relation to narrative, Kallie Strode examines the datafication of beauty in “Narrating (Sur)face: The Marquardt Mask and Interdisciplinary Beauty.” Strode reflects on the ethics of quantifying beauty and looks to the plastic surgery method patented by Stephen Marquardt, who has developed a model of facial beauty using the golden ratio. The Marquardt mask, she argues, exemplifies an algorithmic aesthetic that is being applied to the reformation of bodies. Along similar lines, in “Cyborgian Salariats” Stephanie Bender argues that the individual is subordinated and rationalized by modern technology. Bender examines how Sasha Stone’s photo essay “Hundred-Horsepower Office” presents an optimistic vision of a new kind of subject, the Weimar-era white-collar worker, a human-machine assemblage that combines the body and modern office technology.

In our special section, “Screening Artificial Intelligence,” three authors consider questions of ethics raised by recent cinematic representations of sentient

technology. In “Welcome to the Machine: Artificial Intelligence of Screen,” Rebekah Brammer identifies the most common conventions and long-established tropes used to depict AI in science fiction films and television series. Brammer argues that customary themes concern ethics and politics, such as robot slavery, rebellion, and intimacy with humans. She examines how recent works like *Black Mirror* and *Westworld* offer updated expressions of familiar human anxieties about artificial intelligence. In “Loneliness and Love,” Abby Lauren Kidd examines how these traditionally apocalyptic cinematic visions of AI in films like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Matrix* impact widespread perceptions of real-world artificial intelligence. Kidd analyzes three recent films—*Robot and Frank* (2012), *Chappie* (2015), and *Zoe* (2018)—which offer optimistic speculations about the possibilities of human-AI relations that depart from conventional depictions of AI as monstrous and malevolent. Finally, in “The Face of the Future: An Ethical Examination of Lucretia Martel’s *AI*,” Abby Sacks contends that the auteur’s 2019 short film reinforces ableist misconceptions about mentally ill and neurodivergent people. Though the authors in this section focus on different films, they all show that cinematic figurations of AI, old and new, invariably express collective worries about how new technology will affect social norms concerning intimacy, the body, and established power relations.
