

EURAMERICA Vol. 38, No. 1 (March 2008), 1-30
http://www.ea.sinica.edu.tw/euramerica/ch_index.php
© Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica

Art History in an Age of Image-Machines*

Timothy J. Clark

Department of History of Art, University of California, Berkeley
E-mail: travesty@berkeley.edu

Abstract

The article reflects on the continuing power of Ralph Mannheim's (Marxist) proposals for art history, and on the fact that Mannheim's basic model of image production—his picture of a conflictual, material field of concrete image-activities—has proved so difficult to sustain. It is argued that important features of the image-world we presently inhabit tend to make it increasingly difficult to keep hold of the practical materiality of image production, in the face of a realm of images that seems (or claims to be) more and more mobile, disembodied, and disposable. Art history's task and tactics in this situation are far from clear. The article describes the author's own tactics in two recent publications, and goes on to reflect on the pedagogical opportunities offered to art history as a result of its existing in the face of a more and more strident cult (or ideology) of image flow and image immediacy.

Key Words: art history, material, image-world, spectacle

Invited article, Received November 5, 2007

Proofreaders: Chia-chi Tseng, Wen-chi Chang, Pei-Hua Lee

* This is a speech given at the 2006 Sociology of Arts Conference, Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica, 17 November, 2006.