

CFP: “Medium, Immediacy, Intermediality”
A proposed special issue of *Postmodern Culture*

We invite submissions for a proposed special issue of *Postmodern Culture* entitled “Medium, Immediacy, Intermediality.” The issue aims to gather ways of seeing the term “medium” beyond current disciplinary frames. Rather than take the routes of literary or film studies, art history or communication theory—and rather than see media as discrete, pre-constituted categories of aesthetics or mechanics—we seek to put the category of medium into question, and in doing so, to facilitate approaches to the various mutually dependent media whose boundaries and frames might now seem less conclusive.

What is this thing we call a medium? Is it an innate quality of technology or art? Is it instead a function of knowledge, a tool by which users, industries, or critics learn to categorize, show, or see culture? Moreover, when does a medium become political? Is it political when it identifies itself with a tradition of art or a timeline of technological development? Is it political by virtue of its setting, its audience, or its purported content? The simplest answer to these questions would resolve itself through a medial ontology (like any of those drawn from Heidegger or McLuhan, Lessing or Mumford, Kittler or Habermas, Greenberg, Krauss, or Fried). We aim instead to expose the risk of our own implication in the order of mediatic things; and to ask whether a medium might be political, not in its application, but rather from the very instant of its invention, as a composite of institutional knowledges, objective materials, and subjective practices. “New media” cannot just be the most recent entry in the narrative of technological development. Rather, newness and development are mere mechanisms of myth and control in a technophilic and technocratic culture, from which even digital objects (such as gaming or computing) must be guarded. We therefore seek contributions to a “media studies” that would not fully coincide with “new media studies,” and that might consequently multiply and undercut our concepts of medium.

We invite contributors to consider: what approach to media might reinvent itself through its objects, rather than simply describe those objects? What if the crisis in media studies were to occur not in the interruption of media histories, but instead in the historical process by which any medium comes to uphold a mediatic order of culture and art? What if intermediality were not the periodically necessary joining of one discrete medium with another one, but instead the moment in which nothing joins? What if immediacy were not the fantasy of unimpeded access to material reality, but instead the moment of critical clarity that occurs when historical objects encounter regimes of thought under which they don't quite cohere? What if a medium were not the name of aesthetic distance or temporal lag but instead the condition by which temporal and spatial categories become known? What kind of media studies might survive the negation of inherited categories, and still identify as a materialism of reading? What kind of reading might be possible if medium specificity and medium ontology could be bracketed or swept aside? What immanent knowledges might become legible, but only in the suspension or exhaustion of extant disciplines? What methods might foreground the political and epistemological factors that guide the historical encounter between critic and object? And

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what theoretical ligaments might tie the technological composition of media to their social worlds and aesthetic effects?

Please send 500-word abstracts along with a brief bio sketch and contact information by June 1, 2012 to Matt Tierney (matthew_tierney@brown.edu) and Mathias Nilges (mnilges@stfx.ca). Following initial acceptance, complete essays should be submitted for review by November 1, 2012. The final decision regarding the publication of all essays lies with the editors of *Postmodern Culture*.

For further information on *Postmodern Culture* please see:
http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/postmodern_culture/



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