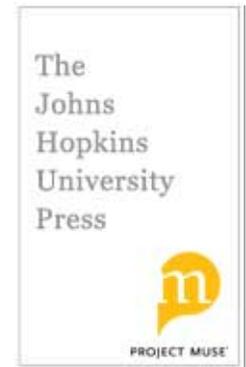Ganz normale Bilder: Historische Beitrage zur visuellen
Herstellung von Selbstverstandlichkeit (review)

Martina Heβler

of probes, pacemakers, catheters and artificial hearts in the human body, it will be technically possible to build in minicomputers in the human organism. . . . Our relationship with the world, with society, and with ourselves is clearly fundamentally changed by science and technology" (p. 271).

To this one can only respond that philosophers such as Latour would argue that theories too are hybrids, and that technologies alone, however sophisticated, can never sufficiently explain change. In short, Fohler's account fails to provide the insight that she believes we need to attain in order "to control hybrid production and integrate hybrids and their social consequences carefully in society" (p. 277).

LARA TAURITZ BAKKER

Lara Tauritz Bakker is a doctoral candidate at the Center for Studies of Science, Technology, and Society at the University of Twente, the Netherlands. Her research interests lie with the development of everyday technologies such as desk chairs and automated teller machines.

Ganz normale Bilder: Historische Beiträge zur visuellen Herstellung von Selbstverständlichkeit.

Edited by Davie Gugerli and Barbara Orland. Zurich: Chronos, 2002. Pp. 277. €25.90.

"Ganz normale Bilder bedürfen keiner Begründung. . . . Wenn alle meinen, das gleiche zu sehen und zu verstehen, dann ist es die Wirklichkeit." ("Completely normal pictures have no need of justification. . . . If everyone believes they see and understand the same thing, then it is reality.") With this remark David Gugerli and Barbara Orland introduce their anthology, *Completely Normal Pictures*, whose purpose is to show this "normalität" to be the product of a complicated, cultural, social, and technical construction process and of group-specific cultures of communication.

Thus, the volume stands on the one hand in the tradition of constructivist technical and scientific history, in the mode of Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar: "The result of the construction of a fact is that it appears to be unconstructed by anyone." What also counts for the "ganz normalen Bilder" is, as Gugerli and Orland write, that they "bring about the disappearance of their instrumental prerequisites, their procedures and procedural conditions" (p. 10).

Gugerli had written of a "pictorial turn" in the history of technology in 1999, by which time the long-neglected role and significance of pictures in science and technology was becoming an ever more interesting topic of research. Now we have this anthology, which derives from an international workshop in 2000, whose goal is to illuminate the no-longer-visible production processes and contexts of pictures as well as the visual references they make on already "normalized" visualisation techniques. Both the

introduction and Sabine Höhler's and Jürgen Link's contributions discuss "normalization concepts" at the theoretical level. The editors tie in with Hans Blumenberg, who had developed a concept of evidence "which explains itself from out of a process of normalisation." "Afterwards," he continues, "the technical becomes invisible (no longer questioned), because it is implanted into the Lebenswelt, and begins to regulate it" (p. 11). That which is "normal," according to Gugerli and Orland, has reached the state of "natürlichkeit," naturalness (p. 12). Credibility results from the "everyday-ifying" of specific forms of picture production.

In her article on oceanography, Sabine Höhler refers back to Roland Barthes's book *The Myths of Everyday*, with its reference to the "natural-isierende" (naturalizing) function of myths and its theory of myth as an opportunity to secure for oneself the historicity of scientific-technical evidences. Jürgen Link, following Foucault, focuses on processes of normalization, imagines the "concept of normalism," and, using the example of curves—which are based on statistical mass data—shows the production of "normalcy."

The essays in this volume, which refer to these theoretical concepts again and again, are divided into three main sections: spaces in view, curves, and bodily reality. Temporally they range from the eighteenth to the twentieth century; thematically they integrate a broad spectrum of topics, from oceanography to the technical constitution of the Alpine view (Daniel Speich), maps in urban ecology (Jens Lachmund), the fever curve (Volker Hess), and the economic curve (Jakob Tanner), as well as the most modern medical techniques (Gugerli and Orland), to name only a few.

In all, the essays show the extent to which the fabrication of normalcy is a process far from completion and the extent to which "normalcy" produces itself through social, cultural, and visual circumstances. Scientifically and technically generated pictures are always dependent upon external legitimation. New visualization techniques and new types of pictures must connect to prestructured communication processes, debates, and discursive practices; only then do they become credible, only then do they become "normal pictures." *Ganz normale Bilder* never does address one particular matter essential to the question at hand, namely, what pictures *qua* pictures contribute to the generation of evidence and, consequently, how it is that pictures can impart evidence more effectively than texts or numbers. This question, however, may be left to future research.

MARTINA HEßLER

Dr. Heßler is a scientific assistant at the Historisches Institut der Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule in Aachen.