

BOOK REVIEW

Mauro Carbone and Graziano Lingua, *Toward an Anthropology of Screens: Showing and Hiding, Exposing and Protecting*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2023, 194pp., 124€, ISBN: 978-3-031-30815-4

In an era where digital screens are as ubiquitous as the air we breathe, *Toward an Anthropology of Screens* by Mauro Carbone and Graziano Lingua offers a seminal exploration into screens' crucial functions and profound impact on human culture. This scholarly work dissects the screen's evolution, anthropological significance and philosophical implications, offering an enlightening narrative on our mediated reality.

The book establishes its foundation with the idea of our body as the proto-screen, exploring how such an idea has evolved into today's wearable devices. This exploration is not just a technological chronicle, it also delves into the intrinsic human tendency to mediate reality through screens, highlighting their integral role in our interactions with the world. The authors' exploration of the notion of 'arche-screen' (understood as a trans-historical theme) is particularly insightful, positioning screens as dynamic and evolving human tools for interfacing with the world. Carbone and Lingua explore screen interaction through two function pairs – showing and hiding, exposing and protecting – forming the core of their analysis. While the first pair is commonly associated with screen experiences, the authors' focus on the second pair introduces a novel element to the discourse. By emphasizing the functions of exposure and protection, the authors move beyond the still dominant 'oculocentric' perspective. This allows them to examine more comprehensively the role of screens in mediating the relationship between bodies and the environment, exploring how our interactions with screens shape our understanding of self and the world around us.

Indeed, Carbone and Lingua delve into how screens influence our perception, cognition and social interactions, reshaping our experiences and identities. Sociopolitically, the authors dissect screens' role in power dynamics and public discourse, acting as platforms for political engagement and surveillance and as both connectors and dividers on the global stage. These chapters offer readers insights into screens' historical evolution, their transformative aesthetic influence, their entwinement with our cognitive and emotional fabric, and their intricate role in shaping power, identity and community in the digital epoch.

The penultimate chapter introduces the notion of 'quasi-prosthesis', understood as the temporary use of human bodily organs (such as eyes or skin) as additional components of digital devices. On this basis, Carbone and Lingua raise questions about the crisis of the modern concept of 'individual' (literally meaning 'indivisible') and our transition to a 'dividual' condition. These ideas are pivotal in understanding the dynamics of our digital engagements. The concluding chapter builds on these notions, offering a series of reflections that address multifaceted issues rather than providing definitive solutions. It encourages critical thought and self-reflection, guiding readers through the intricate landscape of our screen-mediated existence.

Toward an Anthropology of Screens is a compelling blend of historical analysis, philosophical reflection and cultural critique. Carbone and Lingua's work guides a more conscious engagement with screens, providing rigorous scholarship and persuasive argumentation. It is a significant contribution to the discourse on digital culture and an essential text for anyone seeking to understand the complex role screens play in shaping the human experience.

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