

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF NEW VISUALITY AS THE REFLECTION ON 'DIGITAL' VISUAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The Anthropology of New Visuality is a project formulated by Arturo Escobar concerning visual aspects of the Anthropology of Cyberculture. The issues addressed include new forms of visuality in the contexts of digital technologies of seeing. The main thesis is based on conviction that the Escobar's project finds new research areas in Visual Culture Studies and is discussed basing on the research of theoreticians indentifying themselves with this field. The research context is divided into three theoretical aspects: *virtual cultures*, *surveillance cultures* and *interface cultures*. Consequently, *virtual cultures* include the issue of new visualities, which are the effect of functioning of various types of virtual realities. Furthermore, *surveillance cultures* are a current reflection, which refers Michel Foucault's theories directly to web-cameras monitoring private, public and satellite space. Then, within the notion of *interface cultures* questions of: on-line identity, telepresence, and artificial life, obtained by means of the Internet, are discussed.

Keywords: The Anthropology of New Visuality • Virtual Cultures • Surveillance Cultures • Interface Cultures

INTRODUCTION

Arturo Escobar in his essay *Welcome to Cyberia. Notes on the Anthropology of Cyberculture*, published in 'Current Anthropology' (1994) and reprinted in *Cybercultures Reader* (2000), formulates the concepts and research perspectives of the Anthropology of Cyberculture. The first concept, which is labelled by Escobar as 'postorganic anthropology', can be found in research by anthropologist David Thomas and can be derived from analysis of extended categories of notions of 'cyberspace' and 'cyborg'. The second concept – 'cyborg anthropology' is formed as a consequence of research on the development of knowledge and technology as a cultural phenomenon, but its main goal is an ethnographic research on crossing the boundaries between humans and machines, which are specific to the late 20th and the early 21st century society. The last of the three concepts, was formulated due to the criticism of the previously mentioned two and as an effect of the development of visual anthropology, which has been searching for new research areas^[1]. It is this project that is referred to by Escobar: 'Given the importance of vision for virtual reality, computer networks, graphics, and interfaces and for imaging technologies – form satellite surveillance, warfare, and space exploration to medical technologies such as tomography, and the visualization of the foetus (...) – it is not surprising that the branch of anthropology most attuned to the analysis of visuality as a cultural and epistemological regime has been the first to react to uncritical celebration of cyberspatial technologies'^[2].

Escobar's project on development of the Anthropology of Cyberculture launched numerous comments. One of them was an attempt to assign the subject scope of the last concept, which was given the widest possibilities of development. Ryszard W. Kluszczynski coined a term 'Anthropology of New Visuality' emphasizing its relationships to Visual Anthropology. Subsequently, Kluszczynski concludes that: 'In its scope there are [...] new forms of visuality, primarily found in the contexts of new imaging technologies: technologies of virtual realities (*virtual cultures*), private and public surveillance technologies – ranging from satellite images to medical ones (*surveillance cultures*), network technologies (*interface cultures*)'^[3].

Nowadays, from the hindsight of more than ten years of changes of contemporary research of visual aspects of new media and cyberculture, we find ourselves under the impression that the Anthropology of New Visuality has found its own development niche. On one hand there

appear numerous studies and readings of anthropologists concerned with the previously mentioned areas of interest, but at the same time they do not put an end to the expansion of the discipline. Escobar's project finds new research areas also within Visual Culture Studies, where the theoretical paradigms proposed by the author of *Welcome to Cyberia* are implemented to full extent. The presented phenomenon is also present in other areas of reflection on new media and cyberculture, which results from the fact that certain authors publishing under the label of Visual Culture Studies, or indentifying themselves with this field, are at the same time recognized as representatives of visual anthropology by other collective works' editors. This situation should not be surprising though, when we take into consideration similarities among those scientific disciplines.

The explanation for this state of affairs can be sought behind the following rationales. Firstly, incessantly and dynamically developing Visual Culture Studies eagerly reflect on new media and cyberculture. Secondly, their scope houses all areas of reflection touched upon by Escobar, i.e. 'virtual cultures', 'surveillance cultures' and 'interface cultures', additionally enhanced by an extended area of considerations on cultural (including social-anthropological) meaning of digital images, which represent the basis for the visual dimension of those theoretical contexts. And thirdly, it is worth reminding that according to Nicholas Mirzoeff the research subject of Visual Culture Studies are visual events, in which a contemporary user of culture seeks information, meaning or pleasure in the interface with a visual technology^[4], i.e. particular subjects, objects of looking and means of their presentation. Beside analogue visual media the scope of those media includes also the digital picture, computer animation, virtual reality and the Internet as well as all hybrid forms in other known visual media^[5].

Therefore, the assigned perspectives of development of anthropology of new visibility have been accomplished through research on the visual culture. The issue is to determine whether the research fits the methodology proposed by visual anthropology or by Visual Culture Studies. Constant terminological ambiguities concerning 'visual culture' cause even more problems in circumscribing the methodology of this scientific field. It shares many common features with post-modernist reflection on art history, the representation and picture theory, which can be described as Visual Studies^[6] and the development of interdisciplinary research started by Cultural Studies. What is more, Visual Anthropology can also be considered a subdiscipline within Visual Culture Studies, but its scope in comparison with this scientific discipline is rather limited and primarily focused on social problems^[7].

Abovementioned examples make us realize that Visual Culture Studies have not been developing under direct influence of anthropological reflection but rather in some aspects it can be understood as its extension, in which Mirzoeff proposes an interdisciplinary approach using theoretical achievements of art history, film studies, media studies, sociology, and other disciplines, which deal with visual aspects of contemporary culture^[8]. In this scope there is also visual anthropology, which similarly to Visual Culture Studies wishes to be perceived as a separate discipline. For these reasons the two disciplines should not be linked or indentified as one.

'VIRTUAL CULTURES'

The research stream of Anthropology of New Visibility described as 'virtual cultures' is concerned with the problem of 'virtuality' analysed in the aspect of new types of visibility. In this context I introduce the opinions of Mirzoeff included in *Virtuality: From Virtual Antiquity to the Pixel Zone*^[9]. The author starts his considerations with a demagogical statement that 'Virtuality is everywhere' and defining this term he comes to the conclusion that 'the virtuality is an image or space, that is not real, but appears to be. In own time, these include the cyberspace, the Internet, the telephone, television and virtual reality'^[10]. Further on, in the introduction to the quoted argument Mirzoeff specifies that the virtual reality is the space which becomes present when we talk on the phone and it can be located in 'the in-between' space for communicating people.

Mirzoeff describes 'virtuality' in categories of the cultural phenomenon, tracing back the history of subsequent forms of visual representation, which he treats as techniques for creating an illusion of reality. The term that characterises the presented point of view is for sure the phenomenon of visual representation, but also it is the notion of image, which is typical of majority theoreticians of Visual Culture Studies. Mirzoeff's deliberations on this topic begin with the following statement: 'Virtual antiquity was a surprisingly common experience in the late eighteenth century. (...) Neo-classicism provided access to an interiorized virtual world, the space of virtual antiquity. The experiences of Goethe and Jefferson indicate that virtuality can be understood as the transformation of space away from exterior three-dimensional reality to the polydimensional interior world of the self'^[11].

Assuming such point of view allows understanding of 'virtuality' in the categories of 'mental immersion' into a reality coming from a different order than the currently existing one. This aspect is called by Mirzoeff 'the mental space' of the viewer, in which 'the space of perception in which such representations and social practices of spectatorship were combined in the act of perception'^[12]. It is worth mentioning here that 'virtuality' is not identified with virtual reality, but is only meant to show the aspects of visual representations that are based on representational relations which moves the spectator into an other than real dimension of reality. In this an important distinction is the possibility of visual changes, which can be made in the virtual reality by the spectator. Classical painting and sculpture transported the spectator to an imagined zone of intrinsic reality, but panorama (1792) and diorama (1822) offered assumed illusion, which seemed real alongside with the possibility of visual changes. The changes, however, were not caused by the presence of the spectator. In this context Paul Virilio's conclusion, quoted by Mirzoeff, seems most cogent stating that 'The name panorama (...) refers both to the edifice on which the painting is hung and to the pictorial representation itself'^[13]. 'Virtual' sense of mobility, provided by the analysed examples, lies in offering to the spectator the possibility of experiencing reality or visual representation referring to it, without the need to travel.

A significant feature of this approach is the aspect of the visual dimension of 'Visuality', which is analysed by Mirzoeff according to the centuries-long tradition of reflection on representation, accordingly building the continuity of theory (perceived in a historical perspective) on 'virtual' aspects of every description of pictorial and visual representations. In a similar manner Mirzoeff cites well-known and repeatedly interpreted circumstances of visual media reception as an announcement of virtual reality emergence. As an example of this kind of interpretation let us use the description of reception of the Lumière Brothers' film *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895), during which the spectators run away from the cinema room in fear of the coming train^[14].

Reading cinema as a medium, which creates the 'virtual' dimension of reality may raise objection as well because 'The world of film (...) in spite of the illusion of reality created by it, does not belong to the same reality as the spectator who cannot impact on the filmed events'^[15]. A consequence of such attitude of the viewer towards filmed illusion is impassability of the border between reality and the depicted film world (*diegesis*). So, it is necessary to remember, that: 'One of the most important transformations, which was brought to the audiovisual arts by the development and application of digital technologies in artistic domains is the change of relations between the spectator and the picture. (...) This complex process had the most impact on the cinema. It was the cinema that in its whole history (...) has always made the screen a form of unchangeable frame of the offered experience, the frame, which was stable and invulnerable to any attempt aimed at disturbing this stability'^[16].

Such belief leads us to the conclusion that the analyses of visual representations presented by Mirzoeff can be understood as 'interfaces with virtuality' in the following sense: 'The screen (...) is the only interface available to the movie watcher (...), the only interface of the traditional cinema'^[17]. In this sense 'interfaces with virtuality' function as a specific archetype^[18] for the media using virtual dimension of reality (virtual reality, the Internet) and that can be treated as new types of visual representation.

Similarly, you should treat Timothy Leary's suggestion that 'most Americans have been living in Virtual Reality since the proliferation of television'^[19]. The quoted argument becomes a

starting point in Mirzoeff's reflection on examples of creation of 'virtual' aspects of contemporary television, which broadcasts video pictures also by means of the Internet as *network television*. However, describing this kind of examples of media hybrids as contemporary means of creating 'virtuality' Mirzoeff does not notice the aspects of control and power, which are hidden in those 'panoptic' visual structures^[20].

Documentary series like *An American Family* (1973) and *The Family* (1974), continued by MTV as a documentary soap opera *The Real World* (1992), and finally implementing its most radical assumptions in the form of *Big Brother* program, were called 'reality television', whose dynamic growth could have been caused by questioning of indexality of images broadcast by the digital media. Here we face the most basic problem for the discussed Mirzoeff's analyses, which formulate the described tendencies as an announcement of 'virtual' dimension of television, not impairing representation^[21].

Finishing the presentation on 'virtual' aspects of visual representations we should notice that the subject of interactive visual changes is brought up in the paragraph discussing virtual computer environments and virtual reality, which are the last link in the evolution of visual media. This phenomenon can be analysed on the example of Internet cameras presenting fragments of urban areas (eg. Tokyo) and works of art (eg. Of Italian 'Infobyte' group doing 'virtual representations' of Giotto's frescos in St. Francis Cathedral in Assisi) which can make us realize that in the analysis of the term 'virtuality' Mirzoeff is interested in the phenomenon of representation, and that the digital media are taken into consideration as a next phase of development of artistic sign forms based on the relation to the virtual reality.

Such beliefs can be found in theoretical works of Vilém Flusser, who claims that: 'Electronic image, and later on a digital one came into existence in order to give a more accurate testimony of reality than photography or cinema, in order to catch the world in presentations, which could give the sense of direct access to the reality, or even the feeling of participation in this reality (Flusser's 'the gesture of video'). The marvel of electronic and digital image and their tools is that in their urge to testify about reality, the tool for recording the world intervenes with the world, and testifies its own being-in-the-world, and is, therefore, to some extent auto-referential. It may also be understood as coexistence of a person who is looking, recording, his or her gaze together with the recording tool and the observed world'^[22].

Similarly, Steve Lipkin examines digital image in the context of phenomenological representation, but notices that: 'the place where phenomena and marvels appear is not only consciousness (mental representations), but a certain technical orchestra, which simultaneously – as a part of the presented world – enables coexistence of things in their specificity (relevance) and, to use Ingardner's term, appearances of the things as certain phenomenal methods of their manifesting oneself in iconic representations (cultural representations). Both this orchestra and its phenomena – cultural representations, affect structures in mental representation awareness'^[23].

Digital images form the basis for visuality of virtual reality and the Internet. Describing this phenomenon Mirzoeff claims that the user starting interaction with the virtual computer environment has an interface allowing physical access to the visual, wholly 'intrinsic' world, which can be experienced by the user by means of 3D space. In this environment the point of view is controlled by the user, not by the medium, but its most important feature is interactivity. Thanks to it the user can make visual changes in the virtual reality, which does not seem to be traditional pictorial space, although it remains a 3D geometrical system. Mirzoeff claims that to a large extent visuality in virtual environments pursues from abstraction to creation of pictorial representations (based on iconic relations), which generate new methods of seeing regardless of human eye. A decline of the significance of the image as a 'window to the world' is connected with the discussed topic^[24].

The last aspect of the visual representations discussed by Mirzoeff is the topic of 'virtual body'. This issue was discussed on the example of the project called *The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan* by a French artist Orlan, who has been performing the transformation of her own body thorough a series of plastic surgeries. In her performances the share of the visual component is very important. Its role is not in striving for "perfection" of the female face, which was legitimized by the patriarchal system, but is inseparably connected with the topic

of identity. Orlan has made an attempt to create a new person, which will come into being in a series of plastic surgeries, and her face will be a computer-made resultant of the artist's face and chosen representations from the western European classical art: *Diana* by a sixteenth-century French School of Fontainebleau painting (she refused obedience both to gods and men), Francis Gerard's *Psyche* (as opposite to Diana), Gustave Moreau's *Europa* (adventure), Sandro Boticelli's *Venus* (timeless physical beauty), and Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (a hidden portrait of a man in a female body)^[25].

Orlan's project 'spreads (...) between the real, biological body and virtual body, between nature and technozone'^[26]. The artist is aspiring to transform the body so as to make it resemble a 'virtual' pictorial representation (image), which does not exist in any other form. For this reason it is justified to discuss this issue in the chapter dedicated to pictorial representations, the more so because the before-mentioned transformation of the body is taking place by means of visual representations derived from traditional art. In the topic of 'virtual body' there are also the works of Stelarc, who claims that 'moping images make the body obsolete...'^[27]. In his realization 'Stomach Sculpture' (1993) the artist shows the interior of human body (medical images) determining still another plane of discourse, this time in the context of Michael Foucault's biopower, which is our introduction to the issues of 'surveillance cultures', which will be taken up in the further part of the text.

'SURVEILLANCE CULTURES'

In the scope of Visual Culture Studies the current of reflection called 'surveillance cultures' is represented by Lisa Cartwright and Anne Friedberg, who refer Michel Foucault's theories direct to photography^[28], panorama and diorama^[29]. The most often quoted publication in this context is *Discipline and Punish* (1975). The aim of this book was: 'try to study the metamorphosis of punitive methods on the basis of a political technology of the body in which might be read a common history of power relations and object relations. Thus, by an analysis of penal leniency as a technique of power, one might understand both how man, the soul, the normal or abnormal individual have come to duplicate crime as objects of penal intervention; and in what way a specific mode of subjection was able to give birth to man as an object of knowledge for a discourse with a <scientific> status'^[30].

The presented scheme of exercising authority and control, in which the subject (*sujet*) – human "self" comes from subjection (*assujettissement*) reveals itself – in media images. According to Cartwright and Marita Sturken 'Photographic images have been instrumental in the production of what Foucault called the *docile bodies* of the modern state – citizens who participate in the ideologies of society'^[31], and in the need of possessing of the perfect body, and in creating images of the perfect look. While the model of a perfect prison – Panopticon (1791) – according to Friedberg was present in the two alternative visual forms as panorama (1792) and diorama (1823), which started the process of emergence of the cinema^[32].

According to Escobar reflection on 'surveillance cultures' spreads from satellite to medical images. Such perspective was also taken into consideration by Mirzoeff, who, defining visual event, draw to attention that in the contemporary culture even things that are by definition not visual, become visual which can be exemplified with imaging the inside of human body, which is done using medical technologies^[33]. Visual event is example of the process of visualization of human existence, in every dimension, and they are the main object of Visual Culture Studies research. In this sense, the reflection on 'digital' visual culture at large can be treated as an example of a discourse on 'surveillance cultures'.

One of the examples of reflection set in this paradigm is also the article of Lisa Parks^[34], which describes the 'Digital Earth' project; the project of virtual environment embracing the whole planet with an enormous number of satellite images, computer photographs, digital animations and software that enables acquiring information about the planet Earth. In the context of these consideration remarks of Paul Edwards (quoted by Parks) seem crucial. He claims that computers helped to create and sustain closed-world discourse. In this way, in a very short time there developed on an enormous scale a military control system, which became, in a metaphorical meaning, a system of world's politics used during the Cold War^[35].

The previously quoted *closed-world discourse* is nothing else, but a 'power discourse'. Its action mechanism was explained by Foucault in the following way: 'in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to its ponderous, formidable materiality. (...) It does not matter that discourse appears to be little account, because the prohibitions that surround it very soon reveal its link with desire and with power. There is nothing surprising about that, since, psychoanalysis has shown, discourse is not simply that which manifests (or hides) desire – it is also the object of discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or system of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be sized'^[36]. However, any appropriation of discourse, or in other words rule over power, of which it is an inseparable carrier can be done only by means of procedures of exclusion (prohibition, rejection or arbitrary division into true or false).

In the context of discourse on 'surveillance culture' Geoffrey Batchen describes 'archaeology of virtual reality' proving that already in the 19th century emerged prototypes of apparatuses (kaleidoscope – 1815) which enabled 'spherical seeing', surrounding the viewer. The author reminds that for Foucault panopticism is not only a project of a perfect prison but also a diagram of a mechanism of perfect power, in which he includes the idea of modern configuration of human subjectivity entangled in constant negotiating of what is 'real' and what is 'virtual'^[37]. Such interpretation of the idea of Foucault's panopticism attracts our attention to the particular link between 'virtuality' and the system of power/knowledge. Starting on from photography visual media gain properties allowing them to produce a system of power and control of democratic society.

However, this control is gaining a special dimension in the contemporary images broadcast by electronic and digital media, described as "the vision machine". This dimension is called by Virilio blindness because 'The production of *sightless vision* is itself merely the reproduction of intense blindness, that will become the latest and last form of industrialisation: *the industrialisation of the non-gaze*'^[38]. In the same context of 'blindness' conditioned by the electronic media, Mirzoeff places Foucault's panopticism, which became a natural target or object of social concern because 'seeing' and 'being seen' was in Panopticon divided to such an extent that 'seeing everything' meant as a matter of fact 'being unseen' yourself^[39]. Contemporary electronic media implement this idea through the possibility of 'seeing without watching' (blindness) where a camera controlled by a computer monitors the environment ('sees everything'). The examples prove that the area of reflection about the 'surveillance culture' largely expands, and the theoretical perspectives of Escobar's Anthropology of New Visuality permeate and are impossible to delimit.

'INTERFACE CULTURES'

A similar situation applies to the reflection on the Internet, which could be examined also in the context of concerns discussed in the previous paragraphs, although panopticism is neither the only nor the dominant theoretical trend. A different solution still can be examining the question of the Internet in the context of 'virtual cultures' just like Mirzoeff does it. However, the issues he discusses concentrate around the anthropological and social topics: differentiating social groups with access to the *Web Wide World*, the question of on-line created identity and 'artificial life'. According to Mirzoeff privileged access to the Internet is differentiated according to the gender, sex, ethnic origin to such an extent that in certain parts of the world it is still fictional. Although this problem will decrease alongside with development of the Internet, still 95 per cent of computers with access to the Internet (data from 1999) are placed in the highly industrialized countries. Therefore, on one had the Internet oversteps the borders and on the other it enables creation of new limits. Mirzoeff claims that the society of 21st century can be divided into those, who have the access to the Internet and those, who for whatever reason do not it^[40].

In the context of presented assumptions the Internet is the 'road' to a new form of social Darwinism claiming that usage of computers for data processing is a stage of social evolution

separating the group of people having broadband access to the Internet as the higher on-line sections of humanity from those, who have come to a halt on lower levels of industrial economy. This distinction became the basis for a model of Darwin's 'natural selection', in which people with the access to the Internet, highly skilled in on-line computer environment, have become a new technological elite and are standing higher [in the social hierarchy] than those who do not possess such skills, or do not have, for instance for economical reasons, computer hardware or a modem allowing connection to the Internet. The model expresses contempt for those, who for various reasons, are excluded from the global www network^[41].

In this context it is worth reminding the concern of Manuel Castells, who monitored the development of the access to the Internet in Columbia. In *The Internet Galaxy* he wrote: 'I believe that the Internet is a fundamental instrument for the development in the Third World. [...] However, this does not mean that by diffusing the Internet without altering the context of its appropriation we can reverse the current situation, in which about 50 percent of humankind barely survives with less than two dollars a day. Unless we act on a broader development strategy, we could find ourselves in the situation I found myself landing in Bogotá in April 1999. [...] I care very much about Colombia, so I was eager to see any small sign of light at the end of its tunnel of violence. Yet, it turned out that, confronted with the flight from Bogotá of the upper middle class, barricaded in its suburban gated communities, extortionists and kidnappers had resorted to the Internet to distribute their threats by the hundreds through electronic mailing lists; then had proceeded to selective kidnapping to enforce their threats, so cashing in on their Internet-based, mass-produced extortion business'^[42].

Those events have convinced us that the Internet is not indifferent to the growth of crime rate. In January 1998 the Chinese government produced a list of Internet crimes involving political subsidies and cheating government agencies^[43]. However it is not the only problem which makes us perceive this tool as a 'dangerous' one. Many of its users have learned that it can also be used to create a new 'virtual identity', which can be used with no limits. Dangers connected with online identity appear when the frames of actual reality and virtual game do not have clearly defined boundaries – both for us and for the people we meet on the net. In this situation it is hard to assess if there are positive effects of incorporating others' roles and to what extent the deceived suffer^[44].

Mirzoeff describes a case of "Julie Graham" – a virtual on-line identity, which was created by psychologist Stanford Lewis. He used to log in the CompuServe network, in a female discussion group, using nickname "Julie" and he discovered that his female interlocutors came into much closer relations with him than when he logged in as a male. Soon after that Lewis created a very detailed on-line identity for "Julie Graham" proclaiming that she is a female psychologist whose face was seriously deformed in a car accident and couldn't have been corrected even by means of plastic surgery. The CompuServe discussion group allowed her to enter into relations and overcome her disabilities. The on-line identity was very well tailored to fit the needs of the users of the network, which resulted in its great popularity and many people started insisting on meeting her outside the CompuServe network. Therefore Lewis realized that he would have to finally 'kill' his on-line identity so as to avoid disclosure. This intent failed, however and the deceit was disclosed^[45].

The described on-line identity "Julie" was mainly based on text. However, Mirzoeff claims that the future of the Internet lies in creating new forms of visibility. As a determinant conditioning the growth of this kind of tendencies we can name the share of flash animations in creation of www sites. But according to Mirzoeff the main factor propelling the evolution of the Internet from a text medium into a visual one was popularity of commercial erotic and pornographic websites, which statistically proved to be the most often visited domains^[46].

It was the increasing presence of digital photographs, video clips, animated films on web sites as well as web-cameras broadcasting images from private and public space via the net that decided about the evolution of visual aspects of the Internet. When computers with more virtual memory resources were mass produced, numerous radio broadcast and music files players also included components for visualizing the sound. This kind of technological changes soon resulted in development of the Internet as an audio-visual medium.

Mirzoeff summarises the described tendency in the following way: 'Where it seemed at first that the Net had simply adapted the traditional spaces of representation for its own use, it is now creating new models of visual experience'^[47]. As a consequence of this conclusion we can say that the Internet creates specific modes of visibility, which Richard Howells calls a new kind of 'visual text' characterized according to him by three features: integration, interactivity and evanescence (impermanence)^[48].

Describing the listed features of Internet visual broadcast. Howells uses the example of Big Brother web sites (2000, English edition) which according to him are medially integrated because they include such components as text, pictures, computer graphics, sound and image provided by the cameras monitoring activities of participants of this edition of the program. On this example we can also describe interactivity of Internet broadcast, which as a matter of fact lies in the opportunity to make choices. Users of Big Brother sites can freely move around among thematically organized information, and alongside with it they also have access to archive texts and interviews. What is more they can also correspond with the producers and order merchandise, therefore doing shopping in this way. Except from it internet users can chose web-cameras through which they would be able to watch the participants of the show. Visibility of Big Brother sites is obviously impermanent, ephemeral, and prone to changes. This kind of features can also be related to digital images, but in this case it is the matter of frequent update of the content of the web-cameras and changeable character of many entries on the described website^[49]. In this way Howells presents model features of pictorial message on the Internet, noticing the specifics of this phenomenon.

The topic of the image broadcast by web-cameras is an important trend in the reflection on "interface cultures", describing phenomena, which could also be included in the ' virtual cultures' What we mean is clearly telepresence, a specific form of presence in the virtual reality, cyberspace and the Internet. Thomas J. Campanella tries to link the specifics of the visual internet transmission broadcast by web-cameras with the phenomenon of telepresence of urban (Hong Kong) and mountainous (Mt Everest) landscapes^[50].

This point of view can be used when we recall the definition of telepresence (in a broad context), which 'refers to any kind of electronic navigation, self-representation and data traffic'^[51] (also visual). In this way telepresence gains a wider meaning, which cannot be seen from the point of view of a user staying in the interactive computer environment. According to Jonathan Steuer, telepresence is reciprocal, involving both the observer and the observed. In other words, the observer is telepresent in the remote environment, and the observed environment is telepresent in physical space in which the observer is viewing the scene^[52].

The described example shows that visibility on the Internet becomes telepresent. In this sense, but to a large extent also linked with the topic of identity Mirzoeff treats pictorial representations on the 'Bodies@INCorporated' (which refers to website address: <http://www.bodiesinc.ucla.edu/>). The user can create avatar representations of his or her body, which become telepresent, and he or she can also chose psychological or sexual identity. As a result of those decisions the avatar gains an image, in a particular place on the website described as a 'Showplace'^[53]. Therefore, visibility on the Internet integrates theoretical problems, which can be dealt with here in social-anthropological context.

CONCLUSION

Currently in the area of Visual Culture Studies there is an argument, which is supposed to lead to classifying this field of knowledge into the existing division of humanistic sciences. Mark Poster in his article *Visual Studies as Media Studies*, published in *Journal of Visual Culture* (2002), describes the issue as follows: 'Visual studies, I propose, is most productive as media studies. While there are excellent reasons for promoting visual studies as a problematic field and as a field of study in its own right, I suggest it is best understood as part of a broader domain of the cultural study of information machines'^[54]. In this way Visual Culture Studies will obtain the most promising research perspective as a reflection about visual media.

Confirmation of the tendencies described by Poster should be looked for in the field of new media and cyberculture, undertaken by Visual Culture Studies. The scope of such projects also contains all spheres of Anthropology of New Visuality. This example confirms the belief that the fields of reflection of Visual Culture Studies and Media Studies and more and more intertwined. In this article I intended to present how Poster's proposal about Visual Studies as Media Studies implements itself in the field of Visual Culture Studies. I chose the example of Anthropology of New Visuality, which definitely shows that the topic of new media and cyberculture tries to include the reflection on the methods of creating visuality.

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- [6] Such point of view is presented by Margaret Dikovitskaya, who claims that: 'some researchers use the term visual culture or visual studies to denote new theoretical approaches in art history (Holly); some want to expand the professional territory of art studies to include artifacts from all historic periods and cultures (Herbert); others emphasize the process of seeing (Mitchell) across epochs (Rodowick); while still others think of the category of visual as encompassing nontraditional media (Mirzoeff) but also of science, medicine, and law (Cartwright). Objects of visual studies are not only visual objects but also of viewing and the conditions of the spectatorship and circulation of objects. One can conclude that visual studies goes far beyond its constituent object-oriented disciplines of art history, anthropology, film studies, and linguistics'. Dikovitskaya, M. (2005). *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn*. Cambridge – Massachusetts – London: The MIT Press. p. 64.
- [7] See: Olechnicki, K. (2003). *Antropologia obrazu. Fotografia jako metoda, przedmiot i medium nauk społecznych*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza. pp. 10–12.
- [8] See: Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London – New York: Routledge. pp. 3–5.
- [9] See: Ibidem. pp. 91–126.
- [10] Ibidem. p. 91.
- [11] Ibidem. p. 92.
- [12] Ibidem.
- [13] Paul Virilio claims that: '(the panorama) makes an architectural work of the painter's field of activity. The name panorama, in fact, refers both to the edifice on which the painting is hung and to the painting itself'. Virilio P. (1994). *The Vision Machine*. Trans. by J. Rose. London – Bloomington – Indianapolis: British Film Institute – Indiana University Press. p. 40.
- [14] Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* p. 95.
- [15] Kluszczynski, R. W. (1999). *Film wideo multimedia. Sztuka ruchomego obrazu w erze elektronicznej*. Warszawa: Instytut Kultury. p. 221.
- [16] Kluszczynski, R. W. (2002). 'Ekrany – obrazy – światy transformacje'. In: A. Gwóźdź, P. Zawojski (eds.), *Wiek ekranów. Przestrzenie kultury widzenia*. Kraków: „Rabid”. p. 382.
- [17] Ibidem. p. 383.
- [18] In reference to the cinema the same point of view is presented by: Gene Youngblood, Grahame Weinbren, and Siegfried Zielinski. See: Wienbren, G. (1995). *In the Ocean of Stearms of Story. Millennium Film Journal* 28: 15–30. Youngblood, G. (1970). *Expanded Cinema*. London: Studio Vista. Zielinski, S. (1999). *Audiovisions. Cinema and Television as Entr'Actes in History*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

- [19] Quoted in: Barlow, J. P. (1990). 'Being in Nothingness: Virtual Reality and the Pioneers of Cyberspace'. *Mondo* 2000 2: 34–44.
- [20] Comp.: Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* pp. 96–99.
- [21] See: Ibidem. pp. 101–104.
- [22] Gołębiewska, M. (2003). *Demontaż atrakcji. O estetyce audiowizualności*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria. pp. 201–202.
- [23] Ibidem. pp. 200–201.
- [24] Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* pp. 103–104.
- [25] Ibidem. pp. 117–118.
- [26] Kluszczyński, R. W. (2001). *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne. Cyberkultura. Sztuka multimediów*. Kraków: „Rabid”. p. 194.
- [27] Stelarc, (2007). 'From Psycho-Body to Cyber-System. Images as Post-human Entities'. In: D. Bell, B. M. Kennedy (eds.), *The Cyberculture Reader (Second Edition)*. London – New York: Routledge. p. 457.
- [28] See: Cartwright, L., Sturken, M. (2001). *Practices of Looking. An Introduction to Visual Culture*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University. pp. 96–100.
- [29] See: Fiedberg, A. (2002). 'The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze'... pp. 395–404.
- [30] Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. by A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books. p. 24.
- [31] Cartwright, L., Sturken, M. (2001). *Practices of Looking*... p. 98.
- [32] Fiedberg, A. (2002). 'The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze'... p. 399.
- [33] Mirzoeff, N. (2002). 'The Subject of Visual Culture'... p. 7.
- [34] Parks, L. (2002). 'Satellite and Cyber Visualities: Analyzing <Digital Earth>'. In: N. Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture*... pp. 279–292.
- [35] Edwards, P. (1996). *The Closed Word Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*. Cambridge – Massachusetts: The MIT Press. p. 7.
- [36] Foucault, M. (1981). 'The Order of Discourse'. Trans by I. McLeod. In: R. Young (ed.), *Untying the Text. A Post-Structuralist Reader*. Boston – London – Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul. pp. 52–53.
- [37] See: Batchen, G. (2002). 'Spectres of Cyberspace'. In: N. Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture*... p. 241.
- [38] Vilirio, P. (1994). *The Vision Machine*... p. 73.
- [39] Mirzoeff, N. (2002). 'The Subject of Visual Culture'... p. 10.
- [40] Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* pp. 104–106.
- [41] Ibidem. p. 107.
- [42] Castells, M. (2001). *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*. Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 5–6.
- [43] Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* p. 106.
- [44] See: Wallace, P. (1999). *The Psychology of Internet*. Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 54.
- [45] See: Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* pp. 111–112. Mirzoeff describes a case of „Julie Graham” referring to: See: Stone, A. R. (1995). *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*. Cambridge – Massachusetts: The MIT Press. pp. 65–81. The same story is also described by Patricia Wallace, but here the names were changed: the psychologist is called Alex, and his on-line identity is „Joan”. See: Wallace, P. (1999). *The Psychology of Internet*... pp. 46–47.
- [46] Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* pp. 108.
- [47] Ibidem. p. 112.
- [48] Howells, R. (2003). *Visual Culture*. Cambridge – Oxford – Malden: Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers Company. p. 232.
- [49] Ibidem. p. 233.
- [50] Campanella, T. J. (2002). 'Eden by Wire. Webcameras and the Telepresent Landscape'. In: N. Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture*... pp. 267–269.
- [51] Böhme, H. (2008). 'On the Theology of Telepresence'. Trans. by A. Gates. In: Søndergaard M., Weibel P. (eds.), *Thorbjørn Lausten's Visual System – Magnet*. Karlsruhe: Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie. p. 137.
- [52] See: Steuer, J. (1992). 'Defining Virtual Reality: Dimensions Determining Telepresence'. *Journal of Communications* 42: 75–78.
- [53] Mirzoeff, N. (1999). *An Introduction to...* pp. 112–114.
- [54] Poster, M. (2002). 'Visual studies as media studies'. *Journal of Visual Culture* 1(1): 67.