

## REVIEW OF BOOKS

Thinking in images, the proposal of La Imagen Compleja

Reviewed by

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**T**he use of new technologies to record and reproduce images is giving rise to countless reflections, in almost all academic fields, from the sciences to the arts. The recent elections in the United States are an excellent example of this since they represent a before and an after in the use of digital communication. President Obama's campaign made it clear that the *World Wide Web* is clearly the most efficacious of the communications media; and it changes any prior debate on persuasion, communication and image. But, what are these images that inhabit the network like? What does their degree of impact consist of? And, in what way do they change our way of understanding the world?

In 2006, Josep Maria Català, professor of Image Aesthetics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, published "La Imagen Compleja, fenomenología de las imágenes en la era de la cultura visual". In this text, he explains how the proliferation of images, as a result of the new technologies, changes both the concept of image, and the way in which we understand the world on the basis of these new images. It is a rigorous, exhaustive study which has become compulsory reading to think around images, from the theoretical, analytical and practical viewpoints; inviting readers of a variety of disciplines to enter the debate of what we call Visual Culture and its effects.

Visual Culture, the author tells us, does not so much depend on the images as the modern tendency to visualise the existing or put it into images. The difference between visual representation and vision becomes diluted in it. The paradigm of Visual Culture consists of the world being understood through images (in plural), and the way of understanding reality cannot be reduced or simplified; the images of visual culture are complex, that is to say, they are open images, interrelated with other images. We must understand the complex as multiple, as vertebrate and as fundamentally unstable.

This paradigm of the visual culture occurs after the culture of the text (period in which a link existed between word and world, or what amounts to the same, it was thought that what sight perceived could be understood through language), and after the culture of the image (in which the mimetic pact which prioritised the alliance between the visual representation and the visible world reigned).

The images in the Visual Culture cease to be transparent and become opaque, cease to be copies of the world (mimesis) to become displays, the images are no longer just spectacle but interactivity; the images are reason and form a part of thought.

In the text by Dr. Català you will find an explanation of each of these concepts and above all of their transfers. That is, if the image has a pedagogical and epistemological function, what occurs when the images cease to be two dimensional illustrations and transform into interactive universes (let us think of a web page); the reading of these new images cannot lose sight of the fact that images are no longer just what they represent, but they are complex images, and to acknowledge their complexity requires a way of interpreting that is reciprocated with this open, multiform and unyielding aim.

\*Link to Josep Maria Català's text:

[www.mmur.net/teenchannel/era\\_digital/ponencies/j-catala.htm](http://www.mmur.net/teenchannel/era_digital/ponencies/j-catala.htm)