

**NEW MEDIA ANXIETY:
ART HISTORY AND THE PROBLEM
OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY**

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New media forms intensify the effects of modern technology on both artistic production and its canonical scholarly reception. Indeed, advancements in computational technologies may have transcended the perspective of a mechanical era, ushering in new questions of aura and agency as regards new media versus high art. Both compelling and problematic for their largely military-industrial origins, electronics and the digital stretch the limits of art theory, criticism, and practice. This investigation considers the influence of modern technology upon contemporary artistic production, and how scholars assimilate that art into a cogent intellectual history.

Chapter One introduces a historical context for the canonical reception of advanced technological media. Beginning with the problem of photography and its split nature as both a mechanical tool for ‘scientific’ observation and an expressive medium for an artist’s unique vision, I identify the reverberations of this dualism on subsequent artistic movements and advanced technological forms. Surveying the reception of art and technology in the American academy, this chapter chiefly considers the significance of high art/low culture debates to prevailing canonical responses. Chapter Two brings the dimension of commercialism to this discussion, through an examination of its role in defining the artistic avant-garde. By analyzing the so-called collapse between aesthetic and commercial objects under the duress of capitalism, this writing elucidates the western canon’s theoretical apprehensions around electronics and the digital. Chapter Two also considers the impact of

postmodern identity politics and social reality of globalization, relative to the foregoing discussions. Chapter Three analyzes what ideological discord is stirred in the coming together of the socially-defined minority artist and media art, especially as it relates to global movements in contemporary production. Finally, it offers a model of embodied engagement with electronics and the digital that brings the intellectual vitality of new media studies to the rich legacy of art history.

This exploration offers a language for art that is deeply engaged with media technologies, and a theoretical bridge that links the resources of recent new media scholarship with dominant western art historical discourses. In analyzing the anxious interface of art and technology, this work acknowledges their symbiotic relationship.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Soraya Murray was born in Inglewood, California in 1971. She arrived at Cornell University with a bachelor's degree in painting from Occidental College, Los Angeles, and a master's in visual arts from the University of California, Irvine. Her writings have appeared in various publications including *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, *Art Journal*, and *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*. In August 2006, Ms. Murray began teaching in the School of Art and Art History at the University of South Florida, Tampa.

This is dedicated to my parents
GERHARD BERNHARD FRANZ MUHLERT
GRETA GLORIA MUHLERT

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