

Culture and critique

Notes on a polysemic relationship

Vasiliki Belia, Laura Candidatu, Gianmaria Colpani & Milica Trakilović

Abstract: In her work on cultural critique, Rosemarie Buikema conceptualises culture as a terrain for the elaboration and contestation of collective memory, a form that mediates social formations, and a practice that critically supplements the political. Taking the polysemic relationship between culture and critique as our starting point, we bring Buikema's reflections to bear on our own work on post-Yugoslav visual art, feminist graphic narratives, and digital media. We pay special attention to the question of "medium specificity", which is central to Buikema's conceptual intervention. Our goal is to illustrate the expansive reach of this intervention across multiple fields of inquiry.

Keywords: cultural critique, medium specificity, post-Yugoslav art, feminist graphic narratives, digital media, mediation

Culture permeates virtually every aspect of human societies. This has rendered culture a constant preoccupation in the history of thought, albeit a slippery one. What exactly is culture? How do people make culture, and what does culture do to social relations? How does culture bind social formations together, while fracturing and dividing them at the same time? Ever since cultural studies identified the relationship between culture and social formations as its main matter of concern, feminist and postcolonial critics have made fundamental contributions to the collective effort at addressing these questions. It is not an exaggeration to say that feminist and postcolonial critics have shaped and oriented cultural studies from its inception.

Commenting on the fast-paced expansion of cultural studies in the early 1990s, Stuart Hall once warned:

There is no moment now (...) where we are *not* able, extensively and without end, to theorize power – politics, race, class, and gender, subjugation, domination,