

Transcending Cinema as the Art of Mass Culture

The efforts of early theoreticians of film like Münsterberg or Arnheim to “prove” that cinema should be considered as a new form of art against the snobbish undervaluing of cinema as only a low form of culture or some kind of non-art, gained an unexpected settlement in Benjamin’s still controversial essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

Dialectics in the Digital Age

Not only regarding the representatives of the old theory of film, but also some authors, who appeared much later (for instance Béla Balázs, Marcel Martin, André Bazin, etc.), Benjamin’s conceptualisation of the industrial process of reproduction in the early 1930s turned relations between the notions of art and cinema around. Instead of “proving” its reputation as art, *film brought up far reaching consequences for the very understanding of art as such* and, above all, it reconfigured the whole field in which aesthetics can operate. In the age of digital media and virtual reality the process, which Benjamin indicated in the early 1930s, seems to have been accelerated. The process that I have in mind here involves the overwhelming multiplicity of interactions and inter-activities, which differ from, say, pre-mechanical and, of course, much more from the pre-digital epoch, by being decisively powered by technology. However, mass culture as it is defined in anthropology and sociology as well as even in the so-called science of economy, still determines the whole framework, in which any practice of art