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**Gillian Rose. 2012. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (Third edition). London: Sage. 408 pp.**

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*Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* is the third fully revised and updated edition of Gillian Rose's bestselling book on visual methods. This new edition is richer in material and broader in purpose compared to the previous ones (2006; 2001). Almost 100 pages thicker, the 2012 edition includes a new chapter on visual ethics and an open-access compendium website that completes the book. More importantly, this is the first time the book discusses digital media, such as YouTube, videogames, online photo-sharing, and more. Since the first two editions of *Visual Methodologies* have become classics among graduate and undergraduate scholars engaged in visual studies, this review will focus mostly on the new features of this 2012 edition.

Rose's aim is to introduce the

complex debates in visual analysis and interpretation and to stimulate the reader to explore visual methodologies. She undertakes this by firstly providing a comprehensive, theoretically informed survey on researching with visual materials (Chapter 1) and secondly by proposing a critical methodology to approach visual materials (Chapter 2). Rose starts from the assumption that both what is seen and how it is seen are culturally constructed. Thus, in order to understand the social effects of visual materials, Rose provides some tools for a critical approach to interpreting found visual data, such as photos, movies, and other media products. Her analysis addresses the three sites in which the meaning of an image is constructed: the site of the production of the image, the site of the image itself and the sites where the image is received by different audiences.

Each one of these sites holds social, technological and compositional modalities (or aspects). Different visual methods provide researchers with different ways of analyzing the sites and modalities involved in the meaning of an image.

Starting from this analytical framework, Rose dedicates the central part of her book to in-depth discussions on specific methods. In a very systematic fashion, Rose explains in detail the particular attributes and limitations of each methodology through concrete examples. The methods covered in Chapters 4 to 11 are compositional interpretation; content analysis; semiology; psychoanalysis and visuality; discourse analysis with a dual focus on discourse formation and on material practices; ethnographic audience studies; and photo-documentation, photo-elicitation, and photo-essays. The final chapter presents a review on the aforementioned methods and compares them quite systematically. Rose invites researchers to mix and combine visual methods from a critical perspective. In particular, she encourages researchers to bear in mind the power relations embedded in the ways of seeing, the visualization of social difference, the agency of the image, and the embeddedness of visual images in a wider socio-cultural context. Chapter 12 is brand new; it deals with the ethics of visual research by focusing on three areas which Rose sees as particularly problematic i.e.

consent, anonymity and copyright. Fundamentally, the author wishes to provide students and researchers with the practical and theoretical tools to engage with visual materials critically, regardless of the specific method being used.

The clear structure of the book is one of its strengths; all the chapters addressing particular methodologies share the same structure. Each chapter starts with key examples, followed by the description of the method and some theoretical discussion about its usage. For each methodology, strengths and weaknesses are explicitly addressed to allow a well-directed critique and comparison between different methods. This composition enables the reader to use the book in different ways. It can be read in its entirety for a comprehensive overview, or selectively if one has an interest in particular methods. Furthermore, key terms highlighted in bold and positioned on the page margins, as well as focus boxes and final summaries, help the reader to navigate the dense and rich material of the book.

Throughout the text, Rose invites readers to explore and to engage with visual materials by referring to exercises on the website compendium, introducing focus boxes on particular concepts or empirical examples, and proposing further literature references at the end of each chapter and on the website. I find that through these materials,

Rose stimulates the reader to think and look further, as any good author is supposed to do.

The densely-packed contents cross-refer to the extended version of the book available on the companion website<sup>1</sup>, which further links to a multitude of additional online sources. The website completes the third edition of the book by offering auxiliary instruction, resources and examples, as well as interactive exercises. It is open-access and therefore freely available to the public. The structure of the website is clear and straightforward as well; it divides external resources and activities following the book chapters. It provides meaningful additional materials for those who want to deepen their focus on specific methods or simply put to work the contents of the book through applied exercises. Particularly interesting for students is the section on interactive activities, which proposes exercises to directly engage the reader with the visual materials analysis introduced in each book chapter. The section of the website about online resources recommends a wide range of external references, which are mostly insightful for researchers who are learning about visual methodology for the first time.

The book embraces two broad research fields concerned with visibility, which are rarely in dialogue: on the one hand, we have social sciences which use visual research methods as a way to pose research

questions by *producing* images, e.g. recent developments in human geography and anthropology<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, we find the tradition of visual culture studies, where researchers *analyze* found visual materials - such as photo archives and movies - as their research data. Rose applies the same framework to discussing both bodies of work.

The latest edition seems to place more stress upon the first field - namely, the *production* of visual material - than the previous editions. This change in focus is also mirrored in the title change from 'An Introduction to the *Interpretation of Visual Materials*' (2001; 2006) to 'An Introduction to *Researching with Visual Materials*' (2012) (emphasis added). This could be a response to the growing interest among social researchers in experimenting with image-making to capture the nonrepresentational aspects of the social (Pink 2007). Yet, Rose dedicates only one chapter towards the end of the book (Chapter 11) to the explicit presentation of methods for producing images and making them part of a research project, namely photo-documentation, photo-elicitation, and photo-essays. The attention, hence, is still unbalanced towards methodologies of interpretation and analysis rather than image production. Therefore, for those who want to pursue research using visual analysis and interpretation, *Visual Methodologies* provides straightforward assistance on how

to carry out such research. Readers wishing, on the other hand, to produce visual materials as a part of their research might not be left fully satisfied with this book.

In sum, I would recommend this book to undergraduates, graduate students and researchers interested in the interpretation of visual materials, since it provides an excellent introduction to the complex and developing field of visual analysis. Despite the fact that the production of images as a method is still not presented in-depth, I would define Rose's book as a must-read introduction for those interested in integrating photo and film production into their research projects. Certainly, the book offers rich insights for orientating and situating oneself in the broad panorama of visual methodologies.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sagepub.com/rose/home.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Examples may include the production of mental maps, drawings, videos, photographs, diaries, by the researcher and/or the research participants.

### References

Pink, S. 2007. *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research* 2nd edition. London: Sage.