

The Gendered Relationship with Cameras: an Archival Research of Visual Advertisements

The material turn in media studies invites us to consider different approaches through which we can analyze the relation between media and gender. Indeed, giving importance to the material, concrete, and tactical aspect of media implies a shift from a focus on media contents, and from the spectators/users' practices of resisting and negotiating meanings proposed by popular media. On the contrary, a material approach in the study of media and gender implies, first of all, a focus on media technologies, foregrounding how they emerged and came to determine particular uses not only through their specific technical standards, but also through their external materiality that enabled the cultural circulation of the media technologies themselves.

A media archaeological approach can take into account the ways in which "protocols", at different levels (from the material interfaces to the cultural techniques of advertising), have shaped gendered relations around technology. This project intends to tackle how visual advertisements of photo and video cameras as entertainment technologies have imagined the relation human/machines in gendered terms: indeed, they have shaped the use of technologies as part of the masculine identity, while women either appear as supportive decorative elements or as objects of the man' "gaze" using the technology. However, some advertisements show women behind the camera. Thus, this project majorly aims at historicizing the process by which women began to be targeted as possible consumers of camera technologies.

The theoretical approach behind this kind of research is one that, while considering the technical aspects of media technologies, can not dismiss the cultural and social discourses surrounding it. The research, thus, will be conducted through a hands-on approach to the technologies available in the Residual Media Depot, and through an online archive research.