

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design

Doctoral Dissertation

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The Presence of the Author in the Digital Age: Performativity
and Mediated Reality in Documentary

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Theses

1. At the end of the twentieth century, under the influence of reflexive and performative documentary tendencies, explicit authorial presence became prominent in contemporary documentary film. Rather than depicting a world independent of the subject, the film often focuses on the dynamics between the topic and the filmmaker.
2. In the epistemological crisis of the digital age, documentary has shifted away from the exclusive norms of traditional photographic realism.
3. In my view, digital technology expands authorial presence in documentary film through three new forms: “embodied presence,” “remediated presence,” and “computer-based presence.”
4. My research shows that in the digital era, documentary increasingly interprets and contextualizes an already mediated world rather than uncovering a previously untouched reality.
5. Within participatory internet culture, some documentaries have moved toward a horizontal, co-authored practice, while the filmmaker increasingly assumes the role of interface creator.
6. Documentaries produced in the digital media environment often create new spectator roles, in which viewers establish interactive relationships with the content and construct individual narratives.
7. While subjectivity and the personal position of the speaker remain central in today’s documentary film, it has also become evident that the nonhuman perspective of distant observation is gaining greater significance. The drone or the GoPro often serve to provide an approach to truth situated in a nonhuman viewpoint.
8. The digital age simultaneously reinforces embodied presence in documentary and disembodied observation that is displaced from the filmmaker’s direct position.