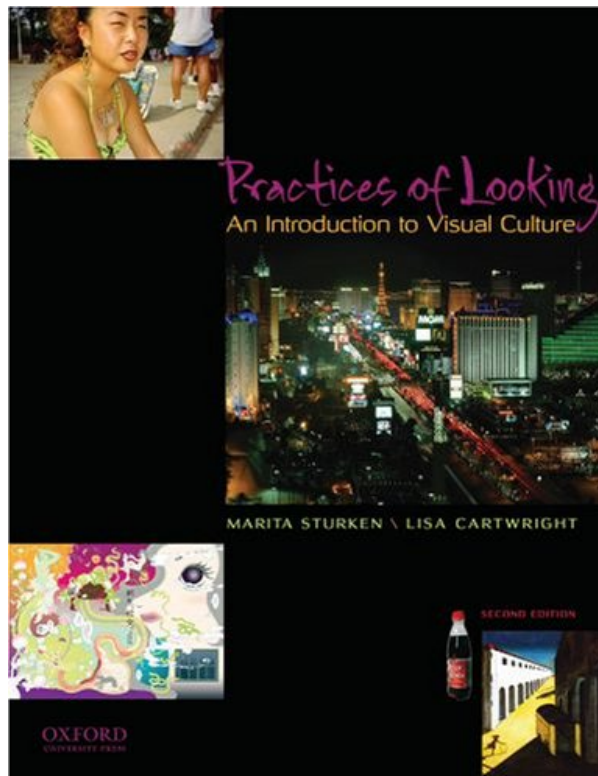
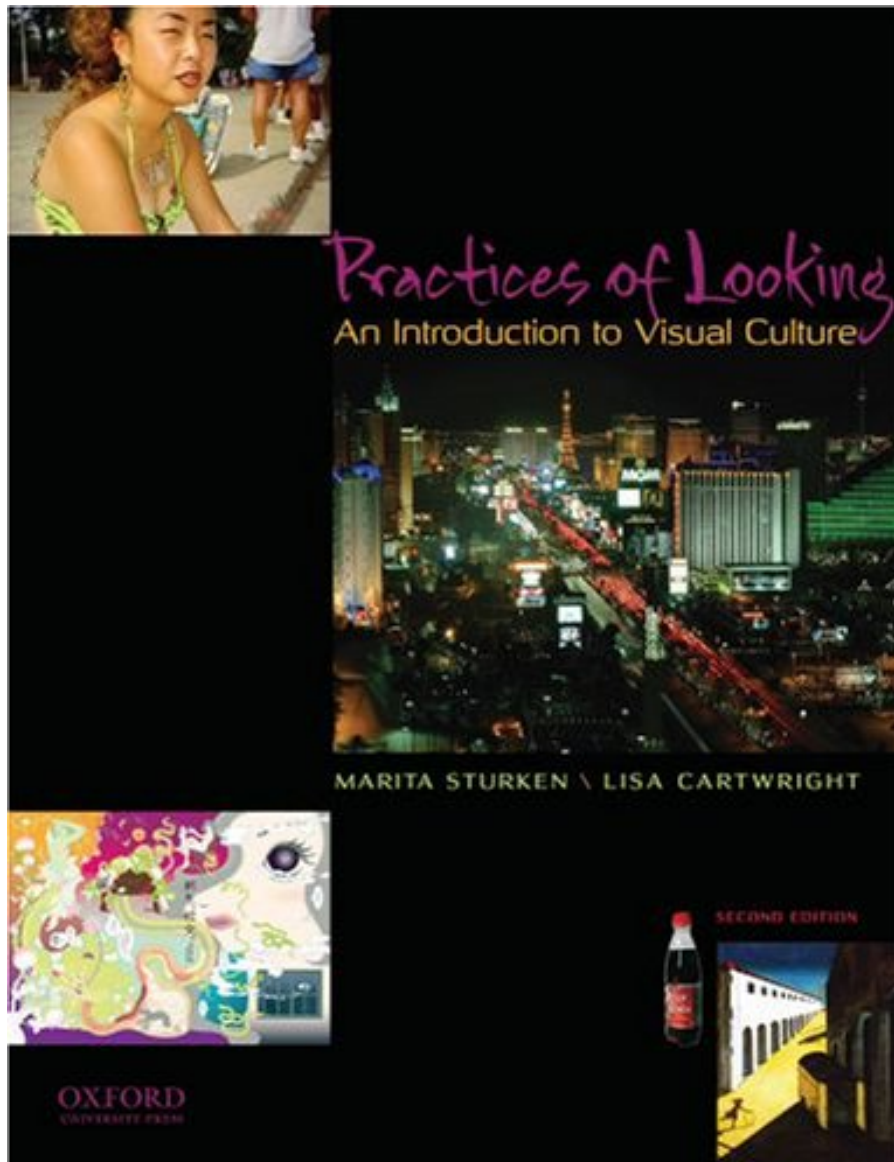


# PRACTICES OF LOOKING: AN INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL CULTURE BY MARITA STURKEN, LISA CARTWRIGHT



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## Review

This is that rarest of textbooks clear enough for undergraduates and challenging enough to use with graduate students. Simply the best introduction we have to the most important issues in thinking about the visual from an interdisciplinary perspective. This textbook is a comprehensive survey of theoretical, historical, social, and legal issues in visual culture. Well written and well argued, this textbook is suited for an introductory or a more advanced undergraduate course in visual culture or communication... I've used Practices of Looking before and my students loved it. Marina Levina, University of California, Berkeley Practices of Looking makes the subject matter and critical apparatus of visual culture studies accessible and clear. As a text, it communicates the complex ideas that animate the field without falling into jargon and murky writing. This is a book that respects the intelligence of its audience, which ranges from undergraduates just discovering visual culture to graduate students refining their own approaches to the visual universe. Bernard Herman, University of Delaware

## About the Author

Marita Sturken is Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University.

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Visual culture is central to how we communicate. Our lives are dominated by images and by visual technologies that allow for the local and global circulation of ideas, information, and politics. In this increasingly visual world, how can we best decipher and understand the many ways that our everyday lives are organized around looking practices and the many images we encounter each day? Now in a new edition, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* provides a comprehensive and engaging overview of how we understand a wide array of visual media and how we use images to express ourselves, to communicate, to play, and to learn. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright--two leading scholars in the emergent and dynamic field of visual culture and communication--examine the diverse range of approaches to visual analysis and lead students through key theories and concepts.

Using clear, accessible language, vivid examples, and more than 250 full-color illustrations, the authors both explain and apply theory as they discuss how we see paintings, prints, photographs, film, television, video, advertisements, the news, the Internet, digital media, and visualization techniques in medicine and science. This truly interdisciplinary text bridges art history, film, media, and cultural studies to investigate how images carry meaning within and between different cultural arenas in everyday life, from art and commerce to science and the law. Sturken and Cartwright analyze images in relation to a wide spectrum of cultural and representational issues (desire, power, the gaze, bodies, sexuality, and ethnicity) and methodologies (semiotics, Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and postcolonial theory).

Thoroughly updated to incorporate cutting-edge theoretical research, the second edition examines the following new topics: the surge of new media technologies; the impact of globalization on the flow of information and media form and content; and how nationalism and security concerns have changed our looking practices in the aftermath of 9/11. Challenging yet accessible, *Practices of Looking* is ideal for courses across a range of disciplines, including media and film studies, communications, art history, and photography.

Beautifully designed and now in a larger format and in full color throughout, *Practices of Looking* is an invaluable guide to understanding the complexities, contradictions, and pleasures of the visual world.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

27 of 30 people found the following review helpful.

A Very Useful Text for Teaching

By A Customer

This is a well-organized text for teaching introductory undergraduate courses in visual culture, media studies or art history. I used it in a course I taught last semester and the students seemed to get a lot out of it. It provides a broad overview of critical approaches and methodologies for understanding and analyzing art, photography, painting, film and electronic media. One of its strengths is the way it facilitates thinking about images across disciplines and cultural realms from art to popular culture and from the fields of law to science and medicine. The book has many good illustrations that support the concepts discussed.

20 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

Great insights, painful read.

By Onandifer

It's a fascinating topic, and Sturken has some wonderful insights. I learned some great things from this book. That said, I believe it could easily have been written with half as many words. The massive, unbroken blocks of text can become very difficult to continue reading.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Great (but overpriced) introduction

By Alan Diaz

This is by far the best introductory text on visual culture I have personally come across. I strongly disagree with some previous reviewers that say the writing is "pompous" or "needlessly complex"; I am by no means an expert on the subject and I found the writing to be extremely comprehensive and even generous when it comes to explanations. The authors seem to make a great effort to be understood and a lot of really complex concepts are presented in a surprisingly and refreshing clear manner. I also disagree with a previous review that claimed that technical terms are frequently unexplained (I, in fact, think quite the opposite). Maybe the complaints about it being "unnecessarily long" could be somewhat justified if you consider that illustrating the concepts through concrete examples is "unnecessary". I think that the examples (although I admit I sometimes skimmed through them) present the rich context of visual culture and even make the text quite pleasant and colorful. That, in my opinion, is really something to be thankful for when it comes to "academic" texts.

That said, I have some complaints about the quality-price ratio of the actual materiality of the book itself. I initially borrowed the first edition from my university library (where they gave it a hardcover treatment for durability) and read it almost completely through. As I already said, I thought it was great (and wanted to read the new sections added on the second edition) so I decided to buy it regardless of the surprisingly high \$80 price tag. I was quite disappointed when it arrived. The paper is not too great, the typography is not the best for reading and the cover is made from a flimsy and thin "plastified" paper (I also think the design of the cover itself is awful -5 minute random cut and paste-, but you can see that from the product photo and I guess its irrelevant). Besides this, I find the format too big (it is exactly A4!). Thus, the book ends up being one of those "squiggly" books that feel like a wet fish when you have it in your hands. I admit this is not so serious, but for \$80 bucks I was expecting something better made...

In conclusion: content-wise the book is top notch; materially-wise it leaves a lot to be desired. It is extremely useful and it is no doubt a work of great scholarship. However, its not one of those books you enjoy having in your hands or in your bookshelf (and it will undoubtedly hurt your wallet).

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