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TECHNIQUES OF MOBILITY, AESTHETICS OF FLATNESS:

Abstract:

In correspondence with the boom of mobile media, the number of scholarly articles and essays on the mobile phone keeps increasing every day. Some recent studies on the mobile phone have expanded their focus to pay closer attention to specific uses in „developing“ countries, acknowledging mobile use at different social and political levels of use in different regions of the world and covering a wide range of other topics related with the mobile phone. However, much seems to be argued along preset lines or notions such as “seamless connectivity”, “ubiquity”, “flow”, “new subjectivities,” and others. In my paper, I question the assumption and construction of a “new subjectivity” that some suppose to be generated – by navigating through different levels of concrete materials: artistic, non-artistic (ethnographic) / subjective, less subjective / visual and non-visual –.

As can be seen in some of these examples – the so-called “iPod jack” practices of live sharing, the difficult levels of representation in the interactive play *Call Cutta Mobile Phone Theatre* by Rimini Protokoll, communication technology functions as a setting that deliberately enhances subject-making processes and aims at a commodification of subjectivity. Today, individual subjectivity seems to be treated more important than ever, and has already become implicated in an economic cycle of subjectivity all its own, involved in production. There any ideology immediately is flipped over to become an act of consumption under the relations to the individual subjectivity and the social system. Ideology is already a mode of subject production, one in which subjectivity is alive, and in which it is reproduced.

“Subjectivity” as used today may at times give one the impression that it is inextricably linked to an activity of nurturing the economic and social system. This process can be reversed into a cycle of production: the economy feeds a mobile subjectivity. Here, I propose to describe these phenomena by the notion of a psychological “flatness” – a “flattening-out” of subjectivities to conform to a mode of existence that is replaced by capitalist economies and geopolitics mostly organized in networks (network systems) – can be observed as pervasive to technologically enhanced modes of “being-in-space” produced through individual and collective uses of digital mobile communication. In the latest two publications “Eyesight Alone”(2006) and “Sensorium – embodied experience, technology, and contemporary art”(2006), Caroline A. Jones, an American art historian, examined the notion of “surface” in modernity (especially by Greenburg) and reinterpreted it as bureaucratization of modern subjectivity, which continues to influence today’s mode of being. Being aware of the discussion, I would like to explore an alternative concept on “flatness” through developing a connection between digital media and popular culture.

Dr. Miya Yoshida

(200-word CV for the presenter)

Miya Yoshida is a curator and an art historian from Japan currently living and working in Berlin, Germany. Apart from art-critical publications on contemporary art and technologies, since 2003 she has curated a series of exhibitions on mobile telephony, “The Invisible Landscapes,” in Sweden and Thailand. She has recently received her PhD degree in Fine Arts and visual art at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University, Sweden. Her doctoral thesis was on mobile telephony and constructions of subjectivity. Along with her research on mobile telephony, she is preparing to continue her series of thematic exhibitions at the Werkbundarchiv, Berlin, 2008. For more details, please see www.invisible-landscapes.net.