

Summary

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The premise in this thesis is that in the context of the late twentieth-century visual culture of the West, a condition of dystopia is distinct. I argue that since the Sixties developments in computer technology ('new technologies') have unleashed worlds of artifice and that the visual media are the prime mediators in perpetuating such dystopia.

I argue that the human sensory real has always been and still is intertwined with the artifice of dream worlds, but demonstrate that most utopian constructs, such as the current ones regarding globalism and technological utopia, are still not pleasant places although they intend and purport to be exactly that. My interpretation of the late twentieth century is that there are many coexisting worlds and different concomitant and layered spaces of both real and virtual kinds. It seems to have become impossible to fully verify the 'real' observed experiences and observations, and cyberspace can become as real as the 'real'. The main argument is that, in particular, technoreals as artificial 'Other' have come to co-exist with the sensory real.

It is demonstrated that technology is still a tool used for achieving ideological (and political) objectives; that at present there is an essential awareness of the dominance of technology and of the threat of technology-out-of-control.

Key terms:

Artifice, catastrophe, computer technology, cyberspace, cyborg, dystopia, fragmentation, globalisation, ideology, new media, novelty, pleasure, post-industrial identity, real, relativism. utopia, virtual reality.