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Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film, and Television

Larry Gross

John Stuart Katz

Jay Ruby

Because this invaluable book was published a few years ago, it seems appropriate to acknowledge that those readers of this journal whose professional and scholarly interests it addresses -- and because of its breadth and depth they will be many -- will have read it and told their colleagues, students and friends about it, as well as their audiences in the very media in which they work and with which the book deals.

So, at this stage in the life of *Image Ethics* what remains to be said about it? If you have ever pondered "the ethical problems of imagemaking," e.g., rights, responsibilities, privacy, consenting subjects, the meaning of images, documentaries, drama and their ilk, sketched by the editors in the Introduction, you will agree with them that "[p]hotography, film and television confer enormous power to create images that combine verisimilitude and visual impact, and the mass media can disseminate these images around the world." The twelve essays should induce "a moral pause" in the image industry because, as the fourth (and fifth?) estate it has laid upon it the status of "'noblesse oblige' that attends power and which suggests the need for all concerned to pause and contemplate the moral implications of the images they produce and distribute."

The majority of the studies take as a starting point the moral rights of the subjects in the so-called documentary style of image production, which is itself treated in Brian Winston's "The Tradition of the Victim in Griersonian Documentary." The other essays are: Carolyn Anderson & Thomas W. Benson, "Direct Cinema and the Myth of Informed Consent: The Case of "Titicut Follies"; Lisa Henderson, "Access and Consent in Public Photography"; Robert Aibel, "Ethics and Professionalism in Documentary Film-making"; John Stuart Katz & Judith Milstein Katz, "Ethics and the Perception of

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Ethics in Autobiographical Film"; John David Viera, "Images as Property"; Thomas Beauchamp & Stephen Klaidman, "A Study in Multiple Forms of Bias"; Larry Gross, "The Ethics of (Mis)representation"; Jack G. Shaheen, "Perspectives on the Television Arab"; John A. Hostetler & Donald B. Kraybill, "Hollywood Markets the Amish"; Toby Alice Volkman, "Out of South Africa: `The Gods Must Be Crazy' "; Thomas Waugh, "Lesbian and Gay Documentary: Minority Self-Imaging, Oppositional Film Practice, and the Question of Image Ethics."

Even this listing provides the rudiments of the broad and often provocative coverage focussing on cases and incidents, e.g., the film *Witness* and its Amish subjects, the image of Bela Lugosi as Dracula, Elvis Presley's image as commodity, the ambiguity surrounding the "social change" photographs of Lewis Hine and the Farm Security Administration, the "paparazzo" Ron Galella and his photographic pursuit of Jackie Kennedy Onassis, the lawsuit of General William C. Westmoreland against CBS concerning their documentary, *The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception*, the media culture's practice of "mainstreaming," as well as the topics more readily evident from the titles of the essays above.

This range of topics, the acknowledgement of the polysemic nature of constructed images, and the forceful scrutiny of the often invisible tenets of the image industry compel any reflective reader -- especially the professional image-maker -- to evaluate media attitudes and practices in dealing with subjects through a new viewfinder.

The 107-page annotated bibliography by Lisa Henderson draws primarily on contemporary United States sources, but reaches back to 1890 and out to several other countries to gather in its essential richness. Its broad coverage is structured and cross-referenced to be of great value to the worker or scholar specializing in one medium and searching for parallels in other media.

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