
Counter-Practices of Seeing: Using the Eyes to Mobilize the Political Body

Christopher Moffett*†¹

¹Independent Scholar – United States

Abstract

More often than not, our seeing practices ask us to remain still, taking it in. This is the optical apparatus of the classroom, billboard, car, TV, laptop, and so on. Largely, we merely move between these stations. These are the coordinates of the modern visual landscape afforded us—a politics of constrained visual consumption. To engage differently requires not just developing a more refined critical eye, but ways of seeing and moving that can rework and refashion the optical apparatus themselves. This entails developing counterpractices that draw our eyes off of the vectors that pin us, and into new lines of action. This workshop will foreground what lies dormant today: the deep biological coordination between looking and movement. We will draw on the theoretical work of Maxine Sheets Johnstone on the relationship between the gaze and embodied power relations. Utilizing the Feldenkrais Method of movement learning, we will unleash more dynamic use of the eyes, coordinated with smooth reorientation of our body. Through movement and sensory practices looking will become coordinated with action.

Keywords: practices of looking, ways of seeing, optics, apparatus, gaze, power, multimodality

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: cm2189@columbia.edu