

## **The Virtuous Window**

Anne Friedberg's book *The Virtual Window*, was written at a time in which the social media industry had not yet taken over the "virtual" scene, imposing their own standard window to frame all productions or at least productions to be communicated and shared. Prior to that, the comparison she made between the classical window of painting and that of media is rather reasonable although incompatible in that she does not take in consideration the fact that the metaphor of "finestra aperta" was addressed to artists rather than the common people who are now also capable of creating virtual representations, the artistic style of which are highly debatable. Greatest master pieces in the history of cinema, for instance, "Andrei Rublev" by Andrei Tarkovsky are still based on classic perspective, as the beautiful scene in which two noble observants are standing in front of a lake while suddenly in the background we see a buffoon being brought away by the gendarmes.

In this respect Friedberg comparison are rather outdated, bringing on the table all the conventional Western movements, such as Cubism rather than Russian Constructivism and their cutting edge way of changing perspectives (filming below a train or above a chimney). Again what is still striking is the comparison she makes of what is inside a painting and what is inside a computer. The computer itself is not a perspective but rather the vanishing point itself, the artificial light substituting the sun, the vanishing point per antonomasia, which we cannot penetrate.

Throughout her text, Friedberg is very careful and aware of the academic discourse around the subject. She is aware of all the Derrida-like criticism her book might suffer from, and she herself attempts to unpack in advance the use of her virtual window metaphor, before other academic wolves will tear it apart. In this respect she positions herself as seeing a rather continuation through history of the virtual, rather than something newly established with media technology. She then moves forward making her book anyway a legitimate contemporary form, bringing in Friedrich Kittler and Walter Benjamin premonitions of the death of the book as a media. She then attempts to illustrate throughout the chapters of her book, maintaining the idea that it is not a conventional book, but it is rather a set of different perspectives onto the matter, a sort of non-linear form.

In reality, the reader perceives the introduction of this book on media as yet another conventional attempt of academia to bring forward a breaking through argument yet acknowledging the various contributors of the discourse and at last retreat the head in

the security of a turtle shell argument. Friedberg is certainly not a visionary but rather a good academic, whose book can be utilized as a way to update oneself to the discourse, a discourse which is however already becoming outdated as the beginning of this text accounts. Possibly, the most fastidious aspect of the book is that it seems rather a claim of being a breakthrough but in reality, Friedberg does not dare to make any revolutionary claims. As she sees this continuum with classical tradition and wants to merge with it, one may find rather contradictory her retreating her head in the turtle shell, presenting a very formal scholarly work. How can one talk about media without media? And, as she finds this continuum, why not argue against Kittler and Benjamin saying that, there is no such thing as media evolution or better dissolution but rather we live (as probably a Baudrillard would say) in a frozen moment of such technical evolution in which all media are in fact possible (book as equally a computer game)?

Following the above argument then, this book could have probably made sense, not from a one media perspective, that of the book, but accompanied by other forms of media more pertinent with the discussion. Friedberg should have herself followed the Brunelleschi experiment and take a mirror in front of the modern forms of the Virtual Frame, maybe just in front of the computer screen and get some inspiration from there rather than just getting inspired on the intellectual level on the possibly re-signification of such metaphors, which in a way are useful to elevate the academic, as in the Chinese saying "if you wanna be a tiger (Friedberg), face the tiger (Brunelleschi)". Anyhow, a better approach would have been also to look at high level artistic production utilizing modern media, such as the ones at the Media Labs, whose heroic envisionment also ended with social media.