Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

This may be the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

Thomson, T.J.
(2018)
Theorizing Images by Zarko Paic and Kresimir Purgar (Eds.) [Book Review].
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, *95*(2), pp. 549-550.

This file was downloaded from: https://eprints.qut.edu.au/119021/

© 2018 by Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication

This work is covered by copyright. Unless the document is being made available under a Creative Commons Licence, you must assume that re-use is limited to personal use and that permission from the copyright owner must be obtained for all other uses. If the document is available under a Creative Commons License (or other specified license) then refer to the Licence for details of permitted re-use. It is a condition of access that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights. If you believe that this work infringes copyright please provide details by email to qut.copyright@qut.edu.au

Notice: *Please note that this document may not be the Version of Record (i.e. published version) of the work. Author manuscript versions (as Submitted for peer review or as Accepted for publication after peer review) can be identified by an absence of publisher branding and/or typeset appearance. If there is any doubt, please refer to the published source.*

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018763312

Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

This may be the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

Thomson, T.J.
(2018)
Theorizing Images by Žarko Paić and Krešimir Purgar (Eds.) [Book Review].
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, *95*(2), pp. 549-550.

This file was downloaded from: https://eprints.qut.edu.au/119021/

© 2018 by Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication

This work is covered by copyright. Unless the document is being made available under a Creative Commons Licence, you must assume that re-use is limited to personal use and that permission from the copyright owner must be obtained for all other uses. If the document is available under a Creative Commons License (or other specified license) then refer to the Licence for details of permitted re-use. It is a condition of access that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights. If you believe that this work infringes copyright please provide details by email to qut.copyright@qut.edu.au

Notice: *Please note that this document may not be the Version of Record (i.e. published version) of the work. Author manuscript versions (as Submitted for peer review or as Accepted for publication after peer review) can be identified by an absence of publisher branding and/or typeset appearance. If there is any doubt, please refer to the published source.*

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018763312

Theorizing Images. Žarko Paić and Krešimir Purgar (Eds.). Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016. 275 pp. £47.99 hbk.

Reviewed by: T. J. Thomson, *Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.*
DOI: 10.1177/1077699018763312

The strength of *Theorizing Images* in its opening chapters is that it articulates the murky questions and associations that exist for young scholars concerning object-subject, time and space, and the relationship between verbal and visual communication (the latter of which is explored with the greatest depth in Chapter 9). Such issues are rarely explicated and, when attempted, can result in discussions that are often simplistic and reductionist or dense and indecipherable. To not only address these issues but to do so in an engaging and comprehensible manner is an accomplishment, indeed. Paić is associate professor at the School of Fashion Design at the University of Zagreb, and Purgar is associate professor at the Art Academy, University of Osijek, Croatia.

In many cases, the book's contributors use concrete examples to make abstract concepts more understandable. The authors place much attention on time and how temporality affects visual content and reception. To make this example more explicit, they helpfully liken it to a more familiar concept (the conjugation of words that change based on the relation of the speaker to time and to others, such as "I run, I ran, I will run, we run, we ran, we all will run"). All mean different things but have the same basic elements, which is underscored through this illustration.

The authors smartly avoid the somewhat cliched, perhaps overwrought, and perennial discussion on the truth of images, and instead focus on the properties of images—what, when, how, and where. The star and crown jewel of the piece is Adriano Fabri's work in Chapter 5, which provides a fascinating perspective on humanity's relationship with technology, and how machines are "images which have to be decoded: images of what the human being is and wants to be." Such a perspective, which focuses on the role and value of images, is appropriate in a developed society that is exposed to more visual rather than verbal messages in mediated formats.

Where the text falls short is in its authors' lack of uniform accessibility, especially, but not exclusively, in the book's later chapters. This is true both in terms of clarity of ideas and also cultural context. While the text is written primarily by European scholars (12 of the 13 are European-born and one hails from Argentina) with an academic audience in mind, it is still dense in places and occasionally relies on a deep understanding of foreign-language concepts and terms that are not always defined in the text (or supplemented with a footnote). An example of this is the undefined "*operative Bildlichkeit*" in Chapter 10 and the passing reference to Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk in Chapter 7 which could have been referred to as Germany's first public television operation rather than by its German name. Such references confuse the reader and make him or her go hunting for more context, which disrupts from the narrative flow and distracts from the author's argument.

Such concerns are perhaps compounded—or at least made more murky—by the fact that some chapters were written in a foreign language and translated into English by a third party. Thus, one wonders how accessibility is impacted by the translators' subject matter expertise and writing clarity. In any case, more care could have been taken during the writing or editing to improve the writing's accessibility for a global audience.

Missing throughout the text, too, is a discussion of three-dimensional and virtual reality

images, which have profound implications for framing, the gaze, and how these phenomena are interpreted and experienced. Some discussion does exist that addresses opacity, screens, and the hyperreal but the discussion focuses more on the technology than the implications of it. As a chapter is included that focuses on cinema and moving images, it seems natural that a discussion on framing in virtual environments would also be included. The final four chapters seemed to be included in the collection more out of convenience than necessity. One wonders whether the collection would have been stronger if these had not been included so a trimmer but more poignant collection could have emerged.

Overall, *Theorizing Images* is, in many places, an impressive synthesis of the highly interdisciplinary landscape of visual studies. Scholars needing a foundation in visual culture would benefit from this text, as would those needing to give voice to the often-unnamed or poorly explored relationships among objects, time, language, and meaning-making. The text is hampered, in places, by its Eurocentric focus and the language and cultural barriers that are occasionally presented but not resolved, yet all readers will likely find a good portion of the text evocative and resonant, even if not all the chapters possess the same intellectual heft, narrative elegance, or theoretical sophistication.