

This Was Not Cinema: Judgment, Action, and Barbara Hammer

by John David Rhodes

In this essay I work with Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, Hannah Arendt's theory of human action, and Linda Zerilli's theory of judgment, developed from her own readings of both Kant and Arendt, as being integral to politics (and to feminist politics, in particular), in order to think about filmmaking as a mode of action because it is a mode of judgment. Barbara Hammer's filmmaking offers an especially useful territory for examining the possibility that making a film might be a mode of acting, given that her accounts of her filmmaking practice emphasize the organizing role that judgment plays in her practice. Hammer's films, which have often been celebrated for their representational dimensions, and in particular their vivid and challenging representation of lesbian lives and lesbian sex, are, I argue, also powerful demonstrations and enactments of aesthetic judgment as a mode of action.

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