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Visible language

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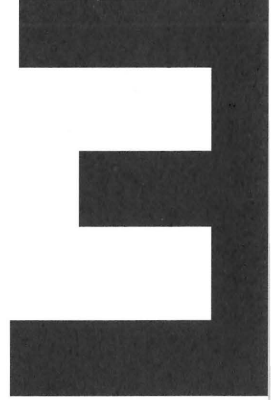
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AN INTRODUCTION

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Part one essays cover both deeply rooted and more recent practices such as preservation, remediation, interpretation and navigation.

PRESERVATION may seem an odd point of departure for this series of essays, but traversing a distant space – memorializing and stabilizing the written word is a primary benefit of visible language. Elizabeth Eisenstein in her classic book *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* states: “Of all the new features introduced by the duplicative powers of print, preservation is possibly the most important.”¹ The first essay, a collaboration between Sang-Soo Ahn and Sharon Poggenpohl, “Preserving Words: The Korean Tripitaka,” is an homage to the wisdom transferred through written language and generations of human care. It is the woodblocks themselves, dating from 1251, from which countless impressions can be made that the authors celebrate here. This durable artifact and its printed product is now joining the digital age. Will digital preservation, an invisible language, outlast the physical wooden record’s nearly seven-and-a-half centuries?

The reader is invited to re

PART ONE

SHARON HELMER POGGENPOHL

to reconsider the ubiquity of visible lan

REMIEDIATION,² the transference of the character or structure of one medium into another, particularly that of an old medium into a new, anchors the second essay, “Bookcover as Intertitle in the Cinema of Jean-Luc Godard.” In Kevin Hayes essay, textual reference also plays its part as a book, presented visually – its cover or spine revealing a title – it deepens meaning and signals structural shifts within a cinematic presentation. It reminds us of the importance of narrative in books, in movies, in life itself. Here a movie quotes not a passage but an entire book, which in turn is quoted in this article as a film clip. Remediation continues – it supports reference and memory.

INTERPRETATION, whether cursory or hermeneutic, colors the everyday experience of making sense of the city. Mark Owens' essay, "Reading the City: Writing and the Construction of Urban Space in Jem Cohen's *LOST BOOK FOUND* explores the materiality of writing within New York City in the technically modest but lyrical Cohen film. Ephemeral writing, its decay and fragmentation and the subsequent rewriting of the urban substrate stand in contrast to preservation. The "lost book" with its strange categories is at the core of a series of nested events that include the city and its instantiation of the categories as well as the essay itself as it encapsulates both "lost book," film and city. Sorting and organizing ideas and experience into categories or lists is, according to Jack Goody, a significant attribute of the literate mind.³ Here the literate mind reads, meditates and transfers categories beyond the page.

Consider the ubiquity of visible language

page through these essays.

NAVIGATION, using the Global Positioning System, renders a visible record of movement or position in time. "Visualizing Place," Andrea Wollensak's essay, explores the possibilities for expression using triangulations from satellites to record traces of memory and movement. Diagramming position, experiencing space technologically in response to human action and visceral experience, whether reflecting an old culture or new, whether stable or moving, opens a performative space that is both human and precise.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Eisenstein, Elizabeth. 1983. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. London: Cambridge University Press, 78.
- 2 Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin. 1999. *Remediation, Understanding New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- 3 Goody, Jack. 1977. *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. London: Cambridge University Press, 17.