



Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics

By W. J. T. Mitchell

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Almost thirty years ago, W. J. T. Mitchell's *Iconology* helped launch the interdisciplinary study of visual media, now a central feature of the humanities. Along with his subsequent *Picture Theory* and *What Do Pictures Want?*, Mitchell's now-classic work introduced such ideas as the pictorial turn, the image/picture distinction, the metapicture, and the biopicture. These key concepts imply an approach to images as true objects of investigation—an “image science.”

Continuing with this influential line of thought, *Image Science* gathers Mitchell's most recent essays on media aesthetics, visual culture, and artistic symbolism. The chapters delve into such topics as the physics and biology of images, digital photography and realism, architecture and new media, and the occupation of space in contemporary popular uprisings. The book looks both backward at the emergence of iconology as a field and forward toward what might be possible if image science can indeed approach pictures the same way that empirical sciences approach natural phenomena.

Essential for those involved with any aspect of visual media, *Image Science* is a brilliant call for a method of studying images that overcomes the “two-culture split” between the natural and human sciences.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Mitchell is persistently exciting in the way that he brings images together to build a logical description of a historical situation that is not reductive or simplified. . . . In *Image Science*, we get a good sense of what he wants the image to do, and some brilliant examples of it, together with an arsenal of semiotic sub-categories.”

(*Los Angeles Review of Books*)

“With its comprehensive presentation of Mitchell's revisionist concept of iconology, *Image Science* serves as an introduction to the challenges of studying both art history and the more innovative fields of visual culture and media studies. It is also a fine review of Mitchell's contributions to interdisciplinary study. . . . Highly recommended.”

(*Choice*)

“*Image Science* adds another chapter to Mitchell's long and illustrious intervention in the disciplines of art history and visual studies. Mitchell argues persuasively for a science of the visual that straddles the humanities and the social and natural sciences, one that addresses not only objects but also their perception and role in human experience. This is an exciting and theoretically challenging collection.”

(Keith Moxey, Barnard College, Columbia University)

“*Image Science* is fascinating and a wonderful account of a leading scholar's rich research. As always, Mitchell's writing is erudite, engaging, and challenging; his thinking mindful and provocative in equal measure; his arguments dazzling; his insights startling.”

(Marquard Smith, Kingston University, London)

“Ranging widely across the new visual realities of science, art, cinema, and digital media, these essays are conceptually precise, politically engaged, and deeply reflective. They demonstrate why Mitchell has become America's leading philosopher of the image.”

(Susan Buck-Morss, Graduate Center of the City University of New York)

About the Author

W. J. T. Mitchell is the Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago and is editor of *Critical Inquiry*.

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