



Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy

Bruno Latour (Editor) , Peter Weibel (Editor)

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In this groundbreaking editorial and curatorial project, more than 100 writers, artists, and philosophers rethink what politics is about. In a time of political turmoil and anticlimax, this book redefines politics as operating in the realm of "things." Politics is not just an arena, a profession, or a system, but a concern for things brought to the attention of the fluid and expansive constituency of the public. But how are things made public? What, we might ask, is a republic, a "res publica," a public thing, if we do not know how to make things public? There are many other kinds of assemblies, which are not political in the usual sense, that gather a public around things--scientific laboratories, supermarkets, churches, and disputes involving natural resources like rivers, landscapes, and air. The authors of "Making Things Public"--and the ZKM show that the book accompanies--ask what would happen if politics revolved around disputed things. Instead of looking for democracy only in the official sphere of professional politics, they examine the new atmospheric conditions--technologies, interfaces, platforms, networks, and mediations that allow things to be made public. They show us that the old definition of politics is too narrow; there are many techniques of representation--in politics, science, and art--of which Parliaments and Congresses are only a part. The authors include such prominent thinkers as Richard Rorty, Simon Schaffer, Peter Galison, Richard Powers, Lorraine Daston, Richard Aczel, and Donna Haraway; their writings are accompanied by excerpts from John Dewey, Shakespeare, Swift, La Fontaine, and Melville. More than 500 color images document the new idea of what Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel call an "object-oriented democracy."

Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy Details

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Sarah says

This book is one of my favorite books I own. It has essays from different academics of different fields (1000 pages in total). The concepts addressed in this book could change the way we approach democracy. In addition this book is considered an art exhibit because there are pictures in it of different places and events to help with the points the authors are making.

Peter says

Contains some really interesting essays - including a profile of Allende's new media initiative in 1970s pre-fascist Chile!

Gloria says

This book is an exhibition catalog which is filled with many many essays. This is not something that one reads in one sitting, obviously, as it is assembled like many of other Latour's interests, and it takes *alot* of time (like Latour).

Of the ones that I have read so far, am particularly taken by Warren Stack's entry, as well as adore Haraways' Chicken Little essay---which reads a performative piece by an academic, but quite humorous.

This one will be next to my bed for at least a year..... dipping into it occasionally, for inspiration or provocation.

Menser says

I saw Latour speak last spring and was quite impressed in his defense of his view--and the ways it has changed since his earlier works like *Laboratory Life and Science in Action* (I detest "we have never been modern", intriguing title, terrible book--too many inaccurate synopses of other works). His opening essay is tremendous and the focus on representation and assemblies with respect to the ways in which "things" are discussed or more accurately make themselves present and are engaged by us is a much unaddressed topic in political philosophy.
