

Jonathan Terranova's project is a remarkable piece of dialectic that, in its completed form, accomplishes something considerably more than its originally stated purpose.

The catalogue of militarized designer objects is imaginative, funny, and thought-provoking, and one could attempt a critique in terms of the degree of success of the concept in elucidating the concealed militarization of American social assumptions. This elucidation is the stated purpose of the project.

But the intention of including a succession of critical reviews by writers who have no knowledge of one another's contribution changes the project monumentally. As anyone can testify who has read art critical pieces that lead one to wonder if the critics were all looking at the same exhibition, to incorporate the critical responses into the published project is to illuminate the larger processes of consciousness within which the obfuscations operate that Terranova is trying to reveal in the visual segment of the project.

For in spite of all the protestations about the lack of an innocent eye, we think we are seeing what is really there, most of all if we are critics with a certain amount of arrogance. But as the juxtaposition of half a dozen critical reviews will remind us, we aren't.

The question to be answered thus becomes the sources of our distortions, and that is where psychology meets social critique, and where anthropology becomes more relevant than art criticism.

That is, in other words, where things start to get interesting. And we can begin to puzzle out how and why we interpret our world when we believe, subconsciously, that we are seeing it even when we are old enough to know better.

"Look closely. Don't be fooled. What is this?" As a famous Zen master said once as his final words to his students before dying.

The subterfuges of the social order and our own predilections towards personal simplification both prevent us from looking closely, and we are the more fooled when it is we who fool ourselves, or choose not to be unfooled by looking closely.

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