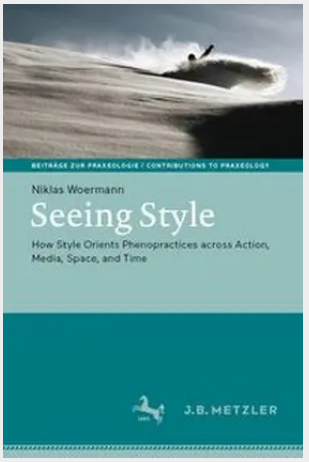
Woermann

Seeing Style

How Style Orients Phenopractices across Action, Media, Space, and Time



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How do social practices prefigure experiences, and how does embodied experience organize the performance of practices? This book suggests that the classic concept of style offers a fresh answer to the question how doings and sayings are linked into practice bundles. Based on a rich ethnographic study of the visual practices of the German-speaking freeskiing subculture, this work develops a theory of phenopractices, or embodied cultural practices dedicated to apprehending and expressing style. Focusing on the visual dimension, it extends the thought of Garfinkel and Schatzki using recent insights from science and technology studies and research at the intersection of neuroscience and phenomenology. This offers a new perspective on fundamental practice-theoretical questions about the nature of practice elements, social order in the context of rules and regularity, or action and practical intelligibility. Each chapter discusses and develops foundational concepts such as time, space, action, emotion, or perception based on an analysis of freeskiing practices such as planning a route in the backcountry, testing a new ski model, or judging freestyle contests. The central argument is that cultural styles of conduct are not only symbolic structures, but a functional resource which organizes situational intelligibility and thus enables social order based on aligned and managed embodied routines. Because the stabilization, dissemination, and evolution of such styles happens via different media, practice change is primarily influenced by media rather than symbolic, rational, or functional needs or ends. A rich ethnography and provocative theoretical argument of interest to anyone working on contemporary practice thought, advancing phenomenology, the sociology of vision, lifestyle sports, media, or practice evolution.

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