



# **An Aesthesis of Networks: Conjunctive Experience in Art and Technology (Technologies of Lived Abstraction)**

*Anna Munster*

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Today almost every aspect of life for which data exists can be rendered as a network. Financial data, social networks, biological ecologies: all are visualized in links and nodes, lines connecting dots. A network visualization of a corporate infrastructure could look remarkably similar to that of a terrorist organization. In *An Aesthesia of Networks*, Anna Munster argues that this uniformity has flattened our experience of networks as active and relational processes and assemblages. She counters the "network anaesthesia" that results from this pervasive mimesis by reinserting the question of experience, or aesthesia, into networked culture and aesthetics. Rather than asking how humans experience computers and networks, Munster asks how *networks* experience -- what operations they perform and undergo to change and produce new forms of experience. Drawing on William James's radical empiricism, she asserts that networked experience is assembled first and foremost through relations, which make up its most immediately sensed and perceived aspect. Munster critically considers a range of contemporary artistic and cultural practices that engage with network technologies and techniques, including databases and data mining, the domination of search in online activity, and the proliferation of viral media through YouTube. These practices -- from artists who "undermine" data to musicians and VJs who use intranetworked audio and video software environments -- are concerned with the relationality at the core of today's network experience.

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