



Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space (Console-ing Passions)

Anna McCarthy

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Although we tend to think of television primarily as a household fixture, TV monitors outside the home are widespread: in bars, laundromats, and stores; conveying flight arrival and departure times in airports; uniting crowds at sports events and allaying boredom in waiting rooms; and helping to pass the time in workplaces of all kinds. In *Ambient Television* Anna McCarthy explores the significance of this pervasive phenomenon, tracing the forms of conflict, commerce, and community that television generates outside the home.

Discussing the roles television has played in different institutions from 1945 to the present day, McCarthy draws on a wide array of sources. These include retail merchandising literature, TV industry trade journals, and journalistic discussions of public viewing, as well as the work of cultural geographers, architectural theorists, media scholars, and anthropologists. She also uses photography as a research tool, documenting the uses and meanings of television sets in the built environment, and focuses on such locations as the tavern and the department store to show how television is used to support very different ideas about gender, class, and consumption. Turning to contemporary examples, McCarthy discusses practices such as Turner Private Networks' efforts to transform waiting room populations into advertising audiences and the use of point-of-sale video that influences brand visibility and consumer behavior. Finally, she inquires into the activist potential of out-of-home television through a discussion of the video practices of two contemporary artists in everyday public settings.

Scholars and students of cultural, visual, urban, American, film, and television studies will be interested in this thought-provoking, interdisciplinary book.

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