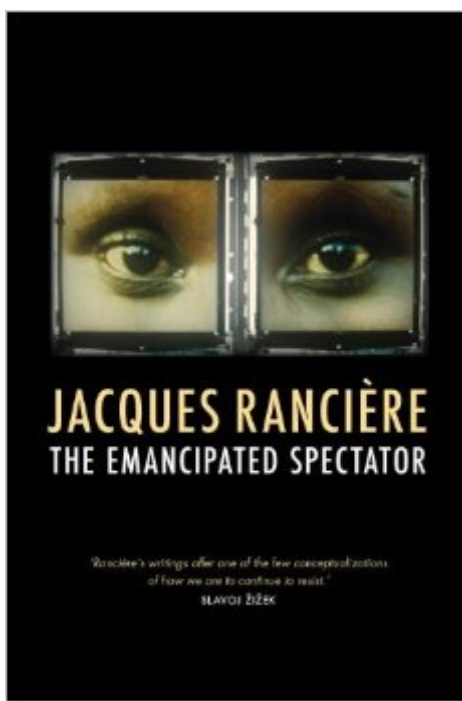


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# The Emancipated Spectator



## Synopsis

The theorists of art and film commonly depict the modern audience as aesthetically and politically passive. In response, both artists and thinkers have sought to transform the spectator into an active agent and the spectacle into a communal performance. In this follow-up to the acclaimed *The Future of the Image*, Rancière takes a radically different approach to this attempted emancipation. First asking exactly what we mean by political art or the politics of art, he goes on to look at what the tradition of critical art, and the desire to insert art into life, has achieved. Has the militant critique of the consumption of images and commodities become, ironically, a sad affirmation of its omnipotence?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is a set of five essays in response to Rancière's earlier work "The Ignorant Schoolmaster." All of these pieces are tied together by Rancière's attempt to overcome the dyad so often associated with modernist aesthetics of passive spectator/active seer. The title essay extends the concept set forth in "The Ignorant Schoolmaster" by suggesting that the knowledge gap between the educated teacher and the student should be given up in place for an "equality of knowledge." The goal of this is not to turn everyone into a scholar, however. As Rancière says, "It is not the transmission of the artist's knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third that is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect" (15). This is by far the most cogent and understandable of the essays in the collection, and it offers an interesting suggestion in rethinking the space between the actor and viewer, teacher

and student, or any other relationship. However, it struck me as the kind of idea most at home in the world of theory, one that might not be well-translated into praxis. The second essay, "The Misadventures of Critical Thought," Ranciere criticizes the traditional role of the spectator by claiming that it, even though a mode of criticism itself, it "reproduces its own logic." He looks at photos from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Vietnam, by Martha Rosler and Josephine Meckseper. Some people do not want to view these graphic photographs, however that very refusal perpetuates and continues the logic of the war in the first place.

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