

The Object of Reading & Reading as an Object

Reading as an art form and the changed discourse about books

The proclaimed demise of ('proper') reading and the announced e-book era which has begun to redefine the common understanding of books and reading, and to defamiliarize the related every day practices, liberating them for new meanings, have among others released a stream of book-focused art-projects and reading/writing related performances. Apart from reflecting the changing forms of the book itself, many of these artefacts are in fact trying to embody (and thereby comment on) the new ways of reading and of dealing with books. Drawing on a number of cases – Fleur Thio's *New Ways of Reading* and Vuk Cosic's *Deep Ascii Novel*, among others – the paper will discuss the ways in which these visualisations or objectifications of reading relate to a more general phenomenon observed in (media) discourse on books which seems to be increasingly moving away from the text to its external, i.e. material and contextual dimensions. The trend is most evident in a rapid proliferation of books about books and especially in books on reading, which are in fact not talking about, but rather *around* books, articulating the physical experience of reading and the material practices of handling books – as if stressing their (re)discovered materiality.