



# Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture

*Bill Nichols*

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## **Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture** Bill Nichols

Blurred Boundaries explores decisive moments when the traditional boundaries of fiction/nonfiction, truth and falsehood blur. Nichols argues that a history of social representation in film, television and video requires an understanding of the fate of both contemporary and older work. Traditionally, film history and cultural studies sought to place films in a historical context. Nichols proposes a new goal: to examine how specific works, old and new, promote or suppress a sense of historical consciousness. Examining work from Eisenstein's *Strike* to the Rodney King videotape, Nichols interrelates issues of formal structure, viewer response and historical consciousness. Simultaneously, *Blurred Boundaries* radically alters the interpretive frameworks offered by neo-formalism and psychoanalysis: Comprehension itself becomes a social act of transformative understanding rather than an abstract mental process while the use of psychoanalytic terms like desire, lack, or paranoia to make social points metaphorically yields to a vocabulary designed expressly for historical interpretation such as project, intentionality and the social imaginary. An important departure from prevailing trends in many fields, *Blurred Boundaries* offers new directions for the study of visual culture.

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