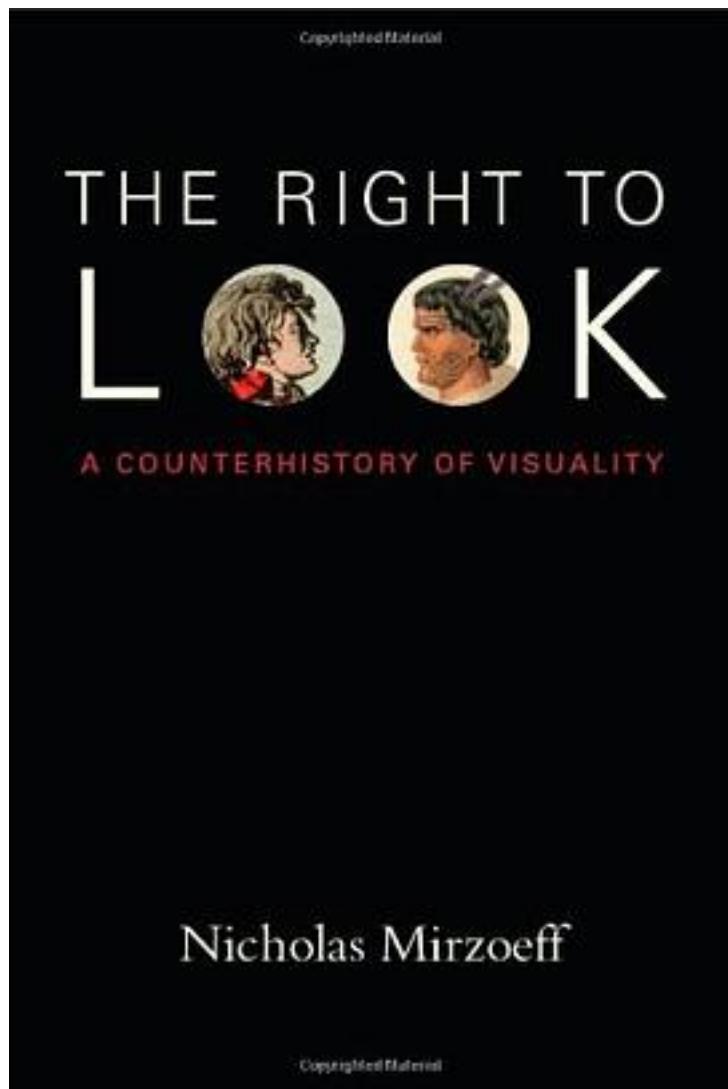


The Right to Look



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In *The Right to Look*, Nicholas Mirzoeff develops a comparative de-colonial framework for visual culture studies, a field that he has helped to create and shape. Casting modernity as an ongoing contest between visuality and counter-visuality, or "the right to look," he explains how visuality sutures authority to power and renders the association natural. An early-nineteenth-century concept, meaning the visualization of history, visuality has been central to the legitimization of Western hegemony. Mirzoeff identifies three "complexes of visuality," plantation slavery, imperialism, and the present-day military-industrial complex. He describes how, within each of these, power is made to seem self-evident through techniques of classification, separation, and aestheticization. At the same time, he shows how each complex of visuality has been countered by the enslaved, the colonized, and opponents of war, all of whom assert autonomy from authority by claiming the right to look. Encompassing the Caribbean plantation and the Haitian revolution, anti-colonialism in the South Pacific, anti-fascism in Italy and Algeria, and the contemporary global counterinsurgency, *The Right to Look* is a work of astonishing geographic, temporal, and conceptual reach.

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