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Ghost stories for grown-ups: Pictorial Matters in Times of War and Conflict

is an Introduction written by invitation from the editors of the journal *Humanities*. It was conceived simultaneously with and is a companion piece to 'Reflections on Protest and Political Transformation since 1789' a concluding chapter to *The Aesthetics of Global Protest. Visual Culture and Communication*. Again, taking as its central armature Karen Barad's agential realism inflected by understandings of Lambros Malafouris material engagement theory; Jacques Ranciere's politics of the sensible; Judith Butler's notions of performativity, inclusion and exclusion; and Richard Grusin's concept of mediation discussed in 'Reflections'. This introduction moves the discussion forward to more fully embrace the pictorial and the physical, historical and institutional processes of picture-making within the apparatus of picture-making. The attempt in 'Ghost stories' is to shed new light and thinking on pictures as material objects; how they perform, act and feed into our subjectivities, experiences and realities and to account for their currency, duration, affectivity and authority beyond transparent representation or symbolic meaning. From the fields of visual culture and art history, insights are deployed from W.J.T Mitchell (2005) on what pictures 'want;' from Jens Eder and Charlotte Klonk's *Image Operations* (2017) on how images 'operate;' and the ontological concerns of Horst Bredekamp and Hans Belting, for example. In this framework, the worlds pictures create and the subjectivities they produce are not understood to precede the phenomena they depict. The picture, as the outcome of the apparatus which produces it, makes an 'observational cut' that simultaneously excludes and includes certain elements from its frame. As such, it has to be comprehended as party to processes which are both ethical and political. A fact which is particularly important during times of conflict and war.