



Dara Birnbaum: Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman (AFTERALL)

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Opening with a prolonged salvo of fiery explosions accompanied by the warning cry of a siren, Dara Birnbaum's video *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978--79) is a concise, action-packed, and visually riveting video. During its seven-minute span we see, again and again, the transformation of the drab secretary Diana Prince into the super-heroic Wonder Woman. By isolating and repeating the moment of transformation--spinning figure, arms outstretched--Birnbaum unmasks the technology at the heart of the metamorphosis. In this illustrated examination of Birnbaum's video, T. J. Demos situates it in its historical context--among other developments in postmodernist appropriation, media analysis, and feminist politics--and explores the artist's pioneering attempts to open up the transformative abilities of video as a medium. Demos examines Birnbaum's influence on such artists as Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, and Candice Breitz, and the turn toward "postproduction procedures"--the mobilization of existing imagery for innovative uses. He also reveals a fascinating historical shift in the reception of Birnbaum's work: a move from an emphasis on her deconstruction of mass culture ideology to an appreciation of her creative use of consumer imagery.

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