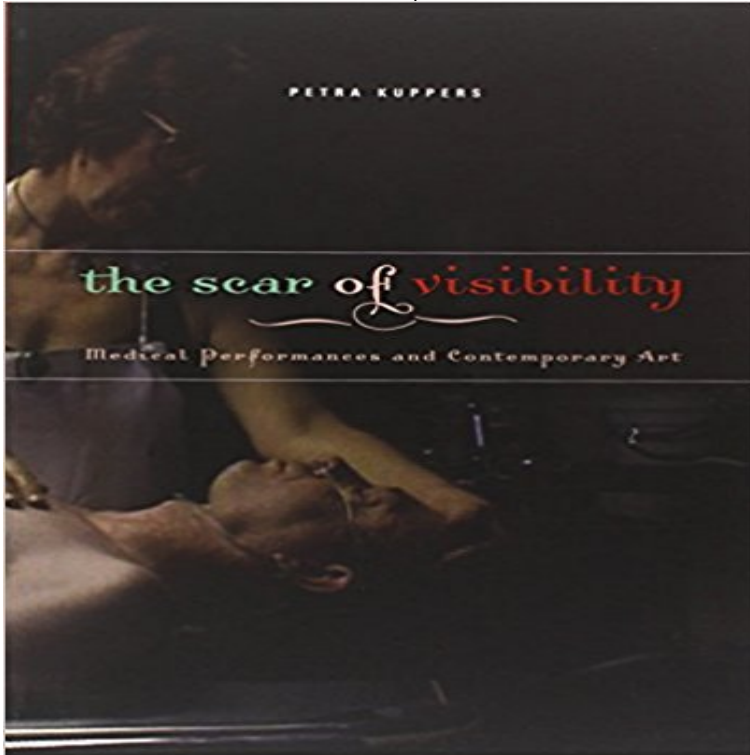


## The Scar of Visibility: Medical Performances and Contemporary Art



Contemporary visual and performance artists have adopted modern medical technologies such as MRIs and computer imaging and the bodily access they imply to reveal their limitations. In doing so they emphasize the unknowability of another's bodily experience and the effects—physical, emotional, and social—of medical procedures. In *The Scar of Visibility*, Petra Kuppens examines the use of medical imagery practices in contemporary art, as well as different arts of everyday life (self-help groups, community events, Internet sites), focusing on fantasies and knowledge projects surrounding the human body. Among the works she investigates are the controversial *Body Worlds* exhibition of plastinized corpses; video projects by Shimon Attie on diabetes and Douglas Gordon on mental health and war trauma; performance pieces by Angela Ellsworth, Bob Flanagan, and Kira O'Reilly; films like David Cronenberg's *Crash* and Marina de Vans *In My Skin* that fetishize body wounds; representations of the AIDS virus in the National Museum of Health and on *CSI: Crime Scene Investigations*; and the paintings of outsider artist Martin Ramirez. At the heart of this work is the scar—a place of production, of repetition and difference, of multiple nerve sensations, fragile skin, outer sign, and bodily depth. Through the embodied sign of the scar, Kuppens articulates connections between subjective experience, history, and personal politics. Illustrated throughout, *The Scar of Visibility* broadens our understanding of the significance of medical images in visual culture. Petra Kuppens is associate professor of English at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the author of *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*.

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