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**Proceedings
of the 3rd
Undergraduate
Art History
Symposium**

The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Panel I (1:15-2:00 P.M.)

Kelsey Thornton

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Chelsea Coon

School of the Museum of Fine Arts

Kia Giam

New York University

Panel II (2:00-2:45 P.M.)

Professors Robert Fisher (Physics) and

Harvey Goldman (Digital Media)

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Panel III (3:00-3:45 P.M.)

Patricia Flynn

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Meaghan Gates

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Meghan Walsh

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Keynote Lecture (4:00-5:00 P.M.)

The Way Things Work:

Art as Science Science as Art

Thursday, April 10th, 1:00-5:00 P.M.

Claire T. Carney Library, Grand Reading Room



3rd Annual Undergraduate Art History Conference
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Introduction

The idea for this year's theme arose from an increased interest in interdisciplinary studies on campus - specifically, between the arts and the sciences. While many people regard these fields to be very much separate in their endeavors— with the arts as creative pursuits, and the sciences as intellectual queries—this notion is misguided. There is, in fact, a surprising amount of overlap and similarity between the two fields. This is seen as early as the 15th century with the innovation of linear perspective, continuing up through the 1960s with the onset of the Environmental Art movement, and extending into the digital age in the work of artists such as Char Davies and Heather-Dewey Hagborg. These represent just a few examples out of hundreds— if not thousands— of unique amalgamations of art, science, and technology, exemplifying the ways in which these disciplines continue to inform one another. Art is a process of discovery, just as science is a process of creation. Therefore, art becomes science, and science becomes art. One could not exist without the other.

Acknowledgments go to everyone who made the conference possible. Specifically, the five other student organizers: Virginia Luongo, Betsey Janus, Trish Birk-Smith, Adrien Mercier, and Rea Bethel. Our faculty advisors, Pamela Karimi and Thomas Stubblefield. Graphic design student, Bing Lin, who has designed our conference posters and brochures for the past two years, in addition to all of the promotional posters for the Art History Club. All nine of today's presenters for being here today— especially Professors Robert Fisher and Harvey Goldman, who kindly agreed to participate in the conference despite their busy schedules. Finally, thanks to CVPA Dean, Adrian Tió, for his continued support of the Art History Club and the Art History Department.

— *Lauren Scharf*

CO-CONVENER OF THE
3RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Hybrid ReAssemblage
Amit Zoran & Leah Buechly

Digital Duality

Kelsey Thornton

The way we consume, interact, and represent ourselves is evolving, and craft is responding. A new group of makers, including myself, is addressing modern issues of the digital age. Every day our world becomes increasingly digital, the virtual and tangible become less distinguished. Book artist Chris Fritton, discusses these issues in his QR Code Book, entitled *Why We Lose Our Hands*. A study in contrast, this tech savvy book was printed with the letter press, antiquated, analog technology, but each page of this book consists of a QR code requiring a smart phone app to read. The convoluted reading experience that this book

creates is a commentary on the modern issue of reliance on digital data sources for knowledge and content. Though this book physically exists without technology, the content is illegible without a device to filter it. *Why We Lose Our Hands* erases the line between the digital and the physical.

Further eliding the virtual/tangible divide is the increased availability of three dimensional printers and scanners. 3D Printed objects are both infinitely reproducible and easily individualized. Already available in public libraries and schools, it will not be long before 3D printers and scanners are common household appliances. You will print

“Basketry is a flexible and forgiving medium that easily adapts to new technology, inviting experimentation”

out newly purchased toys, accessories, and replacement parts for your dishwasher in ease, turning your wildest dreams into ordinary reality. Digital fabrication has revolutionized the design world, allowing the inexpensive, rapid prototyping of products that would have taken months to produce a few years ago.

In tension with the effortless reproducibility of the digitally fabricated, stands the traditional craft object, one of a kind or made in limited numbers. In this sense, art and craft have had trouble accepting 3D printing as a medium, since the ease of reproduction affects the value of an object. Amit Zoran addresses this problem by creating hybrid pieces of craft and digital design, investigating an entirely new making practice. In his first project, *Hybrid ReAssemblage*, Zoran and Leah Buechly restore broken ceramic pieces with digitally printed nylon elements. Accentuating the destruction of the ceramic while retaining the form of the original piece, these vessels explore the various layers of risk involved in craft. In traditional craftsmanship, the object is subject to the judgment and care of the craftsman. Working in an “analog” material, the object itself is the only record of the maker’s effort. Digital craftspeople also make a series of subjective decisions that reflect their skills, perspectives, and values, but there is little risk

beyond a computer crash, as they have access to a history of save files and edit histories to refer back to. By smashing carefully hand crafted ceramic vessels, Zoran and Buechly explore “how digital design and 3D printers can be used to produce unique artifacts” (Buechly & Zoran, 6). Since the shattered remains of the ceramic vase are one of a kind and impossible to reproduce, reprinting the nylon elements would be useless, subverting one of the inherent qualities of 3D printing.

Further exploring the craft potential of digital design, Amit Zoran’s next project, sought equality between digital practice and craft. Through

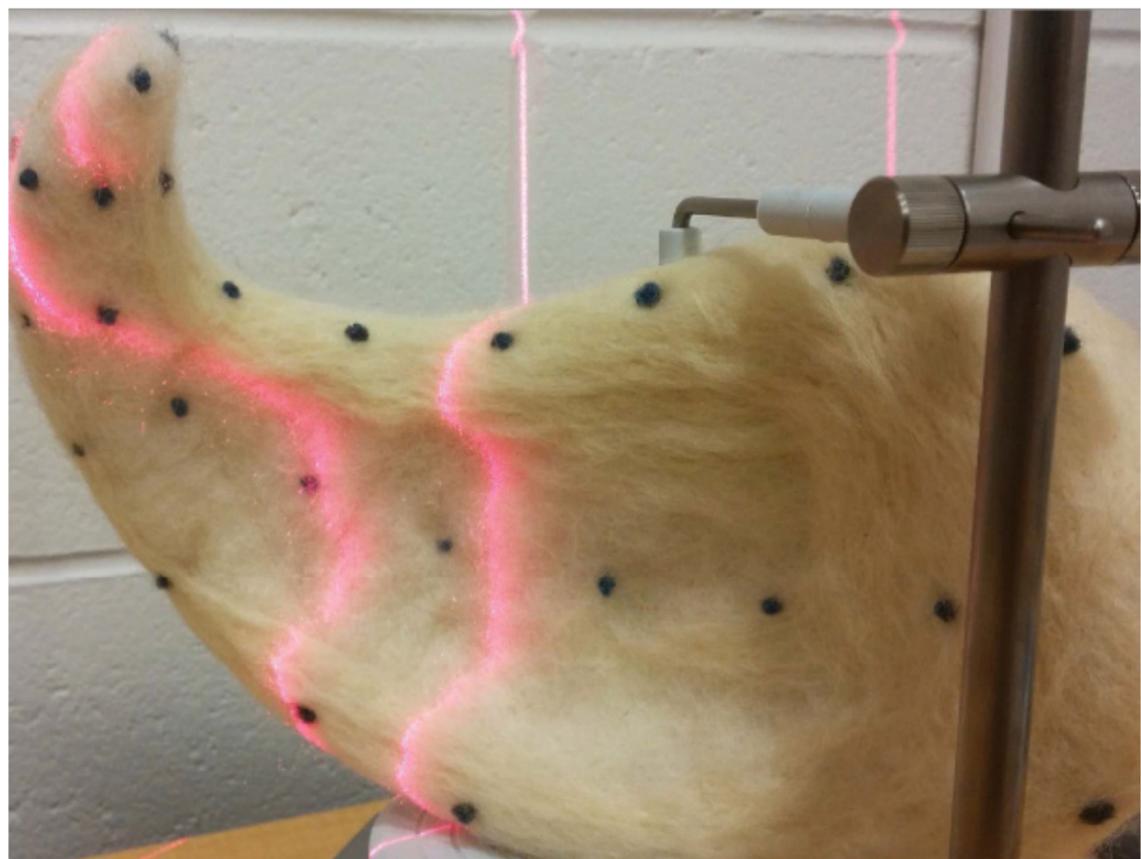


Basket IV
Amit Zoran

hybrid basketry, Zoran explored the intertwining of 3D printed structures and reed. Basketry is a flexible and forgiving medium that easily adapts to new technology, inviting experimentation. In *Basket IV*, Zoran accepted the risk involved in handwork. Though the shape of the basket, potentially hard to achieve traditionally, is defined computationally, the woven pattern is not. While weaving, Zoran was free to make design decisions about color, density, and pattern to create a unique object. Zoran says his baskets are, “a physical manifestation of an intensifying desire to develop a new way of thinking about these polarities: the machine as a generator of control

and innovation and human manual skill, as preserver of artistic production and culture... My hope is to substantiate a new hybrid territory of investigation and discovery, in which the value of artifacts produced both by machine and man can infuse our excitement about technological progress with a need to remember the very soil from which it came.” (Zoran, 330)

Amit Zoran’s words resonated with me. Inspired, I joined this emerging group of hybrid craftspeople. Balancing “analog” millinery, or hat making, techniques around interactive, or digitally fabricated details, I produced a unique wearable experience, embodying the virtual



Nice To Meet You
Kelsey Thornton

extension of self through social media. Twenty-five years ago, Russell W. Belk posited, “knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally we regard our possessions as part of ourselves” (Belk, 477). The extended self includes those persons, places, and things to which one feels attached, which become cues for others to form impressions about us, and function as memory markers for ourselves.

Traditionally these possessions would include a music collection, letters, or pictures, but with the advent of social media, these have all taken on digital forms, publicly accessible through various social media networks. One of the few

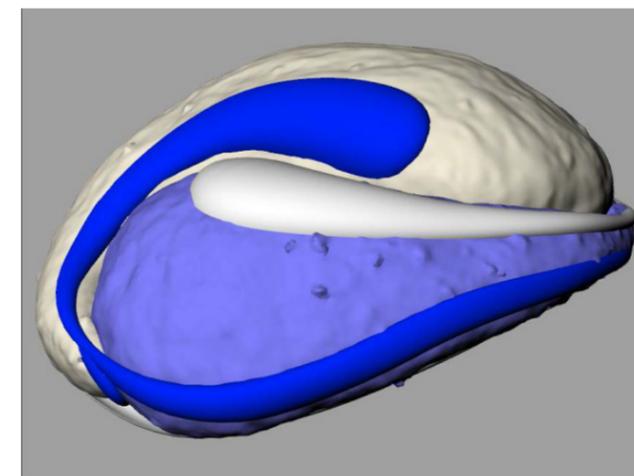
forms of extended identity that continues to be purely physical is our clothing. Unique among clothes, hats are the only piece of clothing that you cannot see from your personal perspective. A hat's aesthetic then, is for the pleasure of others, and for others to judge your identity. In this sense, a hat is emblematic of the position you hold to others. A policeman's hat indicates that he is here to protect us; a baseball cap shows your support of the Red Sox. By combining digital identity with the physical extended identity of the wearer, I am indicating that they are essentially one in the same. Using three different types of manipulated wool, I created three hats, each including digital

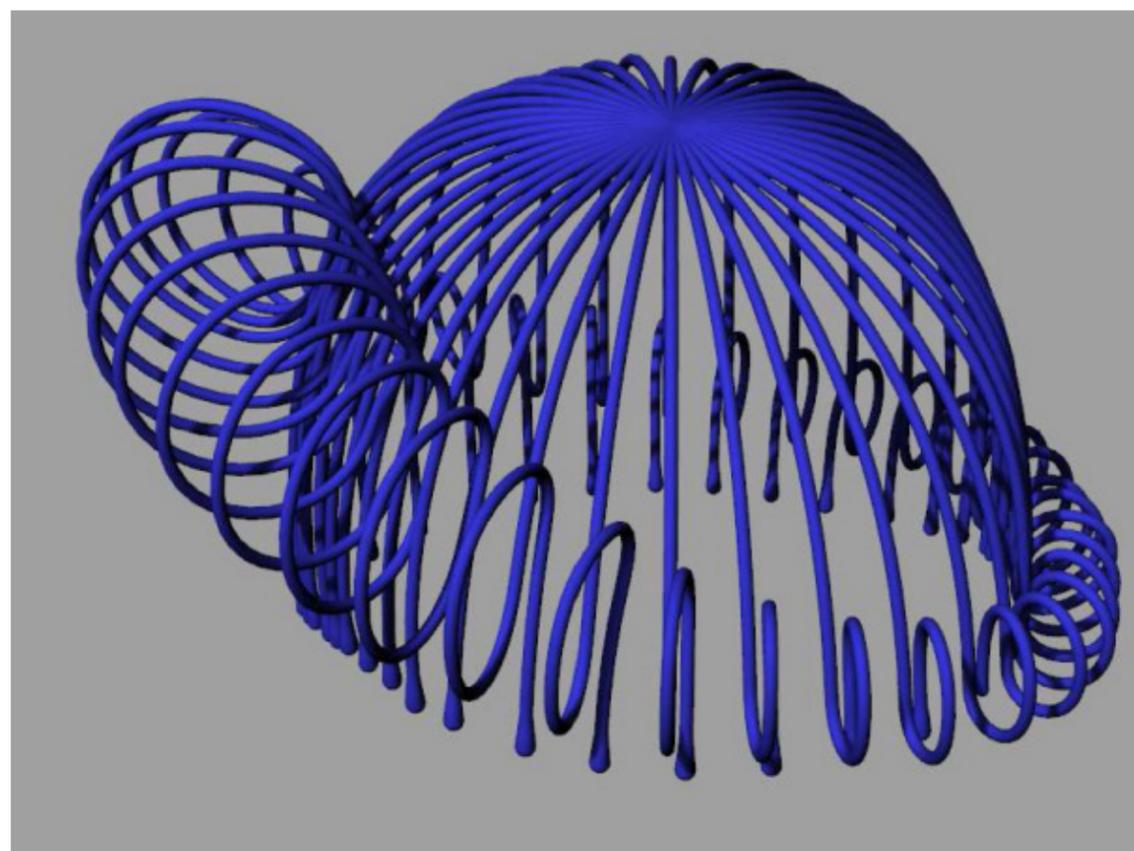
“By combining digital identity with the physical extended identity of the wearer, I am indicating that they are essentially one in the same”

mediums, highlighting the various ways in which material and virtual extended self have merged in the digital age.

Made entirely from wool, *Nice to Meet You*, is constructed using traditional millinery techniques of wet felting and steaming wool. A modern variation on a cloche form, the thick felted band contrasts with the thin blue hood. Exploiting a loophole in Facebook's URL, I designed and screen-printed a QR code such that whoever scans it, it brings them to their own profile page. This hat creates a unique experience between the wearer and the viewer. Upon initial meeting, where one might form an impression based on clothing, the viewer scans the QR code, revealing a portion of their identity not initially visible. This non-digital hat seeks to rectify the way we learn about each other in the modern world.

Digital media also augments social relationships. My relationship with old friends is entirely based on wall posts, not letters. Photographs are never passed from hand to hand, but shared with everyone. These pictures and interactions online even gain a patina of age, as friends comment on them. Browsing through the history on my eight year long Facebook wall causes severe bouts of nostalgia. To represent





What Do You Do?
Kelsey Thornton
Initial Digital Sketch

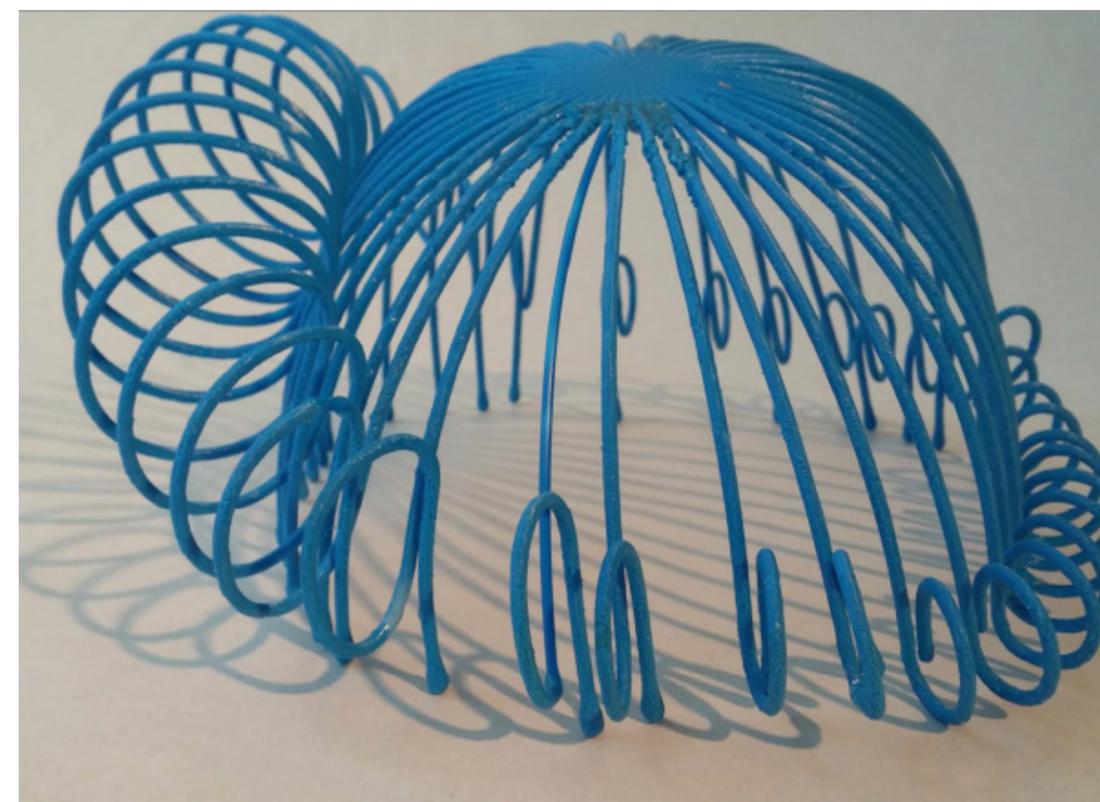
this aspect of digital identity, my next hat, titled *How Have You Been?*, consists of two needle felted wool objects, which are held together by 3D printed bands. Needle felting wool creates solid, but soft objects. The comma shaped forms nestle together to create a Yin-Yang. When 3D scanning, markers have to be put all over the object in order to achieve an accurate rendering during the alignment of each separate scan. I include the needle felted dots in the final piece as an indication of their digital identity. Using the 3D meshes of the needle felted forms, I created curvilinear bands to hold the soft shapes

snugly together. The physical wool objects are held together by a digitally designed object, expressive of the way in which digital media both bands one person to another, and bands one person to their former self.

In my next hat, *What Do You Do?*, I follow more directly in Amit Zoran's footsteps. I designed a basket hat structure, playful in shape. I then hand-spun wool yarn on a drop spindle, one of the earliest craft tools, its simple function is accomplished with centrifugal motion. I consider spinning to be part of my identity as a fiber artist. The physical, repetitive motion of making yarn



Wool used for *What Do You Do?*



3D-Printed Structure for *What Do You Do?*



What Do You Do?
Kelsey Thornton

“The physical wool objects are held together by a digitally designed object, expressive of the way in which digital media both bands one person to another”

is soothing. Time consuming, but portable, I often spin throughout the day. I find the yarn, or thread to be a potent symbol of the passing of time. When woven simply into the 3D printed structure, I am indicating my repeated use of digital media, over a lifetime. This wearable represents my identity as a continuous thread winding in and out of the digital world.

With these three hats, I seek the full picture of the way the digital is involved in our personal identity. Impressions are formed, and relationships are maintained, as our dual identities of the physical and virtual realms meet. By titling these pieces with simple, everyday conversational phrases, I am indicating the superficiality of both our digital, and physical identity, and reflecting the commonplace attitude most people take towards social media. In viewing these pieces I hope people will reflect on their own virtual self. The future of fashion and accessories is heading towards devices which bring the wearers social media use to the physical. A study on the balance of craft and digital mediums, I see these pieces as a new realm for this type of wearable, digitally produced and hand manipulated.



“While scientists may look for beauty within their work, artists use scientific methods to create form that finds truth and beauty in their meanings”

Of Bioluminescent Organisms

*& Other
Beautiful Natural
Occurrences*

Meaghan Gates

According to Gideon Engler in “Aesthetics in Science and in Art,” he states, “the idea of aesthetic appreciation and beauty is perceived as an essential feature in modern scientific process.” Everyone looks for beauty within their lives. Engler continues by quoting the mathematician and theoretical physicist, Hermann Weyl as saying, “My work always tried to unite the truth with the beautiful, but when I had to choose one or the other, I usually chose the beautiful.” (Engler, 1990) Science is the art of finding truth within our existence, and this creates the potential to acknowledge the breathtaking

possibilities of reality, and its potential, that surrounds us everyday. There are many artists who specifically look towards scientific research in order to legitimize the outcome of their forms. They want to use the methodology and conclusion of scientific process to convincingly legitimize their creations. Some examples include Shih Chieh Huang, Olafur Eliasson, and Tara Donovan.

Installation artist Shih Chieh Huang creates active environments that successfully combine science and technology with the artist’s need to create something new. Huang combines technological mechanisms, scientific research



The Bright Beneath
Shih Cheih Huang
2011

of living organisms, and single use consumer materials to create environments that wow audiences around the world. (Stromberg, 2011) The use of movement, light, color, and sound engages viewers in a manner that seems to be increasingly difficult to achieve in our spectacle obsessed global community. Having grown up in Taiwan near an "electric city", Huang has been long acquainted with a vast collection of random materials that one might expect to find at one of these locations. The transient quality in the contents of the shops, and the overall atmosphere brings about a sense of whimsy, which affected Huang's personal aesthetics in his work. These areas known as "electric cities" contain an almost endless amount of computer parts that lead people to the creation of all sorts

of mechanisms. In Huang's case, he eventually began building bioluminescent creatures that he either places in real environments, or constructs new ones for. His animated, post-consumer sculptures create awe through the simplicity of the materials and the way in which they are put together to reference the living world. (Huang, 2013)

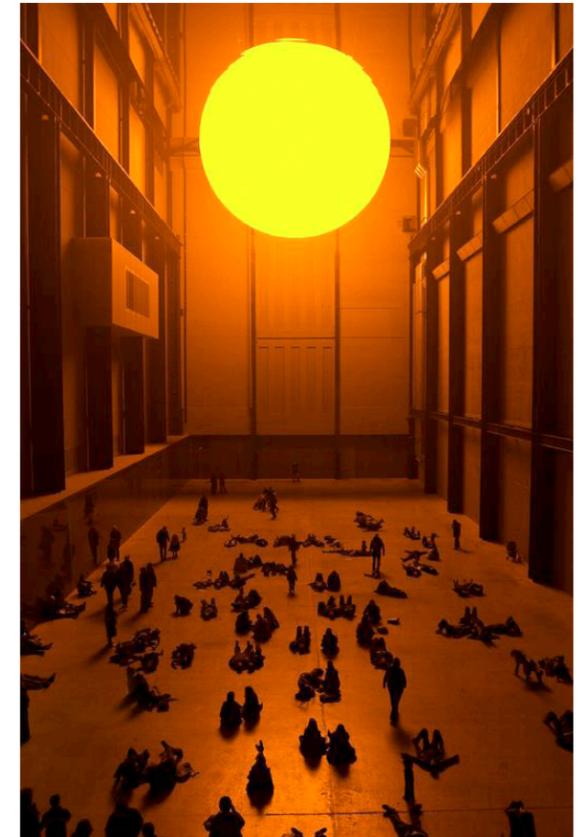
In 2007, Huang was awarded a research fellowship through the Smithsonian Institution where he was able to research bioluminescent organisms for two and a half months. During his research he studied the behavioral qualities of numerous aquatic creatures and how it affected their light sensory organs. He was particularly interested in their defense mechanisms, mating rituals, and the symbiosis of their interactions.

This research has since greatly influenced the formal and conceptual aspects of his work. He was inspired by the light patterns of creatures and their movements within their environments. (Huang, 2013) His pieces continue to not have the intention of being read as direct replicas of the living world, but rather as his own interpretations of what he has seen and researched. (Fields, 2011)

Olafur Eliasson is a Danish-Icelandic artist who creates installation that provides multi-sensory environments for his audience. Each of his works tends to be unique from the rest due to his use of light, color and sound. They also provide a space for his audience to interact with the work as well as each other. These collective experiences, and the dialogue they inspire, are very important to Eliasson because he wants people to question their surroundings and what they know reality to be. (Eliasson, 2012) He is interested in "the intersection of nature, science, and human perception." (Cynthia, 2006) Having grown up in Scandinavia and attended the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, the influence of that region's aesthetics in regards to design and craftsmanship are also very visible in his work.

In the mid nineties, he created Studio Olafur Eliasson in Berlin where he has a large team comprised of architects, craftsmen, scientists, fabricators, curators, and many others who specialize in their specific field of interest. (Coles, 2012) They work together in a laboratory type situation to make compelling works of art that question reality as we register it and how we work within it. (Olafur, February 2009) It is within his process that the methodology of science acts as a very important part of his overall studio practice. The team that works alongside Eliasson helps make many demanding projects such as "The Weather Project" at the Tate Modern in London.

In 2003 "The Weather Project" was constructed in the Tate Modern's large Turbine hall. It consisted of half of a sphere attached to the ceiling, which



The Weather Project
Olafur Eliasson
2003

was made of monochromatic lamps that gave off yellow light. The ceiling was mirrored so that when visitors came in and looked up they could see themselves, which caused a new dynamic of interaction. Humidifiers were placed in the room to create a mist that would build up in cloud forms and change the atmosphere throughout the day. He wanted to make the space tangible and to give room for his audience to inquire as to how we dictate reality. Eliasson stated, "every city mediates its own weather. As inhabitants, we have grown accustomed to the weather as mediated by the city. This takes place in numerous ways, on various collective levels ranging from hyper-mediated experiences, such as the television weather forecast, to more

direct and tangible experiences, like simply getting wet while walking down the street on a rainy day. A level between the two extremes would be sitting inside, looking out of a window onto a sunny or rainy street. The window, as the boundary of one's tactile engagement with the outside, mediates one's experience of the exterior weather accordingly." ("About the installation: understanding the project" 2003)

Why is our presence in the world important, and how do we impact it, are questions that Eliasson wants to bring up in his work. (Olafur, February 2009) When individuals would come visit the installation they felt invited to lie on the ground and watch themselves in the mirror. Some would even engage each other by creating new forms with their bodies connected. ("About the installation: understanding the project" 2003) He was able to set the stage for his concept by having a team of specialists around him who could help engineer and play with the science of how elements will interact to create a very convincing environment for those coming to experience his work.

Finally, Tara Donovan creates biomorphic abstractions with her large-scale installations. She displaces everyday items such as Styrofoam cups, pencils, buttons, and straws to create forms that overwhelm a space. She is interested in the transcendence of these everyday items into forms that take on a life of their own. Her use of multiples creates homogenous textures that could be likened to surfaces found in the natural world, but nothing could be identified as directly related. She was quoted as saying, "I work very much like a scientist or an architect in the studio. I sort of clean everything up, isolate the material, and then perform experiments with it." (Donovan, 2013) Donovan also stated, "I am mimicking the ways of nature," thus using the act of observation she creates her own kind of biology within each piece through her formal aesthetics and the nature of her materials."



Untitled
Tara Donovan
2003

In her piece titled "Untitled, 2003" at the Ace Gallery in Los Angeles in 2005, she creates a large grouping of Styrofoam cups that are attached together with hot glue. They are suspended from the ceiling of the space, and since they are so tightly packed, they look as though they are one plane that is billowing and undulating. The overall form looks as if it were the surface of a large white cloud. The white translucency of the Styrofoam also alludes to the same quality you would see in Cumulus Clouds.

While scientists may look for beauty within their work, artists use scientific methods to create form that finds truth and beauty in their meanings. Without research and experimentation, an artist's work may fall short when presenting their conclusions to the world. They hypothesize about a concept they are trying to elaborate on and then they experiment with material to find out what mediums and tools work best for their idea. When an artist narrows down what they need in order to be successful, they return to

the creation process, and create a final work of art. All artists could compare their processes to that of a scientist. Step by step each person experiments, and through trial, and error, they create a work art. According the physicist C.N. Yang, "One learns to hope that nature possesses an order that one may aspire to comprehend," and I believe that with the art practices of many, we are beginning to peel back the layers of that aesthetic desire. (Engler, 1990)



00:25:0
Meghan Walsh

“Through our habitual use of screen based technology, the user learns to put the physical and visual information about the digital platform within our peripheral so that it becomes transparent to the user.”

Art & The Screen

*Loss Through Mediation
and Remediation of Cinematic
Experience on Screens*

Meghan Walsh

As a whole, society is littered with screens and representations of them. For the individual this means interacting with multiple screens everyday. In the J. David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin’s essay on the topic of mediation and remediation they highlight the influx of multimedia experiences society has become accustomed to. They state that “we are in an unusual position to appreciate the double logic of remediation--not only because we are bombarded with images (in print, on television, in films, and now on the World Wide Web and through other digital media), but also because of the intensity with which these two logics are being pursued in all ... media. ‘Live’ point-of-view television programs show us what it is like to accompany a policeman on a dangerous raid or ... to be a skydiver or race-car driver hurtling through space. Filmmakers routinely spend tens of millions of dollars to film ‘on location’ or to recreate period costumes and places in order to make their viewers feel as if they were ‘really’ there. Internet sites offer stories, images, and now video that is up-to-the-minute, all in the name of perceptual immediacy. Yet these media enact another logic with equal enthusiasm: web sites



00:14:00
Meghan Walsh

are often riots of diverse media forms, including graphics, digitized photographs, animation, and video... Televised news programs now feature multiple video streams, split-screen displays, and composites of graphics and text”.

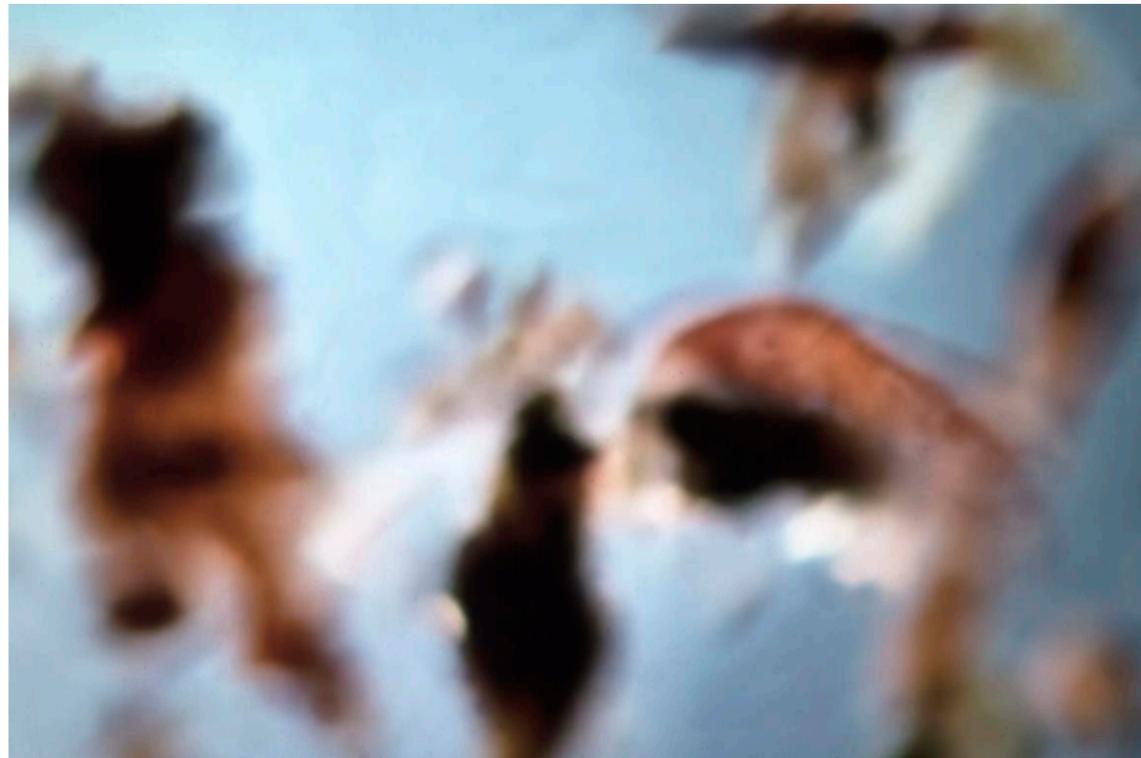
Through our habitual use of screen based technology, the user learns to put the physical and visual information about the digital platform within our peripheral so that it becomes transparent to the user. The user interacts directly with the information being displayed on screen. Most displays the users have become accustomed to

navigating, are sites that are remediating original material where the act of the mediation of the material is visible to the user. For most purposes this form of remediation is nonintrusive to the user experience when browsing the web and similar non-video based activities. But when viewing cinematic material, these remnants of the mediation interrupt the users sense of immediacy and temporality that the film is trying to convey.

Until the end of the twentieth century, the two most popular and convenient ways to consume motion pictures were either in a movie theater or

in front of a television screen. Watching a program in these formats creates a different atmosphere and experience than watching a movie in the theater. In the art of filmmaking the intent is to mediate reality with such transparency that viewers assume the film’s constructed reality as their own. The magic of cinema is reliant upon the audience’s suspension of disbelief so that they can be absorbed into the fictitious reality of the film they are viewing. For the viewer in the movie theater all distractions have been eliminated allowing them to completely engage

in the cinematic experience. Watching a film in this setting is the most ‘natural’ for the medium. When the same film is viewed as a DVD or television broadcast, the way in which the viewer experiences the film is different from watching the same film in the movie theater setting. As a DVD, the viewer has control of the environmental setting in the room where they watch the film; they can adjust the lights, volume, and control background noises. Additionally, they control the flow and sequence of the film. The viewer can fast-forward and rewind the scenes in any



00:02:7
Meghan Walsh



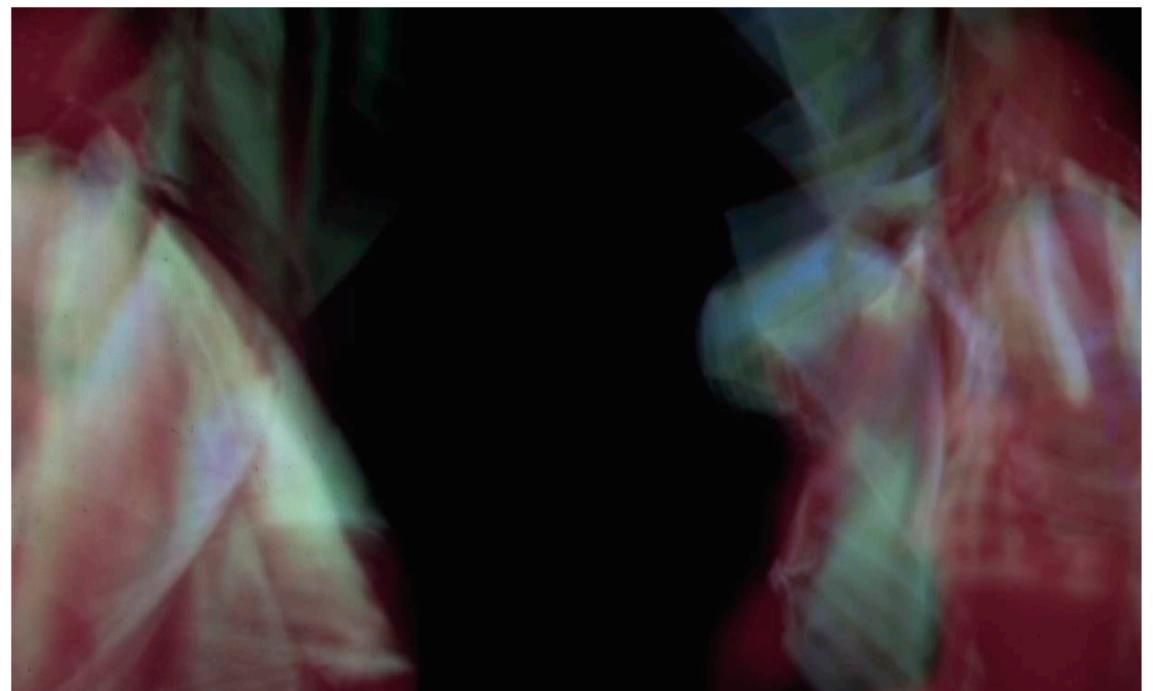
00:16:00
Meghan Walsh

order they desire and in doing so creating an entirely new narrative sequence of the movie. Another step further removed from the intended viewing of a film is the television broadcast. In this form the film can be edited to shorten running time to allow for scheduled programs, remove scenes that are not suitable for the audience, and censor vulgar language. Besides cutting out inappropriate content television broadcasts will truncate a film to allow for commercials, by doing so they are breaking the broadcast into predetermined segments.

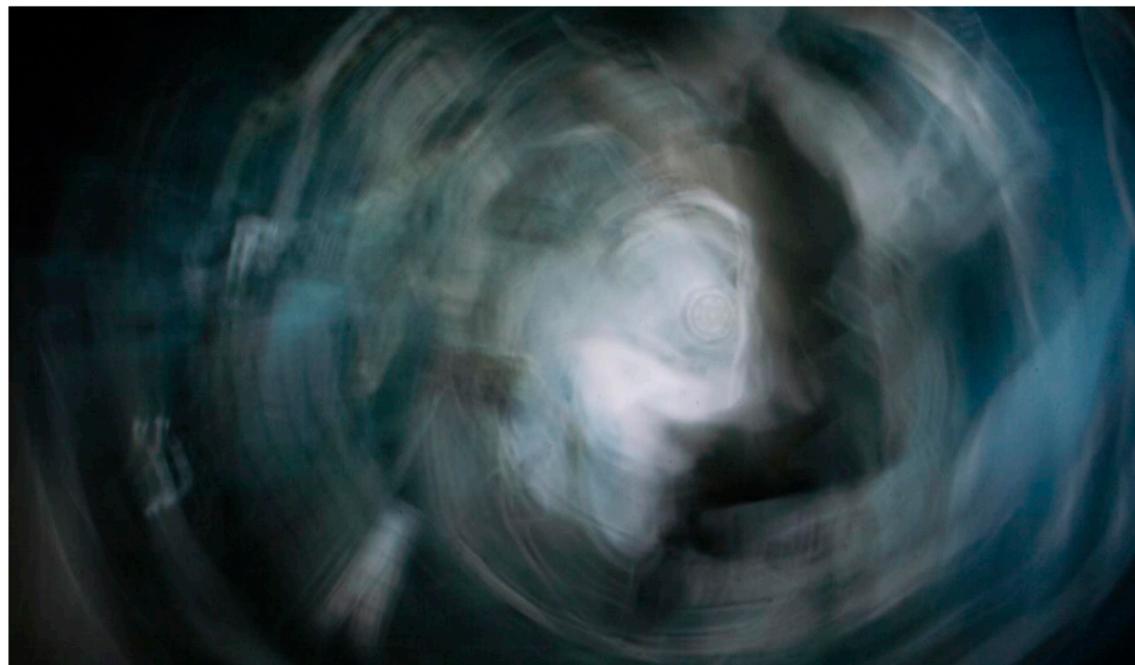
Video hosting and sharing sites such as Youtube or Netflix are filled with multiple windows, buttons, and advertisements that don't allow for the user to have an uninterrupted visual experience. These interruptions of visual flow

constantly remind the viewer that the content they are watching has been moved here from another, more 'natural' platform of viewing. The alternative is creating a full-screen view of the video which has two consequences: loss of image quality and always present advertisement banner over the video. Along with the barrage of advertisements, obstacles such as: visual or audio lagging, colors that are untrue to the original, site crashes or bugs, break the illusion of transparency.

The further removed from the setting of the movie theater, the more likely that the film will lose its capability to completely immerse the viewer into its constructed reality. A video hosted on a webpage it is subject to many forms of mediation and remediation that dilute the



00:03:5
Meghan Walsh



00:06:7
Meghan Walsh

“The viewer becomes aware of the screen’s materiality and separates them self from the constructed world that is being played on their screen...”

viewers’ cinematic experience. As a viewer of media on these platforms I became interested in the amount of distortion that a film is subjected to once it is uploaded to the internet. Distortions that cause the most disturbance of the visual characteristics of a film interested me most, such as: lagging visuals, pixelation, lack of resolution, and saturation of color. With the power to control the flow of the videos I navigate throughout the

film or switch among various websites. I began to mediate with my camera the distortions that occur to the cinematic experience when it is remediated by the internet. The subject matter of the films I photographed stretches across all genres: documentary, music videos, educational or historical material, science fiction, television programs, as well as cinematic films. Most material I have chosen spontaneously while browsing the web and is chosen either because of its amount of motion, saturation, color palette, quality of resolution, and/or contrast. Within the images I intend to erase traditional indicators of temporality so that the viewer is forced to make his or her own time and space relationships in each image and among the series of photographs. To eliminate these points of reference I employ long exposure times that are not predetermined, but done manually to allow me to compose the image based on what is displayed on screen. The exposure time ranges from seconds up to half of a



00:02:5
Meghan Walsh

minute. The spatial relationships that once existed as motion, light and code displayed on a screen are compressed onto a singular photographic plane and because of that are interpreted with a different understanding of temporality. My hope is that the viewer has a unique visual experience in which all traces of remediation are erased and no sense of immediacy is lost.

Viewers seem to be moving away from the traditional setting of the movie theater due to the fact that they have several devices in their home or on their person that support video. While the viewer’s recreation of the cinematic experience is not always one that strays too far from the atmosphere of the theater, there is something more powerful about viewing a film as an audience in a darkened theater.

Some forms of viewing are detrimental to the immediacy of a film, such as watching Netflix on an iPhone during a commute to work. Though it’s incredible that we can watch our favorite films anywhere, our interaction with them is not one where the viewer is fully submerged into the fictional reality its creator produced. There is no longer suspension of reality. The viewer becomes aware of the screen’s materiality and separates them self from the constructed world that is being played on their screen. As we are able to consume increasing numbers of films at our leisure, the phenomenon of the cinematic experience is vanishing. We are devouring massive amounts of material, but how much of what is seen is processed as a valuable visual experience to the viewer?



Landscape Graffiti
Rhinohead Productions

“Artists have traditionally represented the natural world as a reflection of the cultural and aesthetic points of view of their time”

The Mediated Landscape

in Contemporary Art

Patricia Flynn

In our times, every aspect of the “natural” world, including climate itself, is mediated by the activities of humans. Issues of land and climate may very well be the defining aspects of the 21st century. Artist and scientist Natalie Jeremijenko, of NYU, attributes our relative inaction on these urgent issues to a “crisis in agency.” The sheer complexity of the political climate around these matters can make us feel powerless as individuals.

Like the Dada artists at the end of World War I, artist and activist Julie Perini asks, concerning our times, “Why, then, would anyone make

art?” As someone who cares deeply about the topic of climate and environment, I have long been asking myself how this can fuel my work as an artist. Can artists play a role in addressing Jeremijenko’s “crisis in agency?” What forms might this take?

Artists have traditionally represented the natural world as a reflection of the cultural and aesthetic points of view of their time. However, the converse is also true: the way artists represent the natural world is “an ideological tool shaping the way in which we envision and construct the natural world,” say Adams and Robbins. Witness



Mussel Choir
Natalie Jeremijenko

the influence of the 19th century landscape painters on the decisions of policy-makers at the dawn of the Preservation movement.

In our era of information and sensory overload, what modes of artistic production can engage people on their own terms? How do people create meaning, and begin to care about these issues on a personal level? Says Jeremijenko, "We have all the information we need about global warming and it hasn't led to much action. So I think it's

about changing who produces the evidence, how it's represented, how it's interpreted, where, why." ...because art has the power to evoke a sensory and visceral experience in the audience, and thereby empower personal actions, which aggregate into community engagement and meaningful change.

Art can make ideas accessible. Art can pose questions. One thing it does extremely well is to express ambiguity, and

rooted in the world, creating engaging interfaces that "facilitate interactions between humans and nonhumans." They are playful and imaginative, conveying information about the environment using real-time interaction.

In contrast, with her pioneering work on Virtual Reality, Davies brings us to an imaginary world, which immediately jars us out of our habitual modes of perceiving and being. It is an experience of integration and embodiment in the natural world, so unexpectedly profound that many participants have described it as a transformational experience.

One of Jeremijenko's many projects is called *Mussel Choir*. It uses the water-filtering activity of mussels to provide real-time monitoring of water quality. "By instrumenting mussels with hall effect sensors, which indicate the opening and closing of their shells, and by giving them each a voice, converting the data into sound, the artwork uses the behavior of the organisms themselves as a biologically meaningful measure of pollutant exposure in order to produce a public spectacle." As conditions change, the songs will map parameters such as water depth to sound pitch, pollutants to sound timbre, and the rate of the opening and closing of mussel shells to sound tempo. "When the shells are open, the track is singing, and when they are closed, there is more of a humming sound, which indicates poorer water quality."

multiple points of view. Public discourse on these issues often involves a narrowing down of perspective by all sides. This can be alienating, rather than engaging. Perini observes, "At the root of the work of today's socially engaged artists is creating new relationships: relationships to community, to commodities, to information, and to technology."

Natalie Jeremijenko and Char Davies work in this way. Jeremijenko's projects are very much

Another water quality project called *Amphibious Architecture* uses light to communicate. "Floating tubes with sensors monitor water quality, presence of fish, and human interest in the river ecosystem. The lights shift to red when the water quality is poor, and they shift to blue as quality improves. Citizens can text-message the fish, to receive real-time information about the river, and to contribute to a display of collective interest in the environment."



Osmose
Char Davies
1995

Jeremijenko says, "I run a clinic that treats health as an environmental issue and environment as a health issue." The 'clinic' is a temporary station which can be set up in a variety of locations in the city. People bring their concerns about the environment, and receive recommendations for personal and community action, which counters the pervasive "crisis in agency."

The second artist, Char Davies, is a pioneer in creating immersive, interactive virtual reality environments. She is best known for two works, of the late '90's, which represent a radical departure from the conventions of virtual reality. Conventional design tends to reinforce the Cartesian tradition of "dualistic privileging of mind over body, male over female, and human over nature." The Cartesian grid sets up a certain concept of space which is abstracted and externalized. Conventional VR navigates exclusively by actions of the hand

and eye, which further reinforces a detached and dominating mindset.

Davies subverts these conventions, to create new metaphors of embodiment and participation. The interface offers an experience of total immersion within the VR environment. The "immersant" remains standing and mobile. Sensors are attached to the chest and back, which monitor the breath and position of the torso in space. One breathes in to rise, and breathes out to descend, giving a sensation of floating, much like a scuba diver. One's sense of balance controls direction, as the immersant bends, turns, and extends the body in space. It is often presented as a performance, where an audience can watch, in real time, a silhouette of the immersant in motion on one screen, and what the immersant actually sees, on another screen.

Another significant difference from convention is Davies' departure from "hard edged objects separated in empty space." In Davies' early paintings, she tended to focus on the spatial qualities of an experience, rather than on objects themselves. Similarly, in VR, she uses loose, transparent layers, so that one can actually travel within a leaf, root, or seed, or pass through it altogether. Another component is sound. Like the imagery, the sound itself is constantly changing, according to position, speed, proximity, gaze, and passage of time.

Here is one person's written description of the experience, because I think it does an even better job of capturing it:

"I inhale and gradually begin to rise; if I lean forward I move forward. Lean back and I move backwards."

Here, a forest scene with a grid appears, as an orienting device, and to make reference to the Cartesian grid. It quickly, and significantly, vanishes.

Gradually, a thick fog begins to rise over the grid. Leaves appear through the fog, and



Ephémère
Char Davies
1998

the grid is gone. I move through the leaves, in them, around them. I fly over them, yet more appear above me...It is summer one minute, fall the next. I float as if I am swimming deep in the ocean, yet I know I am in the air.

There, on the edge, a clearing in the distance. I exhale and begin to descend into the clearing. Bend my knees and I fly faster. Finally, I am out of the dense forest ...a pond, a stream, and a huge oak tree. I glide up through the leaves of the tree.

Likewise, the immersant can pass downward into the roots of the tree, and then onward, into an earth realm. And then, into the programming code itself.

What is this? Numbers? Letters, as if projected from a computer screen? Lines of programming surround me in big green phosphorous figures. DNA. Building blocks, the construction of this world, lines of code strung together in three

dimensions. I move through them, fly over them, and all the while they play their techy, almost goofy tune.

Up until now, I have had the notion that digital technology tends to disassociate us from our bodily experience, and from the physical world around us. Therefore, it is startling to me to realize that digital technologies can actually have the power to reconnect us with a sense of ourselves as embodied beings, and by extension, with our place in the natural world.

As Verena Conley writes, "rather than simply lamenting the loss of humanness through technology", we can engage in an exploration of its potential for transformation of a world-view that no longer serves the best interests of the planet. Art can empower us to envision new possibilities. Art is about finding an entirely new vantage point.

Selected Art History Paper of the Year

Written by a Non-Major Student



Un Chien Andalou
Luis Buñel

“The notion that films are created and exist in some form that is easily categorized and labeled has slowly faded, as modern film makers have been creating films which challenge these notions”

Realism & Surrealism

in a Global Context

Seth Borges

The notion of categorization in film has become somewhat difficult for Art Historians as of late. The notion that films are created and exist in some form that is easily categorized and labeled has slowly faded, as modern film makers have been creating films which challenge these notions. This issue becomes ever more complicated when we are speaking about surrealism and Surrealist film. In her article, Moine mentions how, “surrealism is not about a genre, but about an aesthetic movement” (Moine 98), a fact which illuminates this discussion further. With this idea in place, when we are thinking of surrealism, and more specifically Surrealist film, we can avert our attention away from the exact genre of the film in question. The notion of genre is not specifically important in this discussion, since genre restricts the dialogue to a simple inquiry as to the content of the film. Was the film made during the time of the Surrealist Movement? Was the film made by an established surrealist artist and or filmmaker? Was this film made with the intention to be an example or artistic exploration of pure surrealism? And what of the purity of its surrealism? Can we adequately define was is exactly surrealism and what is not?

With all these issues and questions that arise due to the issue of film genre and classification, it becomes counter-productive to form a discussion of surrealism in film while clinging onto the specifications that arise while we determine if something is part of or is not part of some genre of artistic expression. When speaking about these issues as it pertains to surrealism in film, Moine reiterates this point, and presents an alternate approach to film analysis which may alleviate the issues we have uncovered:

...it is impossible for surrealist film (in the strictest sense) to constitute a genre. However, today it appears that the term 'surrealist film' is used frequently, not only to designate an exclusive surrealist production, but to characterize an entire variety of films directly or indirectly influenced by surrealism, or real and interpreted as such, sometimes without any established affiliation. (Moine 99)

Moine realizes that surrealism is often understood colloquially to both art historians and to filmmakers to signify a kind of aesthetic of film. In the context of modern film, when we speak of surrealist film, we are speaking less about the film's connections to the Surrealism Movement in art history, but rather to the surrealist characteristics of the film, of its use of composition, lighting, editing, and acting direction. Surrealism then becomes a more about the methodology the filmmaker has employed in creating their vision rather than being a signifier of a kind of art that was formed by a specific group of artists who have established themselves as being part of the surrealist movement.

In past and more recent films, we can see how filmmakers have used this idea of surrealist film as a method of conveying their messages within their films. The surrealist aesthetic manifests itself in films through many techniques, but for

the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing on the concept of time and its use in cinema. We have first seen in Luis Buñel's *Un Chien Andalou*, in which Buñel deconstructs the flow of time within the film, serving as an example of how surrealism could be applied to film, and how surrealism could manifest itself in a "literal translation of dreamlike subjective reality" (Lyon 46). Buñel's disregard for creating narratives that contain continuous action which logically flows from one action or scene to the other marks an integral aspect of surrealist film. As we will see in the course of this discussion, the application of surrealism and the surrealist aesthetic can differ greatly from region to region, but the aim of its use remains the same: Through subverting the notion of sequential continuity, a concept ingrained in the very idea of film itself, filmmakers are able to create works that operate on a subconscious level, allowing for narratives and sequences that reveal and unearth truths which are deeply engrained within our experience of everyday reality. We will examine the use of time as an aesthetic of surrealism, and explore how the filmmakers of both Iranian cinema as well as Western cinema employ this technique in order to achieve this effect.

In Iranian cinema, surrealism tends to manifest itself in a subtle manner. The surrealist film of Iran focuses much on the uncanniness of reality, depicting the action of their narratives with such a naturalism that it seems to be alien on some level. Hamid Dabashi describes this phenomenon best in his essay on Darius Mehrjui's *The Cow* when he mentions how, "every gesture, every word, every event resonates with an air of reality, an almost tangible matter-of-factness. And yet it is precisely this matter-of-factness that is so unreal" (Dabashi 116). This matter-of-factness that Dabashi speaks of we can attribute to how Iranian filmmakers take many cues from Italian Neorealism. With the use of the documentary



The Cow
Darius Mehrjui

style of filming and editing, Iranian filmmakers tend to film their subjects as they are, in their natural state, how they live and the hardships that they face living in the desolation of often cruel realities. The films make no attempt to embellish the action in with any sort of artificial drama, nor do they attempt to find meaning in lavish fantastical and convoluted narratives. This causes the films of Iranian cinema to seemingly veer more towards realism, which can cause the average viewer to discredit the importance of surrealism within the context of Iranian cinema. This is unfortunate, as it is important to realize the presence of surrealism in Iranian films, as it elevates these films into a level of film making that operates beyond the notion of depicting things as they simply are. It allows us to see the subtle messaging that exists within these films

as more than just documenting, but rather as commentary. It is through this dissection of the uncanniness of life and all its slight strangeness that the films of Iranian filmmakers are able to reach this surrealist aesthetic we are aiming to analyze.

Dabashi's description also suggests that these films contain an innate understanding of how the perception of time plays into the equation when depicting a scene within a film. The flow of time is not something that we as conscious and productive members of society are acutely aware of at most parts of our everyday life. By filming with an awareness of this notion, Iranian filmmakers such as Sohrab Shaheed Salles are able to reach of unique level of surrealism, one that captures something that is so essential to human experience, while also at the same



The House is Black
Farroh Farrokhzad

time depicting narratives which serve to reveal the mistreatment and neglect of segments of society. In his film *Tabiate Bijan* (translation: Still Life, released 1974), Salles films the life of an old train switchman who lives in isolation from society. In the film, Salles makes frequent use of long-takes, capturing much of the action in an unedited form. The effect of this fully real-time experience often creates the feeling that the action onscreen is occurring slower than it actually is. This is also exacerbated by how little action there is in the film. Often stretches of several

minutes of film will contain a single action being performed in a patient yet laborious manner. The act of viewing these laborious actions take place cause the viewer to develop a greater sensitivity to their perceptions of time both within the realms of the movie and in reality as well. This sensitivity creates a conflict within the viewer's consciousness, as they negotiate with the film's unwillingness to abide by the typical notions of how time functions. Time passes in this film, but time does not move. The stillness of time allows us to view Sorhab's vision ever more

clearly. Sorhab is able to convey the existentialist quality of the narrative and the surreality of the scene through this distillation of time, as well as through the viewer's struggle to negotiate with the reality of time within the film.

In addition to conveying this stillness of time through the use of long-takes, Salles also plays with the notion of time through the masterful economy of his editing. Salles does not overdo the edits in *Tabiate Bijan*, and only chooses to change the angles we are seeing the action of the film when the action naturally calls for this

change in viewpoint. This often results in an effect that Saeed-Vafa mentions in his article on *Tabiate Bijan*:

The long takes of the old man in his room eating or smoking, and the long takes of his old wife serving tea and food, weaving rugs and walking slowly across the room could have bored audiences, but the orchestration of the simple movements of the actors, the pauses in dialogue and the editing, together with the exceptional general look of the film, created a poetic rhythm. (Saeed-Vafa 64)

This sensitivity to the quiet and deliberate actions of the actors coupled with his minimal editing style generates a poetic surrealist sensation within the film. His understanding of the naturally rhythmic and mesmerizing quality of slow and laborious action allows him to create a narrative that muses on the futility of the switchman's existence, and on a greater level, the futility of life forgotten by society.

The topic of a forgotten and forlorn society is also explored with a similar approach in Farrokhzad's *The House is Black* (released 1962). In this film, Farrokhzad depicts the daily life of a group of lepers in a leper colony, and in similar fashion to *Tabiate Bijan*, the film does this using primarily documentary filmmaking techniques. Farrokhzad shows us images of the lives of the lepers, of their community, and of their schools, all without attempting to embellish their malformations, without attempting to hide their disfigured faces and limbs. In this way, the film, like *Tabiate Bijan*, attempts to depict the life of these lepers with as much realism as possible.

Though the film is shot with the realist format in mind, the film itself has been edited in such a way that takes the idea of poetic rhythm to another level of exploration. In many montage sequences in this film, we are treated with a series

of images, images all from various interconnected scenes that relate to the voice-over which presides through the entire duration of the film. In certain sequences, the series of images that are edited together are meant to simply serve as a document of the lepers and how they lived their lives in the colony. These sequences are surprisingly few and far between, as the majority of the montage that we are shown is comprised of images of the lepers from the perspective of a subjective camera, allowing us to view the scenes as if we are experiencing the images in a more intimate and tangible manner. These subjective images are often edited together with a rapid rhythmic quality, often coupled with a repetitious audio clip, creating a mesmerizing flurry of imagery, of which the singular images are only visible and digestible for extremely brief moments. This approach to rhythmic editing completely does away with the notion of continuity within the film. We are often shown images that are not clearly related in terms of their time relation, but are related in their compositional organization, of their use of value, and of the directionality of the action within the scene. The film is comprised of these real life images, all created with the intention of depicting things as they truly were, but the concept of time within these images is being deconstructed in order to create film that speaks to the viewer like poetry. This destruction of time also results in many surreal sequences where suddenly the film changes from simply being a series of vignettted shots of the leper colony to a visual non sequitur comprised of these rapid rhythmic cuts, creating these integral moments of mesmerizing reflection on her subjects. These moments give the viewer glimpses at images of life in the colony, glimpses which are fleeting and ephemeral, like a series of images being played to emulate the process of recollection and of the subconscious. Through these sequences, Farrokhzad is able to get past the inherent

linearity of film and as a time-based medium, and is able to create a film that operates on the subconscious level, an integral element of surrealism.

This idea that the destruction of continuity and of the flow of time can facilitate communication on the level of the subconscious is a concept that is integral as we transition our discussion towards the use of surrealism and surrealist aesthetics in Western films. The surrealist and avant-garde films of the West often hinge on this notion in order to formulate their films within an aesthetic of surrealism. Western films that are known to be surrealist are also much more upfront with its usage of these these time-based techniques, utilizing this destruction of time concept which we have discussed and taking its ultimate conclusion. Austrian filmmaker Martin Arnold is one such filmmaker who utilizes the destruction of linearity and continuous motion with film.

In his films, Martin Arnold works with found footage, often footage that is derived from American films produced during the supposed golden age of the Hollywood studio system, and laboriously edits the footage into a series of extremely short clips which play forwards and backwards in rapid succession. His methods take the original films which were intended to be consumed and viewed in a linear fashion, and creates motion pieces which aim to examine the various hidden narratives and messaging that reside within these films. In one of his earlier films titled *Passage à l'Acte* (released 1992), Arnold takes footage from the film *To Kill A Mockingbird* and through his motion analysis, we are able to see a quite different picture of the average American family breakfast, as Daniel Herbert explains in his article:

Within this generalized register, Passage à l'Acte appears to analyze the implicit sexual



Passage à l'Acte
Martin Arnold

politics of To Kill a Mockingbird, and suggests that these are embedded within the very mise-en-scène of the film...The woman on the right of the screen, a neighbor in the original film, is now easily viewed as the wife and mother in this familial unit. Her immobility and silence testify to the passivity of female characters within traditional Hollywood narratives. Gregory Peck becomes a demonic father...Peck orders the young boy to obey, the young boy in turn commands the young girl, who in turn supplicates to the masculine authority and inherits her mother's passivity. Thus the film delineates a certain chain of command within the nuclear family, as an otherwise unremarkable product of the post-classical Hollywood representational paradigm. (Herbert)

Through this extreme editing style, Arnold is able to divorce the actions of the actors in the scene from its origins as an adaptation of a scene from the book, and is able to instead focus on the issue regarding the depiction of sexual politics as it pertains to the image itself. The images inform us of this sexual hierarchy and its politics, but when we are shown this scene in real-time, we often overlook this subconscious relationship that is being formed. The interconnectedness of the actions of the father figure versus the inaction of the female mother figure coupled with the resulting actions of the two children in the scene are made ever more apparent when Arnold edits this scene in the mesmerizing and rhythmic manner that he uses. It's lack of linearity disorients our perception of the scene, but through this disorientation we are able to



Mulholland Dr.
David Lynch

divorce our preconceived notions of how a typical breakfast scene such as this would naturally feel like while viewing. This allows us to see this simple scene in a new light, revealing the uncanniness and oddness of it all; the surreality of the sequence of events, their repetition, and the unnaturalness of the scene is so apparent in this form, it makes one wonder why the original was ever considered normal to begin with.

Other approaches to surrealism in Western cinema incorporate this notion of time by focusing on the narrative and thematic elements of film. Many accomplished surrealist filmmakers such as David Lynch incorporating the surrealist aesthetic by crafting narratives that are much more complex and convoluted than the narratives that appear

in Iranian cinema. The films of David Lynch often feature high drama, coupled with intensely psychological action, all coupled with a flair for the absurd. But Moine describes David Lynch and his use of surrealism best in her article as she uses the films of David Lynch in a discussion regarding the genrification of surrealism:

They are undoubtedly both [artistic and personal films and surrealist genre films], but surrealism serves here to bring the aesthetic qualities of film to the forefront. The interpenetration of space and time, the substitution of characters, the structure in the form of a Moebius strip where different worlds revolve in a loop without ever fully

it is much more obvious in the Lynch's films that they are surrealist when comparing them to the Iranian realist films discussed earlier. This is due to Lynch's penchant for the absurd and the mystical, coupled also with a love of overly dramatic acting styles, which elevate his narratives into a sort of ethereal plane of subconscious surrealism.

In addition to these general surrealist characteristics, as Moine points out, Lynch's films are also characterized by a sensation of time that folds into itself. Films such as *Eraserhead*, *Mulholland Drive*, and *Inland Empire* capitalize on this structure to convey the narrative, while at the same time infusing his stories with surrealism to extreme degrees. In the case of *Inland Empire*, the film tells the story of Nikki, a has-been actress who in attempt to regain her spotlight in Hollywood takes on a new role in a romance film called *On High in Blue Tomorrows*, a film whose script is supposedly cursed, and has resulted in both the main leads being murdered the first time the studio has attempted to film it. That summary does little justice to the actual film experience itself, as the film is actually comprised of numerous inter-cut vignettes from various seemingly unrelated sequences, one such sequence depicting a low-budget television-sitcom-like scene where anthropomorphic rabbits are seen performing mundane household tasks while speaking non sequitur dialogue, lines which evoke the sensation of an ominous mystery. Scenes such as the rabbit sitcom scenes are shown throughout the film in order to break the linearity of the film, and create a sensation not unlike a visual stream-of-consciousness.

As the film follows Nikki, we see her form an attraction to her co-star, which then leads to an affair, but as the affair deepens, Nikki's grasp on reality weakens, as she then begins to confuse the reality of their affair with the romance that they are supposed to be portraying within the film they are making. This confusion then spirals

overlapping, the "schizophrenia," where it is impossible to decide whether it is that of the heroes or that of the story, allow one... to read these films as surrealist films and eventually as original works. (Moine 111)

As Moine suggests in this statement, the films of David Lynch are absolutely characterized by the surrealist qualities that they contain, but in actuality, the films of David Lynch are not necessarily works of pure surrealist cinema. Rather, David Lynch's films are often of the mystery, thriller and horror genre. This however, as we discovered with Iranian realist cinema, does not mean that they cannot be considered surrealist simply because of genre specifications. In fact,



Mulholland Dr.
David Lynch

the film in to an interconnection of scenes in which Nikki seemingly experiences time out of order, sometimes returning to view various scenes from the beginning of the film but from a different perspective. The seemingly unordered and unrelated nature of Nikki's remaining journey allows us to experience the film as a product of its creative methodology, which according to Nochimson's review of the film is very much related to automatism. As an experience of nearly pure surrealism in methodology, we are able to experience Lynch's, "creative evolution [which] confounds any neat distinctions between time future, time past, and time present: [how] the whole being made manifest to him was always there, much like the mysterious, thrilling pattern of *Inland Empire*..." (Nochimson 12). In this way, not only does the narrative of the film serve as the surrealist aesthetic as it pertains to time, the film itself is a product of the surrealist method of thought and of creation. We are able to view his work and perceive it functionally as a mystery thriller with magical realism elements, but also as a work of the surrealist aesthetic of time as

we experience this film's stream-of-consciousness flow of ideas and narratives.

Through the films of David Lynch, as well as the other filmmakers discussed, this concept of time, its manipulation, its perception within the context of the film and as it relates to the perception of reality from the perspective of the viewer have been used to elevate the messages and meanings within these films. They utilize the surrealist aesthetic in order to reveal some truth regarding their subject matter by placing the viewer and subject matter within an atmosphere of the subconscious, where discourse can occur on a level that cannot be achieved through pure realistic means. It is through this method that we can then draw a commonality between the application of surrealism in both the Iran and in the West. Both regions are able to employ their own unique version of surrealism and surrealist aesthetics, but the purpose of this application is done in order to create this subconsciously in-tune space where the uncanniness of everyday life is apparent, and where the hidden truths within human behavior are revealed.

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