Fictitious Narrative and Alternate Subjectivity in Post-modern Moving Image

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Abstract: *A number of artists today are cultivating ambiguity, wonder and dissonance through work that embraces material pleasure and artifice, often affirming characteristics of the capitalist spectacle. But what values do these artworks present to society? What can they offer in terms of how we understand the world around us? Although works of this kind exist in a variety of forms, I will be specifically focusing on the practice of   Lindsay   Seers whose work urges us to imagine otherwise. By examining the work of Linsay Seers, we explore the approach of combining reality with fantasy and fiction. We will be looking at how she uses artifice in a way that resonates with the viewer, stimulating contemplation. The ways in which the work creates a tension between methods of immersion and distancing will be investigated.*

Keywords: *Moving Image; Fiction; Reality*

1. Introduction

The previous decade has been labeled the 'post-Internet' era. There has been debates regarding the formal, aesthetic, and philosophical relationship between art and its impacts since the advent of the Internet[1]. The Internet has rendered a parallel space-time that resembles the real world in almost all regards by integrating business, culture, politics and all sorts of entertainments. It enables its users to alternate identities, manipulate reality, indulge themselves in digital fantasy, generate and consume information. The line between the fictitious and the real has never been this blurred.

In 2001, Jeffrey Deitch coordinated the exhibition Form Follows Fiction, which featured a number of artists who investigate aesthetic and increasingly intertwined.

The most influential artists of the past decade are constructing their own aesthetic worlds through their work, worlds in which one loses one's grasp of the border between the artificial and the real[2].

He observed the emerging collision among surreal, philosophical questions presented by the current alternative realities. He also noticed that as our perspectives of reality get more complex and homogeneous, modern art and contemporary life are becoming symbolism whose elements contemporary artists use to construct and explore private worlds.

Nonetheless, a lot of contemporary artists nurture equivocation, apparition, and dissension in their work by embracing material pleasure and artifice, frequently supporting features of the capitalist department. But how do these artworks influence its audience? What can they contribute to the understanding of the world? To answer these questions, we are going to explore the works of Lindsay Seers that combine reality, fantasy, and fiction in this manner. We will investigate how artifice are employed to resonate with the audience to provokes thought and how her work generates a conflict between immersion and distancing.

2. Artistic Otherness

An artifice can only be viewed faithfully through its otherness.

As John Ruskin said, try to draw a bank of grass with all its leaves, and you'll quickly see that there is a universal law of obscurity and that everything distinct must be bad art and that nothing can be right until it is incomprehensible.

The artwork emphasizes its own materiality and process while creating a representation of the real through its otherness. Some of today's most fascinating artist-filmmakers approach their work with the

goal of showing the ordinary as unusual, unpredictable, and resistant to representation while also bringing attention to the medium being employed. In order to challenge our divisions between objective and subjective reality, artist-filmmakers like Lindsay Seers, Jordan Baseman, and Hilary Lloyd use realist narrative combined with fictitious elements[3].

As Mark Prince said, in the past decade there has been a quest for emancipation from established meaning, for an alternative to already-mediated content...Realist idioms have resurfaced in British art, and this has been reflected globally.

In his article, Mark Prince makes the point that these artists are conflating realism and artifice to reshape the artwork as an account of subjective perception rather than replacing primary experience with learned signals of experience. Our understanding of reality has been significantly impacted by the digital revolution. As a result, some artists are using fiction to address our apprehension of how the world changes. In her works, Lindsay Seers constructs fictitious narratives and imagined histories that provide us with alternate realities and make us reevaluate how we often see space and time.

Lindsay Seers participated in the Mirrorcity show at the Hayward Gallery with her piece *Nowhere Less Now* 4, 2014 (Figs. 1 and 2). Entering the exhibition hall, we are greeted by a sizable partial reproduction of a ship's upturned front hull. A female figurehead with curled sea creature limbs is fastened to the bow, and two enormous replica concrete tetrapods are positioned next to it on the ground. The pieces have an oddly sensual quality, like worn concrete, as if they could have appeared out of thin air from the Brutalist structure they occupy. A movie is being shown on two spherical and hemispherical screens installed on a structure that resembles a radio tower as we approach via an aperture into the darkness of the upside-down hull. In the movie, we learn how Salme, a princess from Zanzibar, came to know Leni Riefenstahl (documentary filmmaker and former dancer).

Akin to many of her other works, Seers explores individuals and histories via personal biography, making connections through epic storytelling. The film's narrator, whose life story we follow, is also a dancer. She discusses her curiosity with the politics around Leni Riefenstahl's dance in the movie The Holy Mountain, 1926 as well as her own fascination with the dance[4]. The narrator explains through a web of links that Princess Salme's existence in Germany is equally politically contentious. Through her dreamlike tales, Seers assumes the position of the unreliable storyteller; while some aspects are supported by her meticulously thorough research, others make it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. We are presented with a collage of timelines, images, movies, and animation, which leaves us enlivened and perplexed, curiously pondering on what we have seen and recounting many scenarios in our minds.

http://www.artvehicle.com/events/338

Figure 1: Lindsay Seers, Nowhere Less Now[4], 2014.

Besides the supplemental images that broaden the story of the work, endorse it, dichotomize it, and

add further ambiguities, the sculpture is accompanied by a booklet to extend the installation into another media rather than a critical explanation or interpretation. The booklet is a piece of the artwork for us to keep. The storylines and numerous biographical strands that flow through Seers' installations are frequently accentuated by the accompanying texts.

3. Reshaping Subjectivity

Pipilotti Rist, Ryan Trecartin, and Laure Prouvost and many other filmakers alike, are pushing the frontiers of our experience on the moving picture by using installation art, online streaming, and projection onto objects. Immersive installation utilized by seers makes us cognizant to our physical interaction with the art and awakens our senses. She deceives us, upending our beliefs of reality. We become increasingly conscious of our own subjective experience as the piece unfolds through many points of view. Because "the perspective is always limited" and "there's no position from which you can genuinely see everything at once," installation art experiences are, in Mary Kelly's words, "kind of out of control[5]."

This scattered meeting exemplifies the principles of Seers, which center on human experience and understanding as a diverse interaction to the outside world. Tetrapods and the ship's hull command the gallery's attention with their imposing presence. Although giving the impression of being heavy like concrete, they are created from lighter materials, hence are actually a metaphor. Their textures are painted on to mimic dirt and moisture. With the exception of the light emanating from the two screens, it is nearly pitch black when we enter the hull. Suddenly, we experience disorientation as pictures that are a combination of film footage and digital animation swirl and dance on the screens in front of us as if being in a dream. The installation as seen from inside the hull contrasts sharply with what is seen from the outside. The inside is visually captive, whilst the exterior's concentrates on the tactile qualities of the materials, which nearly makes you feel disembodied. Real life and fantasy are pulled together and pushed apart by the strife between the two very different surroundings.

The fourth of a group of interconnected works that Seers has produced is the one made merely for Mirrorcity. A picture of her great-great-uncle George Edwards served as the inspiration for the artwork. It starts from taking the viewer through generations and locations while weaving identity, memory, and truth themes throughout. She collects her information by interviewing people that she finds interesting and delves on the topics surrounding their stories, adding layers of philosophy, art theory, theology, and science to each.

https://lindsayseers.info/exhibition/405/

Figure 2: Lindsay Seers, Nowhere Less Now[4], 2014.

Seers' method is intriguing because it disproves the line between fact and fiction and emphasizes how subjective our perceptions are by connecting the dots of historical or biological facts with such density of information, some of which are utterly convincing and others which are far more flimsy.

As Lindsay Seers said, I'm staging the pieces as full of artifice but I want you to feel the truth behind the artifice, and so the idea that the voices and the stories are really people's stories. Something of the flux between what is metaphor, what is created, and what is actual is where I think the pivotal points of the work lie[6].

There is some fluctuation between metaphors. The key components of the work, in my opinion, are what is generated and what actually exists. By combining several narrative strands to break up any sense of anchorage, she manages to both draw you into her stories while also keeping you at a distance. The work is at its most compelling when it sits at the intersection of fiction and truth, occupation and withdrawal because this tension fosters the growth of numerous seeds of possibility in the mind.

4. Reality and Beyond

Colin Perry remarked in his 2009 article "Reel to Real" that modern moving image artists are reformulating structuralist notions about the portrayal of subjectivity[7].

He asserts that modern practice supports the idea that systems serve as meaning-generating units within the relationships between predetermined world symbols and that everything is interconnected. Utilizing these systems, artists like Lindsay Seers portray meaning and our sense of reality as a matter of perspective while also displaying the connective tissue and common language of communication that film generates. Structuralist tropes are given the assignment of challenging our relationship with memory, archive, and fact rather than breaking our suspension of disbelief in cinematic illusion.

We are habituated to assume that editing in film and photography is a standard practice because it is now widely possible to make digital recordings at home. It is encouraging to see artists like Lindsay Seers reorient their work away from the fictional nature of cinematic illusion and toward our cultural assumptions about reality. We typically consider reality as a universal form that is predetermined for us to capture on camera. Seers work reminds us that the real is relative, only constructed when lived and perceived. She demonstrates how expanding the fictional document's authority can lead to new conceptions of representation and new strategies for constructing symbolic meaning.

In this regard, one may conclude that Seer's work focuses more on the reality than on fantasy. The term "fiction" suggests untruth, but she seeks the truth in that which transcends actuality. There is an obvious correlation between these notions and Gilles Deleuze's concepts on the cinematic, perception, time, and becoming. Instead of studying life in closed systems, according to Deleuze's philosophy, we should focus on the open instability and flux of these systems as they mutate or "become". He believes that recognizing the instability and dynamism of mind creates the chance to innovate and improve life. He adopts a creative approach to philosophy, saying that "no system or vocabulary is enough to reflect the flow of existence," and that we can only "change ourselves and the future" if we think beyond our set spatializing and organizing perspective[8].

In Cinema1: The Movement-Image[9] and Film 2: The Time-Image[10], Deleuze analyzes contemporary cinema to present his views on time, movement, and life. He believed that cinematic form modifies the capacity for thought and imagination. In these works, he presents his philosophy of time and the notion that, through the medium of film, we may reconsider time, which is fundamental to both art and philosophy. He explains the cinematic approach of sequencing as images given not from a single embodied perspective, but from "any point whatever," numerous perspectives, spliced and joined to form a coherent whole. Within our perspective of time, we perceive other objects and beings. Via memories, notions, art, and philosophy, however, we are able to traverse time, and through the use of the camera, we are able to perceive time not as a linear progression, but as divergent with varied durations outside our unique perspective. If we step outside of our typical perspective, which orders time according to our own perception, and instead consider other durations in constant flux, we are able to conceive alternative futures, transformations, and possibilities.

Montage, which consists of stitching together distinct opposing units of time flow, is a striking illustration of this, as seen in the work of Lindsay Seers. By questioning our conventional conceptions of perception, Deleuze's conception of film, like Seer's art, is not about reproducing the world but rather about inventing new ones.

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