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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

"EPITAPH OF A SUCCESSFUL ARTIST"

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THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN & COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES
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DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING

BY
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APRIL 1987

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Nine 1/2 Weeks

U.S.A., 1985

Director: Adrian Lyne

Cert—18. *dist*—Palace Pictures. *p.c*—Jonestilm. A Keith Barish production. In association with Galactic Films, Triple Ajaxxx. *exec. p*—Keith Barish, Frank Konigsberg, Robert E. Relyea, Richard Northcott. *p*—Antony Rulus Isaacs, Zalman King. *assoc. p*—Steven D. Reuther, Stephen J. Ross. *p. controller*—Lucille Masone Smith. *p. office co-ordinator*—Ooty Moorehead. *p. manager*—Roger Paradiso. *location managers*—Randall Badger, Clayton Townsend. *asst. d*—Benjy Rosenberg, Kyle McCarthy. *sc*—Patricia Knop, Zalman King, Sarah Kernochan. Based on the novel by Elizabeth McNeill. *ph*—Peter Biziou. *col*—Technicolor; prints by Metrocolor. *camera op*—Craig Haagensohn. *video consultant*—Charles Burke. *opticals*—MGM. *computer anim*—Atlantic Images. *computer images*—Anthony Sabatini Jr. *ed*—Caroline Biggerstaff, Tom Rolf. *co-ed*—Mark Winitzsky. *p. designer*—Ken Davis. *a.d*—Linda Conaway-Parsloe. *set dec*—Christian Kelly. *set dressers*—Chris Gardyas, John Dwyer. *slide sequence paintings*—Brad Holland. *art*—"Untitled 1983" by Jack Goldstein, Mathew Farnsworth art based on the work by Arthur Berry. *addit. artwork*—Sarah E. Charlesworth art in installation scene, Lori Goodman, Robert Longo, Jack Goldstein, Walter Robinson, George Segal. *sp. effects*—Dan Kirshoff. *m*—Jack Nitzsche. (addit.) Michael Hoenig. *m. performed by*—George Blondheim, J. Peter Robinson, (piano) Joanne Grauer. *synclavier/synthesizer programming*—Michael Hoenig. *m. co-ordinators*—Gaylon J. Horton, Elliot Lurie, Judy Ross. *m. sup*—Becky Mancuso (Magstripe Music). *m. ed*—Tom Carlin. *m.p*—Michael Hoenig. *songs*—"The Best Is Yet to Come" by Graham Lyle. Terry Britten, performed by Luba; "This City Never Sleeps" by Annie Lennox, D. A. Stewart, performed by The Eurythmics; "Eurasian Eyes" by and performed by Corey Hart; "Slave to Love" by and performed by Bryan Ferry; "I Do What I Do: Theme for Nine 1/2 Weeks" by John Taylor, Michael DesBarres, Jonathan Elias, performed Jonathan Elias, B. J. Nelson, Michael DesBarres, Dalbello, Michael Brecker; "You Can Leave Your Heart Out" by Randy Newman, performed by Joe Cocker; "Let It Go" by and performed by Luba; "Love and Happiness" by Al Green. Mabon Hodges, performed by Al Green; "The Stayaway Child" by Michael Gorman, performed by Andy Narell; "Saviour" by Winston Gorman, performed by Winston Gorman and Black Sage; "Strange Fruit" by Lewis Allen, performed by Billie Holiday; "Bread and Butter" by Larry Parks, Jay Turnbow, performed by The NuBeats; "Arpeggiator" by and performed by Jean Michel Jarre; "Voices" by Roger Eno, Brian Eno. "Ambient Music 1: Music for Airports" by Brian Eno, Rhett Davies, Robert Wyatt, performed by Brian Eno. *cost. design*—Bobbie Read. *wardrobe sup*—Barbara Hause. *make-up*—David Craig Forrest. *make-up consultant*—Antony Clavet. *title design*—Dan Perri. *sup. sd. ed*—Emile Razpopov, Dessie Markovsky. *sd. ed*—John Duffy, Dan Mandell, Michael Hoskinson, Jim Matheny, Jim Christopher, Joe Fineman, Mark Stoeckinger, Burt Weinstein, Craig Jaeger, Mark Roberts, Joe Holsen. *sd. rec*—Bill Daly. (m.) Michael Hoenig. Dolby stereo. *sd. re-rec*—William McCaughey, Ray O'Reilly, Jay M. Harding, Aaron Rochin. *physical fitness consultant*—Dan Isaacs. *sp. consultant*—Denis Blouin. *sp. consultant*—Ron Jeremy Hyatt. *research co-ordinator*—Hilary White. *stunt co-ordinator*—Frank Ferrara. *stunts*—Sandy Alexander, Leslie Arnett, Peter Bucossi, Sandy Richman, Webster Whinery. *l.p*—Mickey Rourke (John), Kim Basinger (Elizabeth), Margaret Whitton (Molly), David Margulies (Harvey), Christine Baranski (Flea), Karen Young (Sue), William De Acutis (Ted), Dwight Weist (Mathew Farnsworth), Roderick Cook (Sinclair, the Critic), Victor Truro (Gallery Client), Justine Johnston (Bedding Saleswoman), Cintia Cruz (Prostitute), Kim Chan (Chinatown Butcher), Lee Lai Sing (Angry Chinatown Customer), Rudolph Willrich (Chinatown Shopper), Helen Hanft (Flea Market Shovel Seller), Michael P. Moran (Flea Market Chicken Seller), Raynor Scheine (Flower Delivery Boy), Olek Krupa (Bruce), Michael Margotta (Michael), Julian Beck, John P. Connolly, Cassandra Danz and Beata Jachulski (Dinner Guests), Peter Pagan (Riding Crop Salesman), Terri Perri (Italian Singer), Charles Malota, Daniel E. Amrich and Salvatore Sciangula (Coney Island Boys), Kim Michel (Soap Opera Woman), Jeff Severson (Soap Opera Man), Dan Lauria and Corey Parker (Janitors), Joe Maruzzo and Tom Traino (Garbage Men), Corvova Choy Lee (Clothing Saleswoman), Ellen Barber (John's Secretary), Ethel Ayler (Jewelry Saleswoman), Elisabeth Senn (Perfume Lady), Gittan Goding (Dancer at Porno House), David M. Everard (Bearded Man at Porno House), Luther Rucker (Barker at Porno House), Joey Silvera (Man on Stage at Porno House), Petina Cole (Woman on Stage at Porno House), Merry Clayton (Background Vocal at Porno House), Kim Isaacs and Sarah Kernochan (Gallery Guests), David Tabor (Leon Berger). 10,510 ft. 117 mins.

New York. Elizabeth, a divorced businesswoman who works for an art gallery, by chance meets John, a commodities broker, when buying food for a dinner party. Some days later, while wandering around a market, she becomes aware that John is watching her and they have a brief conversation. He follows her, and after he gives her an expensive scarf she had been admiring earlier, they have a meal together. They begin a relationship in which John introduces Elizabeth to a variety of sado-masochistic experiences in his expensive Manhattan apartment. Elizabeth is distracted from her work by the emo-

tional turmoil of the affair, and by the fact that her best friend Molly is going out with her ex-husband Bruce. John remains a mysterious figure, dominating Elizabeth, buying her clothes and jewellery without consulting her on the choice, and cooking for her while refusing to socialise with any of her friends. At one point, Elizabeth follows him to his Wall Street office to try to gain more information. Later, she dresses as a man and is taken to a businessman's club, so that John can supposedly explain more about himself. Following the meal, they are attacked by two muggers. After beating them off, John and

Elizabeth make love in an alleyway. Very behind with her work, Elizabeth visits artist Mathew Farnsworth at his country cottage to finalise arrangements for her exhibition of his work. Back in New York, she is increasingly disturbed by the sex acts in which John forces her to participate. At the successful opening of the Farnsworth exhibition, she abandons the gallery and goes to John, even though she has decided to end the affair. In the morning, he tries to prevent her from leaving by revealing more about himself and admitting that he really loves her. She tells him that the gesture is too late, and while he prays for her to come back, she walks away from the apartment, crying.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

JUNE 1986.

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Highlander

Great Britain, 1986

Director: Russell Mulcahy

Cert—15. *dist*—Columbia-Cannon-Warner. *p*—Highlander Productions. *exec. p*—E. C. Monell. *p*—Peter S. Davis, William N. Panzer. *assoc. p*—Harold Moskowitz, John Starke. Eva Monley. *p. co-ordinators*—Liz Kerry, Patsy de Lord, (N.Y.) Gail Geibel. *p. managers*—(2nd Unit) Simon Bosanquet, (2nd Unit effects) Paul Sparrow, (N.Y.) Edwin Atkins. *unit managers*—Claude Gresset, (Scotland) Gus Maclean. *location managers*—Ray Freeborn, Nicholas Daubney. *location co-ordinator*—(N.Y.) Brett Botula. *2nd Unit d*—(London/Scotland) Steve Hopkins, (N.Y.) Andy Armstrong. *asst. d*—David Tringham, Michael Stevenson, John Lawlor, Jane Studd, (2nd Unit) Peter Bennett, (N.Y.) François Moullin, Ian Foster Wolff, (N.Y. 2nd Unit) Alan Hopkins, David Starke. *sc*—Gregory Widen, Peter Bellwood, Larry Ferguson. *story*—Gregory Widen. *ph*—Gerry Fisher, (N.Y.) Tony Mitchell. *col*—Technicolor. *addit. ph*—Frank Hilton, Fiona O'Mahoney, Graeme Miller, Hillary Crozier, Denis Crossan, Arthur Smith. *2nd Unit ph*—John Harris, (effects) Ronnie Maasz, (N.Y.) Jim Crispi. *rostrum ph*—Tim Field. *aerial ph*—Peter Warrilow. *skycam*—Garrett Brown. *camera op*—Doug Milsome, Mike Rutter, (rockface climbing) Tony Riley, (2nd Unit effects) Peter Versey. *steadicam op*—John Ward, Jean-Marc Bringuier. *luma crane op*—Adam Samuelson. *opticals/visual effects*—Optical Film Effects. *optical effects ed*—Chris Blunden. *optical printer*—Dave Doewra. *matte paintings*—Ray Caple. *anim*—Matt Forrest, Nina Robbins, Peter Chiang, Tim Walton, Mike Smith, Roger Chaisson, Chuck Gammage, Claude Chaisson, Don Spencer, Colin Hughes, John Swinnerton. *photobackings*—Alan White. *ed*—Peter Honess. *p. designer*—Allan Cameron. *a. d*—Tim Hutchinson, Martin Atkinson. *set dec*—Ian Whittaker. *sp. effects sup*—Martin Gutteridge. *senior effects technicians*—Graham Longhurst, Garth Innes, Burt Loxford. *model designer*—George Djurkovic. *m*—Michael Kamen, (addit.) Queen. *trad. m. performed by*—Bob Murphy (pipes), Ben Murdoch (mandora), Alexandra Thompson (vocals). *mv. sup*—Derek Power (OSS). *m. ed*—Li Tjong Weinreich. *song*—"New York, New York" by John Kander, Fred Ebb. *cost. design*—Jim Acheson. *wardrobe*—(sup.) Ken Lewington. *costress*—Pauline Lewington, (N.Y.) Helen Butler. *make-up*—(sup.) Lois Burwell. *prosthetics*—Sandra Exelby, (artists) Ilona Herman (Sean Connery), Graham Freeborn, (N.Y.) Katie Bihr. *make-up effects*—(design) Bob Keen, (art work) Alix Harwood. *prosthetic designer*—Robert Verner Gresty. *mould designs*—John Schoonraad, (technicians) Denise Horsham, Geoff Portass. *title design*—Keith Hodgson. *titles*—National Screen. *tit. ed*—Peter Pennell, (dial.) Bob Risk, (footsteps) Tony Message, (crowd) Brian Mann. *ad. rec*—Tony Dawe, (N.Y.) Danny Michael, (m.) Andrew Jackson. *Dolby stereo. ad. rec*—Hugh Strain, Clive Pendry, Don Bassman, Richard Overton, Kevin F. Cleary. *stunt co-ordinators*—Peter Diamond, (N.Y.) Vic Magnotta. *stunts*—(men) Peter Brace, Andy Bradford. *sword master*—Bob Anderson. *horse master/whangler*—Roy Street. *l.p*—Christopher Lambert (*Conner MacLeod*), Roxanne Hart (*Brenda Wyatt*), Clancy Brown (*Kurgan*), Sean Connery (*Ramirez*), Beatie Edney (*Heather*), Alan North (*Lieutenant Frank Moran*), Sheila Gish (*Rachel Ellenstein*), Jon Polito (*Detective Walter Bedsoe*), Hugh Quarshie (*Sunda Kastagir*), Christopher Malcolm (*Kirk Matunas*), Peter Diamond (*Fasui*), Billy Hartman (*Dugal MacLeod*), James Cosmo (*Angus MacLeod*), Celia Imrie (*Kate*), Alistair Findlay (*Chief Murdoch*), Edward Wiley (*Garfield*), James McKenna (*Father Rainey*), John Cassady (*Kenny*), Ian Reddington (*Bassett*), Sion Tudor Owen (*Hotchkiss*), Damien Leake (*Tony*), Gordon Sterne (*Dr. Willis Kenderly*), Ron Berglas (*Archivist*), Louis Guss (*News vendor*), Peter Banks (*Priest*), Ted Maynard (*Newscaster*), Anthony Mannino (*Boisterous Drunk*), Helena Stevens (*Old Woman in Car*), Frank Dux (*Old Man in Car*), Prince Howell (*Drunk in Hotel*), Anthony Fusco (*Barman*), Ian Tyler (*Lab Technician*), Corrinne Russell (*Candy*), Buckley Norris (*Derehet*). 10,463 ft. 116 mins. U.S. running time—111 mins.

In the car park beneath Madison Square Gardens in New York City, a young antique dealer, Conner MacLeod, is confronted by an apparent stranger; both produce swords and a savage duel ends with MacLeod decapitating his adversary. MacLeod is apprehended by the police and questioned by Lieutenant Moran; the latter is informed by forensic scientist Brenda Wyatt, a metallurgical expert, that fragments of metal found at the scene of the duel are incredibly old. Brenda is sufficiently intrigued to make MacLeod's acquaintance after he is freed, and she is with him when he is attacked on waste ground by another swordsman, Kruger, a menacing low-lifer, though the timely arrival of a police helicopter interrupts the ensuing duel. Meanwhile, flashbacks disclose that MacLeod is one of a band of immortals, into whose company he was welcomed by the flamboyant Ramirez (apparently over two thousand years old) after he 'miraculously' recovered from mortal wounds received in battle in sixteenth-century Scotland. Ramirez explains that the immortals can die only when decapitated by a sword wielded by one of their number, and that their bitterest foe is the Kurgan (alias Kruger), who, if triumphant, will impose an

"eternity of evil". Subsequently, Ramirez perishes at the Kurgan's hands, after which the latter ravishes MacLeod's wife Heather. It transpires that present-day New York is the scene for the 'Gathering', when the last few members of the band will fight it out for the mysterious 'Prize'. After the Kurgan has triumphed over a further adversary, with the popular press exploiting the inability of the police to track down the killer (dubbed "The Headhunter"), he kidnaps Brenda, whose lover MacLeod has become, to provoke a showdown with MacLeod. After a ferocious and prolonged set-to, MacLeod emerges the victor. With Brenda, he revisits his Scottish homeland in possession of the Prize, which evidently allows him to experience the thoughts and feelings of anybody and thus to be an influence for good.

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN, AUGUST 1986.

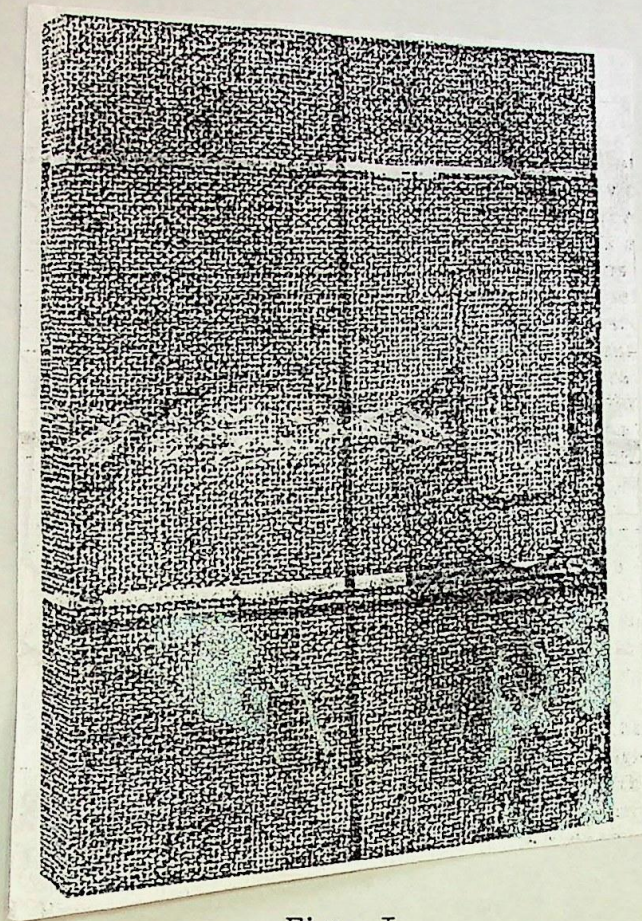


Fig. I

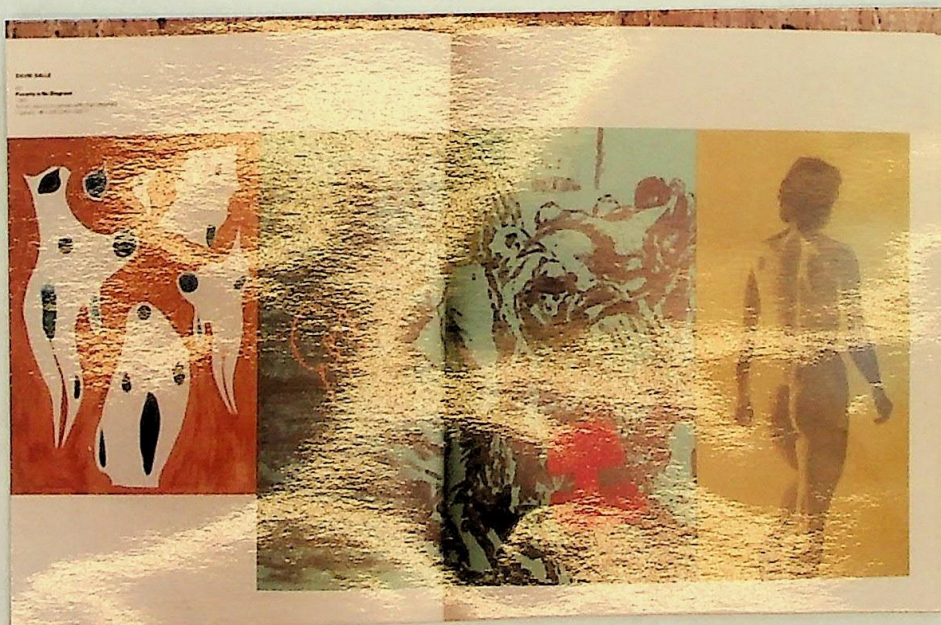


Fig. 2

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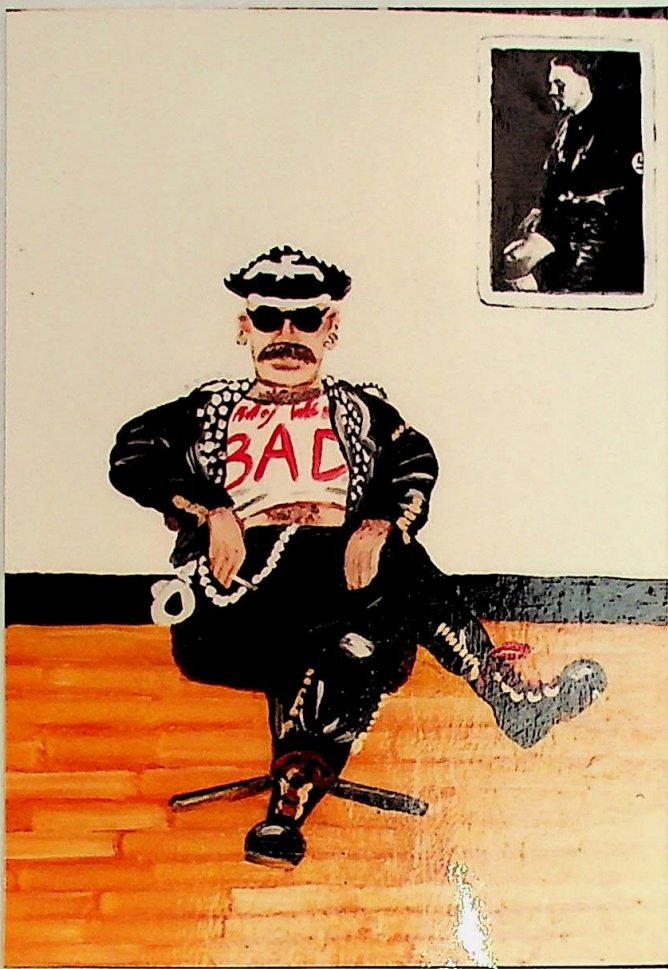


Fig. 2a



Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

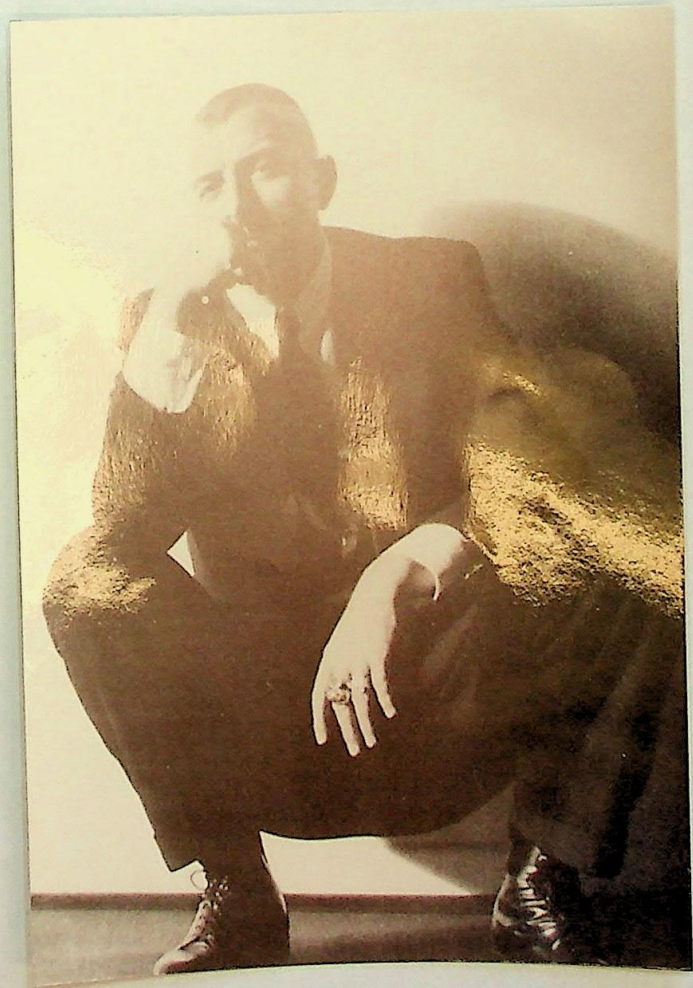
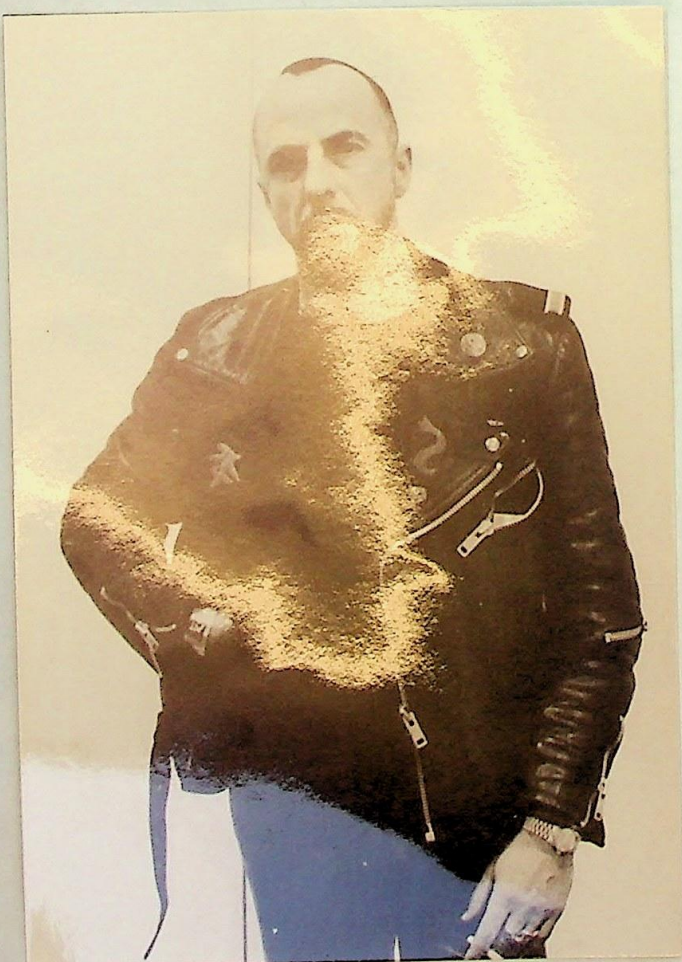




Fig. 6



Fig. 7

INTRODUCTION

I remember once, reading an account of the life of Renoir in which he stated that he wondered what had happened to all the "nice people" he knew in art college, this thesis is dedicated to these "nice" individuals. They are the ones who will never succeed in the contemporary art world, they are naive artists, black artists, women artists, they are the ones, who, by virtue of their humility, will be ignored, and by virtue of their circumstances, will not be allowed to take part in a white, male-dominated art system.

I do not think it is unusual to think of the american art world as being a huge film production, after all, the only way I get to see the works discussed is through periodicals (shadows of the original), and therefore it is obvious that like Socrates/Plato's cave dwellers we are only seeing the shadows on the cave wall.

A use of Camp in assessing the works does not need a defense, it is just as selective as the art world is. It is also, a feminine viewpoint and serves to emasculate an incredibly powerful financial system.

The thesis does not deal specifically with art movements as such, rather, I hope it will serve to highlight misconceptions all of us are fed by a commercial art system. It is not like Haim Steinbach's Supremely Black (1986), a cynical work, but rather a Rousseau, a labour of love, which of course will go ignored.

Stephen Loughman. April 1987

CHAPTER I THE FILMS

Before I proceed I wish to point out that I do rank film as an Art (if not the highest of the Arts) but the two films I have chosen to discuss are of absolutely no artistic merit whatsoever. These films are devised not in the directors heart but instead in the boardroom. They are commercial exercises, their object is financial gain and nothing else. I wish to stress that they are pure fantasy and bear no relation to reality whatsoever. It is the efforts that go into sustaining this fantasy that I intend to explore. Both films rely on the male hero figure and the fantasies within both are overtly male in outlook. In particular I wish to examine the make-up of the hero in both pictures. Finally throughout the essay it must be remembered that I regard both as consumer items which have been made by a team, and not an individual. The films I have chosen are the soft-porn "9½ Weeks" and the swashbuckling post-modern fantasy "Highlander".

Of the two films chosen 9½ Weeks (Adrian Lyne 1985) is the more stylized. Because the scenario takes place within the Art world of New York it has to be quite convincing visually, indeed art luminaries such as Jack Goldstein and Robert Longo are included in the credits of the film. I have included a synopsis of the plot of both films which enables me to dwell on the signifiers used to sustain the fantasy of the hero-figure within the film. Susan Sontag mentions in her essay on Camp the fact that perhaps in the future the method acting of James Dean may become a sort of Camp. 9½ Weeks in many ways could be classed as future material for Camp, it's ridiculous attitude to women and it's pretentious

ambitions make it an incredibly beautiful "Turkey". This does not however, detract from the fact that it caused quite a storm. Initially on release, the film was attacked (and rightly so) by feminists groups and organisations, as being degrading to women. However, this kind of controversy only succeeded in increasing viewing figures, and in proving the public's desire to be titillated (the film was popular with both sexes). The treatment of women in "9½ Weeks" should be condemned, but without this sadistic degradation of the heroine the image of the hero crumbles. The figure of John as hero in "9½ Weeks" (and indeed, the attraction he holds for Elizabeth) is composed of two main elements. Acknowledging the fact that being handsome in a hero's make-up is essential, the two other qualities of John's heroism are his financial success and his "knowledge". Both these traits are implied through certain scenarios in the film, and hold great bearing over the hero's relationship with his leading lady. Our hero's financial success is reflected by the objects he surrounds himself with, the Manhattan apartment, his charcoal-grey suits and his high tech office, all contribute to John's image of affluence. However, although rich, John's wealth is not overstated, he is put across as being a humble individual who has earned his money honestly through hard work. It is made obvious in the end of the film, that John comes from a working-class background, in effect, he is a product of the American belief that no matter what your circumstances are, you can succeed in life financially. In short, John is a working model of "Reaganism". Ironically, John has not been polluted by his wealth, instead, he understands and masters it.

"I make money from money" 1

This is crucial to his role as hero, as he proves he remains detached from the "lesser mortals" love of, and seduction by money. Through his manipulation of money, and through his distancing of himself from it, it becomes obvious that money could never be his master. John is not a slave to money, instead, it is his slave. Therefore he is "forgiven" when he tries to bend Elizabeth to his will, as, evidently, it is of his nature to master everything. The film uses a series of montages to "pronounce" John's mastery of life in general. We are served scenes of him speaking Chinese (presumably he is fluent), John is continually seen in the best restaurants and shops, It has to be said that John has that elusive quality, good taste. His apartment is decorated with Renee-Mackintosh furniture and has a "state of the art" sound and video system. His apartment design suggests a discriminating taste, a taste which can only be attained through knowledge, and which can only be displayed through wealth.

All John's character traits which are hinted at by the support of visual images alone, are closely allied to the philosophy of financial gain, and its rewards, as a right to dominance. Elizabeth's slave-like relationship with John, has no basis without the support of John's image of omnipotent businessman. In the film, Elizabeth's unattainability is stressed by the series of scenes in which garbage-men, and janitors whistle at her as she passes. The "garbage-men" of this world, could never enter into Elizabeth's life, as she is more powerful than them. Only a man like John, can make this successful businesswoman crawl on the floor while being hit with a belt. The fantasy that "9½ Weeks" exploits, is that of power. Although

it deals specifically with male domination of women, it has inherent in it a philosophy of materialism and its rewards in general. The fact that the ridiculous ending of the film, serves to partly upturn this fantasy is of no consequence, because of the fact that it is misplaced within the general philosophy of the film.

In summation, the fantasy exploited by "9½ Weeks" is patently obvious. However, its interesting aspect is the enhancement of the fantasy by the film-maker's use of visual aids. As a commercial enterprise, it sells its commodity (the hero/fantasy) quite well. In fact, the film acts, one way or another, as one long, voyeuristic exercise. On the one hand there is the soft porn element, and on the other, there is what Adrian Wooton describes as the film's "window shopping pleasures".² There is as much pleasure to be had in recognising a Robert Longo or the interior of a Yohji Yamamoto shop as there is to be had from the laughable sex scenes. In a way these visual titbits act as a support to our belief that what we are watching is (within the framework of the storyline) real. This 'support system' supports an illusion.

In the film "Highlander" (Russell Mulcahy, 1986) the fantasy is less explicit than in "9½ Week". Because the film makes no bones about being a swashbuckling romp, and approaches its theme in a lighthearted vein, it could be interpreted as a mild exercise in fun. In effect, the central fantasy of this film is just as unpleasant as that in "9½ Weeks". Again, it concerns power, albeit power of a different kind. Predictably, all sympathy lies with the hero, who must prove himself in mortal combat with a series of foes in order to gain the exalted "Prize". The hero,

Conner MacLeod, is also immortal. One of the minor themes of the film is that immortality has distinct disadvantages. Through a series of flashbacks we are made aware of MacLeod's agony in watching his wife grow and die before he does. These emotion laden sequences serve to conceal an underlying web of misogyny and fear of death. In an interview, Christopher Lambert, who plays MacLeod, says :

"If this guy is immortal and he's wounded and it doesn't hurt him - then it's over. He's not a hero. Whereas the only power that he has is that it hurts like a real bullet but he's able to get up again. He's able to feel things like other human beings. He's just a normal human with normal feelings. The difference is that he has this strength which copes with what is happening to him. That to me, is what we can call a hero".³

Lambert's (and the film's) notion of a hero is of someone who can imitate life to the utmost degree, but never die. This hero can take the subway, queue in McDonalds but will never be confronted with the prospect of death. MacLeod survives four and a half centuries whilst observing the twists and turns of history. In a chilling scene in which the hero (of course to the bafflement of his heroine) recalls the first flight of the Montgolfiers' balloon, it becomes evident that this man is not only part of history, indeed, he is history in it's most fundamental form. The fantasy which this film plays on is one which is more common than this supposed harmless romp would have us believe. In the film "Chinatown" (Roman Polanski, 1974) an account of a truly corrupt businessman's attempt to "hijack" the Los Angeles water supply, the naive private detective, J.J. Gittes, asks the already wealthy Noah Cross what more he will gain from this evil act. He candidly replies, "The future, Mr. Gittes, the future".⁴

At its most basic, human endeavour centres around the support and continuation of the family unit, an attempt at 'history buying' in a dynastic form. Most members of Western society rarely go beyond this basic process. However, a more informed instinct exists among certain individuals who have an understanding of their own vulnerability and fragility. Such people strive to make their mark within the framework of history. Naturally, there are different ways of achieving this goal. In its most vulgar form it can be attained through the attributes of notoriety and wealth and in its highest form through those of intellect and vision.

"Highlander", however outwardly outlandish it seems, can be seen to work as a metaphor for the yearning of the public (through their identifying with the hero) for immortality. In truth, the fantasy at the core of the film plays on the desire of everyone for eternal life and on the reason for this desire, a fear of death.

These films' have more to do with video technology, than the art of cinema. They rely on the visual tricks used within T.V. advertising, establishing character more by means of signifiers than through the use of a script. In short they are disposable. The elements that go up to make a character like Polanski's Noah Cross are much more convincing than the glossy veneer that is John in "9½ Weeks". Instead in these "vid-films" we are served a sense of the heroic, a sense of wealth, a sense of intelligence, everything is honed down to perfection and economy of suggestion. This "sense" is not confined to Cinema alone, it's effects are many. In the field of advertising it is used to imbue a product with certain qualities, Levi's 501's made in the 80's are injected with all the attributes of the 1950's original. An alert P.R. agency like Saatchi & Saatchi can turn a grocer's daughter into a replica of Queen Victoria. It is to these fields that the "sense" truly belongs, these two professions take advantage of a public's preconceptions and biases. Both

professions feed on a lack of real experience and a desire for visual stimulation, in effect, it is an industry that transforms fantasy into profit. An agency like that of Sattchi & Sattchi is the highpoint of this phenomenon, that is to say, that such a corporation has at it's disposal a massive network of both aural and visual outlets which serve to distribute their messages to the public. If the P.R. and advertising agencies are the gurus of this imagistic cult then their most obvious disciples are the followers of "street fashion" and various youth/rock movements. It is in this form that this system reveals itself as a method of placation. Through an exploitation of a lack of identity such groups arise, with Fashion, every aspect of the real is trivialised, reduced to signifier,,and ultimately is anaesthetised.

"Couture castrates !" 5

"You are not what you wear anymore than you are what you eat. Excessive fussiness about clothing, every bit as much as health food faddishness, indicates a small, frightened mind aware of the size, disorder and just plain DANGER of the world and neurotically desperate to create order in a tiny part of it ----- even if it is only the mirror or the table". 6

CHAPTER II. THE ARTISTS.

At the time of writing a new Art movement has already been born. Neo-Geo, or M.B.A. Abstractionism (it has various titles) has taken centre stage in the New York Art market. Already it's protagonists are being groomed for Art stardom in the same way their predecessors were. The German "New Expressionists" and the Italian "Trans-Avant-Garde", although established, are no longer being given the coverage they once received. Thus two relatively young movements which were at one time heralded as being the "new spirit" in painting already haunt the corridors of Art history. The digestion of both these movements was completed in a period of less than ten years, a remarkably short time. The reason for their untimely retirement from public life was not because their philosophy was unsound, on the contrary, as a reactionary impulse these painters accommodated Art historians nicely. Their failure, and they have failed, in that their notion of painting no longer bears up under the Baudrillardian philosophies, ie it is too "fake" to be taken serious. Their reliance on the public's preconceptions of Expressionism, and their brash self marketing as artistic heroes led to their early disappearance from the public eye. The "New Expressionists" movement failed because it was as Craig Owens says

..... "shown to be an idolatry, a fascination with a false image that mimics the presumed attributes of authenticity when it is in fact just the hollow mask with which a frustrated, defeated consciousness tries to cover up it's own negativity"1

in effect it was a simulation. What justifies then the use of simulation within the movement that has taken the place of the unfortunate Europeans ? Is it any more commendable to create a work of Art which has as it's premise a philosophy of appropriation ? An Art that makes no bones about being "dead on arrival". Just what

is it that makes the cynical Neo-Geo more attractive than the serious - minded Expressionist ? In order to determine why one form of simulation supersedes the other, it is necessary to examine the nature of these representations and their respective philosophies. To do this I intend to compare and contrast their similarities under various headings.

The Work Itself.

The Art of the New Expressionists * was quite classical in nature. Painting, Sculpture, even Frescoes were used to stress the links with this classicism. In appearance the paintings (especially those of the Germans) were quite crude. Paint was smeared in thick daubs on an (unusually) unprimed canvas, lending an air of animalism to the finished work. As a painting exercise it was quite restrictive in nature. In short, for the Germans, there was only one way of "true expression" and that was through spontaneity, the intended final product being a genuine piece of unmitigated self expression. Little time was devoted to composition which was sacrificed for the purer ideal of accuracy of expression through a fast application of paint. This concept of raw Expressionism makes a gesture towards Post-Modernism by virtue of its suggested distancing (of the artist) from the finished work, in the brief seconds between conception of idea and application of paint. Painters like Immendorff, Chia and Clemente, however, went to great lengths to utilize personal devices and symbols. Immendorff's "Cafe Deutschland" series was a type of "New Expressionist cartoon strip", a concise history of Post World War Two German neuroses. The Italians, especially Clemente, aimed

* Here New Expressionism refers to the Trans-Avant Garde also.

to shock by means of sexually ambiguous imagery, and these images were painted in bright undiluted colours. When Sculpture was attempted it was usually of a monumental nature and usually in bronze. Clemente's choice to make a fresco was quite clearly, yet again an allusion to classicism. Therefore apart from some insignificant gestures to Post-Modernism, these artists created work which alluded to previous painting genres. Through their "hijacking" of styles, and their historical attributes, they strained to produce, what Craig Owens calls

"the Artificial Masterpiece"²

That is, a painting which arrives laden with classical notions which serve to comfort and confirm the viewer that this, indeed, is a "PAINTING". The process of imbuing an artwork with pseudo-classical values runs the risk of veering toward Kitsch or even Camp. This aspect of supposed "High Art" masquerading as Camp (or vice-versa) will be expounded upon later. The point of note, concerning New Expressionism is that it relied on a series of preconceived biases about, and a series of signifiers from, classical Art. For the Germans the historical basis for their Art was the Weimar expressionist groups and for the Italians (especially Chia) a curious mixture of renaissance/futurist imagery.

Neo-Geo artists, in no way, can be accused of being "classical" in their choice of materials. All materials used, whether in Sculpture or Painting, have their roots firmly planted in the 20th Century. There are no mythical qualities one can cling to in a work by Jeff Koons or Haim Steinbach. Various laminates and plastics are the order of the day here, indeed there seems to be a strong urge to create a new aesthetic form from kitchenware. All materials used have, however, one overriding quality, they are pure Kitsch. Meyer Vaisman's Stretch Painting (1986) Fig. I is held up on a 60's like blow-up of a canvas weave, and is quite tasteless, if not vulgar. The aesthetic sense at work here is the antithesis of that

of the Metro Pictures set.³ These are not monuments to technology they are it's detritus. Basketballs, Star Wars toys and lurid lamps are paraded before the viewer, rather like the conveyorbelt finale in "The Generation Game". These kitsch objects presumably serve as a metaphor for consumer-glut. Yet again, (indeed it seems to be a prerequisite for any "new Art") the critics are dumbfounded, Eleanor Heartney exasperates

"Nevertheless, everyone is trying, Critical discussion is filled with references to death. Hal Foster, in Art in America, remarks, "Painting must die as a practice so that it might be reborn as a sign." Donald Kuspit calls it "dead on arrival" and, in his poetic way, describes its visual appeal: "It's eerie iridescence, like that of many deep sea creatures, seems to bespeak the full force of organic burgeoning, but it has an oddly inorganic-crystalline, mineral aura to it. It is the phosphorescence of decay, creating the semblance of flourishing life." Phillip Taaffe, meanwhile, remarks that his work has a "tragic dimension".⁴

Neo-Geo is going to be a tough nut to crack. Baudrillard's philosophies (as regards the simulations) are quite labyrinthine and will serve a cynical Art movement like this quite well. It can obliquely be read as a reactionary fragmentation from New Expressionism not (in the patently obvious sense) that it is largely abstract as opposed to figurative but that it seeks to define a new aesthetic without regard for past models.*

* This may appear, on the face of it a rather ludicrous statement, given that, a large proportion of this work is rehashed Newman and Riley. However, it does not serve to mystify in the sense that the heroic myth of Expressionism does, by virtue of the fact that the paintings are exact copies, they serve to negate any romantic associations. They are as Kuspit says' D.O.A.

Elements of Camp Within the Works.

"Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a "lamp" ; not a woman but a "woman". To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand being-as-playing-a-role. It is the farthest extension of sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater."5

Much has been written on the phenomenon known as Camp, (indeed it has virtually become an industry) these writings embrace many topics from simple satire and wit, to political theory*. Susan Sontag as early as 1964 drew up several guidelines for Camp in her essay - Notes on Camp . It is her definitions, and reading of Camp, I shall use as the seminal text, as to give the philosophy of Camp some credence it must be seen to be associated with a "respectable" writer such as Sontag. The most important point I believe she made, was the above one, that Camp does indeed see through certain pretensions. As a philosophy of simulation it bears up equally to Baudrillard's (i.e. both philosophies can be applied to all aspects of life). The problem with Camp is that it can too easily be used to ridicule. For instance, a critic like Carter Ratcliff could be classed as a "Camp" art critic. Ratcliff has his name on the introduction of every "Coffee table" art book in existence, his methods of writing is quite flowery indeed, and one cannot help but smile when he is credited after each article as both critic and poet (pretentious moi ?). Ratcliff becomes like an art-loving aunty who will write his "poetry" about the opening of an envelope. The above of course, is not true, or is it ? This is the dichotomy we face when utilising Camp as deconstructive criticism, it tends towards the ridiculous, and everything becomes classified, not unlike the way Baudrillard's philosophies can classify objects as signifiers. Therefore, I intend to use Camp not as a form

of ridicule, but as a form of explanation. This would intimate that the commercial art world is a massive stage and all of the artists within it, actors. All of them heroes and some of them almost immortal.

"Mein Kampf"

The Germans, from the very outset, were involved in a struggle very different to that of Adolf Hitler. The strong Nazi image which still lingers over our conception of "Deutschland" was their main enemy. It permeated their Art (indeed they borrowed imagery from it) and it was not long before they began to acknowledge it. Baselitz played it cool by merely hinting at it in his paintings of various youth movements, Kiefer overcame it through his sophistication, but poor old Jorg Immendorff launched himself into this imagery, (and the annals of Camp) headfirst. Nazi style has, for quite a long time, been associated with S&M and homosexual sub-culture for quite a long time now. For Immendorff to blatantly make use of this imagery in his paintings gave his art associations. That is not to suggest, that merely because he borrowed an image which has connotations within Gay culture he "camped up" his painting, the point is that this imagery, for Immendorff, meant something else, he was presumable unaware of the different connotations it bears in the rest of the world.

I have already illustrated this misconception of ours in the subtitle above, the German word "Kampf" when translated means struggle/fight, however, in the context of this discussion it takes on a new meaning. In the Germany of today the swastika is taboo.

*Deborah C. Phillips, in her article on the Europeans in "Art News" uses phrases like, "foreign onslaught" and words like "invasion" and "blitz", all this on the effect the "Axis" of old were wreaking on American Art.

In America, India and China it seems something different, it is also taboo in America, and in the Orient it is a traditional motif. The swastika in America's (indeed in the Western World's) eyes is a symbol of Fascism and it's inherent evils. In recent years youth movements such as "Punk" played on this taboo (of the older generation *) by claiming it as their symbol of revolt against society's "hot and cold" definition of right and wrong. This re-contextualising of the symbol only served to colour the Art public's reading of it. The American Art world's reaction to an image which already was laden with connotations and had just received one more (Punk preceded New Expressionism by a few years) was predictable. The spirit of liberalism that runs through the Art world defied taboo and embraced these passionate visionaries. In so doing, they "camped" up the Art itself, through a subtle form of patronisation.

"The pure examples of Camp are unintentional; they are dead-serious. The Art Nouveau craftsman who makes a lamp with a snake coiled around it is not kidding, nor is he trying to be charming. He is saying, in all earnestness: Voila! the Orient! " 6

In America, the work, (especially Immendorff's) was seen to be an expose of the hypocrisies within, and the neuroses of, Post-WWII Germany. The imagery slotted in nicely with this theory, but what of the style of these painters? The surface of these German paintings were rough, raw, untamed in their ferocity, they shouted at the viewer. This marriage of violent imagery with a violent means of presentation formed a perfect unit for the understanding of these works. Not only were these painters angry, they were "being angry" in a specific way. The links with the Weimar Expressionist groups made it painfully

* When asked why he wore a Nazi armband, Johnny Rotten, singer with Sex Pistols replied, "Because my parents hate it". (An interesting example of Nazi-chic acting as a subversive gesture, which perhaps explains the Americans willingness to accept what was on the face of it, Nazi-art).

obvious, these painters were recalling the last great Art movement of their Fatherland. They were being angry in the only way the rest of the world could comprehend, and in a way the Art world completely defined, a German way. The swastikas, "OPERATION SEA-WOLF", indeed the aesthetic of German expressionism itself, all having specific contexts in Germany, were re-contextualised under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. In the city of Berlin Immendorff's paintings proclaimed, "Voila! this is what I think of Germany", while in Manhattan the message is translated, "Voila! This is der Germany off vich you haff been tinkin'". Like Allied wartime film of Adolf Hitler, the Germans were speaking but America turned the sound off and dubbed it.

Immendorff is a prime example of a painter who was limited from the word go by his decision to enter the New York art world, the American selective reading of his work (and their grouping together of Immendorff with painters like Baselitz and Kiefer) can be seen to be an act of racism. Baselitz and Kiefer's work is not a simple case of "raw" expressionism, instead, their work has a deeper conceptual side to it. Yet Baselitz has his head shaved like a member of the Hitler Youth and lives in a castle similar to old Ludwig himself. Immendorff parades around like a Hell's Angel in a leather jacket (Fig.4) and Markus Lupertz holds court like the M.C. of a downtown Berlin cabaret (Fig.5). It seems that these artists wish to extend this bigoted view of "Germanism" to their personal appearance. They act, in effect, as a visual metaphor for the art, and a visual metaphor for the art world's conception of them, they extend life to theatre, these men are artists? No! they are a sophisticated form of Camp.

Neo-Geo, the last picture show?

"Camp taste is a kind of love, love for human nature." 7

"One may compare Camp with much of Pop - Art, which when it is not just Camp- embodies an attitude that is related, but still very different. Pop Art is more dry, more serious, more detached, ultimately nihilistic." 8

It is difficult to find Camp within an art movement like Neo-Geo. What Sontag says of Pop Art holds true here, the attitude of these artists is very serious. The use of kitschy surfaces and objects in the work does not rely on a Camp sensibility in the way a Warhol or Lichtenstein does*. The aesthetic sensibilities of Neo - Geo are not humorous or irresponsible. Instead, within this work lies a sureness of vision which acknowledges kitsch and Camp, but does not condone them.

"And so you have Bryan Ferry, in a tuxedo, in 1974, singing "Smoke gets in your eyes"-----a song which was kitsch in the sense of forties "cocktail" classiness from the word go. It proved his hyper-sensibility- using cod "classy" materials and sentiments from lower-middle-brow culture(it is a self consciously literate song) and his voice even vibrated so ambiguously you couldn't tell whether he was laughing or crying. Bliss." 9

Peter York's humorous account of how a pop-star like Ferry foreshadowed the Post-Modernist aesthetic, fits the Neo-Geo aesthetic as well. These artists know what good and bad taste are, and present their work in such a way that it's kitsch (and Camp) aspect is negated. Jeff Koons, when interviewed in "Flash Art", talks of the kitsch "surface" of his work being a.....

"false front for an underlying degradation" 10

*A proper reading of both these artists works cannot be made without some knowledge of the Camp sensibility.

.....this "degradation" presumably being the false sense of kudos one claims when one decries a piece of kitsch as being such. That is, if one recognizes a piece of kitsch we comfort ourselves in the knowledge that, due to our economic and social situation, we have the ability to discern it as such.

"It's a socio-economic situation you're really responding to: "I am above kitsch, I'm better than that, I'm closer to a blue-blood situation than this kitsch object or the socio-economic situation it comes from."" ||

This, (as Flann O'Brien would say) is very intelligent stuff, Koons's kitschy figurines are not kitsch per-se, but our images of kitsch. They are simulations of our visual biases and preconceptions, biases which extend to every aspect of our perception(the very same bias which pigeon - holed the New Expressionists so quickly). Unfortunately (for Koons) the work fails in backing up his intentions.

When Koons talks of the associations one has with a stainless steel object, he discusses the object in a specific way. His use of terms in the interview is baffling. He talks of "security support systems", "luxury" and "degradation" in a high, poetic manner. His references should be in quotation marks as they do not make sense literally. The ghost of Baudrillard is present here in the form of a fly-leaf reading of his philosophies. By bringing these preconceived notions to bear on his work Koons makes an act of self-defeatism. He is obviously not talking about kitsch but a "Baudrillardian" definition of it. This kitsch/ art is a precise example of what Tom Wolfe called "the Painted Word", that is, a work of art that has more to do with a philosophy

of painting, rather than a creative urge. Koons' figurines act as illustrations to Baudrillard's texts. This artist foolishly believes that his figurines function for all of the populace, when it is clearly evident that they do not, and never could. His work functions- indeed only remains in context- within the limits of the gallery walls, being viewed by an individual who has read Baudrillard. They are not kitsch, but "kitsch", not art, but "art". The works achieve the status of "Cult Objects", their meaning becomes illegible without a knowledge of what they react or refer to*. Not so much "The Last Picture Show", more like "the Painted Word Strikes Back".

I opened this piece with Sontag's observation that Camp is a love of human nature, the reason why this work has no Camp value is because it is antiseptic, the work does not acknowledge human nature. This aspect of "clinical art" only serves to distance us from it, the critics who compare it to Death are not wrong, but the aspect of Death present in this work is its sense of artificiality, in Neo-Geo, life is suspended in inverted commas- life becomes crystallized- like Koons' basketballs, or Steinbach's "shelves". Sontag remarks that Death is the antithesis of Camp, but Neo-Geo is not, instead it is the antithesis of New Expressionism. They extend a philosophy (a grim one at that) to life/art which vets their product of any expressionistic myths. Bliss!

"Let's pitch our tent here!"

A Camp reading of the above works, serves to illustrate an

*Deyan Sudjic in "Cult Objects" defines a cult as follows.....

"By definition a cult depends on a group of insiders, tightly knit and linked by secret signs recognizable only to initiates."

important aspect of the beast that is the commercial art world. This mock-serious approach to these two art movements is not intended to make light of them, rather, it re-contextualizes them in a way not dissimilar to the re-contextualization carried out by the commercial art world. It would be foolish to claim that Baselitz and Immendorff are defunct (they are both still working) but nevertheless, their work has lost some credence with the coming of Neo-Geo. The point is, that by being selective myself in my reading of them I articulated a phenomenon that is rife in the contemporary art world, a process of utilization (of the New Expressionists), and classification, which leads ultimately to a validation of the next comer (Neo-Geo). How, in effect the commercial art world "makes history" of its protégés.

CHAPTER III. NEW YORK (INSTANT HISTORY MACHINE)

"The human ear has not adapted itself to the bourgeois rational and ultimately, highly industrialized order as readily as the eye, which has become accustomed to conceiving reality as made up of separate things, commodities ordinary listening as compared to seeing is "archaic" ; it has not kept pace with technological progress." 1

The above quote, although forty years old, still holds relevance today. Never before has the human race (in the western world) been more visually aware. Through the influence of the media, most notably T.V. the average westerner has built up quite a visual encyclopaedia. Because of the complex nature, and sheer bulk, of this visual knowledge, the very people involved in the production of images (we shall call them the Media*) are finding it more difficult to project a convincing image of their commodity. Hence the "exclusive shot" acts as a new experience for the visual appetite of the reader. An advertising campaign such as the "Levi's 501" series, has to be thoroughly stylized for the product to be accepted, as something "new". The public must be seduced by an injected "newness", otherwise the product will not appear as such. In short the public will not accept an image that has not been stylized or idealized. The cinema audience sniggers at the advertisement for the local Indian restaurant, but remains hushed as the Adonis in denim strips to his boxer shorts. The reason for this is not because the Indian restaurant fails in it's objective, but instead, it is not convincing or

*The term Media as used here , includes the New York Art world.

titillating enough. The anaemic slide, with it's upper-class-English voice over, fulfills the requirements of advertising, but it fills them so frugally. The public enjoy recognising a 1950's Cadillac, or the shine of Brylcreemed hair, it comforts their conception of the 1950's. Given the drab lives of the majority of people in the western world, there is a certain desire within most to be seduced by these idealized images. The seduction involved in these advertisements is based on a re-enactment of fantasy. Within these advertisements the fantasy takes many forms, in the majority of cases it is sexual in nature, or in some (like Levi's 501) it takes the form of nostalgia. Nevertheless if the fantasy is overstated, or the image not visually precise, it becomes an object of ridicule, and thus is not commercially viable. It is not to be assumed that an advertising campaign has a long lifespan, it's job is to convince quickly. President Lincoln's maxim certainly holds true for the world of advertising, however, it is possible to "fool all the people", by which time you have established your product, or indeed, produced a "new" Art movement.

Sherrie Levine was merely sleeping but David Salle is dead.

Looking back on old issues of Artforum it becomes painfully obvious how (visually) boring minimalism was. There were no lush brushstrokes to linger over, all was flat, complex theory abounded, and, all in all, a visit to an Art gallery was something of an ordeal. With the introduction of New Expressionism, however, the public was spared the ardour of complex theory, and instead were presented an obvious alternative. Here were paintings that had real people in them, the paint was applied with gusto, and there was (sin of sins!) a narrative within them. As a reactionary movement the Europeans slotted in nicely with this naive view of Art history,

* By virtue of their hedonistic approach to the (previously set) rules of Painting, they were seen to be revolutionary. However as we were sinking into these comforting "armchairs",^{*} another group of artists were giving a different view of the future of painting. Artists like Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine and David Salle, were all saying completely different to the Europeans. Soon, their message was being aired, and what was that message? Among others, their message was that the concept of the original was invalid, and with the death of this concept so was the armchair concept of Painting. But if Painting was dead, then what was the point in liking New Expressionism? This double standard was embarrassing, in order for credibility to be maintained ~~and~~ a rapid clean-up was necessary, after all, how could one camp be holding a christening, while their peers were ordering wreaths? A disinfectant arrived in the form of Neo-Geo, and now we "definitely" know that Painting is dead, Koons & Co. are merely giving it the last rites.

The above paragraph, although a ridiculous and blinkered reading of Art history, is basically true. In the past ten years all of the above has happened (quite literally) before our eyes. The facts of this reading may be clear, but the reading itself is perverse and selective. The concept of "Dead Painting" was brought up as early as 1981, six years before the enema that is Neo-Geo was given to the Art world. Thomas Lawson wrote of David Salle's work

* The term "armchair", here refers to Matisse's concept of a good (and bourgeois) painting.

REFERENCE
ONLY

" He makes paintings, but they are dead, inert representations of the impossibility of passion in a culture that has institutionalised self-expression. They take the most compelling sign for personal authenticity that our culture can provide, and attempt to stop it, to reveal it's falseness. The paintings look real, but they are fake. They operate by stealth, insinuating a crippling doubt into the faith that supports and binds our ideological institutions."² Lawson's reading of Salle's paintings (it must be admitted that Lawson is a "disciple" of Baudrillard's) illuminate a glaring connection with Neo-Geo's supposedly novel intentions.

Salle's painting, Poverty Is No Disgrace. (1982) is a perfect example of what, we are now informed, is called Neo-Geo. Looking at the painting (Fig. 2) it becomes obvious, that it has all the (so called) revolutionary aesthetic sensibilities of the later movement. The left-handpanel has an image of a kitschy attempt at abstraction, likewise, in the right hand panel we are given an image of a nude (not the usual "Porno" image) which along with the abstract, links up two traditions of Painting - one modernist, the other archaic - in one deft juxtaposition. The centre panel, however, clinches the argument, there, nailed onto an image of the "Bowery", is a plastic chair ! Further examination of Salles work reveals that his philosophies are also quite Baudrillard indeed and yet for an artist who bears many similarities to the "new" work, Salle has received little acknowledgement. *However Salle's contemporary, Sherrie Levine has been affiliated with, indeed is considered a member of, this new phenomenon. Why has an artist like Salle been relegated to the back seat, when his sister-in-arms is swept up

*Salle is not referred to, in any of the articles on, or any interviews with, the Neo-Geo artists.

with the wave of adulation and success ? The answer lies in the method of presentation of their respective works, Levine's work (copies of Schiele, Malevich or Evans) was seen to be enhanced by the arrival of Neo-Geo, her work could finally be truly understood. Levine's work was truly dead , whereas Salle's was still breathing, due to the fact that he imbued it with a sense of himself, as opposed to her direct copying. Levine was seen to be (in an unbelievable re-writing of Art history) painting's "Angel of death", through her appropriation of past works, and their associations as the genuine article, she was killing off the last romantic notions of the Artwork as commodity. In effect, Levine was not committing "Artocide" until late 1986, all previous works, (although straight forward appropriations) were simply counted as "Artslaughter". Levine's work was re-contextualized to accommodate the warped course of American Art history. Once a name was coined, Levine was seen to have been proved right, Neo-Geo, meant that Sherrie could go on killing off our notions of authorship and individuality, with History's blessing. The final irony, is the fact that Levine was creating "dead" work, for a period of roughly six years before anyone realised it wasn't alive*.

For an artist to be re-contextualised as crassly as this, to accommodate a smooth flowing view of History, is despicable. When both critics and artists, spend their time referring to dead paintings, which were living in 1982, but died four years later, they do not realise how right they are. Looking at Art history in this manner relegates all Art to a specific time and context, until it can be

*That is to say, that although this Art concerned itself with the demise of painting these notions were not acknowledged until Neo-Geo.

used again, and when used again, it takes on the form of propaganda and is again revitalised to imbue the latest movement with authenticity (in the case of the Germans, the Weimar expressionist groups, and for the Italians, Renaissance Art and futurism).

In Levine's case, the Art world waited for Neo-Geo to catch up with her, before it deemed it proper that this phenomenon take its place within the framework of Art history. These selective readings of history serve to lend gravitas to an illusion, the illusion being one of historical progression, and with it an artistic maturation. The obvious reason for this misreading is to convince the public (and the buyer) of the products authenticity. Like a Levi's 501 advertisement, this twisted view of the past serves to impress characteristics of genuinity on a product/artwork, that are not there to begin with.

It is very difficult to isolate the individuals responsible for this selective reading of the "New " art history. However, even though the responsibility obviously lies with the Art dealers and Art critics for this travesty, the blame ultimately lies with the artists themselves. They are the people who are ALLOWING their work to be interpreted in this shallow way. Their lack of reaction to this interpretation, and with this lack of reaction their obvious apathy as regards such a reading, highlights their willingness to cooperate in this falsification. The reasons for this co-operation are only too obvious.

The Artist as Institution/Hero.

If critics are looking for a dead artwork, they need look no further than the painting Cilindrone 1984 (Fig.3), here three painters (Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel-Basquiat and Francesco Clemente, respectively.) have combined their talents to produce a new artwork. This is not only a shameless piece of self-promotion, but an acknowledgement that all three consider themselves institutions. Two of these institutions were unheard of ten years ago, and yet they can be placed alongside each other as equals. The three styles of the painters are instantly recognizable and act as virtual trademarks for the respective participants. Besides illustrating the fact these "youngsters" have access to instant notoriety, this bastard offspring demonstrates their belief that they are the genuine article. This collage of the three, points out what Lawson meant when he said that self expressionism had been institutionalized. Indeed it has, but by the very individuals who are supposedly the guardians of this concept.

The reason for the rapid institutionalization of these young artists was due to an equally rapid injection of capital. These artists were marketed as "true history makers", their products were validated by a dubious reactionary reading of art history. With the arrival of Neo-Geo we are witnessing another batch of Wunderkids being built up for the lucrative market (the prices for Neo-Geo work have escalated in the past months). The point of note concerning this phenomenon is the fact that the "new" art we are witnessing has as its premise an historical fantasy. The backdrop for these heroes (they are heroes by virtue of their success) is not unlike a movie screenplay. The heroes within this, the greatest story ever told, take their financial gain from their performances to be a validation of their roles as artists. Like the character

John, in 9½ Weeks, these heroes master money while still maintaining the role of avant-garde artist. A successful artist like Robert Longo says of his wealth.....

"Now I can do anything I want with vengeance and power. I want my art to be acts of freedom." 3

.....a horrible misconception of his own institutionalization and classification.

Like the film "Highlander", these artists are encouraged to fight (by virtue of their being reactionary) for the "Prize" and that "Prize" is centre stage in the commercial art market, a dubious honour.

Kurgan: shouting at a hushed group of churchgoers.....

"Listen to me I've got something to say ,it's better to burn out,

THAN FADE AWAY! " 4

Our artistic heroes are obviously willing to sacrifice their integrity even if it means shaving your head, or simply lying low until an historical precedent is set for your work, and re-introduce you into the fight.

Just as the commercial cinema needs heroes like John and Conner MacLeod, so the "instant history machine" that is the commercial art world needs heroes like Levine or Koons. Both of whom gladly take part in the maleé and do battle to satisfy their bloated egos and their fear of obsolescence/Death. Through the haze of hype and publicity we can see this art system disappearing up it's own tail in a trance of self-reference.

No Future?

As long as there are buyers for this work, critics who are willing to grant it a theory, and dealers to sell it, this phenomenon can go on forever. Already there has been a group show titled, "Anti-Baudrillard", held in New York, proof that the movement is beginning to provoke reaction. However Baudrillard has not come out in support of Neo-Geo, and already

his name has become synonymous with the work. Baudrillard should be wary of the damage such a partnership could do to his writings, they will become marginalized, in a commercial exercise like this which relegates Art to Fashion.

"To take a recent example: neither the long skirt or the mini-skirt has an absolute value in itself--- only their differential relation acts as a criterion of meaning. The mini-skirt has nothing whatsoever to do with sexual liberation; it has no (fashion) value except in opposition to the long skirt. This value is of course, reversible: the voyage from the mini- to the maxi- skirt will have the same distinctive and selective fashion value as the reverse; and it will precipitate the same effect of "beauty"." 5

Substituting two art movements (like the above mentioned ones) for "mini" and "maxi", and art for fashion, Baudrillard's quote takes on a novel meaning. It merely takes the minimum of intelligence to this conclusion, and that is one trait which no amount of marketing hype can overcome, indeed, intelligence seems to be sadly lacking as regards the artists and their art. This phenomenon will be with us for quite a while, but like T.V we do not have to watch it, to make work which reacts to the present artworks of a commercial system is to condemn oneself to that system. Therefore, it is necessary for the contemporary artist to diversify, and ignore all aspects of patronization. In short, if an artist begins to become commercially viable they can consider their work (and the conceptions behind it) to be in danger of digestion by an art market hungry for "new" visual titbits. It is improper to grant an artist credence merely because they earn money

, to be successful within a commercial system heralds the "selling out" of this fake "avant garde". All of the artists whether Neo-Geo or New Expressionists, (the art world has a penchant for naming every movement "new") it must be admitted are of a certain type, they are ambitious, these are the people who talk to the right patrons and critics at openings. Each of these movements never thinks of failure they believe their philosophies are "stronger" than the other, their self righteousness indicates their perfection, they are heroes.

Recently, in New York, Exxon have held an exhibition of french art, already the "instant history machine" is dusting down it's cameras for the next great production, "the French Invasion". With Baudrillard's philosophies waiting for them, these unfortunates will be dealt with as efficiently as their neighbours. A fake uniformity/Zeitgeist will be impressed on the works, and they will be easily classified. They have no one to blame but themselves. Their willingness to prostitute their work signals their death as artists, and their birth as media heroes. Their necessity of a "script" and "image" signifies that true art, indeed the true media art is cinema, which is what they are vainly trying to imitate.

NOTES

Chapter I

1. Taken verbatim, from Patricia Knop, Zalmen King, and Sarah Kernochan's screenplay, adapted from Elizabeth Mc Neill's novel.
2. Adrian Vooton's review in Monthly Film Bulletin June '86, Vol. 55, No. 629.
3. Sally Hibbin, "Highlander Hero", an interview with Christopher Lambert. Films and Filming , August 1986.
4. Taken verbatim from Robert Towne's screenplay.
5. Julie Burchill, "You Are Not What You Wear", The Fashion Year Vol. III p39.
6. Ibid. p39.

Chapter II

1. Craig Owens, "Honor Power and the Love of Women", Art in America January 1983, pp10 - 13
2. Ibid p.11
3. Metro Pictures Gallery, in New York championed an aesthetic of an industrial and hi-tech nature.
4. Eleanor Heartney, "Neo-Geo storms New York", New Art Examiner, September.1986, pp 26-29
5. Susan Sontag, Notes on Camp , p112
6. Ibid p. 109
7. Ibid p. 119
8. Ibid p. 119
9. Peter York, Style Wars , London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980 .
p211

10. Giancarlo Politi, "Luxury and Desire", an interview with Jeff Koons
Flash Art , Feb-March 1987, p.74
11. Ibid p.74

CHAPTER III

1. T. Adorno & H. Eisler, Composing for the Films. p.47
 2. Thomas Lawson, "Last Exit Painting ", Artforum, October 1981 p.43
 3. "The ups and downs of Art stardom", an interview with Robert Longo
by Greg Welzenbach, New Art Examiner , December, 1984 p.96
 4. Taken verbatim from Gregory Widen's screenplay for the film "Highlander"
 5. Jean Baudrillard, For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign
U.S.A, Telos Press, 1981. p.79
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