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Acknowledging Difference: Looking at Film, Looking at Food

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Abstract

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Acknowledging difference is a matter of perceiving distinctions—distinctions that often go unsaid, are overlooked, or are simply ignored. This mixed media project of stop-motion animation with a self-reflexive paper accompaniment calls attention to the inherent differences in the products of both film and food, focusing on the perception of the Handmade product. Stop-motion film form alienates the viewer from the “normal” looking structure, inviting the perceiver to actively partake in the digestion of visual information. My food images too are alienating as I restrain from the usual illustration; food is depicted as neither beautiful nor grotesque, my purpose being that the viewer looks at the food objectively. The accompanying paper revolves around the senses of touch and feeling. Stop-motion animation, and Handmade film form in general, reinstate the touch of the flesh hand back into the visual information of the mechanical language of Cinema. It demands an acknowledgement of the filmmaker, both in body and mind. The intent of the visuals, the time of the work, and the energy of the labor, are all very present factors in the film text. Whereas with the mechanical fluidity of Industrialized film form, it very much obscures not only the filmmaker’s presence, but the distance between the world of the film object and the world of the perceiver. As an embodied perceiver, the viewer is then positioned in a passive-looking structure within the Cinematic space of industrialized film, unaware of the differences in tempo-spatiality and body forms. It is my intention to explore the different kind of looking structure positioned by the Handmade product and how a certain pleasure from a genuine figured-out knowledge surfaces from such a structure and form.

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Acknowledging Difference: Looking at Film, Looking at Food

Lauren E. Ladov

Honors Thesis in Film and Media Studies, 2012

What makes me one, and perhaps even unique, is the fact that you are and I am not you

Luce Irigaray's project "to be two," is (among other things) an attempt to assert a different voice into philosophy, a feminine voice. It is an attempt that stems from the acknowledgment of being a certain body and not being an *other* body. Her difference in language derives from this acknowledgment, as all language is body language uttered from and of the flesh. Much of my language in this project may echo Irigaray's vocabulary for she has given me the words to speak about "the relationship between two," showing me the crucial gesture of acknowledging difference for finding both meaning and truth.

Let us acknowledge that we all learn differently: *An Introduction*

In that, our experience of the phenomenological world is based on different sensitivities to and of different sensory perceptions.

I am a tactile learner. My mother used to scold me when she took me grocery shopping or to the department store because I touched *everything*. I ran my fingers across the eggplants, the lettuce, thumbed the hanging cottons and fur. I developed quite the discerning touch, and began to judge upon my response to textures. But my touch was denied to me, not only by my mother's slap, but by the approach of a digital era...

I am of a last generation in America who knew of the time before "The Age of Information" and its co-prevalence of digital technology. But now I touch the illuminated plastic keys and stare into a pixilated screen; I know I do not even have a pencil in my bag. I like writing by hand and I usually do, but more often than not, it is inefficient, *impractical*.

It is strange how nostalgic I am for a time in which I barely lived. But when I surround myself with its remnants- the objects, the music- I am swept away by the romance of it all.

Because it is something I *feel*.

With digital technology the hand feels nothing besides the plasticity of a screen.¹

This thesis project was a personal experimental experience in a return to thinking through touch.

I have spent the last four years with ideas floating around my mind and my gut, ideas my words had trouble articulating. I needed a different approach.

I needed to *touch* so I could *think*.

¹ Let me acknowledge Marshall McLuhan's assertion of digital media as *tactile* as a reference to an integration of many senses instead of an isolation of senses. The digital medium enables a perception of more senses, so it is my intention to capitalize upon this integration through the perception of literal touch.

And though your experience of my project is solely through your *look*, I hope it inspires you to begin to touch again.

Let us acknowledge there is a sixth sense that is different from the other five: *Sensing Essence*. In that, our experience of the sixth sense is the extra-sensory perception of energy—the energy of the *essence of the Other body* that is phenomenologically unseen.

Be it the unseen bodies of spirits, gods, ghosts, or great writers, we all (at some point) acknowledge this extra-sensory perception despite our scientific presumptions. It is the reception of information within and from the present to and of the past; where we experience the spirit in present-moving time, but are cued to the temporality of a happened history. Irigaray alludes to this concept as something that “corresponds to an objectual perception with a something extra which is left to the other: a history, a becoming, an interiority.”² The sixth sense establishes the presence of both the Perceiver and the *Other*, despite appearances.

The sixth sense surrounds Cinema. I am defining Cinema as the total experience of filmic movement, as the reception of the film object’s articulations within projection. Like dance, Cinema is a language of movement, of bodies through space. Unlike dance, it is an articulation out of a machine, originating from the gestures of the camera body. It emanates from an energized apparatus, where the motion of the film object is only seen on screen. The energized apparatus, just like the telephone, obscures the physicality of the “real,” present, solid body.

Cinema is a mechanical language, but speaks with *the essence of the Other body* because the perceived bodies of movement are not *physically* present, only remnants of energy. As

² Irigaray, Luce. *to be two*. New York City: Routledge, 2001. Print

Jacques Derrida muses, “it’s the art of allowing ghosts back.”³ For what is a ghost, but a projected memory? All humans, fully aware and sure of finitude (and not much else...), often deny such truth by activating the imagination to bring back *that which once was*. The concept of the ghost is ingrained in the very concept of being a finite human. It is not an anxiety of the past, but of the impending moment of joining it.

In the vein of André Bazin’s *Ontology of The Photographic Image*, to situate the essences of Cinema we must begin at the moment of death.

The Photograph: Whole objects in the phenomenological world have the ability to cast shadows and possess highlights. The photograph is a historical imprint of this light information derived from a specific time and space in the phenomenological world. The highlights and shadows are transferred onto emulsion (or by pixels) to make up the photographic information and define its content. The physical texture of a dog’s fur is deconstructed and captured as differentiating points on the gray scale (or RGB scale), for example. And so, following Bazin, “The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it.”⁴ The photograph is an object *other* than the original material objects that had been photographed. The photograph is not a reproduction, but a *transference* of form.

The celluloid strip is made up of these still photographs, repeated and connected; likewise the digital recording is made up of sequences, housed in a memory card. The stills are therefore no longer free, but literally tied to the temporal and spatial conditions of duration. It is a recording of the light information of a moment, over a distinct time and space. “It is change

³ *Ghost Dance*. Ken McMullen. Channel Four Films, 1984. DVD.

⁴ André Bazin. *What is cinema? / Essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray*. Berkeley. University of California press. 1967-71

mummified,”⁵ as Bazin declares, since any sort of motion within the duration is preserved by the recording of light information, from one still to the next.



Reels of celluloid in *Man With a Movie Camera*, 1929

The recording is not a complete entity. It is a whole object, yes, but it is only within the linear temporality of the energized projection that the essence of the film object can be perceived.

The Projection Machine: The projection machine is a conjuring machine. The reel of celluloid strips or the digital recording file is the most crucial gear in this mechanical process. A consistent energy is necessary for the projection to run, and consequently, this energy is converted as light is emitted upon a linear vector. The projection process unravels the mummification. Filtered through the celluloid or defined by the digital data, the energized light

⁵ Ibid.

reconstructs the motion of shadows and highlights of the past, and positions it into the present time and space. It is literally a projection of memory.

The Screen: The memory is seen on the screen. The projected moving images would be inaccessible, unseen, without a solid surface upon which the light could be fixed. The light otherwise would remain dispersed. The screen itself is a defined solid space, flat and depthless. The dispersed light of projection becomes the screen's façade.

In "The Scene of the Screen" Vivian Sobchack asserts that the different technologies of visual communication affect subjecthood and presence. "Each differently and objectively alters our subjectivity while each invites our complicity in formulating space, time, and bodily investment as significant personal and social experience."⁶ The sensory experience of visual communication is specifically structured such that it (re)constructs our sense of self, both of mind and body. Sobchack's discussion is of essence, in and of technological communication. All visual technology is grounded in the fact that man is an embodied perceiver of language. With contemporary technology, the screen has morphed into a handheld device, with the capacity to simulate the visual communications characteristic of other technologies (i.e. photography, books, movies, video games, etc.). In digital media how are we to distinguish the nuances of simulation? It is in the sixth sense perhaps, that the technological differences are discerned by the perception of the different energies present: that of the filmmaker's body, that of the visual bodies of movement, and that of the Perceiver's embodiment. The sixth sense is sensitive to how a digital media product situates the energy of the Maker and the energy of the Perceiver, in both presence and resulting pleasure.

⁶ Sobchack, Vivian. "The scene of the screen: envisioning photographic, cinematic and electronic "presences", in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiement and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004. Print.

Let us then acknowledge there are differences within and between the products of Industrialized film and the products of Handmade film: *The Different Bodies of Cinema; Ghosts and The Living Dead*

In that, these differences affect the presence and pleasure of Cinema.

The product of the Industrialized film object is articulated by bodiless beings of the past, seemingly floating through space. They are the ghosts of hallucination where the form of the deceased appears to the perceiver only as translucent moving light in ‘real-time’. The fluidity of motion recalls the historical conditions of a body’s interaction with the phenomenological world (the shadows and highlights representing spatial position and density), so that it is perceived as an indexical sign of “real” or “natural” motion. It is a collective universal regarding the way the human eye sees in the phenomenological world; Siegfried Kracauer’s “flow of material life.”⁷

The Perceiver cannot touch the ghost nor talk with the ghost, he only sees the ghost, and thus he is only Viewer. The Viewer is in a fascinating situation where a past time and space is simulated in front of him in an entirely *different* time and space, and yet he sees this present moment of the past constantly thrust forward towards the future as a sort of delusion. The ghost establishes for the viewer a sense of realistic physical origin, where the temporal-spatial conditions of *that which once was* already happened, recorded and preserved. The viewer can thus prescribe expectations within the realm of movement, and rely on the camera for knowledge by sight.

This ghostly flow is a form of passive seeing. The flow is seamless, therefore, effortless. The camera eye never blinks. Within the flow of material life there is no notion of production, thus no invitation to deconstruct. The Industrialized film object produces an illusion that is

⁷ Kracauer, Siegfried “The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays”. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1995

unrecognized by the viewer as such. Sobchack refers to the rise of an aesthetics of effortlessness in digital technology, citing Guiliana Bruno “Objects of leisure, the automaton and the cinematic apparatus both hide the mechanism that creates movement, pretending to require no effort in representation or reception.”⁸ Even in, and especially in animation, the agent of motion is hidden minimizing the difference between live-action and animation. Because the viewer’s source of identification is with the gaze of the camera or the view of a character, which is in turn, just the same as the camera’s gaze, He believes in the essence of the moving images of bodies whether animated or ‘real’, and even though he knows they are substance-less, he becomes one with their world. The viewer only sees the ghosts dance, comforted by the delusion that he is of their world, or they are of his. There is a fusion of phenomenological worlds then, that of the industrialized film and that of the viewer’s are joined in the flowing movement of *that which once was*. The viewer becomes a bodiless perceiver in the realm of filmic movement, his body identifies with the camera’s body, all – seeing, immaterial, fleshless. The difference between phenomenological worlds, the differences between camera and man, the differences between maker and viewer remain veiled under the ghost dance.

Perhaps it is the lack, or denial of difference that gives rise to Walter Benjamin discontent with the film object as an object unable to possess aura. For, “to experience the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look back at us.”⁹ This experience necessitates the difference of two, the acknowledgment of separate bodies present, engaged in a dialect of looking at one another. Benjamin’s aura-ful object, most notably the art-object, possesses a sense of authenticity in this “regard.” Its history- who made it, who owns or owned it- permeates through its materiality. Benjamin argues a film object lacks aura because it is an object

⁸ Bruno, Guiliana . *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film*. London: Verso, 2002. Print.

⁹ Benjamin, Walter “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” 1936

dispersed, immaterial, while its history is completely skewed due to the endless reproduction by technological means. Aura is reserved only for physical objects of distinct difference. I disagree with Benjamin though, I believe he is relying too much on the logic of sight as he makes these claims. For films should not be deprived of essence just because of their mechanical nature, for a film object can possess aura if the viewer perceives it so within the Cinematic experience. The perception cannot be of the eye, but of the sixth sense because it is this extra-sensory perception that experiences the presence of the filmmaker, an energy of a distinct *Other* body, unseen.

All film objects are inherently handmade- the framing choices, the bracket decisions of the action and cut of the camera, the editing process, and so forth. Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* describes this inherent fact quite clearly as the presence of filming hands of Mikhail Kaufman, the editing hands of Elizaveta Svilova, and the directing hands of Vertov himself are visually depicted "in the making process" throughout the entire film.

These moments create a lasting impression such that even when not depicted, the viewer still acknowledges the laborious hands behind the moving images, especially during the stop-motion sequence of the wobbly tripod body. Vertov physically bonds himself to the gestures of the camera, allowing him to explore its capacities. Specifically he looks into the making process itself, concentrating not only on film, but the nature of the eye both of the human and of the camera itself. The blinking curtains mimic the blinking awakening Soviet woman, The cherry blossom trees go in and out of focus, the blinking gaps between the run of train tracks, all describe the mimicry of the camera's eye to the human's, while instating the differences as well.



Slivova's hand on celluloid in *Man With a Movie Camera*, 1929

It is the nature of the camera that allows Vertov in *Kino-Eye*, to reveal the making process behind bread- a reversal illustration of moving from product to flowing fields of grain. The mixing, the ingredients, the kneading, the baking, the transport, etc. are moments impossible to physically show through words or still photographs because it is the motion, the work, the energy itself that is being articulated. The language is both evocative and pleasurable. It is a gesture of “bring[ing] creative joy to all mechanical labour.”¹⁰ By showing the work of the human body in conjunction with or parallel to the work of the machine, the filmmaker communicates both the interconnectivity and the most basic differences between the essence of the human body and the essence of the camera body, the intent of flesh and the gaze of the eye. Thus if the filmmaker synthesizes these two gesturing bodies, his presence is undeniable.

¹⁰ Vertov, Dziga. *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984. Print.

The self-reflexivity of the filmmaker by showing or referencing a sense of labor in the making process within the articulation of Cinematic language evokes a clear historical referential to the film object, by bonding, at least in the mind, the dispersed visuals to the physicality of *the Other*. In the Cinematic experience of the industrialized film object, I concede that aura *is* often lost because the presence of apparatus so obscures the filmmaker's presence and objecthood of the film itself. However, the viewer can still experience an aura within Industrialized Cinema, and it is most prevalent in the presence of an auteur-the maker whose world, characters, mise en scene, camera use, etc. are designed as such to be acknowledged as specifically distinct. The essence of the film object is tied to a distinguished figure. I *feel* and know the Tim Burton of a Tim Burton Film, but when it is filtered through Disney as was the case with *Alice in Wonderland*, I feel Disney through an through, despite the Tim Burton-y appearances. I experience the difference not through my perception by sight, but by my perception of the maker's energy and presence by sixth sense.

But regardless of creator, the handmade film can and always will articulate aura. Handmade Cinema facilitates the conception of aura because the presence of the hand in the making process transcends into the sensory experience of the viewer wherein the knowledge of the moving image is not only the work of the filmic apparatus body, but the flesh work of specific human bodies.

Let us acknowledge that The prescription of "handmade" is a prescription of knowledge:

"Handmade" Differences.

In that, the prescription "handmade" entails an acknowledgment of labor by the flesh body and intent of *the Other* embodied perceiver.

It is a difference between man and machine. A machine cannot intentionally re-assemble the way “real” objects move in reality, unless designed to do so. This is because machines cannot intend. *Intend: to have (a course of action) as one’s purpose or objective; plan.* Intention requires consciousness of a specific action in regards to greater plan. Intention is one of those “human only” characteristics. Just like conjecturing. Neither machine nor animal conjectures, to my knowledge. Besides in the magical world of Cinema.

I can see the intent behind the films of Brothers Quay, Jan Švankmajer, and Norman McLaren, where every aspect of physical visual texture is constructed and designed, and continuous throughout. “Watching animation is like watching thought if thought could be seen.”¹¹ It is in the transformation of elements that this attribute of animation resides because the laws of time and space become moot. Change according to motion, sound, and visuals, is a continuity displaced from narrative. McLaren put forth that “an animated film is all about the illusion of movement” and further all Cinema is of this illusion.¹² However, the more the filmic movement articulates the *essence of the Other body*, rather than of the apparatus, the more the illusion unravels, or at the very least invites the viewer to engage in the unraveling. The sixth sense can distinguish between illusions or deconstruct the illusion itself if the film form permits the active *look*.

The Cinematic experience of the Handmade film object is a language *figured out*. All Cinema *appears* as ‘live-action’ since the film object speaks in live-time, on a linear vector. But the viewer *figures out* that it was made by hand from the referential and cues of the hand. Handmade Cinema situates both maker and perceiver as actively present in this exchange of language.

¹¹ *Norman McLaren: the master's edition*. Dir. Norman McLaren, prod. Marc Bertrand, Marcel Jean. Image Entertainment, 2006. DVD

¹² *Ibid.*



Eyes behind lace in *Color of Pomegranates*, 1968

Sergei Parajanov's *The Color of Pomegranates* presents a collection of moving images inspired by or loosely based off of the Armenian poet Sayat Nova. Each shot is a visual poem with mathematically composed visual elements in a brilliant color palette. The camera remains mostly static through each composition, so that the slightest movement- the shuffle of lace across the eyes, the fanning of book pages around the still lying boy – animate the composition, becoming the lyricism of the scene. Every element draws a certain attention to its specific form and texture, and the motion describes its specific materiality and weight. It is a masterful orchestration of hieroglyphics to be deciphered.

Lotte Reiniger uses silhouette puppets to tell tales and *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. The silhouette puppet is the physical product of the paper cutout's interaction with light, how it can obscure or manipulate light. It is a filmic gesture that harkens to the basic ontological nature of film itself, as film is nothing but the product of a body's interaction with light, (only to be

inverted, transferred, and then) projected on a flat surface. The silhouette puppet is moved by hand and this is essentially a shadow puppet. The moving image of a shadow puppet is something so associated with children, the body, and the imagination, that It is an illusion we are all familiar with (hopefully) before the age of 10. We are thus cued in to know the construction behind the moving images.



McLaren's eyes and hands behind celluloid in *Pen Point Percussion*, 1951

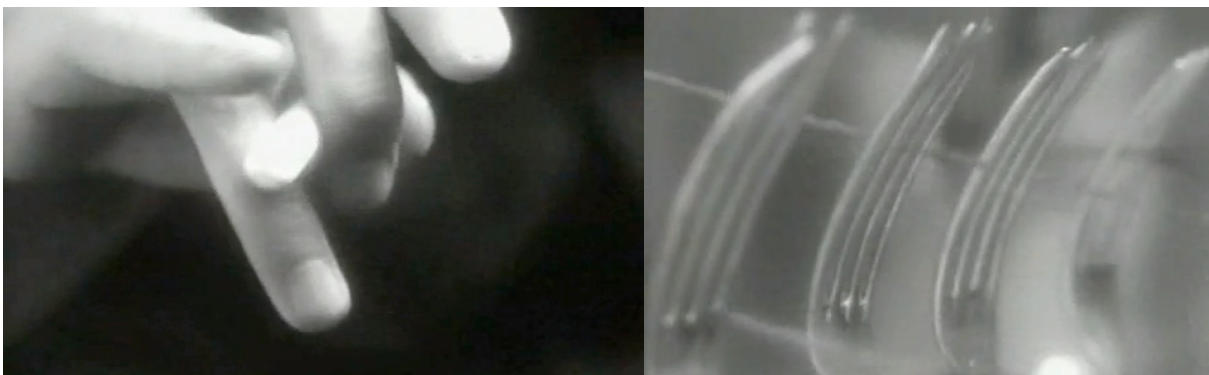
McLaren's films and video art are the epitome of handmade, as each still of the celluloid strip is drawn on and controlled by his hand. It is an exquisite painstaking work of crazy genius to say the least. McLaren discusses the nature of animation noting that despite the abstract visuals, "once the thing goes into motion, the things that are there no matter what shapes they may be, can behave in a human or animal way which echoes something quite human in the person."¹³ It echoes, I think, that the animator, as creator, creates in his own image. It is an echoing of essence. The choices in making motion are only limited to the animator's

¹³ Ibid

imagination, how he imagines something to move emanates from an idea of association. The visual entity moves like a human or moves like an animal because these are agents of motion in the phenomenological world. So the mimicry of the moving entity evokes not necessarily a certain sense of agency, but sense of spirit.

Brothers Quay's *The Institute Benjamenta* is not prescribed as a handmade film. But the presence of the hand is eerily undeniable; first in the presentation of objects: the thimbles of sewing, the forks, the pinecones- and then in the dandelion field. This is a scene of handmade magic because it so required the touch of the delicate hand that a machine cannot accomplish. Seeing the fragile weed up close, in a moment of stillness, was such a striking moment that now each time I see a dandelion, I recall the Quay Brothers' imagery. This *strange* presentation of familiar objects elicits a certain Uncanny response, a crucial difference in the perception of object animation (to be discussed below). Secondly, importantly, the Quay Brothers' puppetry background still breathes in this live-action film by directly referencing the motion of the hands and handmade motion itself. The classroom chalk dance sequence is a prime example.

Introduced by the close ups of lacing chalk between the knuckles of fingers and threading string between the spokes of forks; these visual associations gain as much a sense of importance as the characters themselves. These are motions of and by the hand, emphasized, and perceived with a tinge of curious awe. The following choreographed dance of the institutionalized men is obviously a motion of their own autonomous bodies, but the movement itself evokes the motion of puppets- the awkward sweeps of limbs, the emphasized posturing of joints, even their faces become animated caricatures unlike their usual stagnant expressions. They move because their teacher, Lisa Benjamenta, instructs them to do so. They cease motion upon the smear of chalk by her hand. It is as if her hand steers their world. Just like the hand of the animator steers a film.

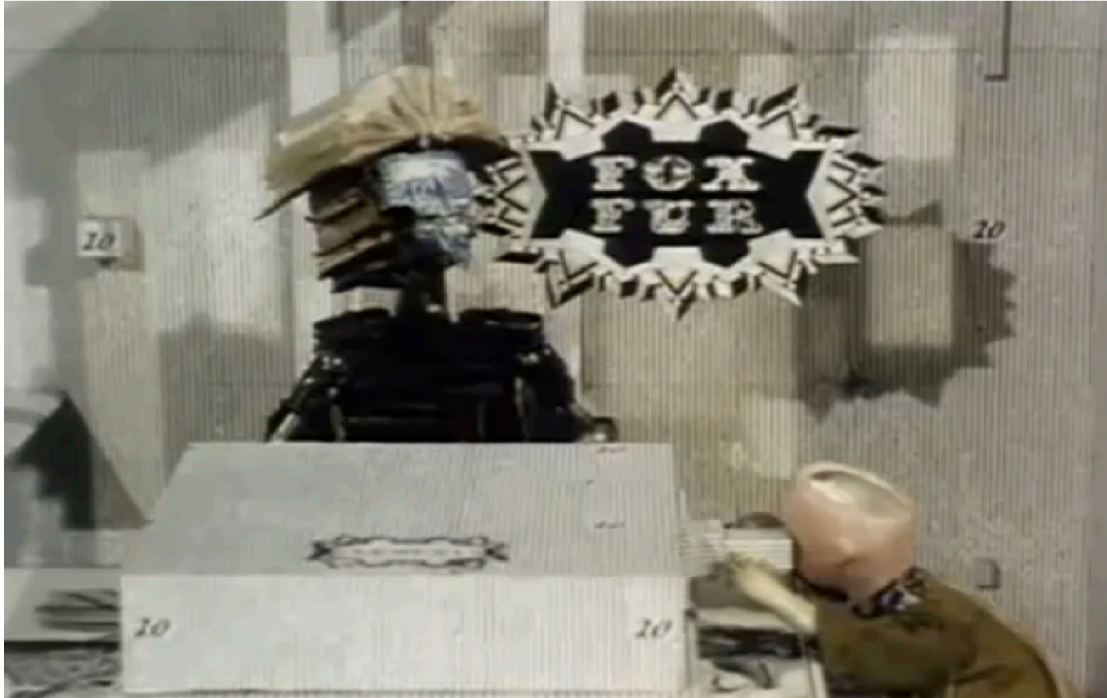


Lacing chalk, threading forks in *Institute Benjamenta, or This Dream That One Calls Human Life*, 1995

The human hand is unique. It separates us from those ancestral, wily monkeys because our hands are more nimble and less hairy. Film form, more than any other visual art form denies the touch of the hand, from both the making process of the filmmaker and the perception of the viewer. But the more a filmmaker asserts the hand and touch upon the process, using the lens not only in a haptic manner, but in a way to record the touch of the hand itself in making motion, the more the viewer perceives the *essence of the Other body*. Švankmajer discusses how this is a particular branch of art he has been trying to explore as it is a sense not yet exploited. “In the renaissance of the general impoverishment of sensibility in our civilization, touch must play an important part, because tactilism has not yet been abused by the realm of art.”¹⁴

Touch is a most powerful and important stimulation that should be, or perhaps, needs to be aroused and inspired more often. That this sense has yet to be “abused,” allows it to uphold a notion of authenticity and reliability, which has waned with the inundation of stimulation associated with the other senses. Our eyes may be fooled, but the sense of energy and flesh are felt inside and out.

¹⁴ Solarik, Bruno “The Walking Abyss: Perspectives on Contemporary Czech and Slovak Surrealism” Essex: University of Essex. 2005



Little Švankmajer feeling things out in *Cabinet of Jan Švankmajer*, 1984

In the Brothers Quay's *Cabinet of Jan Švankmajer*, in the *Metaphysical Playroom*, the tufted-headed little Švankmajer automaton sticks his little metal arm feelers into the little boy's 'Elementa' box. The little Švankmajer discerns the dead tarantula inside as first as "fox fur," then as "fir tree." Are these conjectures wrong? Yes, technically because we, as extensions of the little boy, see it as a dead tarantula. But would the knowledge of the eyes tell him anything more significant than the fact that what he is feeling is a dead tarantula body? When something is dead, is it not merely form and texture? It is the properties of form and texture that allow the little Švankmajer to figure out what the object may be, based on association. The knowledge is not factually based, but instead the poetic ability to sense a likeness in things.

Let us acknowledge that stop-motion form came before the fluid motion of industrialized film, and thus paved the way for the emergence of Cinema: *Asserting the Difference; Stop-motion Animation*

That is, the use of stop-motion post-Industrialized film form, and especially in a digital era, is then an assertion of difference into the articulation of Cinematic language.

By calling attention to its own illusion, stop-motion denies the viewer submersion into a fluid, continuous temporal and spatial world; the flow of material life is denied. Stop-motion is like a visual portrayal of Derrida's concept of *différance* as "*Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other."¹⁵ The differences of both the object and camera positions, from still to still articulates the motion, and it is this assertion of difference that forms the language of stop-motion. Noticing the difference becomes the game in visual reception, which thus situates the viewer in an active role as perceiver. It is only through this difference, the visual fragmentation, within the gaps, where stop-motion's charm breathes. The temporal relationship to the perceiver therefore is completely different than industrialized temporality. It is not a projection of memory or historical moments because stop-motion reinstates the photographic object itself, "the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it." Stop-motion therefore creates its own time, as it is an assemblage of these freed objects. The duration of *that which once was* has not happened yet; it is happening.

The viewer then, is happening too. Because the filmic movement of stop-motion form generates a realm of movement that is totally other, there is an acknowledgement of being in a world *other* than the temporal-spatial conditions of the filmic object. Motion is not fluid because time is not fluid. Linear time- the passing of seconds, as a matter of fact, plays absolutely no role in the recording of the images. This is not a mummification of change, but a Dr. Frankenstein-

¹⁵ Derrida, Jacques "Différance," *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971

izing of change. Giving life to dead objects is not a process of preservation, but a mutated process of creation.

The blinks in movement disrupt the flow of material life, and thus the trust in knowledge derived by sight is deconstructed one still photograph seam at a time. The viewing then, is perceiving because the nature of stop-motion animation necessitates more than mere viewership.

Perceive: become aware or conscious of (something); come to realize or understand. Origin: Middle English: from a variant of Old French *perçoivre*, from Latin *percipere* 'seize, understand', from *per-* 'entirely' + *capere* 'take'

The acknowledgement of difference both in tempo-spatiality and within the physical making of motion inscribes the viewer into an active role of perceiving the happening light information. The film object is other, its body articulates motion differently. It needs to be identified, but simple sight cannot be trusted. Within the etymology of perception there is an inherent notion of touch in the production of knowledge. Perceiving is an *active* form of looking; it is a *digestion* of visual information that brings about awareness. It is a *figuring out* of knowledge; it is not a language of illusion, but of disillusion. No ghosts of the past, only the present production of living dead.

This articulation is not only done by hand, but by the constant assertion of difference upon the apparatus with each click of the camera. The camera does not get to breathe, merely take staccato gasps. Just like the heavy brush strokes of a Van Gogh painting call attention to each stroke of the brush, which in turn calls attention to each stroke of the hand, the assemblage of stop-motion differences creates an extra-visual texture to the moving image, which in turn calls attention to the motion, the labor of the hand which makes the appearance of motion in the moving image. It is a *knowledge figured out* that a machine did not (could not) make this motion

by itself. The objects themselves reference the hand, and are usually an object that fit in the hand, handheld. The lens is not necessarily haptic, but a means to physically reinstate the hand into the filmic apparatus.

Stop-motion is a language of deconstruction. The languages of deconstructionism are often met with backlash as their discursive projects in exposing the incongruences in the production of meaning presents no alternative, answer, or better approach to meaning, let alone what to do with truth, philosophy and its historicism post deconstruction. I do not think the act of deconstruction is inherently productive. However, I think the act of deconstruction is inherently *progressive* because it presents new or at least different forms of language into the philosophical discourse. Language in a project like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* is horizontally structured along these plateaus to mirror the rhizomatic imagery presented in the content as well as deconstruct the arborescence of the book-chapter hierarchy. It is a discursive project that self-reflexively offers the reader a different reading experience. It is as much about the content of the reading as it is the context of form. And even more pertinent to the nature of stop-motion, Derrida's *Envois* section in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* depicts an abuse of epistolary language which illuminates the gaps in correspondence, the anxiety of inheritance wrapped in the act of writing, and the convoluted relationship between the man of the pen and the man of reading.

It begins in the making process, as Vertov claims: "Everybody who cares for his art seeks the essence of his own technique."¹⁶ In the stop-motion technique it is deconstructing the language of sight through the essence of the relationship between hand and machine. The work of the hand not only makes the motion of objects, but asserts its dominance over the camera, saying "Look, *you!* I too can perform this repetitive, rhythmic action and make motion just like

¹⁶ Vertov, Dziga. *Kino-Eye :the writings of Dziga Vertov*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984. Print.

you! You're not that special with your shiny one eye!" But the camera just stands over the maker, showing him just how hard the work really is, snark-ly remarking, "Your back hurting yet? You need a break don't you? Look at you on the floor, look at what you've become. Humbling, isn't it?" But when the two get past their catty remarks of pride, and decide to live symbiotically, combining their work and essences, the stop-motion of 'real' material objects engages the perceiver in a fascinating exploration of touch and metaphysics.

This active perception of energy within the gesture of stop-motion form, and in general, Handmade Cinema accentuates its own difference from Industrialized Cinema. The language of the Handmade invites the perceiver to *figure out* the illusion of motion. the perceived motion is tied to the hand, the body, it is the collective universal of how the human *touches*. Whereas The seamless touch of the machine in industrialized filmic movement (re)constructs the viewer as complacent, accepting the illusion of merged worlds as ghostly fact. But the sixth sense perception provides a knowledge beyond the appearance of things, offering the perceiver a concept of difference, a perception of the *essence of the Other body*. It is a difference in aesthetics and taste, and therefore pleasure within the realm of Cinema.

Let us acknowledge that it is a difference that does not matter all that much besides to the perceiver who finds meaning and value within the difference.



Camera tripod wobbles away in *Man With A Movie Camera*, 1929

But it is a difference that is beyond critical within our interaction with food. Knowing a food object is made by hand and not a machine is the *figured out* knowledge that *the Other* body with their own two hands took the time and intent to make something for you. The maker's energy is infused into the food, and even if it does not taste as good as a Twinkie it still is so pleasurable because it is a knowledge of the *essence of the Other body*.

Let us acknowledge that there is a difference between digesting the film object and digesting the food object: *Digesting Difference*

That is, in the process of digestion, the film object remains other, while the food object becomes one with us.

My video presentation on food is not a project of facts and practicality. I have no concrete information to offer, no data, no research, no particulars. That is a whole other project.

Literally. That is a project of knowledge through an epistemological exploration and exposition of food nutrition and economics. The value of *that* knowledge is apparent and understood because it is a science. And we *already* have that knowledge, or at least a sense of that science. We *know* what's in processed food—we can read ingredients listed; we *know* the animals are mistreated—we've seen the protester's placards; we *know* eating processed food is not a healthy choice—we feel the epidemic of obesity around us. So if we *know* all this already, why do we not care to change the way we eat?

“Food is apprehended through the senses of touch, smell and taste, which rank lower on the hierarchy of senses than sight and hearing, which are typically thought to give rise to knowledge. In most of philosophy, religion, and literature, food is associated with body, animal, female, and appetite—things civilized men have sought to overcome with reason and knowledge.”¹⁷

Why do we not care or alternatively, ignore the scientific knowledge of food? Perhaps because the senses used to obtain that knowledge, as political scientist Janet Flammang points out above, are incongruous with those used to *apprehend* food. As embodied perceivers, our “Reason” ignores the fact that we apprehend through *all* the senses. But in The Age of Information, where (most, or all) knowledge is found through digital media, there are only so many senses that can be stimulated through visual communication... Progress is about change—Changing the way we think, talk, and interact. Marginalized movements or social identities like feminism, LGBT communities, animal rights, environmentalists, tend to gravitate towards the work of deconstructionists precisely because it spotlights the holes in the production of meaning, enabling these groups to assert a different voice into the gap and engage in social and political discourse. The somewhat undefined or loosely structured product presents an opportunity for the individual to (re)construct their own meaning and value upon work.

¹⁷ Flammang, Janet A. *The Taste for Civilization*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Print.

My video project on food is a work akin to this kind of deconstruction and I feel that this is both its weakness and its strength. I do not believe it is productive. It is not conceptually constructed to offer an answer or an alternative to the way we eat. I do not think it wise to proselytize morals, especially when it comes to food. For food is something so wrapped in traditions and cultures that some declaration for vegetarianism or any other –ism is a blow to the authentic community identity fostered by food itself. Further, food is something people often do not have much of a choice over, whether it be social, economic, or political factors. However, I do believe that everyone has the choice to acknowledge a difference.

The purpose of this video project is to change and perhaps abuse the looking structure between food and consumer, taking the food object out of the “food-for-consumption” context, while also leaving behind the commonly depicted organic beauty of the food object. By deconstructing the language of sight and whimsically accentuating the illusions in the making process of food itself, this project draws attention to the form and texture of food, with the intent to reinstate a certain knowledge by tactilism upon the relationship between food and consumer. Within the deconstruction it is my hope that the individual perceiver will (re)construct and assign personal meaning and value upon the work.

It is the idea that the consumer is also the co-producer, championed by the Italian-based Slow Food Movement: “The consumer orients the market and production with his or her choices and, growing aware of these processes, he or she assumes a new role. Consumption becomes part of the productive act and the consumer thus becomes a co-producer.” The Slow Food Movement is in opposition to the “Fast Life” of Industry. With a snail for their symbol, this now-

international movement purports “A firm defense of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of *Fast Life*.”¹⁸

Let me acknowledge that I have honesty issues: *Honest Product*

That is, sometimes, I am too honest.

When a friend tells me she thinks she’s fat, I tell her I think she’s a beached whale. It’s a cruel product of being raised a sarcastic Jew. My thesis project, above all, is a product of this honesty. But a product is only as honest as the making process itself. So let me honestly start at the beginning of the making ...

When I proposed to do a thesis, I wanted to experiment with stop-motion technology with the desire to understand what this kind of technology is and does ontologically, conceptually, physically and so forth. My choice of food objects was an arbitrary one as I literally looked at a list of objects I found visually intriguing, and realized food objects were most prevalent. The specific food objects-pumpkins, coffee, corn (popcorn), spaghetti, and cereal- arose out of their popular consumption in the American diet and out of the aspect of play inherent in these objects already. We carve pumpkins, we drink espresso art, we get games and characters with cereal, we twirl and throw spaghetti, we eat popcorn watching movies... These food objects are associated with fun. I like fun; it all seemed appropriate. But what happened when I stepped into the role of the artist and began to really look at these objects-not just look, but *touch* these objects out of the “food-for-consumption” context? It was in this kind of looking process that I began to really see. Food is an odd object. It comes in so many shapes, sizes, textures, colors. Food is one of the first objects our bodies come in contact with, whether it be our mother’s milk or puréed pumpkin

¹⁸ Portinari, Folco. “Slow Food Manifesto”

smoosh. It is the only object, besides a possible *other body*, that has been *inside* of our body on a regular basis. Food provides and cultivates our life force. Food is the essence of the human body...

But processed food is *strange*. This object is a conglomeration of so many parts, be it synthetic or not. The making process of these objects is a whole other story-the refining, diluting, injecting, distilling, but this making process has been so concealed from me (and most Americans) that I have no idea how any of these objects are *actually* made. These foods do not just grow from trees like money, they grow from machines. It is strange I chose food objects that were mostly all of processed nature, but perhaps this allowed me look at them *objectively*. It is stranger still how much their making process informed me of a certain essence...

Monteith McCollum's film *Hybrid* illustrates the life and career of Milford Beeghly, the man whose mission was to spread the hybrid corn seed across the Midwest. Beeghly produced his own commercials playing upon the values and attitudes of mid-century American farmers, in an attempt to allay their fears and apprehensions of this "unnatural" seed. McCollum, Beeghly's grandson in fact, paints an exquisite, harrowing, and bizarre portrait of this man: stranger to his family, philosopher of the land, and dreamer of peace and prosperity. His illustration of corn itself is both beautiful and strange as he inserts stop-motion sequences of the corn object, spinning, dancing, popping kernels, all situated in a rundown dusty farm warehouse, riddled with metal bits and broken industry. Corn becomes this mutated object, thanks to Beeghly and his company, and the depiction via stop-motion form. The viewer in turn has the knowledge of the mass industry that is to come, this cash crop that will blanket the nation. McCollum's project through aesthetics and form (not-so) subtlety evokes the essence of this strange object, the mechanical energy of mutation, the extraordinary abnormality of the industrialized food object.



Kernels, bolts, and corn in *Hybrid*, 2000

When I began to consider the kinds of motions I could use, I thought in terms of association. When I think of spaghetti I think of Italians, homemaking, sharing, twirling, and snakes. When I think of coffee I think of Italians (a lot it seems...), community, philosophy, and drugs. It went like this for each object. Within the storyboarding process I focused around the literal transformations of the object's form. How can corn turn into popcorn? How does milk change the Fruit Loop? And when I actually began photographing, I focused on highlighting texture and form. The slimy tangled mass of spaghetti, the bodacious bod of a corn husk.

Let me acknowledge that it all led to a very strange presentation of food: *Unhomely Food*. In that, it depicts the Unhomely, or Uncanny side of Food.

The Uncanny sentiment is a strange one, since we do not articulate it much. And those who try to talk about it are often stuck in their words...Recall Sigmund Freud's most convoluted,

tongue-tied piece in defining the originating word *Unheimlich* in relation to *Heimlich*.

Perception of the *Unheimlich* is a feeling seen, heard, and then felt. It is a feeling tied to the body, that often makes you cringe. Not because something's scary or disgusting, but because it is so strange.

Heimlich: belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly

The *Unheimlich* then is linguistically in opposition to the prescriptions of *Heimlich*. That said the use of the linguistic prefix “un” still necessitates the allusion to the base word, visually, audibly. This prefix can be understood as a moment of negation, or as a reversative, where the sense of re-establishing a prior state is evoked. Unabashedly unacademic, unkempt. With *Unheimlich*, I cannot speak to the socially accepted meaning really of the ‘un’ affix, but to me individually, it presents more of a sense of erasure than reversal. I see an image of the compound word as an image for the signified base word with a cross over it. As per consequence, the image of the signified base word is a level below/under/behind the image of the signified affixed word. Thus the sign of the affixed word is at the surface-level, denying the sign of the base word. For Freud: “Uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.”¹⁹ Repression is a strong word, and wrapped up in too much, “Freud-ness,” but semiotically speaking, the sign of the affixed word visually situates the base word in a repressed level, leading to both its denial and incorporation within the definition.

But I digress, let's talk about our feelings because it was the Uncanny response that surrounded my interaction with these food objects and it is the Uncanny response I hope to invoke in perspective perceivers. I am anxious, I am nervous, I am kind of disgusted, and I am

¹⁹ Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*.

most of all worried about the food we eat. The processed food object to me is Uncanny to begin with, for it is an object of the home, yet produced by machines. It is an object associated with the hands of a body, the cook, the mother, but made by the steel claws of technology. It is an object allied with unprocessed wholesome foods (in that I purchase and eat a bag of grapes just the same as a bag of Doritos), while it is everything but. It is an object or made of objects that existed once, but we could care less about this fact.

I want food to exist again. I want to acknowledge the spirit food once had and the spirit food brings.

The charm of stop-motion is inherently steeped in the Uncanny effect for it plays with a “world-view that precludes certain phenomena from the arena of empirical experience.” “The Uncanny effect is an emotional or psychical response to the compelling perception of phenomena that have been so barred,”²⁰ through our world of rules and expectations. Seeing the static objects of ‘reality’ animated without the appearance of an agent or cause defies our phenomenal expectations as phenomenological beings. The Uncanny sentiment is strange because it is a feeling to be *figured out*. The perception is one that defies factual knowledge, presenting a phenomenological experience unknown, so the consequent response is one not wholly understood by body or mind. But maybe this response derives from our second brain...As Michael Gershon, chairman of the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology at New York–Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center explains: the gut is “equipped with its own reflexes and senses, the second brain can control gut behavior independently of the

²⁰ thank you Dr. Mueller for finally articulating this clearly in *Synthetic Cinema*

brain.”²¹ The Uncanny response is not tears or laughter or fright. It is a response of something weird, from *down there*. If our bodies are unsure of the reaction, so too are our minds. If the mind dwells on the strangeness of the response however, it can figure out perhaps why it all is so strange...

Let me acknowledge the difference, the successes, and the failures of my videos: *My Work and Me*

In that, the Uncanny effect of my videos is not as successful as I desired.



A feather to be plucked in *Black Swan*, 2010

The Uncanny of my videos are not really based in a world-view, besides that of reality. I do not think the effect is as evocative as something like the writhing alien arm of *District 9*, the pluck of the feather from Natalie Portman’s back in *Black Swan* or all of whatever *Videodrome* was... These are visceral moments so wrapped up in the animal and the insides of the body, the parts of ourselves we hide, deny, are anxious about, that when we perceive these things exposed,

²¹ Hadhazy, Adam. “Think Twice: How the Gut’s ‘Second Brain’ Influences Mood and Well-Being” www.scientificamerican.com. Scientific American

we are forced to *figure out* how and why we feel about it all. Why does my gut churn? Why does my mouth gape? Why do I find these cinematic moments as crucial sources of metaphysical discourse for the contemporary identity.

These moments are successfully evocative because they happen to characters within narrative structures. Denying my videos of characters was a mistake because characters help us as viewers find identity mirrors; it is through character that we shape our psychology. I am cued to react a certain way by looking at the character's reaction. Even in Švankmajer's *Darkness Light Darkness*, the tongue that inches across the floor is Uncanny to me not just because of its appearance, but because it is then acted upon and included in the narrative structure of 'making the human.' My videos lack structure and a character's body, therefore they lack a certain point of psychological visual connection for the viewer himself.



A tongue to be mouthed in *Darkness Light Darkness*, 1989

On a similar note, I think my choice not to do sound design led to a deficiency critical to the Uncanny effect. Without a corresponding sound to motion, the object does not exist in the

diegesis. I denied my objects weight. The interaction between the object and the surface is effect-
less, its textures seen, but not heard, therefore not fully felt. I cannot feel the whole body of my
objects. But then again, it is not what *I* feel that matters, it is what *you* feel that does.

So why did I choose not to do sound design? To be perfectly honest, as this entire project
is trying to be, I found the sound effects distracting. I so focused on syncing the motion with the
music, that the project became paired with the nondiegetic level. And I liked the syncopation; it
brought the visuals to life, I began to finally enjoy watching my project... But when I added the
sound effects I felt dishonest in doing so, It was no longer whimsical, but kind of cruel. My
perspectives on the food objects were glaringly clear as I matched Fruit Loops with metal chinks,
rolling pasta with the scurry of critters' legs. Perhaps my dislike was an issue of poor design or
apathetic indiscipline, but perhaps it was something else, something related to the "quiet material
pleasure" of it all...

I honestly do not think my videos are very "good" (in structure and aesthetics). I think
there are successful moments of beauty and humor and strangeness, but overall I think I was
trying too hard. In that, I was too wrapped up in a conscious process that I could not let myself
go, or trust myself, or something cliché like that. Most successful moments in my opinion are
ones that were not storyboarded, instead the products of experimentation and improvisation. The
coffee throw up, the close-ups of tangled spaghetti, the threading of spaghetti through the
colander, the loops sliding on the spoons' backs, these were my favorite. But my visual
perception of the videos is also skewed by the *fact*-based knowledge of my own making process.

I honestly do think, however that my work is good (in effort and intent). It was a labor of
time by my hand, my body, and my mind. It is this kind of labor that has been so denied from me
in not only the digital world, but in the realm of academia, that it is no wonder why I have been

so enthusiastic to discover the separate, but related joys of cooking and of filmmaking. Doing these stop-motions, I have never felt so much like a woman and like a kid, an efficient machine and an achy tired human, all at the same time. I was finally allowed to think and discover through my touch again, finding such meaning and value to this kind of repetitive and (since I worked in the house) domestic labor, balanced by the playfulness of it all. I feel that I have made a product with my own two hands that so literally is of my body, my energy, and my essence, that it will surely be perceived as such.

Let me acknowledge that I am not an artist, I am not a filmmaker, nor philosopher, nor poet, nor someone else's puppet.

That is, I am only me who thinks she is too young to be anything at all, besides an embodied perceiver of this 'so called dream that one calls human life'.

But when I grow up, I want to be an alchemist.

Alchemy: the medieval forerunner of chemistry, based on the supposed transformation of matter. It was concerned particularly with attempts to convert base metals into gold or to find a universal elixir. a seemingly magical process of transformation, creation, or combination.

Two years ago, I became quite interested by the concept of alchemy. Alchemy as a philosophy is entrenched in the human capacity to *figure out* the laws of nature in pursuit of redemption, immortality, and the transformation of the human soul. If man bases his knowledge in the laws of nature, he then can become lawmaker. Initially exposed to Alchemy through the Jungian lens of Eastern Thought, specifically within *The Secret of The Golden Flower*. Alchemical symbolism was essential in understanding the internal flow of energy within

meditative practices to achieve the “Golden Flower” of immortality, akin to the Western symbol for the elixir of life, or the Philosopher’s Stone. Then, moving to Prague for three months, I again encountered Alchemy- its history contained on the Golden Road by the Prague Castle, and more importantly through the animation work of Jan Švankmajer.



Re-appropriated object heads in *Dimensions of Dialogue*, 1982

Švankmajer’s stop-motion videos are masterpieces of film, sculpture, and poetry. He infuses objects of the everyday with Uncanny tactility and quirky personality. The assembled objects of human form as in *Dimensions of Dialogue* and *Flora* are gorgeous visual metaphors for the human and his nature, the conglomeration of parts that form the whole body, and the inevitable deconstruction and decomposition of this whole. Yet, even when the body is destroyed, potential energy lingers. Roger Cardinal refers to Švankmajer’s creations as a manifestation of “dark alchemy”

“Even as people or objects decompose and lose their identity, the energy they embody does not vanish, but is redistributed [...] Matter such as mud and clay is capable of

transcending inertia, so that, ultimately, nothing in the world can really be written off as dead”²²

Objects are infused with energy by a certain Alchemical process during the interaction with the living. It is a transformation that only requires the power of the imagination to achieve, like playing with doll. The reordering of objects and the movement attained through the technique of stop-motion renders these once inanimate objects animate. They are live bodies within the language of Cinema.

Objects are an extension of the people and the products of our culture. We surround ourselves with and place significant meaning upon objects, especially in film for anything can become critically important when in close-up. But when filmmakers like Švankmajer, Quay Brothers, McCullum, etc. choose to re-appropriate the objects of society to transmute their forms and meanings, they becomes something exquisite: the living dead. It demands the emphasis on imagination; it looks at the potential in parts as a whole; the potential after life of these dead objects, if the right kind of energy is applied.

These animated worlds are just tinier, which is appealing to me because 1) I am tinier than most. 2) Because I can now look at the potential energy in all the objects around me. I can move *anything* in this world! That can fit in my two hands that is. It is a reassuring feeling-knowing I can escape the confines of reality by imagining it so, instead of turning to watch more movies. But even better, is knowing that I can allow others to escape for a moment, however brief, and share and delight in this freedom. Filmmaker Andrew Stanton (*WALL-E*, *Toy Story*) affirms this feeling as wonder, declaring there is “no greater ability than the gift of another human being than to give you that feeling. To hold them still for just a brief moment in their day and have them surrender to wonder. When it's tapped, the affirmation of being alive reaches you

²² Cardinal, Roger. “Thinking Through Things,” in *Dark Alchemy*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1955

almost to a cellular level.”²³ To wonder, is to be free as human, to be freed from the temporal-spatial conditions of the present, acknowledging there are no such conditions within the realm of imagination.

3) Stop-motion technique is an animation that makes me feel so distinctly human. To make and watch the living dead scurry along, I recognize myself. The work it is to move about this world, while knowing that I too will become just another dead object. I too am just an assemblage of parts and objects that scurries around, touching *everything* in sight before I am no longer.

Sobchack shares my enthusiasm, or I hers, regarding this sort of animation: It is an “animation that speaks to its (and our) existence, animation that, as Annmarie Jonson suggests, ‘bridges the threshold between, reveals, the compossibility or undecidability of, both vivification and deanimation, life and death, the animate and inanimate.’”²⁴

The creation and perception of stop-motion animation offers the metaphysical question of possibility. The animator has the power to re-appropriate the physical dead objects of the real world and recreate them into something so much more. The choice in motion stems from re-imaginative play on the object’s form, use, and essence. The envelope can have the power to munch and deform thimbles. The metal pins can dance across maps. The spaghetti can come alive out of the metal colander. The language of illusion is shared but deconstructed as the perceiver enjoys the imaginative existence of the living dead, but is conscious of its construction and difference. It is an acknowledgment of difference, acknowledging the deadness or inanimateness of the objects, but desiring their life through animation. This kind of animation, thought, touch, possibility, and creation is what I am most drawn to and it is this kind of skill that I know I need to build to become an alchemist.

²³ TED Talk, Andrew Stanton: “The clues to a great story”

²⁴ Sobchack, Vivian "Animation and automation, or, the incredible effortless of being". Screen 50:4 (Winter 2009).

Let me acknowledge that by looking at food, I figured something out: *A Conclusion*

That is, when I imposed this alchemical filmic technique upon the food object out of the “food-for consumption” context, I figured out that our interaction with food within the “food-for consumption” context is another form of Alchemy.

Food is a dead object. Though it was alive once, it is now merely form and texture. Food is the only object our bodies digest, and our life literally depends on it. Food preparation takes natural elements of the world and re-appropriates them as “food for consumption.” The digestion process breaks down these materials and transforms them into the body mass, while dispelling the unwanted deconstructed elements as waste. Food gives us life, and there is a difference between the life we get from one food and a life we get from another. As philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer asserts, as does everybody everywhere: “We are what we eat.” Words of fact? Words of wisdom.

The interaction with food is an overlooked Alchemy that we all engage in. It is a matter of joining the knowledge of the mind and the knowledge of the gut, to transmute a common substance into something of great value, an elixir of life. The general passive attitude towards food, allowing machines to do the work for us, not only denies us the “quiet material pleasure” in touching food, but the power to give each other life, to ensure a healthy body and mind of both me and you. We must join the knowledge of both our brains and guts, and reinstate all six of our senses to fully perceive the crucial power of the food object, the object that is like no other because it transcends the difference between bodies, *the Other* becoming *one*.

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