

Johan Grimonprez

Text by Leigh Markopoulos

When flying difficult sorties and under poor weather conditions, pilots can be confused (disoriented) about which way they are heading (up or down), and whether the ground is below their feet or above their head! For example, military pilots are known to suffer from visual illusions during night flying such as mistaking discrete ground lights for the stars and consequently flying inverted (upside down).

<http://www.defence.pk/forums/india-defence/4346-lca-news-discussions-14.html>

Method of this work: literary montage. I have nothing to say only to show. Walter Benjamin

MONTAGE: noun

1 a: the act or photographic process of combining several distinct pictures so that they often blend with or into each other to produce a composite picture which may or may not appear to be made up of separate pictures **b:** a picture made by montage **2:** an artistic composition made by combining heterogeneous elements **3 a:** a style of film editing in which contrasting shots or sequences are juxtaposed for the purpose of suggesting a total idea or impression **b:** an impressionistic sequence of images linked usu. by dissolves or superimpositions and introduced into a film or television program to develop a single theme, suggest a state of mind, or bridge a time lapse [...] **6 a:** a literary technique in which heterogeneous images, themes, or fragments of ideas are juxtaposed to produce a single total effect. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*

With the invention of photography, painting had to redefine itself. Now, with the manifestation of the web, television has to reinvent itself. Every medium absorbs the other... It's an ongoing dialogue, and mediums cross-fertilize each other. Johan Grimonprez

The fact is that all writers create their precursors. Their work modifies our conception of the past, just as it is bound to modify the future. Jorge Luis Borges

The paperback is very interesting but I find it will never replace the hardcover book—it makes a very poor doorstep. Alfred Hitchcock

Johan Grimonprez's critically acclaimed films and video installations dance on the border of art and cinema, documentary and fiction, practice and theory. Mixing reality and fiction in an innovative fashion and presenting history as a construct readily open to manipulation, Grimonprez asks us every so often to pause, do a double take, and to reconsider our assumptions. Acting as a media archeologist and suggesting new narratives through which to tell our histories, the artist emphasizes the co-existence of a multiplicity of realities. http://www.class.uh.edu/blaffer/exhibit_johan_grimonprez.html

A media artist who turns media into art (and makes art about media) Grimonprez's career is a double take—jumping from the cinema to the art gallery and back—and his films inspire double takes in the viewer. Mark Peranson, "If You Meet Your Double, You Should Kill Him: Johan Grimonprez on Double Take," <http://www.cinema-scope.com>

Sometimes people ask me are you an artist or are you a television maker or a film-maker. I would say that's a secondary question... For me what's crucial is telling stories—the rest is just a toolbox. Johan Grimonprez

He works and reworks certain tropes, drawn from the worlds of film, fiction and—crucially—television, forcing them to play themselves out in the over-determined and over-mediated arena of Western political history. *It's a Poor Sort of Memory That Only Works Backwards*, exhibition catalog, (Houston: University of Houston Press, 2010), foreword.

Grimonprez takes pleasure in allusion, showing how the mind strives to make sense out of coincidence—the mode of the paranoid, who is often the most grounded because of a constant questioning and reevaluation of “reality.” He composes a formal, visual poetry that nods to YouTube, with leaps across times and spaces, a poetry that can only be finished by the viewer upon the realization ... that the commoditization of fear for political gain is happening again, only the Other has changed. For it is true that history is written to make sense of the present and, also, as De Lillo wrote, “Nothing happens until it is consumed.” Mark Peranson, “If You Meet Your Double, You Should Kill Him: Johan Grimonprez on Double Take,” <http://www.cinema-scope.com>

The world is so awash in images that we related to 9/11 through images we had already projected out in to the world. In a sense, fiction came back to haunt us as reality... I think reality is very much there, but it's co-constructed: Fictions are made into reality and back and forth. “Johan Grimonprez Talks about *DoubleTake*, 2009,” Artforum, April 2009.

SYNOPSIS: Trickery. Deceit. Magic. In Orson Welles’s free-form documentary *F for Fake*, the legendary filmmaker (and self-described charlatan) gleefully engages the central preoccupation of his career—the tenuous line between truth and illusion, art and lies. Beginning with portraits of world-renowned art forger Elmyr de Hory and his equally devious biographer, Clifford Irving, Welles embarks on a dizzying cinematic journey that simultaneously exposes and revels in fakery and fakers of all stripes—not the least of whom is Welles himself. Charming and inventive, *F for Fake* is an inspired prank and a searching examination of the essential duplicity of cinema. <http://www.criterion.com/films/908-f-for-fake>

...the real must assert itself against its image to prevent its own defeat in an ongoing battle between fiction and reality... The interplay between fiction and reality has long been central to Grimonprez’s practice; it already characterized his 1997 film essay *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, which conjoined archival footage of plane hijackings with excerpts from Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* and *Mao II*, and became notorious for its uncanny preemption of some of the shrewder theorizations of 9/11. *Double Take*... clearly speaks to the origins of our current predicament, too, in which the symbiosis of the fictional and the actual has become increasingly difficult to parse. Alexander Scrimgeour, “Johan Grimonprez Talks about *DoubleTake*, 2009,” Artforum, April 2009.

Grimonprez’s work restructures reality through a series of repeating metaphors. *It’s a Poor Sort of Memory That Only Works Backwards*, exhibition catalog, (Houston: University of Houston Press, 2010), foreword.

Repetition makes reality. Johan Grimonprez

The work Youtube me and I tube you has two components... an interactive component and a selection of clips that I got from youtube and the purpose of that is [to underline the] inter-textuality between the history of certain things. It’s very much historical as well in that it looks in retrospect at how the very act of watching television has changed by means of the remote control ... and the very act of watching television has changed in general the way we relate to the image Television has been redefined by the net. The younger generation doesn’t watch television. Johan Grimonprez

Dedicated to the first encounter between western explorers and highland villagers on New Guinea, Grimonprez’s earliest film *Kobarweng or Where is Your Helicopter?* (1992), and the related five-channel projection *It will be all right if you come again, only next time, don’t bring any gear, except a tea kettle* (1994/2003) ..., offer a meditation on post-colonial anthropological discourse as one of poetic misrepresentation of the respective “other.”

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Any life is made up of a single moment, the moment in which a man finds out, once and for all, who he is. Jorge Luis Borges

THE END

Written for the ltd los angeles exhibition *HE MISTOOK THE GROUNDLIGHTS FOR STARS AND ASKED WHY THE AIRPLANE WAS FLYING UPSIDE DOWN* (12 February - 23 March 2011)