

A note for a symposium on new media at Montreal's Festival des nouveaux cinémas, October 2000 medias

SEQ CHAPTER \h \r 1Fascinated By the Web? How to get over it . . .

Immersion in the phantasmagoria of a delirium-inducing ocean of sights and sounds is the condition that culture industries has imposed upon; they have even established that state of semi-consciousness as normative. The delirium induced by this immersion in the phantasmagoria of sights and sounds is responsible for the impression that reality has ephemerally turned into simulation.

But reality has not vanished—nor will it. It simply mutates, and this process of mutation is incessant. Reality is ever re-produced, for reality is never anything more than the product of the technique of a given epoch. Reality is always being re-invented: humans transform themselves and nature through activity—this is something that always has been, is, and always will be. What Baudrillard believes to be the substitution of a signifying system for reality is not all that—it is merely the replacement of the reality that is the product of one system of technique with another reality that is the product of another.

How can we rescue ourselves from immersion in the phantasmagoric? The phantasmagoric operates by creating the impression that it is a seamless unity. Our art must overcome that impression. This demands that art become physical—that we acknowledge that artworks are machines for affecting the bodies of those whom they address. Immersion in the phantasmagoria of sounds and images has reduced our capacity for direct sensory—and sensuous—experience. We must emphasize the physicality of the making and reception of artwork. That is to say, we must emphasize the body's role in making and experiencing art. Art—*ars*, making—should teach us about the body's way of knowing. The body learns first through activity, not through concepts.

Our art must distort and fragment all with which it comes into contact: it must do all that it can to damage the wholeness of a work of art, to tear apart the seamless unity that is the staple form of the entertainment “arts,” that seamless form that absorbs our being and leaves us inert and unproductive. Further, it must make the mediation of the apparatus explicit, for the occultation of the apparatus figures among the phenomena that has led to erroneous thinking about the disappearance of reality. More, we must use every extreme means for restoring our connection to our bodies. The first step towards this end is to make the body palpable. The drumming and dance of the Ewe and Yoruba peoples of West Africa, the Santería drumming and dancing of Cuba, Vodun drumming and dancing of Haiti can engender weeping, dancing, and fits. These are all intense, physical responses to art. “Re-connect poetry to the body”—that must be our slogan.

We must intensify the image. We can do this by steering it towards immediate perception. Immediate perception, too, is attentive to what is, to the gift of the given. Thus, it combats the devaluation of the everyday realm. A cinema of immediate perception is opposed to the world of the spectacle, to the devaluation of the real world of actual, everyday pleasure through spectacle.

Spontaneity, too, intensifies the image. Spontaneity blasts open the prison-house of false consciousness, the alienated *méconnaissance* of the *société du spectacle*, consciousness which turns the subject against his or her real interests. It blasts apart the sedimentation of the self in the petrified projections of the spectacle, and carries us away in the *dérive*.

