

Film is not an accurate depiction of reality. And, if defined as the world's modern art form, it absolutely should not be. Art could not exist if it were bound in any way to reality. Film has succeeded on many levels by freeing itself of the bounds of reality. However, there is infinite territory left to explore, and with the tools at filmmakers' hands, film has the potential to thrive as a true, emotional art form without depending on reality to be comprehended by the audience. To achieve this, filmmakers must most importantly focus on décor, including the elements of setting and object placement. It is décor that most separates film from reality and most powerfully displays the emotional energy film can wield when it breaks free of reality.

The placement, presentation and individuality of objects in films endow these objects with emotional purpose and remove the audience from reality. This applies to all objects, both realistic and non-realistic. In fact, it is often the everyday objects an audience is accustomed to that can be most powerfully transformed into unreal elements by their placement in film. In his article "On Décor," Louis Aragon states, "The elements of the décor which surround Charlie [Chaplin]'s persona participate intimately in the action: nothing is useless there and nothing indispensable. The décor of Charlie's very vision of the world... haunts the hero to such an extent that by an inversion of values each inanimate object becomes a living thing for him" (53). Here, Aragon analyzes the

importance of objects in film; when filmmakers take care to ensure that each object has a role unto itself, and is almost its own breed of actor, the film can turn everyday objects into metaphors for life and can get a film's message across more thoroughly. By making objects take on a grander, more emotional and more dreamlike state, it rids film of being realistic. Unlike the real world, the setting of objects in movies is often parallel and in sync with the characters' emotions. It is just as crucial in eliciting an audience's response as the script or main storyline. This observation is perhaps most obvious in horror and suspense films where weapons or important clues are most often materialized in the form of an everyday object. Yet, their importance is paramount to the solving of the mystery and progress of action. Thus, through film, objects have great importance and become capable of transcending the realistic qualities attributed to them in everyday life.

Once the complete threshold of impact objects can have on a film is realized, the next step in developing film as an art form is to endow décor with a modern sense of beauty. Aragon elaborates on this when he writes, "To endow with a poetic value that which does not yet possess it, to willfully restrict the field of vision so as to intensify expression: these are two properties that help make cinematic décor the perfect setting for modern beauty" (52). Here, Aragon comments on the modern sense of beauty filmmakers have not approached through the real, everyday use of objects. This "modern" sense of beauty today's films lack can be accomplished through taking what are modern, everyday, extremely *realistic* objects and endowing them with poetic and dramatic value. It is necessary to abandon the old and tried aesthetic sense of beauty and search for a deeper meaning in beauty of everyday gritty human life. This is the path film needs to

take in order to flower as an art form, and the manipulation of décor can accomplish this best.

Beyond the placement of literal objects in films, décor can also be manipulated through literal changes in the film itself. That is, literal screen shifts and placement of objects outside the dimension of the movie's setting. Film can inhabit dimensions beyond the walls of the plot of the film, and elicit an emotional response from the audience by manipulating objects and shapes onto the screen itself. Virginia Woolf, in her article entitled "The Movies and Reality," recounts an effective example of this. She writes, "At a performance of *Dr. Caligari* the other day, a shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen... For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous, diseased imagination of the lunatic's brain... The monstrous, quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement, 'I am afraid'" (89). Here, Woolf discusses the intense emotional atmosphere a film can create without beating the audience over the head with clear-cut statements of: this character is evil, a haunted house elicits fear and a sense of doom, or the victim is scared because they are shaking. Film should move beyond these worn methods and use a more surrealistic, abstract approach through the manipulation of the film itself. This can be done using lighting and musical soundtracks, but it is the vibe of the décor in films that most sets the tone and doesn't simply inform the audience how they should feel, but rather makes them feel an emotion through visceral and exciting techniques.

Film need not be so blunt with its visual aspect to elicit understanding and emotion from the audience. As an art form, the placement of characters, objects, décor and clothing can have a visceral, larger-than-life quality to it. People go to the movies to

be removed from reality and enter another zone, one where, though the plot and setting may be realistic enough, the objects and décor take on a grander meaning that separates them from the daily mold of their lives. Woolf elaborates on this idea of our brain's reception to what our eyes see when she writes, "Together they look at the King, the boat, the horse, and the brain sees at once that they have taken on a quality which does not belong to the simple photograph of real life. They have become not more beautiful, in the sense in which pictures are beautiful, but... more real, or real with a different reality from that which we perceive in daily life? ...As we gaze we seem to be removed from the pettiness of actual existence. The horse will not knock us down. The King will not grasp our hands. The wave will not wet our feet" (87). Here, she explores the separation of film from reality; even if films are made up of everyday objects, people, places and things, the art of film is in endowing these objects with poetic value and a purpose. This effectively transforms us and takes us out of our everyday existence, as all art forms are capable of. Thus, film does simply only separate audiences from reality; it can and should open our eyes to an even more real, visceral sense of reality; one outside of our existence and experiences.

Though everyday objects can make everyday life on film become more exciting and visceral, objects and their placement in dream sequences of films can achieve the same effect. If going to the movies in itself is a type of hypnosis and coercion into a dream-like state, the objects in films play a crucial role in developing this dream-like state both in the film and in the audience. Cinema has the power to portray dreams on screen which separates it from all other art forms, especially its closest form, theater. Thus, it is film's responsibility and duty to personify dreams on screen through detailed

and well-reasoned placement of setting, environment and décor. In his article "Sorcery and Cinema," Antonin Artaud expands on this idea. He writes, "If the cinema isn't made to express dreams or everything that in waking life has something in common with dreams, then it has no point. Nothing differentiates it from theater. Yet the cinema, a direct and rapid-fire language, has no need of a certain slow and ponderous logic in order to subsist and prosper" (104). Cinema has the tools to create dream-like action in a literal flash-instant. Film can travel through time and create fantastical landscapes freed of the laws of physics obeyed in real life. Film can create a symbiotic union between the audience's mind and what appears on the screen. To Artaud, this is the direction all art is headed, and film needs to jump on this track, "Because life, what we call life, will become increasingly inseparable from mind" (104). Thus, film's décor and setting have the power to create a dream-like state and this will embolden its role as an art form grander than reality.

Though film can portray extremely realistic and sometimes even historical events, as its ground form and at its core, film is not an accurate depiction of reality. Considering its ability to make almost any object or sequence appear on the screen, it would be an extreme waste of potential to be bounded by reality. After all, we subscribe to all forms of art to reach a higher plane of existence, and it is high time for films to stop recreating reality for us and instead endow us with a higher sense of our true surroundings through a more visceral and real approach. Through the manipulation of décor, film can most powerfully carry out this ability.

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