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Nadia Hironaka & Matthew Suib *The Fall*

by Sabin Bors, January 14, 2015



***The Fall* is a short meditation on the construction of cinematic narrative and homage to Andrei Tarkovsky. The HD video is masked at the lens and projected in a fully-lit gallery space, causing the edges of the projection to bleed into the projection wall.**

The projection was designed for a fully lit space where the lights are gelled or adjusted to match the light quality of the projector. The edges of the projection are masked at the lens of the projector, so the projection appears feathered at the edges. Originally part of the artists' *Whiteout* exhibition, which also included a lit-gallery projection titled *Whiteout*, this work was created to contemplate on what happens when you take a cinematic image out of the theatre or black box and let the immediate environment play a role in the experience. The birch forest was filmed by the artists with the intent to find a landscape similar to the birch forests that are a motif in Tarkovsky's films. The horse that suddenly appears halfway through the loop is extracted from

600 Washington Square South
Philadelphia PA 19106
tel 215.629.1000 fax 215.629.3868
info@locksgallery.com
www.locksgallery.com

L O C K S G A L L E R Y



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Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* and inserted with a certain degree of editing sleight-of-hand into the forest the artists filmed.

When discussing *Ivan's Childhood* in *Sculpting in Time*, Tarkovsky says: "I felt all the time that for the film to be a success the texture of the scenery and the landscapes must fill me with definite memories and poetic associations. Now, more than twenty years later, I am firmly convinced of one thing (not that it can be analysed): that if an author is moved by the landscape chosen, if it brings back memories to him and suggests associations, even subjective ones, then this will in turn affect the audience with particular excitement. Episodes redolent of the author's own mood include the birch wood, the camouflage of birch branches on the first aid post, and the landscape in the background of the last dream and the flooded dead forest." It is this quality, to bring forth subjective associations, that the artists unveil through the motion of the camera; along with it, the viewer can observe the dislocation of the cinematic image within a different environment, and thus meditate on the very nature of space and time, as well as the camouflaging movement of the camera. Nadia Hironaka and Matthew Suib keep several of Tarkovsky's motifs: the panning circular sequence, the absorbing nature, the recurring forest images and long takes which mark the apparent absence of action are all an expression of the relation between the viewer and the enshrouding time. This narrativity of the emptiness demands the viewer to substitute it with subjective meaning and presence. Not lastly, by masking the edges of the projection, the artists create a videographic sculpture in space and time, since the work incites to both a cartographic



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and a chronological meditation that presents the viewer with an image of duration. The temporal flow and the cinematographic sequences that articulate the motion of viewing testify to the way time resists the occupation of space. This 'camouflaging' motion demands the viewers to adapt their viewing visually and materially to the surrounding projection of time, as if approximating its spatial expression; for space is temporal while time is spatial.

In *The Fall*, the artists reveal a cinematic time-place expression of our narrative experience and perception through a seemingly hallucinatory landscape, aberrant movements and non-localizable relations underlying a disconnected experience. Like with Tarkovsky, the scene of nature opposes any dramatic action to comprise



filmed matter alone, thus eluding an acting subject. Yet the artists carry the project of presenting the discontinuous nature of cinema further: by masking the edges of the projection, they amplify the discontinuity of the filmic experience and reveal a proto-filmic trace inherent within the cinematic movement. When exploring the oneiric and imaginatory qualities of cinema, the artists transform the very reality of the gallery space and emphasize the artificial framing and construction of viewing. It is almost as if the viewer experiences an argument that creates the inherently spatial expressions which compose, decompose and recompose time, in a spatiotemporal vision that interrupts the cinematographic continuum by creating visual leaps and underlying the aberrations, anomalies, and digressions of the image. Dreams, phantasies, memories, recollections, visions, and the very act of thinking are all marked by spatiotemporal discontinuity. The texture of the image expresses the 'camouflaging' state of matter in the film and the spatialization of time.

Time is imprinted within the image and within seeing through an altering atmospheric and optical state. It is the transitional, unstable and dispersing nature of time the artists explore through this progression of/unto the perceptible. Hironaka and Suib have

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used the Tarkovskian long take to stress these spatio-temporal dynamics. The single continuum of the long take purposely stretches the monotonous, mundane experience and provides an alternative mode of perceiving reality. Once the clearly outlined spatial markers are removed, time is exposed as a fleeting phenomenon, observable in the horse's movement. As an agent of space, movement ceases to be purely narrative to reveal its continuous presence in time. What the viewer experiences is an instant of life in its singularity that reveals a shift of accent from narrative to durational aesthetics. While the long take tends to be monotonous, the elevation of the temporal plane is achieved through spatial manipulation: the camera provides a multiplicity of views and identifies with the physicality of space.

Do Nadia Hironaka and Matthew Suib create a spatial continuity by masking the edges of the projection, or does the artists' gesture reveal a discontinuous space that yet captures the temporal continuity? The projection wall does not 'contain' the projected film, it does not frame the views, but becomes a materialization of space itself. The viewer observes the sweeping movement without any motor effort – her/his glance occupies a privileged, unique space. The gallery space undergoes a conceptual modification while time emerges as a renewed phenomenon, since the filmic matter that imprints space becomes a projected texture of time. Since time in any film is subjective, the work creates a montage that is not based on any narrative logic, but the logic of subjective experience and perception. Presence is obscured and masks an observer of the temporal event: like Rublev caught within an epic narrative with no definitive focus, the viewer her/himself remains 'anonymous.'

[Installation views at Locks Gallery, Philadelphia. The Fall is currently in the permanent collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Photo by Joseph Hu.]

