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Color of Reality

Sarah Elgart · Thursday, October 20th, 2016

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In the past several years, the abundance of senseless and often seemingly random acts of violence against innocent individuals has rocked the world. Whether its targeted terrorism (homegrown or otherwise) against specific groups identified by country, ethnicity, religion, or sexual preference, or the seemingly unending incidents of police fatalities against people of color, these acts of violence have reverberated to affect the collective universal consciousness in ways that we can perhaps only begin to understand right now. And as Black Lives Matter necessarily picks up momentum as a movement, we in this country need to take stock. As such, this makes the moments when these horrific events become the impetus, content, and/or context for creative works all the more powerful, especially when the works themselves are beautifully realized.

John Boogz has at it in “Color of Reality”

One such example is **Color of Reality.** This surprisingly imaginative short film combining the prodigious talents in movement of Lil Buck and Jon Boogz, and those in painting of Alexa Meade, is unexpected and moving. Alexa Meade’s abilities as a painter who merges human subjects with their backgrounds by painting them both to look as if they are a two dimensional canvas are already as well recognized as Lil Buck’s are in Jookin’.

As this compelling short opens, the two dancers – Buck & Boogz – are painted impressionistically to blend in with the couch they sit on, the room they are sitting in, and the exterior of the television that switches between news channels recounting yet another senseless act of violence by police against a black teenager. Only the live news footage on the television and the open eyes of the young men belie the fact that they are not part of a flat canvas. When they move outside into the un-painted streets of what looks to be downtown Los Angeles and begin passing by and/or interacting with un-painted pedestrians, that’s when it becomes really surreal and astonishing. Their movement, which already seems to be from another dimension, along with their colorful, decorated, aspects against that of the real world, set them apart. As we get to the end of the short (no spoilers here), what occurs is translated once again in paint, as if almost to point out the role of the artist to interpret reality.

Lil Buck and an unconscious passerby in “Color of Reality”

While some of the interactions seem too set up, the camera angles and editing in **Color of Reality** are subtle and wonderful, highlighting relatively small yet profound moments. For example, when

Lil Buck, whose face alone is incredibly emotive, stops by a pedestrian so submerged in his phone that he does not even see the colorful figure, or just a shot of the two men walking down the street with the urban landscape and graffitied walls in the background. The form mixed with the content and context of this short are a quiet plea — asking us to look up and begin to **SEE** the world as it is.

Jon Boogz & Lil Buck watch the unfolding reality around them

As a dance maker myself I find that responding to these troubling world events in my work is an unavoidable necessity. Even as I begin a work perhaps not knowing where I am going, I have found myself grappling with this frightening and inexplicable violence. Amidst all the pre-election rhetoric and madness, to see it represented here so simply, wordlessly, and eloquently in **Color of Reality**, I find incredibly refreshing.

Enjoy.

https://youtu.be/Dq1tm5TqYsg

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