

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Reality is a Flip-Cam

Adam Leipzig · Wednesday, March 9th, 2011

Video posts coming out of the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa give us a new visual language to depict “on the ground reality,” and I suspect this language will infiltrate other media and artists’ work in the coming decade.

One hundred years ago Expressionist/Futurist painters used mechanical imagery and multiple views of objects in motion to depict reality, as Marcel Duchamp’s *Nu descendant un escalier n° 2*.



Based on the Mideast video imagery, and if we think of these videos as *art*, not reportage, here’s what Reality looks like today.

Reality is storytelling dissected into pieces – very much the way all of us experience our world. While the pieces are disconnected and may be only 30 seconds long, they make sense through a context external to the artwork. There is never a narrative first act. It is assumed the viewer knows the set-up.



In Reality, sometimes there is only a second act, such as the experience of being in a crowd of protesters. Sometimes there is only a third act, as when protesters are assaulted and killed.

Reality’s colors are saturated.

Reality’s image is not stable. The image darts and careens as the camera tries to show us what the artist wants us to notice – now bullets on the ground, now dark smoke in the sky, now a gun waving, now people walking, now cars passing. Because there is no image stabilization, you find yourself moving your eye around the screen to keep one object or person at the center of your focus so you can understand what you’re looking at.



Reality is not widescreen. Its aspect ratio is 4×3 – the aspect ratio of a cell phone screen – and sometimes it has a slow frame-rate, so you become aware of its video quality. Looking at this reality is like watching animation without in-betweens.

Reality is seen through a tiny eye, about the size of a human eye, and you can tell it is tiny because

of the way it moves. Reality moves like a flip-cam. Sometimes reality is seen from hip level, or peering around corner or down from balconies.

Because life is dangerous, Reality only observes from places the artist can be safe.

(Click on each of the still images to see the new visual aesthetic for Reality.)

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