

AMANDA DAWN CHRISTIE / Return to Spectacle: A Cinemanifesto

In these days of torrented movies and televisual dreams streaming from handheld devices, this is a call for insurrection of the mass media; a call for the resurrection of cinema, which if not already dead, is certainly dying.

In these last days of cinema where commuters watch National Film Board documentaries on their iPhones between work and home, squinting in the green light of the bus, the tram, or the train, this is a call for return to spectacle.

Yes! To collective viewing and the shared experiences of the larger than life.

Yes! To spilled popcorn and the smell of sweat and suspense from bodies nearby. Yes, to the mingling of taste, smell, image, and sound, and a crowd of strangers all sitting silently complicit in the forward facing seats of the cinema.

Yes! To the sonic expansion and contraction of invisible waves! The acoustics of architecture mingling with decibels, pitch, and timbre to fill the air with a sound that you can feel in your spleen. Compressed audio files played through ear buds or computer speakers have nothing on the resonance of sound in deep spaces; natural echoes and reverberations unique to each room that change depending on the number of bodies in seats.

Yes! To the disruption of silence as strangers shuffle in their seats during quiet and awkward scenes. Yes! To the

secret pleasures and irritations of hearing the growling stomach of your neighbor, loud swallowing, sighing, and shifting.

Yes! To the 24 24 24 three flashes per revolution from the three blade shutter and maltese cross driven intermittent transport rollers of cinematic projectors. Now that this high revolution is giving way to high definition, this unforgiving constant image stream is replacing the flicker flicker flutter of the 24 24 24 slices of cycle. As progressive scan lines are forcing incessant image streams of bright white light to slam against the visual cortex and occipital lobe without respite, who will remember the motor that drives the gear that drives the belt? So lest we forget, we say yes! To the 24 24 24 three-blade shudder of the shutter.

Yes! To organic materials of silver and gelatin dancing in opposition to the rigid grids of pixels and interlaced images. Even the highest of hyper definitions relies on perpendicular lines, insipid horizontals and verticals, the image constrained by x and y; paint and retrace, paint and retrace, paint and retrace.

Yes! To the space between the frames; To the blackness between luminous shapes. For when you watch a film on film, one hour of movie time = $\frac{1}{2}$ hour of cinematic blackness during which your eyes and your mind get the visual equivalent of silence and rests between the frames. And this, this is a call to honour the darkness between the frames. Abandon progressive scan lines in favour of the space and the pause between the light - the space and the pause for subliminal breath and respite.

This is a call to remember the role of the projectionists as simultaneous magicians and technicians of light, working in their sequestered booths behind soundproof glass.

This is a call to honour and preserve the all too fast disappearing vocation of the projectionist who works alone in a darkened room far above the audience plying her art in the dark from behind soundproof glass that reflects the los-angelic images behind her like flickering shadows in Plato's cave - only these are not shadows but inverted images gazing back from the silver screen; the only shadow in these mirrored pictures is that of the projectionist herself, alone and standing next to her machine like a lover or a child. For only she the projectionist will remember the quirks, strengths, and weaknesses of the 24 24 24 three-blade shutter maltese cross intermittent and transport rollers spinning in sync with the pull down claw and registration pins of this intricate machine.

This is a plea to recruit and to train young qualified projectionists. This is a denouncement of the degradation of projection! A denouncement of theatres that relegate projection to one menial task among many others performed by the popcorn vendors and ticket lenders. This is a call for initiation rights of passage and the passing on of esoteric knowledge of the craft and the skill. May our dying projectionists pass their stories and their ways on to the potential next generation as something so much more magical than simply pressing a "go" button. Projection is an art that extends far beyond pressing "play" as it navigates a delicate dance through aspect ratios, lens changes, frame rates, latham loops, platters, reels, and rectifiers.

Finally, this is a call to the return of cinema as spectacle!

Cinema was once so much more than the story on the screen. So much more than torrented movies on a 12" laptops can ever aspire to be. There was a time when going out to the movies meant going out. Out of the house. Out of the bedroom. Off of the couch. Out of the private space and into shared public experiences with promise and potential of spectacle.

Yes! To the return to the spectacle of the cinema!

Yes! To spectacular architecture of the movie palace!

Yes! To cinema as event!

Participating in the return to spectacle requires little effort on your part. Pull on some fine fun formal or funky attire. Book a babysitter, dogwalker, or plant-waterer if need be. Find a movie palace of incredible architecture; or find your nearest independent cinema, film society, or cinematheque. Go watch a movie larger than life in a magnificent space - a space filled with history, richness, smells, and the bodies of strangers! Leave your tiny computer screen home; get out of the sad and sorry solitude of home viewing and torrented movies and trade it in for the spectacle of cinema. Use your cell phone for phone calls, games, and other mobile media intended for tiny screens. Save the movies for magnified and magnificent larger than life.

Let the resurrection of spectacle begin!

Saint John, 2010.