

MODEL FOR STAGE AND SCREEN 1987

Wood/ light, fog machine

Model for Stage and Screen is a projection piece where the viewer becomes the projector. Two discs are suspended in a chamber. Light and fog project out of the lower disc in such a way that eventually the viewer begins to experience a variety of retinal effects, (visions or hallucinations). Leaving the chamber and escaping from these hallucinations you experience another retinal effect, retinal excitation, as you see red on the white walls of the antechamber. It is a work where the spectator has little control over what s/he see.

Jonathan Müller, an early 19th century scientist, found that the nerves of different senses were physiologically distinct. When electricity was applied to different nerves it would generate different sensations: when applied to the optic nerve it produced a sense of light; applied to the skin, it reproduced the sense of touch. Muller also showed that the converse was true: a variety of different causes could produce the same sensation in a given sensory nerve. His experiments described the arbitrary relationship between stimulus and sensation, showing that the body has an innate capacity to misperceive, when all referential illusion is eliminated. Therefore, any coherent system of meaning based on perception through the body's senses is threatened.

I wanted to make a moment in a film where the spectator would suddenly be confronted filmically with the sensations of a real space; that awakening from the dream that is the movie, s/he

would find the theatre of space has continued. While maintaining the diegesis it would also fulfill the desire for narrative's closure. This is the film that leads out of the spectacle and into spectatorship, a promise of action continuing before the gaze. Spectatorship being the incidence in which the gaze, above all else, is privileged - before action, before decision. This suggests two events inseparably linked together, where the desire to look and for the look to continue, crosses the desire for an end and for something of the past to take its place.

The prior event is the insistence of the inception of the gaze of Orpheus as he descends into the underworld and transgresses, by turning back, to look at Eurydice. This look, at a moment of forgetfulness, represents the locus of the gaze as the desire to unveil the mysteries of sexual difference and of death. It is in this moment of loss in the gaze that what was simultaneously once most desired is irretrievably lost. Without thinking, it represents that time in which desire is everything not of the world, but of another world, unknown without access.

This gaze, at the moment of its' giving over to an impetus so strong that it causes Orpheus to forget, is woven into the myth of the narrative as the representation of the inscription of the 'lack' as it passes from the temporal to the permanent, since Eurydice is taken from Orpheus on the wedding night before the final act. This eternal 'lack' speaks metaphorically not of castration,

but of the impossibility of seeing into that world where desire has presented itself. For it is into this darkness that it struggles most to perceive.

The other look, the gaze of Oedipus after he is King, is a difference. Blind eyes that only now see a truth that is beyond interpretation, being able to see, yet not seeing. Oedipus interprets again and again his own story. First of the oracle as told to him; then as a riddle, which he solves; then as a final oracle for which there is no solution. It is in the realisation of the impossibility of a solution that he blinds (castrates) himself, for it is here that he realises whose story must be told. The story of himself as it unfolds 'après coup', as a desire for the story about himself.

So it is that these two moments cross each other, the Orphic moment - the impetus for looking; and the Oedipal - the moment for insight. Yet with each, the gaze has a primacy that cannot contract ordinary experience, hence its metaphoric relationship with myth. This then becomes the logic, not for discourse, but for the ordering of discourse - for the structure of a narrative which cannot be played out.



