

Thinking back on Kensington Gore

After lengthy cosmetic preparations on a man's neck, I take a knife and slowly slice through a built-up area of wax leaving a clean, bloodless cut. A scarcely suppressed "Yuk" invariably escapes the audience. Is this a conscious choice to ignore the visible mechanisms of illusion, to suspend disbelief for the purpose of experiencing, at a distance, the possibility of mutilation? Should we, rather, see the viewer's reactions as deeply ingrained credulity - years of subtly indoctrination passing off the hidden ideologies of TV and high culture as the irrefutable truth? Either way, watching a painstaking but painless simulation of a slit throat is apparently uncomfortable and most people (in England at least) are relieved to laugh at the slapstick that punctuates the spectacle and happily shift into structuralist interpretations of the distancing devices I use: fragmented narrative, alternative modes of storytelling etc. The actual violence, both self-inflicted and as perpetrated on an extremely phallic male neck (not to mention the violence of the editing) much of this has gone undiscussed and my personal motives remain unquestioned.

~~Perhaps that's what I should have expected.~~ After years of insistently pointing to my subjective experience as the personal in "The Personal is Political", I came to seriously consider issues of spectatorship - possibly to give me me me a rest, but equally through a sense that a feminist/journalistic account of my trials and tribulations was becoming peculiarly impersonal. Some more indirect approach might inadvertently reveal deeper mysteries, greater complexities and unexpected insights. A tape dealing with illusionism and spectatorship is an extremely indirect way of cutting someone's throat, and where the personal was previously discussed only in terms of the political, it now disappears under the interest generated by a semi-structuralist sub-plot. Am I disappointed? I'm not sure.

Political/personal, public/private, intellect/instinct, head/heart, these eternal oppositions infiltrate every aspect of human endeavour - social, psychic and

cultural. Where the artist attempts some form of synthesis, the viewer or critic can be relied upon to redraw demarcation^c lines generally by cutting out anything that doesn't fit the category to which the work is being consigned. But the artist her/himself is equally susceptible to the charms of familiar patterns and in "Kensington Gore" among others, I attempt to break old habits and reconcile some of those opposites which alternately produce mechanistic art, predictable, rational and accountable, or a spew of chaotic subjectivity. Around this objective revolve a constellation of formal and political concerns, many private needs, a host of anecdotal, sensory and visual preoccupations and a simple delight in the magic of video which makes my dreams come true, if only for a moment - or two.

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443 wds.