

Uncover – Cover – Discover. From Angel's Spot to the Centre of the World

When a film – the medium that generates fictional truths – resolves the fantasy of the fairy tale, the nightmare or the vision of horror that may be its subject matter, it can instantly reverse the resolution of the fantasy: A boy has a nightmare (extra terrestrial beings, ghosts, murderers, variously mutated monsters), wakes up bathed in sweat, realizes it is only a dream and breathes a sigh of relief. Having calmed down, he turns over on his side to sink back into well-deserved sleep and, in so doing, uncovers some obviously real but obviously supernatural object under the blanket. Is the connection between dream and reality different from the ideas that we construct about the real and the fictional? Evil is real; the evidence is there. The extra terrestrial beings are not figments of the imagination. A real object in the fictional medium of the film substantiates the interconnectedness of reality and dream or fiction. The protagonists have brought the objects along from the realm of the imagination and don't realize it. And because only we moviegoers know it, we shift the level of perception in the film: the "evidence" of the dream world, of the fantastic, spills over into our reality; it is more genuine, more real than the illusion of reality in the film.

Reality has indeed become a complex affair. What, if any, are reliable standards by which to measure it? What is the difference between nature, a house, an object or the pictures of them that are fed to us in the media, the cinema, television? Is reality that which surrounds us and fantasy that which goes on in our minds? When our media-saturated reality has blurred the distinction between mind and matter, when fantasy is no longer confined to the imagination, how do we deal with the sense impressions at the interface between outside and inside, i.e. the point at which we define contact with reality?

The visual arts are what they say they are – visual; they further the visual perception of the paradigms and categories that underlie our concept of reality.

Changing a standpoint, "confusing" the visible and the invisible, embarking on the daring venture of changing perspectives – these are the strategies that allow a new positioning and a new orientation in our approach to reality. Daniela Keiser's work starts here: she displaces our perception of known realities, makes it possible for us to "walk around" in places ordinarily accessible only to the mind, presents fictional sites as reality. Like the objects that fantasy brings to films, her objects, photographs and collages submit "evidence" for further perception of the known. She makes potential realms of reality visible, turns mental spaces into a physical experience. She shifts the position of an ordinary mailbox so that it directs our perception towards a view of a landscape obstructed by a wall, thus making something that is invisible visible. The same thing happens when she allows us access to an alley shut off by a gate and a wall (*Street*). In *Spot* she adds one picture to 25 existing aerial photographs of Ittingen, a former Carthusian monastery, and makes a soft and colourful carpet out of them for us to walk on. *Spot* takes an elevated, but safe vantage point and dovetails with another project proposed by the artist, a "vertigo tower" to be placed on the premises of the Ittingen monastery. It will be so tall that visitors are sure to get dizzy: the conventional panorama platform for tourists becomes a consciousness-changing experience. The familiar vantage point is complemented by an "angel's" vantage point. Up there we could, must, might risk a different kind of observation not only of the "view" but also through modifications of the mental and physical assumptions that we have learned to count-on who can take dizzying heights, who hopes things will change, who dares to look down?

Cinematic devices like zooming, close-ups and panning are elements of this artist's approach that cause both irritating and sensually intoxicating changes in perspective. If we swing very high up or circle around very rapidly, we lose our footing, our sense of orientation, and control over what we call reality. We are in a no man's land, suspended, a blank in space and time that makes a new mix out of the known and the unknown, fantasy and facticity, mind and matter.

Curiosity, a love of research and an adventurous spirit lead to "pictures" in Daniela Keiser's work that demand a commitment both physical and mental. Looking at them once is not enough; repeated viewing is both reassuring and disturbing.

Looking from the sky down at the earth or from the earth up into other skies: *Les Découvreurs* is a group of photographs taken at the Cinéma Geode in Paris, in which the domed ceiling consists of a screen. The photographs show men on hazardous missions fighting the forces of nature, waterfalls, aerial pioneers, sunsets, encounters with bears, storms, idyllic boat rides, roaming herds of buffalo, delightfully swaying palm trees, all the fascination of the universe above and below the water. The photographs could be "real", that is, they could be snapshots of journeys, of experiences, of the photographer's active participation. But the grid of the heavenly dome puts us off. We seem to be in a globe illuminated from within or sitting inside the earth and looking at what is happening on its surface. Meridians define the construction of the dome, creating a constructivist pattern of the world which could reveal another visible realm beyond the one we now see, no matter what the level of reality we are in as we look at it. Do you like to sit in the first row at the movies, too?