The Mise-en-scène of a Decade: Visualizing the 70s

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PREFACE

NATHAN HOLMES

The essays and reflections collected in this issue excavate 1970s visual culture across a number of sites, each investigating how modes of visuality developed within and around the decade resonated in their immediate moment and yet remain tethered to our present. In particular, the contributions here gravitate to genres and tropes that either flourished in the 1970s—from landscape art and digital film effects to *giallo*—or, like the western, horror, or the journalism film, were revisited and renewed. Taken together, these contributions offer ranging considerations about how visual concepts germinate, multiply, survive, and transform, and how they might be seen differently when turned in the light of alternative historical coordinates.

Analyzing the proliferation of point-of-view cinematography in 1970s horror, Adam Hart pivots from the theories of identification that have pervaded the discourse of slasher films. Instead he argues for the uncanny, subjectively destabilizing effects of point-of-view as a mode of spectatorial address, contrasting it with the surveillance aesthetic found in recent found-footage horror.

In "Predictive Landscapes," K.R. Cornett considers the relation between American landscape, the western, and the road film. Examining Monte Hellman's *The Shooting* (1966) and Bob Rafelson's *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), she traces a mode of citation and subversion that allowed both films to produce a visual mediation on America's open spatiality.

Colin Williamson considers a different variation on the western in "An Escape into Reality: Special Effects and the Haunting Optics of *Westworld* (1973)," drawing attention to the way the sci-fi western's digital effects can be seen as figures for the anxiety and imagination surrounding both computer technology and emerging contexts of geopolitical volatility. The equally volatile, crisis-ridden world of the 21st century, Williamson points out, makes HBO's resurrection of the world of *Westworld* apposite, even if the expansive technological anxieties of the present seem to demand more elaborate narrative images.

The landscape of the American west and the land artists who took it as their object form the basis of Kaitlin Pomerantz's reflection piece. Wandering around Robert Smithon's *Spiral Jetty* (1968) and Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969-70) provokes Pomerantz to consider how the artist's assumptions about natural history have fared

as questions of anthropogenic environmental change have intensified.

Italian *gialli* films have likewise been associated with contextual, if more localized, social anxieties. Seb Roberts argues, however, that the transgressive sensation and exuberant stylization of the cycle allowed Italian audiences an experiential departure from the moral conservatism that characterized their moment.

Moving from the sensational to the seemingly mundane, Nathan Holmes investigates the production design of office space in "Deep Backgrounds: Landscapes of Labour in *All the President's Men*." Drawing on the film's production history as well discourses in office design and management theory, Holmes argues that the film's staging of knowledge work via

investigative journalism expressively delineates aspirations for a white-collar workplace that would never materialize.

Finally, in "Archaeology of the (1970s) Commune," Andrew Pendakis interviews the artist Fraser McCallum about his installation, *Come Live with Us*. McCallum's project reconstructs the experience of Rochdale College, an experimental, student-run school spawned within a modernist dormitory high-rise at the border of the University of Toronto campus. Drawing on archival materials, interviews, and present-day images of the building's architectural surfaces, McCallum's installation grasps toward Rochdale as a radical moment of possibility, even as it acknowledges the difficulty of solidifying its historical presence.