



Christoph Girardet & Matthias Müller, still from *Kristall*, 2006, DVD, 14:30. Courtesy of the artists.

# artists vs. hollywood



Christoph Girardet & Matthias Müller, still from *Play*, 2003, DVD, 7:20. Courtesy of the artists



Cover: **Stan Douglas**, still from *Journey into Fear*, 2001, DVD, 15:22. Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, New York.

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**Steven Eastwood**, still from *Of Camera*, 2003, Super 16mm transferred to DVD, 14:40. Courtesy of the artist and Paradogs Ltd.

## Artists vs. Hollywood

Joanna Callaghan

Narrative in conventional film is built through a combination of layers of film language; text, sound, performance, mise-en-scène and editing. A film's success depends on the manipulation of these layers into a cohesive and powerful whole. Often the purpose of such wielding is to seduce the viewer into an unconsciousness that allows them to 'get into' the story and which consequently seeks to make invisible the narrative structure used to do so. The emphasis on story, character, performance and making these as 'real' as possible are the hallmarks of what we can call 'Hollywood' cinema. Paradoxically, much of Hollywood cinema is about the dream, the possibility that exists to change one's life or to save someone else's. Most of what happens is highly unreal, but that is unimportant since the messages are clear; desire and consumption.

Artists vs. Hollywood brings together a collection of works that are connected by the use of narrative and narrative structure. In the works of Stan Douglas, Steven Eastwood and Stuart Croft narrative is used as a structural device, as opposed to making a film that has a narrative. For Matthias Müller and Candice Breitz, the narratives supplied by others' films are material for reworking ideas about representation, stardom and memory. For all these artists, conventional narrative imperatives such as closure, problem-resolution, character identification, the mise-en-scène, montage and sound are held as subjects of analysis.

Associated with an interest in narrative is the notion of rupture. Narrative ruptures are a point in which there is a break in the fluidity of the narrative structure and the devices used to support that structure. Croft uses the dissolve as a way to create a disrupted narrative structure alongside the actual surface narrative situation. In *Of Camera* by Steven Eastwood, the abortive attempts of two people to be together in the same space are explored. Their disagreement is fuelled by technical difference: the woman exists on videotape and the man on celluloid. The story corrupts as the two realise they are incompatible and that they are being filmed and watched. As Eastwood says, "I want the rupture to have such potency that it changes the physical limitations of the medium, so that frames collapse and the film spills everywhere. It becomes a life". In Müller's works, the original narratives are ruptured

and rendered void by the edit, replaced by an accumulated narrative that becomes an analysis of the highly constructed and regimented nature of images and the associated elements, in particular that of performance.

The rupture is a place of possibilities. It is a moment in which the filmmaker's position as source and arbiter of significance is questioned. Like the world in which Stan Douglas' *Journey into Fear* is set, there is simply information and opportunity without narrative coherence. For the spectator the effect of narrative rupture is a forcing of consciousness of the self in the process of creating meaning. This 'self' recognises itself as a subject of the narrative or as subjectivised by the narrative. The desire is to pair an audience's consciousness of the narrative through the isolation, recognition and manipulation of its elements with an opaque, intangible possibility of a further narrative supplied wholly by an audience accessing a different point within the flow of images. This might be similar to writer Alain Robbe-Grille's demand that a reader of his work must guess what hides under details or events. It appears these artist filmmakers want their audience to supply the missing story line. In doing so, the rupture becomes a moment for agency, of recognition or of projection. Unlike Hollywood, which leaves no questions unanswered, the rupture creates questions. What is key for all of these works is narrative as a structural component of filmmaking that operates in conjunction with other structures, of equal interest, all of which are held up for analysis, exploration and experimentation. Whether the works in *Artists vs. Hollywood* are acting in opposition or in collusion with Hollywood, is something the viewer must decide. Certainly as audiences become more literate concerning how images can be read and the mechanics behind making them, puncturing the serenity of this audience is an ambitious goal and one adopted with caution.

Joanna Callaghan is an Australian artist and filmmaker based in London.



**Stuart Croft**, still from *Drive In*, 2007, Super 16mm film transferred to Digital Betacam and DVD, 7:24. Courtesy of the artist and Fred [London] Ltd.



**Candice Breitz**, *Soliloquy Trilogy*, 2000, DVD. Courtesy of the artist and White Cube, London.



**Stuart Croft**, still from *Hit*, 2003, Betacam transferred to DVD, 22:00. Courtesy the artist and Fred [London] Ltd.