



Cavalcade

Written by: Caitlin Sutherland

For the illustrators/artists in *Cavalcade*, the title's definition has been interpreted in the broadest sense in order to create a narrative that both counters typical definitions associated with the art of illustration, while also creating a relational environment where the viewer is invited into the whimsy of the cavalcade itself. Traditionally a cavalcade is defined as a procession led by horses or sometimes a hunting party. Extended definitions relate it to parades or pilgrimages, gathering strength and numbers as they move from starting point to end point. However, the difference between parade and cavalcade is the emphasis on spectacle. Where parades are more about a spectacle or celebration, cavalcades focus more on elements of participation and passage.

In an attempt to connect with the spectator, the artists have used their affinity for illustration, a typically rigid art form dictated by text, as a turning point. Refusing to be confined by the definitions of their discipline, the artists have chosen to focus on a more collaborative approach and a turn towards constructing ephemera. By creating an immersive environment in the gallery, *Cavalcade* appeals to the viewer with a sense of nostalgia; a nostalgia for a time in the spectators life when the image becomes the story; a receptacle of meaning unto itself. In such a world, the spectator immerses them self in this environment restricted only by the limits of their imagination, a world of fairy tales, fables and folklore.

In this sense, the artists are asking the viewer to join in the procession. It's not entirely about the complexities of the images themselves, but the ability of the viewer to set aside the idea of the spectacle, and become a part of the story. The spectator is also able to entertain the possibility of influencing the relationships between the murals, which will continue to be woven throughout the duration of the exhibition. As such, I can't tell you what the show's about or try to define it for you. For me, that would counteract the environment the artists have worked so carefully to construct. Each of the panels tell their own story, but they are also loosely connected. I cannot speak for the artists, but I can try to articulate and weave together some of the more complex narratives that began to emerge for me as I examined the panels.

One of the main themes that struck me throughout the installation is the concept of becoming and belonging. Kassem Ahmed's panel marks the beginning of the project. Aptly, his piece is about migration, and delves into concepts of time and space. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze weighs in on the topic of becoming. While examining the concept of time, Deleuze helps us pinpoint ourselves in the present. We can only function in the present, but we are always in motion, always becoming. Our pasts make up who we are, but by contemplating these moments of the past, we are no longer remembering, we are constructing something new, in turn effecting our future understanding of the present.ⁱ Through the environment of the installation, and the immediacy of the images, we are in some ways drawn into a coming of age narrative. However, as you begin to reflect, first impressions may begin to seem a bit naive.



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Jessie Durham's panel following Ahmed's can perhaps illustrate this point. Durham weaves a narrative using children who not only represent the definition of cavalcade proper, but who also engage with the idea of interacting with the child within us. However, these are not ordinary children doing ordinary things. Something about this panel, with their blank stares and the idea of the hunt seem to pluck at the notion of innocence lost; like the lost boys from Peter Pan, but there's something askew. We are harkened back to our childhood psyche; but it becomes a remote and desolate place once we've lost our own innocence as echoed by the pennant bearing the anthem, "Ulterius." Concepts that were once black and white, become complicated; they become something else. Likewise, as the installation develops, it will likely be hard to examine the same panels without attributing new meanings as our understanding and the installation itself changes.

The following panels by Daniel Downey, Nat Janin, Sean Lewis and Adrian Forrow continue to play with the feelings of chaos and alienation that emerge in Durham's piece. Additionally, gender and power relations also begin to emerge, creating complex dialogue ripe for interpretation and association. Dmitry Bodarenko's panel provides a stark contrast, both in relation to the spectator who has immersed his/herself in the installation, but also in relation to the buildup of tension in the previous panels. Dmitry manages to shift the gaze. Not only is this a pivotal point for the spectator in relation to the installation, it also signifies another chapter in relation to the gender/power dialogue, not unlike Manet's Olympia or Laura Mulvey's arguments from the "Visual Pleasure and Narrative of Cinema." When the gaze is returned, it is no longer passive or subservient; it becomes active, a symbol of agency. Alternately, the spectators in the gallery now become the spectacle, which in turn calls into question how we construct the narrative behind the spectacle itself.

Javier Ortiz's panel further investigates the phenomenon of how we construct and interact with the spectacle in modern society. In his piece, Ortiz examines disjointed power relations and how we construct celebrity by referencing a popular parade, the Riosucio Carnival from his home in Columbia. We create and merge the spectacles of celebrity, religion and family as fantastical projections of ourselves, in a paradoxical attempt to define our individuality.ⁱⁱ Ortiz counters that in turn these social constructs end up exerting power over the individuals who created them.

Ali Hall's panel brings back the idea of migration and space-time like Ahmed's, but it also reinforces this concept becoming and belonging through self-reflection. Brian Massumi argues in *Parables for the Virtual* that the playing field, or the parameters placed on the installation by the gallery space, represent the process of becoming. As the spectator engages with the installation both topically and internally, they become conduits of possibility.ⁱⁱⁱ By participating in the active narrative of the installation, and examining the spaces in between, the spectator is able to join the cavalcade.



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ⁱ Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. London: Althone Press, 2004. 90

ⁱⁱ Debord, Guy. 59-60. *Society of the Spectacle*. Black and Red, 1977. *Marxists Internet Archive*. Web.

ⁱⁱⁱ Massumi, Brian. "The Political Economy of Belonging." *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002. 75.