

行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫 成果報告

「詭態寫實主義」：Uelmann 的詭態攝影蒙太奇 研究成果報告(精簡版)

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中文摘要： Bakhtin 的「詭態寫實主義」重點有二：詭態身體以及寫實主義。首先，詭態身體不同於古典的官方美學，乃是一個不完整的身體、不完全的變形，同時包含死亡與生命、老朽與新生，而且重點在具正面效果的後者；此原因與寫實主義有關。所謂的寫實主義乃指平民文化的嘉年華式歡笑，起源於古羅馬時期的農神節（Saturnalia）。不同於官方的慶典，其本質穩固現有的階級制度，農神節其間，所有階級制度上下倒錯，主人扮演奴隸，奴隸扮演主人，全民不分男女老少一起暢飲狂歡為期一週。Bakhtin 將詭態身體連結至寫實主義的原因即為，二者皆抹除二元對立的界線，以呈現一個變動不居具正面能量的世界。Bakhtin 認為法國文藝復興作家 Rabelais 在《巨人傳》（Gargantua and Pantagruel）中，淋漓盡致呈現「詭態寫實主義」。Rabelais 創造「卑下化」的詭態身體，亦即將代表高尚、理想、精神的元素降級至人體的下半部以產生上下倒錯的價值鬆綁。Rabelais 並且更進一步將卑下化的身體與自然物體結合，使身體回歸大地之母以得新生。如此一來，「卑下化」不但沒有產生負面效果，反而具有正面積極的再造力量。如此「卑下化」的詭態身體可見於美國當代攝影家 Uelsmann 的蒙太奇攝影作品。Uelsmann 的攝影美學有別於古典正統的「先視覺化」（pre-visualisation）攝影美學，強調「後視覺化」的暗房疊影技巧，將不同時空的物體疊合，以製造視覺隱喻，使攝影擺脫紀實的功能成為可以產生變形影像的冶金術。Uelsmann 的變形影像當中，常出現上下倒錯的詭態身體；並且受到超現實主義畫家 Magritte 的影響，喜好將人體與自然界中的物體結合，以其創造出「創世紀」的特質。如此一來，Uelsmann 的詭態攝影蒙太奇便具備了「詭態寫實主義」的特質：卑下化以具備再生的能量。Uelsmann 的詭態攝影蒙太奇證明了「詭態寫實主義」不只是文藝復興詭態的特色，亦可在當代詭態作品中佔據重要地位。

中文關鍵詞： 詭態、嘉年華、卑下化、冶金術、重生、大地、宇宙的

英文摘要：

英文關鍵詞： Grotesque, carnival, degradation, alchemy, regeneration, earth, cosmic

結案報告

“Grotesque Realism”: Jerry Uelsmann’s Grotesque Photomontages

Believe me, photography is alchemy.

—Jerry Uelsmann¹

This project has set out to argue that Bakhtin’s concept of “grotesque realism”—whose kernel is “birth-giving death”²—is materialised in grotesque photomontages created by the American photographer Jerry Uelsmann (1934-); and that such materialisation calls into question Bakhtin’s belief that “grotesque realism” is proper only to the pre-Romantic grotesque. Bakhtin’s notion of “grotesque realism” has to be understood in two aspects: the grotesque body and realism. In what follows, I will describe my findings after having carried out this project.

For Bakhtin, the grotesque body refers to an *incomplete* transformation of one body into another: it deviates from the classic, official aesthetics of the orderly and the completed as it represents “a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, . . . the old and the new, the dying and the procreating” (pp. 25, 24). The emphasis, he maintains, should be placed on the positive pole of the incomplete metamorphosis; the grotesque image *embodies* “a death that gives birth,” so to speak. This leads to the second, and more significant, aspect: realism. By realism, Bakhtin refers to the folk culture of humour which can be traced back to the Roman Saturnalia, a one-week carnival of antiquity that seeks temporarily to revive the merry reign of Saturn (the god of sowing and husbandry) under which all men are equal: slaves and masters switch

¹ Jerry Uelsmann, “Some Humanistic Considerations of Photography,” *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, ed. Vicki Goldberg (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 450.

² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), p. 352.

roles to eat and drink merrily together, to laugh at other people and at the same time be laughed at.³ With social ranks being inversed and social rules relaxed, the Saturnalia distinguishes itself from the official feast asserting “the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions.”⁴ Here it is not difficult to see the fundamental link Bakhtin builds between the grotesque body and the Saturnalia. As an incomplete metamorphosis that erases the line between life and death, the new and the old, the grotesque body deviates from the classic aesthetics of order and symmetry. Likewise, the Saturnalia, as a festival that abolishes the distinction between masters and slaves, the high and the low, stands in opposition to the official feast, whose nature is stable and unchanging. Both of them, so to say, present a dynamic world of undefined forms.

In Bakhtin, the combination of the grotesque body and carnivalesque humour—“grotesque realism”—symbolises popular resistance to inhibition and prohibition. It manifests itself properly in Renaissance grotesque literature such as Cervantes’s and Shakespeare’s works, notably Rabelais’s *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (first published in 1532), rather than in Romantic/Modernist grotesque literature, in which carnivalesque madness gives way to “tragic” madness, and thus the “positive regenerating power [is] reduced to a minimum.”⁵ In Rabelais’s *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, we see grotesque figures whose bodily hierarchy is often suspended or subverted—the replacement of the upper stratum (the face and the head) by the lower stratum (the genital organs, the belly and the buttocks)—in such a way as to uncrown all that is high, ideal, spiritual and, more importantly, to

³ Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1990), p. 583.

⁴ Bakhtin, p. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 38.

merge with cosmic elements such as earth, water, plants, and the air to bring forth something new and better. In Book II of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, for example, the narrator accidentally strays into the mouth of Pantagruel, King of the Dipsodes, and finds a whole new world there, with mountains, forests, meadows, deserts, towns, “and a great arme of the sea.”⁶ The narrator lives—i.e., eats, drinks, and shits—in the mouth of the King for six months, a part of the bodily upper stratum that comes down to earth in such a way as to combine in the King himself “the entire universe with all its elements and forces, with its higher and lower stratum.”⁷ In other words, in grotesque realism, the degradation of the high is not negative and destructive but helps to reunite the body with all the elements and kingdoms of nature: “The old dying world gives birth to the new one. Death throes are combined with birth in one indissoluble whole. This process is represented in the images of the material bodily lower stratum; everything descends into the earth and the bodily grave in order to die and to be reborn. This is why the downward movement pervades Rabelais’s entire imagery from beginning to end” (p. 435). Simply put, grotesque realism presents life as a circle in such a way as to endow the grotesque body with liberating and regenerating power.

“The downward movement” also reveals itself in Uelsmann’s grotesque photomontages. First of all, from the 1960s onwards, Uelsmann has engaged himself in developing an aesthetics—“post-visualisation”—that challenges the dominant, classic aesthetics of straight photography, the so-called “pre-visualisation.” Pre-visualisation is an aesthetics of the completed in the sense that the image is completely previewed at the time the shutter is clicked. By

⁶ François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. Sir Thomas Urquhart and Pierre le Motteux (London: Everyman’s Library, 1994), pp. 283-84.

⁷ Bakhtin, p. 365.

contrast, Uelsmann’s “post-visualisation” blends together two or more negatives in the darkroom on a single print “to construct a non-linear sequence of images within a single picture,”⁸ a technique that “keep[s] them [photographers] open to in-process discovery,”⁹ to continual becoming. Post-visualisation helps Uelsmann to develop an interest in “creating literally a visual metaphor”¹⁰ in the photographic space which turns photography into alchemy. Metaphor and alchemy are essentially alike inasmuch as they both confuse conceptual categories by collapsing the borders that construct the Great Chain of Being, the hierarchical structure of all matter and life—to give birth to all kinds of metamorphosis. In other words, by saying that “photography is alchemy,” Uelsmann intends his photographic images not to be the recording of moments of external reality but to be “other realities”¹¹ or what A. D. Coleman calls “unrealities,” that is, the portrayal of events that never happened.¹² Uelsmann’s “unrealities,” though, are born of the superimposition of two or more realistic events (negatives): they are superimposed in such a way as to be realistic, or illusionistic, photomontages rather than Dadaist photomontages. The realistic style allows Uelsmann’s grotesque photomontages to fall in line with the illusionistic style of the Surrealist grotesque objects of René Magritte—who has been considered one of Uelsmann’s artistic beacons¹³— in the evocation of mystery in everyday reality: as Uelsmann

⁸ Peter C. Bunnell, “Introduction,” *Jerry Uelsmann: Silver Meditations* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1975), p. iv.

⁹ Uelsmann, p. 447.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

¹¹ In *Other Realities*, Uelsmann maintains that “[t]he entire photographic process is a metamorphosis. The artist can invent a reality which is personally more meaningful than the one literally given to the eye” (*Other Realities* [New York: Bulfinch P, 2005], p. 54).

¹² A. D. Coleman, *The Grotesque in Photography* (New York: Summit Books, 1977), p. 148.

¹³ Uelsmann quotes Magritte in *Other Realities* as follows: “If the dream is a translation of the waking life, waking life is also a translation of the dream” (p. 74). The Magritte quotation speaks to André Breton’s conception of *surréalité* as the mixture of two seemingly contradictory states such as dream and reality (*Manifeste du Surréalisme, Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, ed. Marguerite Bonnet [Paris: Gallimard, 1988], p. 319).

himself describes in different places that his photography aims to present images that have “some kind of substance or resonance that challenges the viewer with elements of enigma and mystery.”¹⁴

It comes as no surprise, then, that the dominant motifs in Uelsmann’s photography have to do with a kind of reality that transcends surface reality: for example, “floating objects, metamorphosing forms—architectural or human—sensual nudes, . . . material transmutation, and references to classical antiquity or other historical periods. Details commonly convey these themes are rocks, water, cloud, trees, hands, eyes, mirrors, and flora in abundance.”¹⁵ The majority of these details are natural or cosmic elements, that which allows Uelsmann’s photomontages to “have a sort of earth-life quality, have a genesis quality.”¹⁶ In *Untitled* (1992), for example, we see the lower part of a woman’s body is merged with the head of a river flowing down a mountain which faces mountains covered with trees (*Other Realities*). Also, in a 1975 work, we see in a field stands a man whose head grows into a cluster of leafy trees (*Twenty-Five Years: A Restrospective*). Moreover, a 1961 work shows a tree trunk has buttress roots which are the fingers of a man. In these examples, “the downward movement” is evident: the high is substituted by the low, the top by the bottom, in such a hyperbolic way as to create cosmic bodies, to return, in Bakhtin’s terms, “the body to the bosom of the earth,” thereby arousing or sharpening “the new awareness of the cosmos as man’s own home, holding no terror for him.”¹⁷ It is no accident, then, that Phillip Prodger perceives in Uelsmann’s images that “horror is

¹⁴ Uelsmann, *Other Realities*, p. 45.

¹⁵ James L. Enyeart, Jerry N. Uelsmann: *Twenty-Five Years: A Restrospective* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), p. 68.

¹⁶ Uelsmann, “Some Humanistic Considerations of Photography,” p. 445.

¹⁷ Bakhtin, pp. 337, 365.

infused with wonder; the treat of destruction becomes an emblem of hope”¹⁸ or, indeed, death is pregnant with life.

Uelsmann, as we have seen, seeks to endow his images with “a sort of earth-life quality” or “a genesis quality.” It is fair to say that the defining nature of the “earth-life” or “genesis” quality is the positive, regenerating power of the downward movement. In each of the examples discussed above, Uelsmann, to quote Bakhtin on Rabelais, makes “the top and the bottom change places, intentionally mix[es] the hierarchical levels in order to discover the core of the object’s concrete reality, to free it from its shell and to show its material bodily aspect—the real being outside all hierarchical norms and values.”¹⁹ Significantly, these examples are not extraneous by-products of Uelsmann’s photomontages but lie at the very heart of what he is doing.

To conclude, in terms of iconographic similarities and the production of regenerating effects, Uelsmann’s grotesque photomontages speak directly to the Bakhtinian grotesque, proving that grotesque realism is proper not merely to the Renaissance grotesque as Bakhtin understands it but to the contemporary grotesque. Uelsmann’s grotesque photomontages can therefore serve as a starting point for exploring the embodiment of the Bakhtinian grotesque in post-war art and literature.

¹⁸ Phillip Prodger, “Jerry Uelsmann: The Image Beyond the Image.” *Whispers of Blended Shadows: The Art of Jerry Uelsmann* (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2009), p. 24.

¹⁹ Bakhtin, p. 403.

無研發成果推廣資料

99 年度專題研究計畫研究成果彙整表

計畫主持人：趙順良		計畫編號：99-2410-H-004-238-				計畫名稱：「詭態寫實主義」：Uelsmann 的詭態攝影蒙太奇	
成果項目		量化			單位	備註（質化說明：如數個計畫共同成果、成果列為該期刊之封面故事...等）	
		實際已達成數（被接受或已發表）	預期總達成數（含實際已達成數）	本計畫實際貢獻百分比			
國內	論文著作	期刊論文	0	0	100%	篇	
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	0	0	100%		
		專書	0	0	100%		
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力 （本國籍）	碩士生	2	0	100%	人次	
		博士生	1	0	100%		
博士後研究員		0	0	100%			
專任助理		0	0	100%			
國外	論文著作	期刊論文	0	1	100%	篇	將投稿至 A&HCI 期刊 Word & Image
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	0	0	100%		
		專書	0	0	100%	章/本	
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力 （外國籍）	碩士生	0	0	100%	人次	
		博士生	0	0	100%		
博士後研究員		0	0	100%			
專任助理		0	0	100%			

<p>其他成果 (無法以量化表達之成果如辦理學術活動、獲得獎項、重要國際合作、研究成果國際影響力及其他協助產業技術發展之具體效益事項等，請以文字敘述填列。)</p>	<p>將於 2012 年 10 月至中興大學外文系演講 Uelmann 的攝影與影像的冶金術</p>
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	成果項目	量化	名稱或內容性質簡述
科 教 處 計 畫 加 填 項 目	測驗工具(含質性與量性)	0	
	課程/模組	0	
	電腦及網路系統或工具	0	
	教材	0	
	舉辦之活動/競賽	0	
	研討會/工作坊	0	
	電子報、網站	0	
	計畫成果推廣之參與(閱聽)人數	0	

國科會補助專題研究計畫成果報告自評表

請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況、研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）、是否適合在學術期刊發表或申請專利、主要發現或其他有關價值等，作一綜合評估。

1. 請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況作一綜合評估

達成目標

未達成目標（請說明，以 100 字為限）

實驗失敗

因故實驗中斷

其他原因

說明：

2. 研究成果在學術期刊發表或申請專利等情形：

論文： 已發表 未發表之文稿 撰寫中 無

專利： 已獲得 申請中 無

技轉： 已技轉 洽談中 無

其他：（以 100 字為限）

3. 請依學術成就、技術創新、社會影響等方面，評估研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）（以 500 字為限）

Bakhtin 的詭態論述乃詭態研究最重要的理論之一，研究詭態者不能不論及其觀點。然 Bakhtin 的詭態論述有其侷限，過份專注於文藝復興之前的詭態作品，而忽略浪漫時期之後的作品亦可呈現「詭態寫實主義」的解放與重生力量。此計畫的貢獻即在於提供一個反例，並非意欲證明 Bakhtin 的詭態理論為誤，而是證明其理論亦適用於浪漫主義之後的作品。對浪漫時期之後的詭態作品感興趣的研究者，可以此計畫為起點，以 Bakhtin 的觀點來闡釋作品中的死而重生的解放力量。另外，此計畫亦證實了超現實主義畫家 Magritte 對 Uelsmann 的影響。超現實主義與 Uelsmann 之間的聯繫一直是 Uelsmann 評論家感興趣的一個重要議題。一般咸認為超現實主義跟 Uelsmann 有根本的差異，亦即前者強調自動書寫或繪圖的創作方式，而後者的創作方式卻是精心設計的暗房疊影（post-visualisation）已製造視覺隱喻（visual metaphor）。的確如此，不過正是因為創作方式上的差異使得 Uelsmann 跟 Magritte 更接近。後者與一般超現實主義不同，不追求心靈的隨機自動論（psychic automatism），而是精心設計的圖像安排以使圖像呈現詩的特質，而詩的本質即在於隱喻。再者，二者亦同樣喜好在作品中引進如岩石、樹、天空等自然的物體以連結至宇宙（cosmic）的生死循環。尤有甚者，他們皆致力於作品中呈現日常現實生活的景致並且在其中製造幻奇圖像以激起神秘之感；Uelsmann 在 1965 年即有一幅此類作品命名為 'Magritte's Touchstone'。Magritte 對於 Uelsmann 的影響可為此計畫進一步發展的可能性。