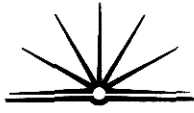


'I want to discover the intellectual ~~destroyer~~ destroyer of universalities... one who does not know how or what he will ~~think~~ think tomorrow because he is too submerged in the present.' (Michel Foucault). This quote by French philosopher Foucault reflects closely that contemporary artists possess different roles. Indeed, as all artists are ultimately (or tragically?) defined by cultural or historical context, their roles ~~are~~ inevitably contribute to our understanding of what art is. It is the work of contemporary artists, juxtaposing (yet in many circumstances ironically reflecting) the pursuits of canonical artists who shape our understanding of the role of artists.

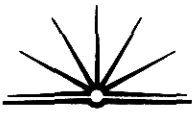
The Renaissance was a period of growth for the artists, working under commission at the hands of patrons



was an economic endeavour of many artists. Like contemporary artists, these Renaissance artists sought to re-present their world in new and exciting ways.

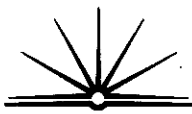
Indeed, the challenges to traditional perceptions as to the role of artists can be explored across time cultures, as there exist distinctive duality across a plethora of historical contexts.

The role of mid-Renaissance artist Uccello was to capture, and explore that which he affectionately referred to as his "sweet mistress." The art of science was compelling to Uccello; the product; perspective. Like other artist of his time, the role of Uccello as he saw it (which is inevitably the ~~role~~ correct one, as the relativity of perceptions is not a ~~a~~ notion restricted to contemporary society, but indeed all times) was to



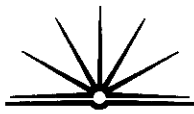
capture this true illusion of space. His sympathetic treatment of human form (reflecting High Renaissance artists such as Michelangelo) led to the glorification of man to divine levels. 'chaos,' was ironically perfection; "The Hunt in the forest", "The battle of San Romano" and man was indeed (as indicated by Michelangelo's ~~and~~ dwellings on sheer size and techniques of contrapposto) truly divine.

The roles of these artists were to capture the essence of our world (~~truth~~, visual truth, beauty, perfection, and glory). Today contemporary artists such as Nam June Paik, Moriko Mori, Eleanor Antin, ~~the~~ Cindy Sherman, Yassamassa Morimura, Bill Viola and Emily Blair challenge our understanding of the roles of artists.



Nam June Paik is a manipulator, he is imaginative and indulgent intending the question the audience's perceptions of the role of the artist through conceptual strength. He is particularly concerned with the unending loop of closed circuit television, exploring the relationship between subject, camera, monitor and subject. ("T.V. Buddha"). His interest in the materiality of sound (born during his time as a student) challenging our aural senses through either its inclusion ("video Hagk") or exclusion. "T.V. Berlin".

Nam June Paik is at constant ~~to~~ satirical play, commenting on the hypocrisy of his themes. In "Zenith, TV looking glass", television is seen as a window into our world. His hybrid work "TV garden" comments on the enveloping

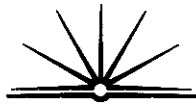


class technology has on the natural world. It becomes evident through such works that the role of the artist has changed - depicting what is 'visually true' has remained ironically constant, yet societal shifts have ~~caused~~ caused the ^{work} ~~work~~ of contemporary artists to be fundamentally relative.

Mariko Mori, the so-to based social commentator challenges our understanding of the roles of artist through passing comment on her time.

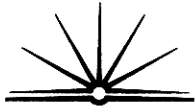
Ironically paralleling pre-Renaissance pursuits to depict a 'greater good', Mori states flippently that her 'religion is her art'. This notion challenges our perception of the role of the artist - indeed, the artist has become a means to view what is fundamentally regarded as 'true' in a new light.

Mori is influenced by the relationship



between humanity and the unknown; specifically, our transcendence into the extra-~~the~~ terrestrial ("Beginning of the End"). She also presents social commentaries on the absurdity of fashion and popular culture through works such as "Birth of a star" and "Emperor's new clothes." She also playfully exposes the absurdity of consumerism - "Made in Japan."

~~the~~ Reflecting the roles of 'traditionally' labelled artists are impacts and influences of other artists. Mori is deeply influenced by the performance works of Eleanor Antin and the non-radical feminist film stills ("1977-1980") of Cindy Sherman. Indeed, Mori's performance pieces places her actors in spontaneous environments rather than pre-conceived artistic platforms. Her famous work "Subway", illustrates this notion of spontaneity, and was impacted

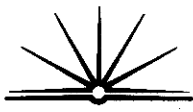


upon greatly by cult films such as 'Robocop' and 'Blade Runner'.

Mori's social commentaries deeply challenge our understanding of the roles of artists.

~~She~~ She kidnaps our perceptions through conceptual strength, yet ironically displays tight-knit, closely defined works.

Bill Viola appropriates images of the mundane to ~~to~~ evoke in his audience truly challenging concepts. His works are visceral, evoking deep emotional responses rather than purely intellectual. He presents commentaries on themes of humanity's deepest fears (loneliness, morality, death—"hot-ed-djerid"). His prosaic subjects challenge our understanding of the role of artists by exposing themes of common concern, yet chilling overtones. His works are not bounded by frames nor two-dimensional (shaping further



our understanding as to the role of artists.) "Tree of life" and "The Messenger" indeed "open our eyes" to the roles of artists. In "The Messenger" we are subject to the ~~trauma~~^{trauma} and suffering of Viblo's personal experience of almost drowning. When made subject to such a concept, we are disconcerted and challenged by our own pre-conceived thoughts regarding the relationship between artist, world, audience and audience. Ironically, through the soothing image of the water (despite the unending stare of the floating naked body) we are put at spiritual and emotional ease.

Japanese artist Yasumasa Morimura through his appropriated work of the famous "Olympia" shapes of understanding of the role of artists. Traditionally concepts of beauty and empowering femininity are

~~still~~ challenged through Morimura's
(and indeed Viola's similar work "self")
egocentrism and exploration of male
eroticism.

It is therefore clearly evident, that
through Bill Viola's cunning ability
"to cut to the sublimated part of us
that longs for the warmth of the womb",
and other contemporary artists' post-post-
modernist pursuits that our understanding
of the roles of artists are shaped. Indeed,
only by juxtaposing these artists with
those now considered historically 'traditional',
that such a shaping can occur. Where,
however, do we turn our post-contemporary
focus? And what will be the role of
the artist tomorrow?