콘텐츠 관점에서의 영화문화에 대한 재고찰
Reconsidering Film Culture from the Perspective of Contents: Back Into The Theatres

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Abstract

Mainly through the pervasive emergence of portable devices (laptops, PDAs, now iPods), the screen arts, that is, the cinematic arts has suffered the loss of what constitutes the core of its existence: the theatre and theatre-audience. This paper discusses cinema's distinct place and significance in culture and its difference from television and other forms of mass media. The most pressing question at hand would be, "how do you bring back attention to the medium that is distinctly cinematic?" "How do you bring people back to the theatres?" This paper argues that cinema, and the film industry as a whole must push for a technological leap that is in conjunction with culture. With mentioning of the rapid development of 3D technologies in the moving images, this paper proposes that such technological novelties and innovation are necessary conditions for a new kind of film culture to emerge.

Ⅰ. The Origin

"To be kidnapped, you have to be in a movie theater, seated in the dark among anonymous strangers." – Susan Sontag [1]

The classic illustration of the cinematic wonder can be found at its very origin: during the screening of Lumiere's Arrival of a Train[1], spectators screamed, ducked down, or ran at the sight of the projected image. This was a phenomenon based on an illusion, and roughly speaking, this was how cinema started; the very component of its foundation was that was cinema

offered, first and foremost, the illusion of three-dimensionality within the confines of two-dimensional space (i.e., the screen) [2].

The experience established itself upon two conditions: control and community. The medium and the mode of its display had to capture the audience by force, meaning, the film had to be in full control of what it was qua film. In this sense, cinema was radically different from other forms of entertainment that preceded it. With paintings and novels, the beholder/reader was in control of how time and space unfolds when experiencing the work. With cinema, the audience was suddenly bereft of his powers over both time and space, confronting an experience that is more forceful, more aggressive. Cinema came with size, overwhelming the audience by the physical

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1) *Arrival of a Train at Ciotat Station* is an 1895 French short black-and-white silent documentary film directed and produced by Auguste and Louis Lumière.

presence of its image, and it also demanded that the viewer succumb to a community of anonymous strangers 'imprisoned' in a darkened theater [3].

Ⅱ. The Intrusion: illusion dismantled

This unique experience, however, partially dismantled due to the advent of television, when visual experience was taken into the confines of domestic life. The disintegration was taken further by the introduction of VHS, making it possible to take movies outside of theatres and into homes. Coupled with rapid technological developments that allowed domestic equipments to match the quality of films screened in theatres, 'movie-going' turned into a redundant act. The alarming misapprehension was that what theatres offered was just moving image in big scale. The issue, however, was beyond the concern for reduced scale: power over time and space was now given back to the audience. Domestic space disengaged the audience from the mandate to fixate his attention on the screen for a given span of time [1]. The very condition of audience-surrender was no absent.

With the aggressive proliferation of mobile devices ranging from laptops, portalbe DVD-players, and now PDPs and iPods, movies have turned into objects to possess than entities to be astonished by. The overfamiliarization of the cinematic form has reduced movies to a level of mere information. Cinema first garnered people's fascination for what it was as a distinct form, through its particularly mode of inciting one's sense of wonderment through the strategic manipulation of time and space. The digital age seems to have plundered cinema of its innate traits.

Ⅲ. A Call for a new technological innovation

As it was the technology of the cinematograph that opened the era of film culture, so it will be a continuous leap in technology that will sustain its longevity as that which is uniquely cinema. More than a need for a fresh narrative or subject matter is a need of a new mode of display, a next level of technological innovation that would re-kindle our sense of wonderment.

One can trace an inkling of such shift in mindsets in the current frenzy with 3D technology practiced in the industry. The record-setting hit, Avatar, is precisely a demonstration of a possible resurge – albeit a different one – in film culture based again on the existence of theatres and movie-goers. One of the reasons the film could garner such financial success was that it was immune to the piracy of illegal downloads. When stripped of its 3D glory and left with barebones of its Pocahontas-like story-line, Avatar would be less in status than Disney's Pocahontas. It was precisely the form of its exhibition that drew so many back into the theatres for the experience that could not be domesticated. Like Arrival of a Train, it excited people not because of its subject matter – the banality of a train moving – but because of the utter unfamiliarity of the medium.

This is not to propose an annihilation of all portable devices and the great feat of the digital age, but rather, a need for a new kind of cinematic form, and in turn, a new kind of film-culture that once again allows its aficionados a chance to be "kidnapped" again. there is surely a unique function of cinema's theatre, and the realities of our modern life only attests to the indispensability of its aid.

▌ REFERENCES ▌

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