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Yael and the Amazing Technicolor Dream


“The context is what defines the art” – Y. Kanarek

Many people dream simply in black and white with two dimensional landscapes. Those who *can* dream in color often have a limited palette to work with, as studies show that a few select colors are chosen as a central theme relating to the psychological state of the individual. And most likely, those who can dream in various tones will still be limited by two requisites: the depth of dimensionality in which the dreams takes place and, oh yes... they have to be sleeping. That is unless you happen to be Yael Kanarek, a new media artist with such ardor and intense creativity that one could say that she not only has visions painted with a Technicolor rainbow that are as 3D and realistic as waking life, but that such copious amounts of inventiveness have no choice but to spill over into her conscious state as she materializes her dreams into art.

Stepping through a portal at 419 East 6th Street transports viewers to a fantastical new desert environment, one so rich in detail and with so many paths to explore as to appear daunting to those caught unawares. With elements of visual art, music, dance, writing and speech amalgamated into an interactive exhibit, visitors to Kanarek’s *WorldofAwe.net* will experience a voyage unlike any other (there’s a reason it was chosen for the Whitney Biennial 2002) as seen through the musings of “the traveler.”

Foregoing the origins of the traveler’s logs of dispatched love letters, travel routes, computer parts and navigation tools, is the magnificent task of translating a dream world into the abstract world of cyberspace. Going backwards from the traditional dilemma in which an artist must pull the tangible from nothingness, Kanarek uses the canvas of the Internet (working in a zero dimension is as unique as one can get) for her work which allows her to expand her art as far as her creativity allows – without the nuisance or apprehension of physical boundaries.

Kanarek says that her interests, “lies in going deeper with an idea, past the first rudimentary layer of interpretation into [the artist’s] real intentions.” She carries this objective over into her work with a staunch advocacy that, “the world doesn’t need repetition. It needs augmentation.” To avoid such a monotonous fate in her undertakings, a myriad of interpretive layers ensconces *World of Art* from novelty, as each chapter in the traveler’s journal contains varying premises. For example, Chapter 1 revolves around the traveler’s quest



to build a laptop out of scrap hardware and bits of ancillary software. Within his travels he compiles a list of every computer model ever created, from an Atari I up to a Pentium VII. Kanarek sees a “digital quilt” being constructed out of the pictures of the computers, one that visually defines time and the progress of technology. Her goal is to, “get the feeling [of the traveler] as visceral as possible.”

Inspired at an early age by the elements of fantasy woven throughout stories like Disney’s interpretation of Lewis Carol’s acid-tripped *Alice in Wonderland*, Herman Hesses’s ethereal *Siddhartha* and Voltaire’s le rêve de l’existentialiste *Candide*, the element inherent to these pieces as well as visibly discernable an inspiration to Kanarek’s work is the notion behind the paradoxical union of conflicting perspectives (otherwise construed as the amalgamation between realism and fantasy) as an artistic device known as magical realism.

Coined by German art critic Franz Roh in the 1940’s, magical realism is a “way of representing and responding to reality and pictorially depicting the enigmas of reality,” which results in a technique capable of creating autonomous literature. Or in Kanarek’s case, autonomous art devoid of conventional structure, space, and time – both virtual and physical – allowing for an exploration into the distortion of self through metaphors like the simultaneous sunset/sunrise enigma (as the sun sets from one individual’s point of view, it is also rising for another individual – what if one man could be in both places at once, would it create a temporal freeze?).

Kanarek’s *World of Awe* is her foray into magical realism, creating a new wondrous environment for viewers that is both whimsical and mysterious in nature since she believes that, “our interpretation of the world comes from our beliefs more than facts.” This results in a feeling of intrigue when exploring her project because cultural identifiers such as gender or religion are not an aspect of this created environment.

Each chapter in the *World of Awe* takes approximately a year to develop. Out of the planned seven chapters, Kanarek is now only up to two. It can be expected that this new media project will continue on for years as she adds layer upon layer of story line and artist inflection, and it will certainly be interesting to see how Kanarek overcomes the boundaries of the real world (i.e. – translating into Hebrew) in order to fully realize her fantastical world. And all this, because she dreams in color.