

Spectacles & Festival

Abstract

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Becoming festival is about quitting “spectacle” addiction, joining in acts of carnivalesque resistance, and finding festive spaces to affirm life, not death. Learning to be festive means taking time out from the spectacle of TV, advertising, and state propaganda recirculating in the corporate owned media.

We are born into the World of the Spectacle. It takes decades for spectacle to teach you that you have no control. It will take you a few hours, reading this book, to realize that there are festive alternatives to spectacle. In the long run, taking a few hours to learn how to change the world is not much time at all.

You will need to be patient with yourself. Years of steady brainwashing, have taught you to trust corporate power, to believe you live in a democratic land, to trust the TV and newspaper for your news. If I can convince you that the interests of the majority of the planet, its people and animals – for you to turn off the TV, stop the newspaper deliveries, and unplug from the spectacle – will save the world – would you have the strength to do it? By the time you entered High School, the spectacle had you programmed to believe that you are powerless, to obediently shut your eyes and cover your ears to anything resembling a critical or skeptical voice.

In this book, I integrate non-violence (*Ahimsa*) philosophy with critical postmodern theory to find alternatives to violent spectacles of production, distribution, and consumption. There are two related ways out of spectacle, carnival and festival. Here, we examine the inter-relation of all three, in what I call *trilectics* (as opposed to dialectics). Trilectics means the opposition of three elements, in this case how spectacle, carnival, and festival oppose one another. They not only oppose, they morph into each other. Contemporary festival has lost its vitality, its aesthetic sexuality, and has become the stooge of spectacle,

one more act to seduce us into more consumption at the Music, Film, or Craft Festival. This is not what I intend as Festival.

By Festival, I mean a space between spectacle and carnivalesque resistance. I mean a new way of being human. Festival spaces have been co-opted by spectacle, one more sideshow to pull in consumers.

The same has happened to carnival, it is as toothless as the tiger in the circus. Carnival was once about satire, about parodies of spectacle, a way to poke fun at the pope and crown. Now carnival is just the Circus Circus act to entertain your children while you work out on the slot machine. Spectacle has co-opted carnival. Here and there, carnivalesque street theatre, such as protests against WTO or against the Iraq War steps into a role of parody and critique of corporate and state power. Usually, however, the spectacle controls the media that reports the carnival, engages the police to control its boundaries, and keeps it Off-Broadway, so the masses know little about the reality of the event, but instead see the same 15 seconds repeated until boredom and stupidity sets in, and channel gets switch back to commodity commercials. The spectacle is a marvelous mask.

Spectacle separates producer and consumer, making knowledge of violent work conditions and ecological decay invisible. I explore acts of postmodern theatrics and narrative to reconstruct the production and consumption practices of late capitalism. We do not know where products are made, who makes them, and what impact they have on our planet. As long as this continues, festival remains elusive, clouded in the façade of spectacle. Carnival is a way to expose the violence and duplicity of spectacle.

Festival is a non-violence alternative, a way of cutting back on an over-consumptive and conspicuous production life styles and overcoming societal addictions to violent entertainment that gave us Columbine, raids the Third World resources to allow our First World habits, and our continued series of undeclared wars, and a few declared ones in the Middle East. Festival is an alternative the world has yet to try.

It is time that we unplug from the TV, turn off the spectacle that numbs our minds, and find a more festive way of being in the world. The spectacle has us brainwashed into believing that we cannot live a life outside of corporate rule. We are oblivious to the impact the Americana life style has on the rest of the world. America is the most violent nation on the planet. America is a colonizer, and imperialist nation, that masks its invasions with commercials and propaganda.

When America takes responsibility for its violent ways, then the world will find a festive revolution that points towards peace on Earth. We live in a material world that has become through spectacle a commercial world. We stood by while corporatism rules the world.

The purpose of Festival is to find ways to disengage from our obsession with obtaining Third World resources through acts of violence. To be in Festival, is to reside in a sensual world, to explore our sense of the world. We can evolve, we can become a non-violent world. We can be a sensual world, an aesthetic world. We can co-habit this planet with other animals. We do not need to live in ways that are anti-biodiversity. We can stop the War of America on the rest of the world. This is not just the Iraq War, it is the Bio Tech War, our obsession with making every nation consume genetically modified foods. It is the virtual war of violence, that addicts teens to Nintendo games of murder.

If you love the idea of Festival, then help me create it. A festive world is a more feminist one. We have deeply fucked up the world around us. Plugging into the spectacle brainwashes us into believing that Nature is not bleeding and dying. We have over-populated the planet; our way of living is a threat not only to ourselves, but also to all animal and plant life.

In the end, Festival is about ways to unplug from the spectacle, to resist spectacle with carnival, until we find a space for a more festive existence. It is a way to transform predatory corporations into non-violent and festive ones. It is a way to transform propaganda media into alternative media. It is a way to find joy in living that is not tied to material accumulation and over-consumption. It is about peace, not war. Can we stamp out spectacle? I do not think that is

possible. At best we can keep it transparent with carnival, and provide an option for those who have deprogrammed and unplugged.