

Title: "Forget Passion And Turn To Jest": The Alternative Modes Of Representation In Soviet Arts And Cinema Of The Twenties

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The leftist film theorists of the 1960-70's were searching for an efficient model of the counter-cinema as an alternative to "illusionist" mainstream (since 1915) with its Renaissance visual codes that grant a passive viewer the illusory power of being a ubiquitous "all-perceiving subject." This illusion, according to Noel Burch, is formed by its clear narrative structure, a protagonist to identify with, and recognizable, "iconic" images organized in a linear mode. Thus the "Institutional Mode of Representation" is derived from such "classical" (i.e. bourgeois) arts of the 18-19th centuries as a novel, theater and painting. Its alternative, the "Primitive Mode of Representation," which defines the earliest stages of film history, was based on a working-class representational system. Its "low" and "vulgar" forms of popular entertainment included circus, fairs, carnival, music hall, variety stage as well as non-linear, tableau-style films with their flat space of the frame, very often crowded and filled with events that are not centered and therefore required an active spectatorial position. Tom Gunning who coined the same period "*cinema of attractions*" has emphasized its exhibitionistic - rather than voyeuristic, with its illusionary "controlling gaze" of the subject - qualities.

Analyzing the works of the Soviet theatrical-cum-film production groups of the 20's (FEKS, Kino-Eye group, Kuleshov's cine-collective), this presentation demonstrates how the elements of the "primitive mode" were appropriated for the spontaneous "education of the senses" of the proletarian and peasant audiences.

I will show how the aesthetic of "defamiliarizing attractions" in two recently-restored films by FEKS, "Adventures of Oktyabrina" (1924) and "Mishki against Yudenich" (1925) undercuts the escapist and alienating absorption of the popular arts Kozintsev and Trauberg borrowed from – including detective and adventure fiction, especially the one based on the Red Pinkerton's model.

Another modification of this disjunctive aesthetic of attractions can be seen in such experimental cine-poem as "Pacific 231" (1931) by Mikhail Tsekhanovsky. It provides a visual commentary on another "high art" form – symphonic music juxtaposing through eccentric multiple superimpositions the parts of locomotive's engine to the conductor, his musicians and their instruments.