

Collection Vanmoerkerke

“20th Century Fox” curated by Peter Doroshenko June 2010 - February 2011

The goal of life is to make your heartbeat match the beat of the universe, to match your nature with Nature. - Joseph Campbell

20th Century Fox, a thematic group exhibition, examines the influence of American cinema on contemporary art, specifically exploring the impact of mythologist and writer Joseph Campbell's work on the genre. Artist's works are connected to the legacy of cinema and issues surrounding the relationship between myth, film and artistic production are examined. This exhibition provides an insight into the mono-myth-hero based inspiration for artists in the late 20th Century and early 21st Century. The exhibition title, 20th Century Fox, is drawn from the film studio animation which is the introduction or starting point for thousands of films and the focus of a Florian Maier-Aichen photograph from 2006.

Joseph Campbell (26 March 1904 – 30 October 1987) was an American mythologist, writer and lecturer, best known for his work in comparative mythology and comparative religion. His work is vast, covering many aspects of the human experience. His philosophy is often summarized by his phrase: *Follow your bliss*.

Film director, George Lucas was the first Hollywood filmmaker to credit Campbell's influence. Lucas stated following the release of the first *Star Wars* film in 1977 that its story was shaped, in part, by ideas described in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and other works of Campbell's. The linkage between *Star Wars* and Campbell was further reinforced when later reprints of Campbell's book used the image of Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker on the cover.

Most can probably credit the origins of this technological illusion to the original *Star Trek* and director Stanley Kubrick's 1968 movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. At the time, the movie's depiction of a ship plunging through space was a thrilling novelty for the audience. Eight years later, with the release of George Lucas's first *Star Wars* movie, the illusion became a *visual cliché*.

The word *unconscious* is an appropriate way to regard *Star Wars'* infiltration of western culture. Unless you're from another galaxy, it's almost impossible not to have heard of the *Star Wars* series, even if you've never seen any of the six movies. Since the release of the first *Star Wars* on 25 May 1977, the films have become part of our collective consciousness. As American film reviewer Roger Ebert wrote in a 1999

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retrospective review of Star Wars, *George Lucas' space epic has colonized our imaginations, and it is hard to stand back and see it simply as a motion picture, because it has so completely become part of our memories.* Many other filmmakers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have acknowledged the influence of Campbell's work on their own craft.

Among films that many viewers have recognized as closely following the pattern of the mono-myth-hero are the Matrix, Batman and Indiana Jones series. Accordingly, the borderline between fantasy and science fiction is blurred, and many bookstores shelve science fiction and fantasy together. The science fiction genre has a strong fan community of readers and viewers, of which many authors are a part. In reading science fiction books, abstract concepts such as mutations, radiation, space travel and planets are experienced.

Although science fiction is often written primarily to entertain, many authors use the genre to provide insight into science, society, politics or the human condition. But science fiction is visionary by design and prophetic only by accident.

And yet the strange thing is, in some way, some real way, much of what appears under the title *science fiction* is true. Science fiction has had a role in shaping public attitudes towards the atomic bomb during the fifties and sixties. Modern consciousness therefore is radically different from that of the peoples who inhabited the planet before the emergence of science fiction.

Of course, the question remains open: Campbell wrote his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, describing what he felt to be a universal story motif. Are the patterns that viewers and critics have noticed evidence of the filmmakers having read (or been indirectly influenced by) Campbell's work, or are they simply manifestations of the very archetypes that Campbell was attempting to study?

Yet, because of multiple references, the art works in this exhibition do not necessarily reflect specific attitudes, but rather negotiations that absorb and assimilate myth, the space that exists outside secure domains. For these reasons, 20th Century Fox is not the result of a specific curatorial investigation, but more of a curatorial presence.

Artists in the Exhibition

Ashley Bickerton, Manon de Boer, Angela Bulloch, Olafur Eliasson, Elmgreen and Dragset, Roe Ethridge, Sylvie Fleury, Kendell Geers, Liam Gillick, Jack Goldstein, Peter Halley, Jim Isermann, Ann Veronica Janssens, Terence Koh, Barbara Kruger, Ange Leccia, Robert Longo, Kris Martin, Allan McCollum, John McCracken, Thomas Ruff, Tom Sachs, Michael Sailstorfer, Cindy Sherman, Andreas Slominski, Florian Slotana, Kristina Solomoukha, Tony Tasset, Piotr Uklanski, Banks Violette and Erwin Wurm.