

The Shadow as a Metaphor for Power

Submitted by William J. Hendricks

In support of MFA Exhibition
Fall 2005

Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Minneapolis, MN

Thesis Committee Members:

Ben Heywood
Frenchy Lunning
Piotr Szyhalski (mentor)

Dedicated to my life partner

Michael Flynn Reid

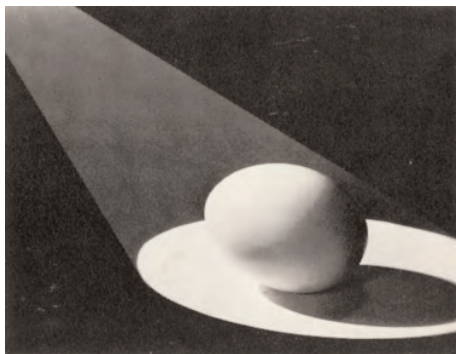


Figure 1
Egg in Spotlight
Paul Outerbridge

Paul Outerbridge—A Singular Aesthetic.
Ed. Elaine Dines. Laguna Beach:
Published on the Occasion of the Exhibition
for the Laguna Beach Museum of Art, 1981. 174

Introduction

The shadow has long been vested with power and meaning linked by tradition and culture. Consequently, you need not explore or search long before you find numerous ways the shadow has been used as a metaphor in religion and literature. During the story of creation in the *King James Version* of the Bible in the First Book, *Genesis*, God created the three necessary elements that are essential to create a shadow—darkness, a light source, and an object. By the end of the Fifth Verse, God separated the light from the darkness and time began. Whether intentional or not, at the end of the same verse, God also created somewhere in the world the first shadow. Thus, the shadow has been around since the dawn of time.

The Thesis Statement

The relationship between the elements of the shadow, light and the cast image of the object can be used as a legitimate metaphor for the individual, community or society and its relationship to power (*figure 1*).

It is in the relationship between the “dark figure that is cast or is thrown upon a surface by an object intercepting the direct rays of the sun or other luminary” that the metaphor lies. Specifically, it is the relationship between the object and the light (Oxford 2706). One might witness the power that the shadow possesses in several ways. One of its properties is its propensity to mask or hide meaning, objects or persons in its midst. This can be experienced as the shadow’s ability to represent a portion of the truth or maybe no truth at all. This will be revisited when we examine Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, and as a cinematic experience portrayed by Jean-Louis Baudry in his article *The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches To The Impression Of Reality In Cinema*. Another unique property of the shadow allows us to capture it and hold it through tracings, photography and other media; historically this has given the shadow the distinct capacity to span time—to fuse past and present together, much like a photograph. This notion was ascribed to the shadow in *The Natural History* 77 A.D. by Pliny who discussed the origin of painting. In this text, he described a maiden tracing the shadow of her beau before he left for war. This outline “immortalizes a presence in a form of an image, captures an instant and makes it last”—in other words, a mnemonic symbol that may be kept much like a photograph (Stoichita 19). Still Pliny and his contemporaries saw this outline as a replacement, a surrogate stand-in for her lover. Stoichita describes how this drawing on the wall allows the maiden to have her replacement while her lover takes his “real shadow” to escort him on his travels (15). Here the maiden and lover foiled time by capturing a shadow that would have faded and brought it forward in time to serve another distinct purpose.

During the course of this paper I will be examining four areas that inform and support my thesis. First, I will examine why the shadow has become an interest to me and how I see it's relationship to the world around me. Power can be broadly interpreted, so I will present the definition of power that I will use in this paper to look at the works of other artists involving the shadow. My basic understanding of power is based on the Post Modernist view held by Michel Foucault that power is knowledge; it is neutral and it is omnipresent. This will allow me to correlate aspects of power to the various elements of the shadow. Next, I will present some of the points made by Jean-Louis Baudy concerning the cinematic setting Plato created in the *Allegory of the Cave* (figure 2). Baudy saw the production in the cave as an apparatus or vehicle essentially devoid of meaning except for two diametrically opposed opposites illustrated by the components of the shadow as this set-up strived to represent the real with the unreal. Then, because we will be talking about the shadow as part of a projected image, I will address the issue of power and how we can observe power reveal itself as the shadow appears in the cinematic production. Finally, I will discuss several artists who have used shadow in their works and what associations to power can be found.

Discovering the Shadow

I have often found myself intrigued and fascinated by the shadow's temporal nature, as it seems to vanish when a cloud drifts in front of the sun and blocks its rays. Or perhaps I catch myself playing in the beams of a light, creating a shadow puppet with my hands and fingers and watching them transform and disappear. Then, too, having lost many friends during the 1980s due to the AIDS crisis, the passing shadow permits me to easily use the shadow as a metaphor representing life and its fleeting nature as expressed in the following stanza of a poem written by English writer, George Walter Thornbury, (1828–1876), *The Jester's Sermon*:

Dear sinners all, the fool began, "man's life is
but a jest,
A dream, a shadow, bubble, air, a vapor at
the best."

It was after hearing a lecture by Professor James H. Hall, theologian, from the University of Richmond, about Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, that I became even more fascinated by the shadow and its potential use in my art. Professor Hall explained Plato's intention by contrasting the world inside the cave opposed to the world that existed on the outside. From his perspective, Plato used the world of the interior of the cave and the comparison to the external

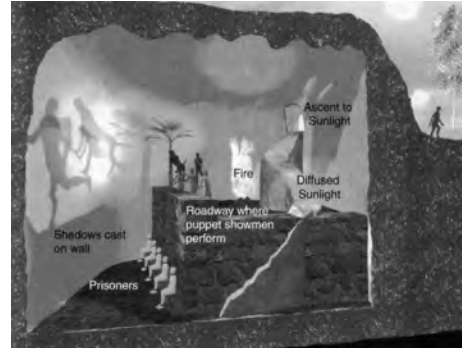


Figure2
Allegory of the Cave
Norman R. Schultz

Schultz, Norman. *Norman R. Schultz—Courses*. 2005.
<<http://normanschultz.org/Courses/graphics/Platocave.JPG>> 04 November 2005

world as a metaphor for the soul's inability to understand and to know true form while being possessed by the physical being. Compared to when the soul is released from the body and is allowed to emerge from the cave and can see truth as it really exists (Hall). It was not the explanation or the potential existence of the soul that caught my imagination, but this association with the real versus the non-real or, as Socrates would say, "enlightenment or unenlightenment" (Jowett 1) and our plight is to be so easily deceived by our perceptions.

As my artwork became more concerned with the dualistic aspect of mind and body, I began to appreciate the shadow's acute potential for representing body, mind and the psyche. Whether you think of the psyche as being comprised of Freud's id, ego and super ego, or in Platonic terms of self—reason, spirit and desire, or Karl Marx's natural self, species self and alienated self, it is clear that there is a portion of the psyche that operates silently and mysteriously in the background. The body, also, does not reveal truth as one might think. Seeing cannot equal believing because even the clearest vision produced by our physiology is flawed by a blindspot produced by the optic nerve attached to the back of the eye that is located in the center of the retina. The mind fills in this blindspot for us conveniently, but we are left with a reality that does not exist. The shadow, too, has the power not only to create an illusion to deceive us but also the capability to inform us as well.

The idea of using the shadow as a tool or to inform my art occurred to me after viewing Anthony Dunne and partner Fiona Raby's GPS Table during the Walker Art's exhibit, *Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life*, Fall 2003 (figure 3). This work, along with a couple others, interacted with unseen sound waves or frequencies that cause the art to respond in some fashion. This reminded me how the shadow reacts similarly in its environment. A shadow is ever present as are radio waves and sound waves. Most of us know they are there but not until it is brought to mind visually in some fashion do we really take account of it. Duane Michals, photographer, in a short film that bears his name said, "People confuse the appearances of trees and automobiles and people with reality itself... to photograph reality is to photograph nothing" (Haimes). Meaning to me, photographing reality is photographing the hidden or the invisible. Using the shadow in my art allows me to draw attention to the invisible through the visible is similar to Michals' photographs that included all that was captured whether seen or unseen on his film. The GPS Table reflected similarly through a visible output to draw attention to invisible global tracking waves that are ever-present in today's technological world.



Figure 3
GPS Table
Fiona Raby and Tony Dunne

Chadha, Gaurav.
Restoring the role of Gestures in Mobile Communication.
2003. Interaction Design Institute Ivrea.
04 November 2005
<http://www.interaction-ivrea.it/theses/2003-04/gesturesinmobilecommunication/documents/final_presentation_2_june_2004.pdf>

Shadow and Power

As I started to play with the shadow as medium and experiment creating shadows for my work, I began to notice how the darkened cast image responds to light when intercepted by an object. The object's cast image has a direct correlation with the light. Shadow responds to the object's location relative to the position of the light. For example, the closer the light is to the object, the larger the cast image will appear. If the light is diffused it causes another reaction; the crisper and brighter the beam, the sharper the edges and the darker the shadow may appear. The dimmer the light is, the softer the shadow will be. If the light source is composed by multiple beams or light bounced from a secondary source or a reflector, you probably experience multiple images cast by the object.

The other interesting aspect about the shadow: it appears many times in literature, theater and art, in which the shadow for the most part is ignored in daily life. We all assume it is there but because it seems to have an omnipresence few of us pay attention to the shadow or notice it as did the child in Robert Louis Stevenson's poem *My Shadow*:

*...The funniest thing about him is the way
he likes to grow
Not at all like proper children, which is
always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an
India-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's
none of him at all....*

The Shadow and Adam Smith's Invisible Hand

At first, it was a casual awareness of the omnipresence of light and shadow that brought power to mind. Particularly, this quasi-visible power that one may recognize but is generally ignored or unseen. The relationship that equates power's invisibility to the shadow's ability to represent the real and non-real is based on both how we perceive the shadow and power. This relationship plays between the relationship of the cast image and light and its similarity to our awareness to the presence of power and how power operates. First, I must turn to Victor Stoichita's examination of shadow and its ability to represent the apparent and the hidden. To demonstrate this characteristic, he points to Plato's dialogue *The Sophist* found in *The Republic*. Plato's understanding of the birth of art was not actually stated to involve Pliny's myth of the shadow, maiden and lover. Instead, Plato did see the specular reflection responsible for the mimetic status of painting (27).

This questionable reality is brought to light in the following passage from *The Sophist*:

'Well, sir, what could we say an image was, if not another thing ... of the same sort, copied from the real thing?'

"Of the same sort"? Do you mean another real thing, or what does "of the same sort" signify?'

'Certainly not real, but like it.'

'Meaning by "real" a thing that really exists?'

'Yes.'

'An by "not real" the opposite of real?'

'Of course.'

'Then by what is "like" you mean what has not real existence, if you are going to call it "not real".'

But it has some sort of existence.'

'Only not real existence, according to you.'

'Nor; except that it is really a likeness.' (26)

What Stoichita and Plato are examining is what is "real" as delivered by the shadow or by the painter and where the reality begins and ends. The shadow represents different realities and "realities" that are not real. An example would be a cast shadow of a building that can be seen and experienced as real. It is however not the real building nor is it a true representation of the real building. The shadow cannot equate all that the building is in reality. The building's shadow is merely a depiction of the building—a mimesis. It does not allow us to discern all the building is or contains. In fact, it may only be bales of hay that look like a building due to how the rays of light are blocked by the bales. It is here that the hidden power of the shadow lies — its ability to deceive the viewer into accepting semblance as likeness or reality. It is how the object responds to light and how the object intercepts the light that creates shadow both the likeness and a semblance neither being reality but at the same time be perceived as reality. Thus the shadows to have the quality to represent what can be seen, as well as the unseen.

The first relationship to power I tried to ascribe to the shadow involved Adam Smith's concept of the "Invisible Hand." Adam Smith was an economist and philosopher that lived between 1723–1790. His theory demonstrates power's nature to operate in an imperceivable manner. The apparentness of power cloaks the less apparent. Although, the theory as it relates to power operating invisibly worked, I dismissed it later because Smith correlated power's nature

to good. In his book entitled *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, which examines in detail the consequences of economic freedom he states:

Every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it ... He intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. (Joyce)

What he meant by this was that although capitalism and the behavior it promotes may be understood as freedom for the individual to advance their own good or promote their own well-being without regard for others, there is also an invisible action that takes place. In his eyes, what transpires is an individual act performed in their best interest. The individual thus inadvertently promotes the good of the community.

As indicated earlier, Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand" provides an economic power which possesses an omnipresence that functions virtually invisibly and provides me with a terrific metaphor for the shadow's hidden nature but it was flawed. It was flawed because I see the core essence of power as neither good or bad. Adam Smith saw the "Invisible Hand" ultimately was tied to a Higher Power, or in other words, to a Supreme Being. Adam Smith "saw the 'Invisible Hand' as the mechanism by which a benevolent God administered the universe in which human happiness was maximized"(Joyce). Since Adam Smith's view of God was as an omniscient and good Being— the power will ultimately advance society and create prosperity:

Although, in my mind his feature of Smith's theory was not totally suitable for my purposes. I did find an example of power that demonstrated a kinship between the invisible nature of power and the hidden aspects of the shadow. One that I could use to support my use of the shadow as metaphor for power. Another view of this relationship that exists between the shadow and power is that each has a presence that dominates its appearance and hides totality of its identity or their hidden nature.

Foucault and his View of Power—Finding a Fit



Figure 4
Michel Foucault

Piscitelli. *Arqueólogo de las Ideas/Genealogista del poder*.
24 June 04.
Educar—El portal educativo del Estado argentino.
15 Oct 2005
<<http://weblog.educ.ar/sociedadinformacion/archives/001951.php>>

It was not until I read the article *Power and Resistance* as presented by John Hartman to the Meeting of the Foucault Circle in March, 2003 that I could begin to relate the characteristics of the shadow to that of power. I found what I needed in a footnote that referred to an article published in 1988. It quoted a conversation between Michel Foucault (1926–1984), and Micheal Bess, from Vanderbilt University. Here Foucault, the French philosopher and a “historian of systems of thought” explained, “Power should not be understood as an oppressive system bearing down on individuals from above, smiting them with prohibitions of this or that. Power is a set of relations”(3)(*figure 4*). To Foucault, power was omnipresent as is light and impossible to avoid. Power was not imposed as in a medieval system or feudalist system of government in a top to bottom structure. It was an internalized system that was self-policing based on a Christian pastoral relationship such as: confessor/pastor, student/teacher, or state/individual. In this system power may be about intimidating a party but not by using force (6). The subject is “fundamentally free” to do what they may. In this article Foucault demonstrated his notion by using an example of smashing a tape recorder down on a table in order to make a subject mad or frightened in order to get them to do something. In this example, no force would be used, just intimidation. Foucault explained it as this “shaping of ... behavior through certain means, that is power. I’m not forcing you at all and I’m leaving you completely free – that’s when I begin to exercise power”(3).

This pastoral relationship that Foucault used to explain the nature of power can be easily transferred and adapted to explain the relationships that exist within the shadow model. The shadow has three components: light, an object that obstructs the rays of the light and the resulting cast image that is produced by the interrelationship between the object and light. Foucault’s description also has three components: the source of power, the subject and the resulting behavior. Using the shadow as a metaphor for power each of the components of power has a corresponding component in the shadow model. The light is equivalent to the source exercising power, the subject correlates to the object, and the cast image correlates to the resulting behavior. Please note that desired behavior is not mentioned because as discussed earlier, the subject has the freedom to react as they please.

The metaphor can continue to be seen as the components interact. While exercising power one does not have to use force in the Foucault model but merely influence behavior of the subject. The same is true in the relationship that exists in the light/object/cast image relationship. The light influences the “behavior” of the object as to what the

resulting cast image may simulate. If the object is human, the individual has the freedom to choose what the resulting image/behavior looks like. If the individual extends his/her index and middle fingers and folds the rest of the fingers within the palm of one hand and raises that hand to the back of their head, the resulting shadow might be considered to resemble an alien from a different planet or a large insect. The subject intercepting the rays of light has the freedom to interact with the light. In the preceding case, the chosen position destroys their likeness. A person can interact with a power source in whatever manner they might choose. The subject's resulting shadow caused by the interaction with light and object is equivalent to the subject action/behavior in the face of power. The subject is free to take whatever action they choose. Please remember, not reacting is a result of power influence too.

Knowing just a few characteristics about light such as only if one goes to extreme measures to exclude it, light is everywhere. In terms of wavelength it has a wide range, from short gamma rays to long radio waves. The human eye can only read a very narrow band. Light can vary in color depending on the source that produces it. When I read Beaudoin's article quoting Foucault as saying, "power is everywhere" (1990, 93) but not as a seamless undifferentiated presence"(2). I could not help but see the parallel. Then the article proceeded to say that Foucault recognized power as "always local, polyvalent, shifting, "enigmatic," and "ubiquitous" (1977, 213), unstable permanence in human relations, a permanence with no simple "origin" and no singular "location" (2). After reading this I was given even more evidence to support my notion of light equaling power. Foucault's nature of power strongly resemble the nature of light as I described. Light is omnipresent, reacts with other sources, and is localized as demonstrated by the parable *The Allegory of the Cave*. In *The Allegory* spectral light existed outside the cave while fire created the light to cast shadows on the wall in the interior. *The Allegory* will be discussed in greater detail later. Thus my case of being able to equate the nature of power and nature of light was made even stronger and my metaphor a better fit.

Foucault equated power to knowledge, and to illustrate his theory he used the Panopticon, a prison that was an architectural concept of English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). The prison consisted of a central guard tower that was surrounded by the inmate's cells that were open to the gaze of the guards within the central tower (*figure 5*). The prison was designed so the prisoners that occupied the cells could not know whether or not the guards were present and observing their behavior. Thus, the inmates responded by becoming self-regulating because of



Figure 5
Guardhouse inside Panoptic Prison

Frisch, Max. *Bluebeard*. posting unknown.
Pirate Utopia.Org. 15 Oct 2005
<<http://www.pirateutopia.org/bluebeard/rupertsRant.htm>>

the ambiguous power situation that existed for them. There existed a “*differential possession of knowledge*,” (Foucault 223) meaning the authorities knew staffing policies but the inmates never knew when the guardhouse was occupied and began to act as if the central guard tower was staffed continually. The gaze that the inmates experienced can be used as a metaphor for the light. As light permanently projects on an object, the light becomes an accepted element of the shadow; the light is acknowledged but never really seen. Although occasionally noticed, the shadow is accepted and internalized as being part of our environment but seldom is acknowledged to exist. In a sense, the inmates never see the guardhouse as empty and our experience of the shadow is never seeing the light as *on*.

What is interesting about this metaphor is how the subject might decide to interact with the shadow and the inmate might come to modify behavior takes place in a fairly comparable manner. As stated earlier, as one would grow oblivious to the light and the cast image, the inmate too becomes oblivious to their situation in the cellblock. Even though they are not consciously aware of the one-way glass, their behavior does not alter. They still act as if they are fully aware of being watched under the gaze of the guards. Occasionally the prisoner becomes conscious of the situation and perhaps takes a moment or two to evaluate his behavior and make adjustments due to his circumstances. Similarly the subject becomes aware of his or her cast image and perhaps interacts with the light and manipulates the shadow in some manner. In both instances, the subject or inmate takes notice of the situation and acknowledges—the gaze/light—and either makes a conscious decision to alter one’s behavior or not.

Lastly, I want to come back to the notion that I found unsettling in using Adam Smith’s model of power. As you remember, the thought in Adam Smith’s theory I objected to was the invisible power that caused the individual to contribute to the common good was linked to God. The dogma that Smith subscribed to was that: because God is benevolent his power would ultimately produce positive results. The thought going something like this: If God is all good, therefore God’s power must be all good too. The reason for my objection was that I did not see the shadow, and how it related to object and light as being good or bad—only neutral. Michel Foucault judged power to be deemed neutral too. Tom Beaudoin, in his article, “Foucault-Teaching Theology” summed up Foucault thoughts this way:

Power is not simply “good” or “bad.” All power is ambiguous, and even the most benevolent exercise of it cannot claim

innocence. Foucault's subtle and complex account of power suggests that if power is not a zero-sum game, persons, groups, and institutions can simultaneously be victims and oppressors.(27)

You can look at the relationship of light, object, and cast image as a zero-sum game. A zero-sum game cannot have two winners or losers and where the amount of "winnable goods" are fixed. Whatever is gained by one player is therefore lost by the other actor: the sum of gained and lost is zero (Heylighen). Since power is based on a set of relations such as: teacher/student, no matter which partner wins or loses the net sum won is zero. The shadow as a projected illusion essentially is a product produced by the light and object/subject relationship and the portion of the rays that are blocked (figure 6). The winning or losing due to this relationship results in how the cast image might look—the gain to the "winner" is zero and the loss to the "loser" is also zero. Therefore, either the light or the object can be seen as victim or oppressor at the same time. The light might be considered a loser if the subject distorts their likeness in some way.

The Shadow Created from an Apparatus--Power Revealed

Victor Stoichita, in a *Short History of the Shadow* refers to *The Allegory of the Cave* as, "... a highly problematic episode" (21) but he acknowledges, "that the whole theory of Western cognitive representation is based on this strange scenario is highly significant (21)."

In Plato's *Allegory*, he begins the dialogue by setting the stage describing both the interior and the exterior of the cave and constructs a cinematic apparatus that projects shadows to the cave's captive audience (figure 7). Using these shadows was "projected a second degree world" (22). Stoichita describes this world inside the cave as "second degree." He understood Plato's strategy in this parable was to compose a world of contrast, to teach, and to demonstrate to his students how one perceives reality. The captives in the cave only were able to view reality through the shadow. The shadow was a projected image using a nocturnal light and an object that intercepted the light to cast a shadow. It was a second image not even a copy but only a resemblance of the original object. At the outset of the parable, Plato's protagonist, Socrates, divulges to Glaukon what they are about to examine: "to what extent our nature is enlightened or unenlightened" (Jowett 1). With this, he establishes a scenario where the shadow will be equipped with the power to represent unreal as real

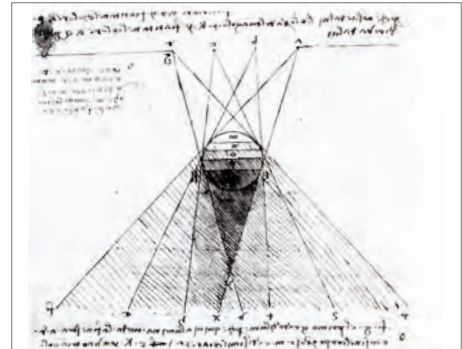


Figure 6
Leonardo da Vinci, study of shadow projection, c.1492.

Stoichita, Victor. *A Short History of the Shadow*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1997. 63

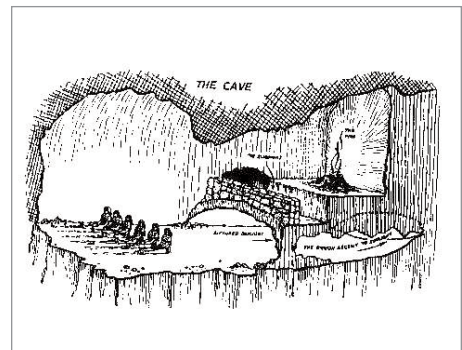


Figure 7
Plato's Cave

Cohen, Marc. *Philosophy 320—History of Ancient Philosophy*. 1 Oct 2004. University of Washington. 15 Oct 05 <<http://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/320/cave.htm>>

and make the visible and invisible. It is no mistake that Plato chooses the shadow created by fire for “the shadow represents the stage that is furthest away from the truth”(Stoichita 25).

In Plato’s eyes the shadow created by the nocturnal light of fire, was the absolute opposite of sunlight (25).

This is how Plato sets the stage:

Behold! Human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open toward the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.(Jowett 1)



Figure 8
Shadow Play
Nina Sobell and Emily Hartzell

Hartzell, Emily, and Sobell, Nina. *Shadow Play*.
15 May 95.
New York University Center
for Advanced Technology. 20 Oct 05
<http://cat.nyu.edu/parkbench/parkbench/5_15_95.html
>

To heighten the illusion produced by these puppeteers and their puppets that interacted with the light for the observers, Plato created a space that could enhance the visual experience with sound. The space that Plato conceived, Jean-Louis Baudry called a “cinematographic apparatus,” because it so closely resembled a modern-day movie theater(763). Plato describes the cave as having outstanding acoustics. The sound that is generated at the back of the house and outside the cave by the actors and people traveling past the entrance bounces back from the wall in front of the prisoners to them. The illusion with the addition of sound added to the shadow, has the capacity to be misinterpreted for reality: “the aim ... being no more momentary make-believe than the ‘shadows’ are the things ‘themselves’”(Stoichita 22). Given Baudry’s view it is easy to see the parallel because he believes that this is a similar endeavor to what motion pictures and their producers do for today’s audiences. They create an illusion that aims to be seen as reality. It is worth looking at how Socrates describes the scene to Glaukon:

Sokrates: And suppose further that the prisoners heard an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

Glaukon: No question, he replied. (Jowett 2)

Why did Plato go to such extremes to put such a tight focus on the shadow by creating such an elaborate scene? Baudry suggests, “in order ... to demonstrate, reveal, and make understood what sort of illusion underlies our direct contact with the real” (763). The viewer “is led to the place ... which is itself a mere prop of reality, which is merely its image, its copy, its simulacrum.” As Baudry said at the beginning of his article “and even [a] simulacrum of simulacrum”(760). Which is to say, the puppeteers regardless of what images the light cast before the prisoners, would only be a copy of the the original puppet, perhaps having only an slight resemblance. If the puppet was inspired by another object, animal or being, then there would only be a likeness of a semblance—a copy of a copy.

What is truly remarkable about Plato’s allegory is how well the light and object interrelate and are used to cause confusion for the occupants of the cave in distinguishing reality from non-reality. Both writers acknowledged the power of the shadow, and understood that this metaphorical apparatus creates an alternate reality from an illusion or turns the illusion into reality.

Now that I have introduced the cinematic apparatus into this essay and since much of my work involves the projected image, I feel an obligation to defend my thesis as it relates to the projected image.

In the previous paragraphs, I made several arguments. First, that according to Foucault power is ever-present, not imposed from the top down. The participants are fundamentally free and that power ultimately is a set of relationships between the surveyor and the surveyed. The subject’s behavior is self-regulating because of an ambiguous situation that exists for them due to a differential possession of knowledge that the surveyor holds and that is what impacts the prisoners’ behavior. For the purpose of the metaphor light holds the position of surveyor or the guards in Foucault’s illustration of his theory as he related to Bentham’s panopticon.

Finding the Panopticon’s Influence in the Projected Image

Can Plato’s allegory be likened to the panopticon? Is there a surveyor present? My answer is yes. However to the best of my knowledge Foucault never addressed the coercive qualities of the cinematic screen.

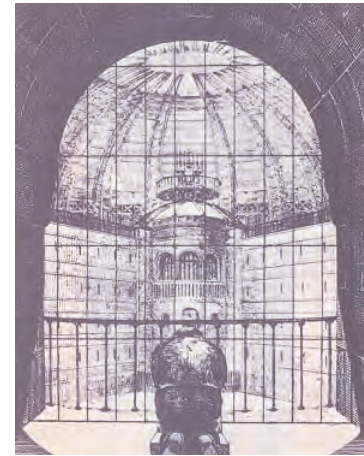


Figure 9
Panopticon Prison from Cell

Garrard, Richard. *Panopticon: Government And Privacy In The New Millenium*.
Jan 03. Humanists of Utah.org. 15 Oct 05
<http://www.humanistsofutah.org/2003/Panopticon_Jan-03.html>



Figure 10
Panoptic School

Frisch, Max. *Bluebeard*. posting unknown.
Pirate Utopia.Org. 15 Oct 2005
<[http://www.pirateutopia.org/
bluebeard/rupertsRant.htm](http://www.pirateutopia.org/bluebeard/rupertsRant.htm)>

By examining both Plato's scenario in the cave and projected image as it takes place in a theater, we can see the panoptic effect on the patrons of the cinema and as well as on Plato's prisoners in the cave. For the purposes of this exercise Baudry becomes a bit more interpretive when speaking about the cave.

The gaze becomes apparent in the contemporary movie house when the projector is turned on. You may notice that the projectors in the cinema today are almost never off around showtimes. The gaze is "implied" (Winonkur 4) and this exhibits itself by people whispering to one another, sitting quietly and turning off cell phones. You may even see young people acting out in the face of the gaze/power by throwing items or doing something else to test the gaze and the presence of the "surveyor" (Winonkur 1). People assume someone is nearby and watching them. The surveyor could be the projectionist, an attendant or management—a stand in for the guard of the panopticon. You may have noticed during one of your visits no one ever seems to be present in the projection booth and unless the movie is sold out the ushers are seldom in the theater. People just act as if the surveyor is there. The cinema patron has internalized the discipline sought. The knowledge of power lays with the assumption of management's presence (*figures 9 and 10*).

In the cave, the gaze seems mysteriously absent but in this instance we are the surveyors along with Plato, Gloukon and Socrates. The story is constructed for us to observe and derive the lessons it teaches. Drawing a connection between the prisoners and today's moviegoer is a bit more complex but Baudry makes this connection for us.

Baudry describes the scene in the cave that was not unlike Foucault's concept of power. Baudry believes that the prisoners have a choice—they could leave. He acknowledges that there are chains holding the prisoners in place but introduces the idea that the restraints are only metaphors. He suggests that what is really holding these people in their place is that projections and the shadowplay on the walls have captured their attention. To quote Baudry:

its figuration or its projection onto the wall/screen of the cavern in front of them and from which they cannot detach their eyes and turn away. They are bound, shackled to the screen, tied and related—relation, extension between it and them...(764)

But how does the screen have such power? Baudry suggests that "desire" is operating invisibly and holding the occupants of the cave in their seat when he says, "We can propose the allegory of the cave is the text of a signifier

of desire which haunts the invention of cinema and the history of its invention”(767).

What he means by this is that the whole story is really about the desire as Baudry see it, “...the philosopher (Plato) is first of all a spokesman of desire...”(767). Plato sees the “appetitive soul (emotion or desire) is the portion of each of us that wants and feels many things, most of which must be deferred in the face of rational pursuits if we are to achieve a salutary degree of self control”(Kemerling 6). Therefore Baudry believes we can make this assumption.

With Baudry’s recognition that it is the strength of desire that holds the prisoners we can make another connection with the modern day movie house and how the gaze and desire operate together to make the audience both surveyor and surveyed.

The film and television industry use both psychology and physiology to exert control over the audience. The male gaze, a term coined by Laura Mulvey, is one of these ploys. The gaze objectifies women and the movie maker presents the ‘woman as image’ (or ‘spectacle’)” (Chandler 2).

In this situation the panoptic gaze casts the male moviegoer as both the surveyor and the surveyed. At best he is unwittingly satisfying his voyeuristic needs, at worst he is projecting his “repressed desire on the performer” (Mulvey 9).

Further, Mark Winokur sees other similarities between the movie theater, the cave and the panopticon. He sees the film viewers situation similar to prisoners in a penal colony. The prisoners have equal viewing access to the guardhouse and similarly the guardhouse to them. The same is true to the moviegoer they “are equally distributed in the space of the theater in a manner that gives each person similar access to the film screen, reciprocally giving the screen equal access to each viewer.”(5). Winokur observes, too, that the moviegoer and the inmate has a similar “monadic experience”(5). This experience is a singular experience and the focal point of their experience is either the guardhouse or the movie screen (*figure 11*).

Thus, I believe the projected image does fit Foucault’s panoptic model of power. Both Mulvey and Winokur’s view is that people are being surveyed but do not possess the knowledge of the surveyor. They see those viewing the projected images as being manipulated by their desires and perceptions. The discipline that governs their behavior is internalized—they are forced to do nothing (Bessen). Lastly, Winokur strongly believes that the “prisoners’ relationship with the tower is less deceptive than our relationship to the screen”(5) because the media of illusion is non-existent. In other words, there is no massive guardhouse sitting before the viewers to remind them that they are being watched. Our desires are being monitored but surreptitiously through advertising sales, bottomlines and preemptive censorship without the viewers’ knowledge(5).



Figure 11

Photo credit: Millen

Millen. *films*. 13 July 2005. Videoasylum.Com.
15 October 2005
<[http://www.videoasylum.com/scripts/t.pl?f=films
&cm=37713](http://www.videoasylum.com/scripts/t.pl?f=films&cm=37713)>

Turrell, Walker and Viola



Figure 12
The Greeting, 1995
Bill Viola

Wainwright, Jean. "Telling Times." *The Art of Bill Viola*.
Ed. Chris Townsend.
London: Thames & Hudson, 2004. 110.



Figure 13
An Abbreviated Emancipation, 2002
Kara Walker

Reid-Pharr. "Black Girl Lost." *Kara Walker—Pictures
From Another Time*. Ed. Annette Dixon. Hong Kong:
C&C Offset Printing Co., Ltd. 2002. 29

During the course of this paper, I presented the definition of power based on the Postmodernist view held by Michel Foucault that power is knowledge, in the face of power people are still free to do as they choose, it is neutral, and it is omnipresent. I correlated these aspects of power to the various elements of the shadow and its relationship to object and light. I presented some of the points that Jean-Louis Baudry made concerning the cinematic setting Plato created in his dialogue of the *Allegory of the Cave*. Baudry saw the production in the cave as an apparatus or vehicle essentially devoid of meaning but it is the performers and shadows that they cast in correlation with the viewers experience that produces meaning. The same panoptic metaphors that Foucault promoted in *Discipline and Punishment* apply to this setting as well as today's moviegoers. The movie theater setting can produce an implied gaze as pointed out by Winonkur, or as Mulvey and Baudry believe a producer who can manipulate viewer perception and desires can produce the same panoptic effect as the prisoners within Bentham's panoptic prison. Both parties internalize behavior due to their environment. Now it is time to find someone who can control the light.

The artists I chose to discuss in the balance of this paper are James Turrell, Kara Walker and Bill Viola. I chose these artists because they all acknowledge and demonstrate how the shadow and the Platoian fable figures into their work. They see their work and the medium they use as providing the means to break through perceptions and perceived truths and present a means for their audience to discover an alternate fit for reality. Some would say that they make the invisible visible. None of these artists use their work to preach at their audience. They work only to remove the camouflage that is inherent to physiology, culture and in societal pressures. Once uncovered, they merely let the viewer draw their own conclusions. In the book *The Art of Bill Viola*, Rhys Davies states that the installation, "demands a personal and entirely subjective interpretation based on interaction and the individual's cognitive processes"(143).

These installations, which if not exclusively projected are in part, reminiscent of traditional shadow-play performances. The staging and setups for these shows include viewing the screen from both sides, spatial viewing (which means performing the work in the center of an audience) and performing without a screen. Although historic, these arrangements move the performances and projections out from the black box—a darkened room in the middle of a gallery or a theater. Off-screen projection and installations are more in keeping with my interests. I would liken the installation and its relationship to the

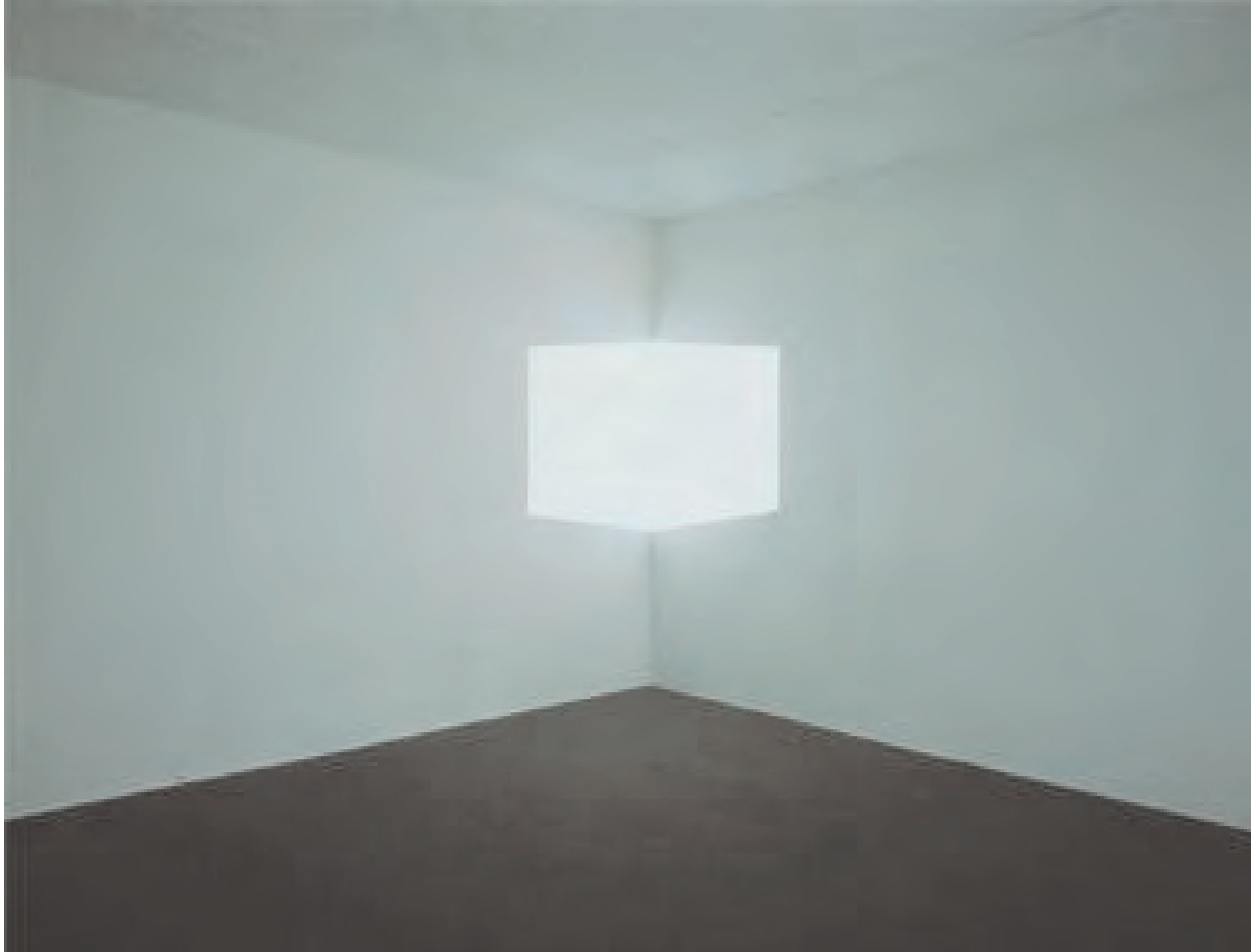


Figure 14
James Turrell, Cross Corner Projection Pieces: *Afrum*, 1967.

Source Data from: University of California, San Diego.

viewer similarly to a person being out-of-doors on a sunny day and a cloud passing between the sun and the individual on the ground.

The shadow of the individual is usurped into the bigger shadow of the cloud. When a person steps inside an installation they become part of the art. The experience for individuals changes in relationship to their shadow being engulfed in the larger shadow. So too does the individual's relationship change as they are being engulfed by the art.

As I discuss each artists' work I will continue to focus on the shadow. The shadow and its relationship to object and light is a metaphor for power, but as you will see each of these artists use this metaphor to lay bare the perception of the viewer and cause them to ponder a new revelation.

James Turrell

“When we see light, we don’t really pay much attention to the light itself.”

—James Turrell



Figure 15
James Turrell, *Meeting Installation*,
1980/1986 from *Skyspaces Series*.

Source Data from: University of California, San Diego

James Turrell sees the power that exists in the light itself. While the other artists may use the object and its reflection to create a positive shape, Turrell takes the light and object and reverses how we commonly look at this relationship. In Turrell’s art he uses the negative shape to define the positive shape and that positive shape is composed of light. He constructs the space in such a way we see the light rather than the object’s cast shadow, and handles it in such a way that light demonstrates its own power to play with our sense of sight and perceptions of reality.

James Turrell would tell you he plumbs light into a space (Miller). He was born in 1943 and raised as a Quaker, which means that his family would go to meeting to wait on the Light. Meeting is what Quakers call church. When they refer to waiting on the Light, they are referring to the Light that resides within each of us. Quakers believe that Light is God and this is where the Quaker peace testimony originates. Simply put, killing a fellow human being is akin to killing God. The Quaker waits on Light to provide “leadings” related to how to live ones’ life and perhaps revelations relating to faith and practice. Quakers would say they do not pray, they wait. They wait for God to reveal Him, Herself or Itself in order to do Its will (Whalen 1). Turrell often tells a story about his grandmother and himself that he related to Whittaker:

My grandmother used to tell me that as you sat in Quaker silence you were to go inside to greet the light. That expression stuck with me. One thing about Quakers, and I think many Friends might laugh about this, is that often people wonder what you’re supposed to do, when you go in there. And it’s kind of hard to say. Telling a child to go inside “to greet the light” is about as much as was ever told to me. (1)

It is little wonder that his interest in light was piqued. One would expect that his interest would be of a solely religious or spiritual nature but to the contrary, his undergraduate studies included perceptual psychology and optical illusions which he uses to combine light, sight and color to create “an atmosphere that can be consciously plumbed with seeing ”(Miller). In the PBS website’s interview he likened it to: “the wordless thought that comes from looking in a fire”(Miller).

For me the most important links that Turrell makes to the power of the shadow is when he is quoted as saying, “Light is the material, perception is the medium”(16).

Sounds a bit like the Plato’s cave, does it not? In fact, James Turrell is not shy about drawing similarities to the *Allegory of the Cave* to his work:

I make spaces that apprehend light for our perception, and in some way gather it, or seem to hold it. So in that way it’s a little bit like Plato’s cave. We sit in the cave with our backs to reality, looking at the reflection of reality on the cave wall. As an analogy to how we perceive, and the imperfections of perception, I think this is very interesting. (Whittaker 15)

Turrell presents a view very similar to Baudry concerning the cinematic apparatus that constitutes the cave in which, he plays with our perception of reality. He acknowledges we only get a reference of the original object to begin with—a simulacrum. That he manipulates it through light presents us with yet another version of reality, but here too it is only a representation of the alternate reality thus another simulacrum. In the end it is, as Baudry would say “a simulacrum of a simulacrum”(Baudry 760). By exposing this fraud of reality he hopes to give the viewer evidence that the perceived reality is merely perception and that truth is harbored elsewhere. He never professes that the alternate reality is the true reality, only another representation. The importance for him in doing so is to create an awareness for the viewer of the “prejudiced perception that we have”(Whittaker 3), because he sees that this ability to break these perceptions and see alternate realities allow us to find solutions to problems that confront society such as energy, climate change and poverty.

The two series where he “plumbs” with the light to reveal that our perception does not tell us the whole story, are the *Projection Pieces* (1966 – 69) and *Skyspaces* (1975 – present).

In the *Projection* series (image) he forms light by projecting across a corner with a modified quartz halogen projector. Essentially it is a rectangle that is projected across a corner in such away that from a distance there appears to be a cube floating off the floor. The cube appears to be attached to the corner of the space. From a distance the shape appears to be solid, but in reality it is composed of light. At a distance, and moving from side to side, one can substantiate this impression because the cube seems to reveal itself in perspective. Moving toward it, the image eventually dissolves to the point where you see not the object, but the actual light on the wall (Turrell 59).

Here is where the power of the light presents itself. It

reveals the invisible. That is what I find so interesting in Turrell's artwork: the ability to re-fashion light and space to construct something new.

In the case of *Skyspaces*, he deconstructs space to reveal another way to observe reality. In *Skyspaces*, the art consists of actual cuts through the roof and ceiling of a structure. These sky openings are above the horizon line (*figure 15*). This work deals with the juncture of the interior space and the space outside the building. By creating a "skyspace" in such a way, the sky drops down to the plane of the ceiling. The opening often appears as an opaquely painted surface on the ceiling. In essence, by creating this hole and adding a bit of interior light it reorientates the occupant's experience and squashes our perception of the height of the sky and brings it down to a few feet above our head (Turrell 96).

These works allow us to see our relationship to space in another form. Perhaps power as seen through the shadow is nothing more than a gauge that allows us to measure our ability to be engaged in the world by providing us a means to acknowledge that our senses are not adept enough to deliver a true reality. How can we see things solely as black and white, when there are so many grays? In a BBC World Service interview James Turrell expresses his hope:

*Rather than being a journal of my seeing,
it is about your seeing... I would just like
to take you and put you in front of this
mountain in a way you couldn't miss it.
It's all that I can hope for and that way
there is a possibility that the same kind of
delight of seeing that happens to me, could
happen to you.*



Figure 16
Kara Elizabeth Walker, *Insurrection! (our tools were rudimentary, yet we pressed on)* 2000,
Centre d'art contemporain (Geneva, Switzerland)

Kara Walker

“How do you make representations of your world given what you’ve been given.”

—Kara Walker

Kara Walker formally addresses power and works to strip away the veneer/romance of history to reveal our inaccurate perceptions of the present (O’Brien 16). One of her goals is to unmask the state of race relations in the U.S..

Kara Walker is an African American. In the second season of PBS’s *Art 21* she recounts her experience while reading *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell. She witnesses her own struggle with being drawn into the romantic imagery of the idyllic South and at the same time being confronted by stark racism portrayed in the book. One of the harsher passages she notes is the scene when Scarlet O’Hara after returning to her family’s plantation, Terra, was forced to forage for food. Scarlet ventures into the slave quarters to root for tubers and was “overcome with a niggery scent and vomited”(Miller). Walker says she was continually torn; between wanting to both “be the heroine and wanting to kill Scarlet all at the same time”

(Miller). Walker says this was when she finally recognized how our perceptions of the past can affect our perceptions of the present.

Her work speaks of power in a traditional manner understood by most people. The power she seeks to reveal is how power can dominate another in terms of one person holding power over another. However, she holds the Postmodernistic view that power is invisible and being invisible it is free to shape our attitudes and perceptions without notice—similar to light.

She would say she is a black person that is torn between two realities. The reality that our society promotes, that strained and antagonistic views of race relations are a thing of the past, and the less dominate view of reality, that disparity and distrust between the races still exists.

Simple proof of these competing views are the political fights over affirmative action and voting rights. For example, the vast majority of the public believes that minority-owned businesses have equal footing in the marketplace while others believe special bidding procedures should be in place to assure minority-owned businesses get their fair share. Attitudes held towards education and minorities are similar. Some advocate that minorities have should greater access to higher education, while the majority of people, that compose the “other,” believe that no special arrangements need to be made and the market place will cure any inequities. Walker brings this dichotomy to her art and as a result is able to create work that allows people to examine the views they hold.

To do this Kara Walker uses silhouetted figures that she cuts from black paper very much styled after the black silhouette portraits done by artists in the Victorian Era. These silhouettes are of imagined images of the South belonging to the period before the American Civil War. Some of the cutouts feature the images of “masters,” “belles,” “mammies,” and “sambos” (Guggenheimcollection.org). She then creates installations with these cutout black images by pasting them onto gallery walls.

The reason she uses images that reflect the past is that she recognizes “that we can be trapped by our perceptions of the present but not by our view of the past”(O’Brien 16).

In her works, *In Darkytown Rebellion* (2000) and *Insurrection!* (2000), in addition to the silhouetted figures she combines an overhead projector to cast colorful backgrounds and landscapes throughout the installations to create a “theatrical space”(O’Brien 16) (*figure 16*). She positions the projector about thirty feet from the wall to catch the viewer in the scene. Very often the figures are approximately the same size as the gallery visitor’s shadow. She says in *Art New England* that she does this to “implicate the visitor” and she believes that what cannot be seen dominates their thinking they fill in the details” (16).

In addition in another interview with Ali Subotnick, Walker adds, “they, also, aid in destroying, or at least disrupting the image for a while”(26) .

You can not view her art without thinking of the shadows on the wall of Plato’s Cave as the projector, shadows and silhouettes combine to build complex images on the walls. Jerry Cullum, says, “She attempts to defuse the racist romantic dialogue by satirizing it, while implicitly denying that there is a single, knowable “historical reality”(46).

O’Brien writes, “Walker mirrors a Postmodern distrust of history, a belief that history is so many morality tales woven into the motives and methods of the historian”(16).

At this point, we have to consider whether or not the shadow is being used for a metaphor for power. In the case of the cutouts, even though they are not cast images these images speak to the endurance of perception over time. They do not fade as the light dims nor do they morph into other shapes. Images of the past are burned into the consciousness of society. They are satirized and question historical reality.

The shadow of the viewer being cast into the scene on the wall also addresses power and our relative powerlessness in the face of it. The viewer may try to avoid having the projector beam thrusting his or her shadow within the scene on the wall, but no matter where the viewer is in the room their shadow is still cast in relationship to the installation. The gallery visitor is nonetheless implicated in scene. Earlier in this paper I quoted Tom Beaudoin asserting that power is neutral: neither good or bad. I believe that even though Kara Walker installed a piece of art designed to speak with shadows her metaphor for power can still be seen as neutral. The power does not lie with the projection but rather allows the viewer an opportunity to reconfigure their thoughts and ideas. Even though the artist uses a didactic device within her art she does not moralize. She allows the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions and she believes that “what cannot be seen dominates their thinking as they fill in the details” (16).

The artist is only trying to call into question the perception of reality the visitor holds. The conclusions are strictly up to the viewer. Beyve Saar, another African American artist said:

I felt the work of Kara Walker was sort of revolting and negative and a form of betrayal to the slaves, particularly women and children; that it was basically for the amusement and the investment of the white art establishment (Ravin).

Does Ms. Saar's comments prove that the power of the shadow communicates as one would think Walker wants it to? I do not think so. Ms. Saar probably did exactly what Walker was intending. Ms Saar called into the question the state of race relations by her bold remarks.

Is Walker correct in her assumption that America's current perception of race or class relations are inaccurate? I think so and I think that many in the press were equally persuaded in the wake of Katrina as the media discovered the only people that were left in New Orleans were the poor and black. Kara Walker does not use her shadows to preach right or wrong; she uses shadows in her work to expose viewers to what is invisible in the visible. That again is the real power of the shadow.

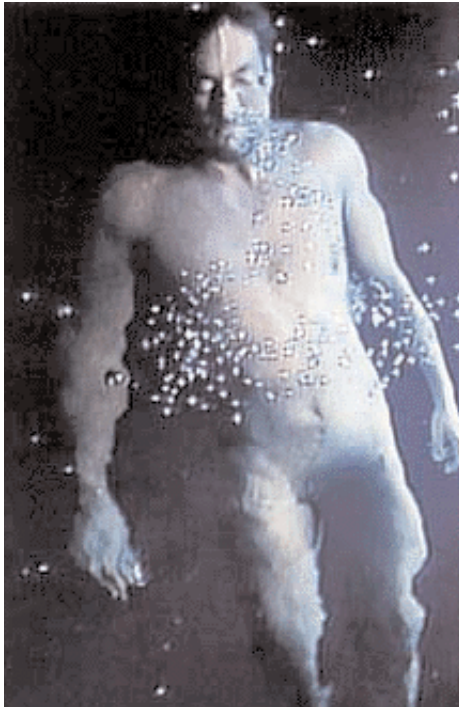


Figure 17
The Messenger, 1996
Bill Viola

Jasper, David. "Screening Angels." *The Art of Bill Viola*.
Ed. Chris Townsend.
London: Thames & Hudson, 2004. 110.

Bill Viola

"Why—even with a work moving this achingly slowly—is it difficult to take in everything that is happening?"

—Jean Wainwright
referring to *The Greeting*
The Art of Bill Viola

Bill Viola is one of the pioneers in the video art scene and has been working with the medium since the 1970s. One of the reasons I included him in this thesis was because in an interview I read titled, *The Ultimate Invisible World*. Bill Viola gave the following reasons he chose video as his medium:

When I first came across video, I wanted to use it like that—to see the unseen. I came of age in the late 60s and my generation was quite conscious of the fact that we were pushing the boundaries of what was apparent - trying to go beneath the surface, or surfaces. I realised then that new mediatoools like video have an extraordinary ability to do this (24).

The keywords were to "to see the unseen." That for me is what my work with the shadow is really all about. That is where the shadow bares all of its power. It makes visible the invisible. It makes visible the position of the light, the number of lights, the type of light and the color of the lights. If the observer is paying attention the shadow reveals much.

Viola sees the water as his connection to the shadow due to a childhood near-drowning experience (Gayford 24). He sees water as the ultimate medium for the image because "it has a captivating surface, and it has a dark, uncertain depth"(24). Bill Viola acknowledges that the *Allegory of the*

Cave can be applied to his work in that in the water images we only see the reflection, not the actual thing itself. Bill Viola recognizes:

It's no coincidence that the myth of Narcissus has been so powerful for millennia. This phenomenon, and its complement, the shadow, maintain a very deep connection within us(24).

Viola does not use shadow or light as one might expect to be spoken about within these pages. He does use shadowy images in his videos, as well as the reflected image of an actor in a piece titled *Mirgration* (1976). In *Mirgration*, Viola says, "He was particularly interested in the idea of resolution, i.e., that even if you can't see something because it is too far or too small, it exists nonetheless"(Davies 145). In this work, he videotapes a scene with a man sitting in front of a table and a bowl of water. Above the bowl is a spigot with a very slow drip coming from it. The viewer can see the man's reflection in the bowl, as well as when the camera zooms in on the drop the viewer realizes the man's image exists in every drop that emerges from the tap.

In both *The Greeting* and *Migrations*, Viola uses video to capture the unexpected and the formally unperceived. In keeping with the other artists mentioned in this paper, he uses his work to cause a pause and reintroduce the viewer's perception to his or herself again. Gaylord sees Bill Viola's view of video as a "microscope to vision"(24). In *Migration*, he addresses scale and what might go unseen due its size or the viewer's inattentiveness.

The Greeting was based on a Jacopo Pontormo painting, *The Visitation*, (painted with oil on wood between 1528-9). *The Greeting* is in some part about time and the inability to absorb what all is going on around us. But also, Bill Viola constructed this work as a homage to the Old Masters of the Renaissance. He appreciates this "historical period of intensive innovation, a complete shift in the basis of image making that were in their day"(Gayford 23). He advances the fact that the "Old Masters" were indeed young rebels of their time. Protesting the socio-political environment as well as the old methodology of creating art. "Single-point perspective was mostly unknown outside of a few university research institutes"(23).

In the article, “Spirit and Medium,” David Morgan talks indirectly about Bill Viola’s intentions while creating his art. Morgan feels that Viola realizes that “video has the ability to disorient views.” But Viola intention “is not content merely to disorient viewers.” He is intrigued by the power of estrangement to illuminate. He wishes to yield “a new vision of self and world.”(103).

Some might argue that Bill Viola’s projections and his explanation about water and the shadow are not applicable to my argument as to the power that can be seen within the shadow metaphor. Stoichita even argues strongly that the reflection of one’s own self in water is similar to looking into a mirror, thus a reflected image cannot be compared to the cast image because the reflected image can be defined as self while the cast shadow is less definable and is seen more as “other”—something other than self. This argument revolves around Jacques Lacan’s theory of the “mirror stage” of human development where the child around eighteen month old recognizes the “I” and realizes that he or she is a distinct individual (31).

Interestingly, Stoichita later in his book modifies his view of whether an image cast on a pond is a shadow or not by suggesting Monet’s shadow in the photograph, *Shadow on the Lily Pond* qualifies as a shadow because it is “not a specular image that floats on the reflective surface”(109). So I would hope you would see from the previous example that these images whether reflected or cast are open to a bit of interpretation.

Bill Viola does use a cinematic process that at its root lies the still image. These images have a behavior and the phenomenon causes us to see moving pictures. This process is less about the material objects depicted but “rather more about the process of the mind that moves them”(Viola 482). Bill Viola’s ability to use video and motion is appreciated for producing art that awakens the viewer from the haze of perceived reality and offers an alternate glimpses what reality might be.



Figure 18
Claude Monet, *Monet’s Shadow on the Lily Pond*, 1920, photograph.

Stoichita, Victor. *A Short History of the Shadow*.
London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1997. 63

Conclusion

“Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are?”

—Michel Foucault

Kara Walker said in an interview with Subotnick, “Art is a pretty vain practice; people mostly like to see themselves in it”. She went on to say, “that every time you shine a bright light on a surface you’ll find a person who enjoys their shadow”(26).

This relationship that Kara Walker describes seems to be more than just a visual fancy for the viewer. In the *Journal of*

Nature Neuroscience, NewScientist.Com reports, “That shadows seem to be hardwired in the brain”(1). After studies were done at Francesco Pavani, at Royal Holloway University of London, UK, and Umberto Castiello, at the Università degli Studi di Trento, Italy—Margaret Livingstone, a vision researcher at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts confirmed, “[That] there is an intuitive bond people feel with their shady outlines.(1)

The work implies that the brain uses visual clues from not only our appendages, but also our shadows, to map the body in space and to interact with the world. “Cast shadows could provide additional cues about body position in relation to objects”(1).

Perhaps, ultimately this notion that the shadow helps to map the body in space and helps us define our position holds the key why there is such power in the shadow and its relationship to light. Isn't that one of the “big” questions we seek to answer? Where are we? Thornton Wilder tried to answer that question in the play, *Our Town*, as his character Rebecca mused over the address the minister wrote on Jane Crofut's envelope. The address he used culminated with the final line reading, “the Mind of God.” Thus giving us place.

Francis Butler in the catalog for the art show, *Light/Heavy Light* in 1985, recognized too, “The artists presently using shadow stress a renewed emphasis on human placement in space, a reconnection with the physical world which might indicate the kind of restructuring of human life”(1).

This is precisely what James Turrell, Kara Walker, and Bill Viola are doing as they seek to create works that cause the viewer to recognize perceptions held currently or in the past may not reflect an accurate picture of reality. Each of these artists trying to help us define and redefine our position in space through their art.

- James Turrell uses the physics of light to expose that our sense of sight and our ability to perceive shape as an inaccurate barometer to base our view of the world.
- Kara Walker, a minority herself and by some to be seen as marginalized by the norm of society exposes a alternative societal of reality with her silhouettes and shadows
- Finally, Bill Violas and his use of video installations to calls into question about our ability to experience the world around us. As he shows us that “even if you can't see something because it is too far or too small, it exists nonetheless”(145).

Baudry might declare that each of these artists are “reproducing Plato's allegory of the enslaving cave which is panoptic (if anachronistically so) in the sense that it provides an illusory world in order to enforce immobility in its viewers”(10).

That conclusion has to be restated rather than enforcing imobility as Baudry, Mulvey and Winokur might contend. These artists are creating mobility because their attempt is to use the shadow to expose the illusion and enlighten the viewer.

The relationship between the elements of the shadow, light and the cast image of the object can be used as a legitimate metaphor for the individual, community or society and its relationship to power in art. Whether you gauge it by reason or looking at how light and shadow are being use by artists, ultimately it is about exposing power and exposing our relationship to it. Our perceptions hold us captive and it is the shadow that gives us a gauge to tell the many attributes of this visible yet invisible light source. James Turrell, Kara Walker and Bill Viola may say that our initial perception may not be trusted but it is the shadow that reminds us that there are other perceptions to be perceived. As Baudry suggested the initial object created to obstruct the light and thus casting the shadow in the cave is itself a representation. The shadow is then only a representation of a representation. The knowledge of that principle alone distributes power and as Foucault holds, "Power is knowledge".

Bibliography

BBC World Service. *James Turrell—Roden Crater*. 02 Nov 2000. Arts & Entertainment. 30 Oct 2005

Beaudoin, Tom. "Foucault-Teaching-Theology." *Religious Education* Vol. 98 No. 1 Winter 2003: 27–42

Baudy, Jean-Loius. "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism, Fifth Edition*. Ed Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 760–777

Bulter, Francis. *Light and Heavy Light*. Fullerton, CA: Plotroon Press, 1985

Cullum, Jerry. "Starting Out From Atlanta: Three Artists Imagine History" *International Review of African American Art* 18 no3 2002: 43-48

Davies, Rhys. "The Frequency of Existence." *The Art of Bill Viola*. Ed. Chris Townsend. London, Eng: Thames & Hudson, 2004. 111-123

Gayford, Melford. "The Ultimate Invisible World" *Modern Painters* 16 no3 Autumn 2003: 22-25

Dir. Haimes, Theodore R. *Duane Michals (1939-1997)*. Perf. Duane Michals
Checkerboard Film Foundation, Inc. 1978

Hall, James. *Philosophy of religion. Part 1 of 3*. Teaching Company, 2003.

Hartmann, John. "Power and Resistance in the Later Foucault." (PDF) Paper Presented at the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Foucault Circle, John Carroll University, Cleveland, OH, February 28–March 2, 2003. *Michel Foucault, Info*. 1998
Michel Foucault Links. 6 December 2004.
<<http://foucault.info/links/index.html>>

Heylighen, F. "Zero Sum Games." 02 Dec 1993
Principia Cybernetica Web. 06 December 2004
<<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/ZESUGAM.html>>

Jowett, Benjamin. "PLATO: THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE from THE REPUBLIC, BOOK VII." *JohnMCox.Org*, Fall Semester 2003, University of Michigan. October 29, 2005

<http://johnmcox.org/teaching/eng125/materials/eng_125_068_aotc.pdf>

Joyce, Helen. "Adam Smith and the Invisible Hand." *Plus Magazine*. Issue 14 March 2001. 22 May 2004
<<http://plus.maths.org/issue14/features/smith/index.html>>
Stoichita, Victor I. *A Short History of the Shadow*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1997

"Light." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2004. Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service.
7 Dec. 2004
<<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9110443>>.

Miller, Wesley. "James Turrell" *Art: 21*, 2005. Public Broadcasting Service. October 30, 2005
<<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/turrell/>>

Miller, Wesley. "Kara Walker" *Art: 21*, 2005. Public Broadcasting Service. October 30, 2005
<<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/turrell/>>

Morgan, David. "Spirit Medium." *The Art of Bill Viola*. Ed. Chris Townsend. London, Eng: Thames & Hudson, 2004. 89-109

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16, no. 3, 1975: pp 6-18

O'Brien, Barbara. "Shadows and Stories: Kara Walker's History" *Art New England* 25 no1 D 2003/Ja 2004: 16 - 17

Ravin, Richard. "The Art of Kara Walker" *Culture Shock*. 1999. WGBH. October 30, 2005
<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/provocations/kara/>>

Schwabsky, Barry. "Bill Viola: Anthony D'Offay gallery - Reviews - London - Brief Article" *Art Forum* November 2001: Article Find, October 30, 2005
<http://articles.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_3_40/ai_81258096>

Subotnick, Ali. "Kara Walker" *Make, the magazine of women's art* no92 2002: 22-27

Turrell, James. *James Turrell: the other horizon*. Ed. Peter Noever. Austria: MAK, 1998/99. 59 & 96

Viola, Bill. "Video Black—The Mortality of the Image." *Illuminating Video*. Ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer. New York: Aperture Foundations, Inc., 1990. 477-486

Wainwright, Jean. "Telling Times." *The Art of Bill Viola*.
Ed. Chris Townsend. London, Eng: Thames & Hudson,
2004. 143-159

Whittaker, Richard. "Greeting the Light an Interview with
James Turrell" *Work + Conversions* Issue 2 (unknown):
pgs 15 October 30, 2005

Winokur, Mark. "The Ambiguous Panopticon: Foucault
and the Codes of Cyberspace." *Articles*, 3 March 2003.
Ctheory.net. 3 October 2005
<<http://www.cheory.net/articles.aspx?id=371>>