

The Association for the Advancement
of Cinematic Creative Maladjustment

A MANIFESTO

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FRIENDS, I alert you:

This manifesto is a gasconade

a non-violent word-grenade

a plushy feral tirade

a bombastic love parade.

So, please, walk with me.

Bang your drum.

Blow your horn.

Load your camera.

Let us promenade.

~Kelly Gabron.

The third day of January on our two thousand and twelfth lap around the Sun.

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CREATIVE MALADJUSTMENT

“There are certain technical words within every academic discipline that soon become stereotypes and cliches. Modern psychology has a word that is probably used more than any other word in modern psychology. It is the word “maladjusted.” ... I say to you, my friends... there are certain things in our nation and in the world which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men of good-will will be maladjusted.

I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation and discrimination.

I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry.

I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few.

I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, to self-defeating effects of physical violence.

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But in a day when sputniks and explorers are dashing through outer space and guided ballistic missiles are carving highways of death through the stratosphere, no nation can win a war. It is no longer the choice between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence. In other words, I'm about convinced now that there is need for a new organization in our world:

The International Association
for the Advancement
of Creative Maladjustment

--men and women who will be as maladjusted as the prophet Amos. Who in the midst of the injustices of his day could cry out in words that echo across the centuries, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." ...Through such maladjustment, I believe that we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice. My faith is that somehow this problem will be solved.

~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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THE CINEMA

AND

THE CREATIVELY MALADJUSTED²

THE PRONOUNCEMENTS

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1.

The Maladjusteds say: Images are what we create, but language and its potential for resistance against the over-determination of identity, perception and experience determines the creation of images. Language is the stuff of us. Our debt to language is paid in full. Language is what we have. So we use it now to reshape and control the means, methods, and motivations for the production of time-based media: Moving-Images.

2.

The Maladjusteds know that the space in-between words is where the image lives. The arsenal and the pantry of the filmmaker are sited at the in-between space.

3.

The Maladjusteds liberate image from narrative. Narrative is the oppressor of the Moving-Image. The Reader conjures images in her conscious and unconscious mind as she reads. Those images come from some Place. The tasks and demands of the filmmaker extend beyond the mere illustration of the menageries of literature. Yes, it is true that the wild beasts of our literary imagination are painted, dressed, and caged by images the viewer has gleaned from the world around her, but the Moving-Image can and must do more than slave for narrative. The Moving-Image must rise up and reclaim the power it has for so long surrendered to story. The true power of the Moving-Image is its resistance to plot. Images resist.³

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4.

The Maladjusteds do not seek to destroy (subvert) mainstream commercial cinema. The Maladjusteds create movies that punctuate, highlight, and, indeed(!), capitalize on the ways in which Genre Movies (action, science fiction and horror) potently legitimate sites of radically within the crusty annals of illusionistic cinema⁴. In Genre (and genre-bending) lies the hope and future of commercial cinema. Genre has saved the studio system's flabby ass more than once already.

5.

The Maladjusteds play. We play with all media and materials. We do not mistake the scale of a production or the source of the production for the value and merit in said production. The Maladjusteds engage works as they are without qualification and without corporate mediations of prowess (box-office rankings, celebrity associations), or the relative evaluations on image quality which reify technology rather than aesthetic and conceptual potency.

6.

The Maladjusteds project their love of the Spectator onto the screens.

7.

The Maladjusteds resist corporate pressure to fuel the desires of the Spectator. Rather they seek to excavate her needs.

8.

The Spectators of Creatively Maladjustment Cinema do not lack. They do not substitute unattainable longing for the provocations of the mundane. The Maladjusteds seek the destabilization of the familiar and the expansion of the known. They race at the speed of light toward the edge of their seats - towards the screen(s), towards the community of Maladjusteds who understand that economic privilege (or the mimicry of such) is a poor metric for defining the quality of a work.

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9.

The Maladjusted filmmaker has failed the Maladjusted Spectator. Rather than generating and proliferating our own image-language with a vocabulary that enables us to share our tactics, insights, opinions and experiences with the Maladjusted Spectator, The Maladjusted filmmaker waited for popular culture journalists, art historians, and film theorists to supply these ideas for them. This has left the Maladjusted Spectator with poor translations for their engagement with images. Because of this failure, the Spectator mimics the language of corporate slaves. She compares shit with manure and contrasts mucus and boogers. Because of this famished vocabulary, the Maladjusted Spectator has been forced to register their experience through shareholder values rather than cooperative valences.

10.

And yet, the Maladjusted Spectator perseveres. Like Amos, she resists the indulgences of propaganda in favor of the rigors or aesthetic transcendence. The Maladjusted Spectator enters the cinema space as a supplicant enters the cathedral.

11.

The Maladjusted Spectator consumes the flawed-image with as much gusto as she would a flawless one. Like a diner who appreciates collards cooked in salt-fat as much as asparagus wrapped in prosciutto, the Maladjusted Spectator does not mistake the humility of materials and transparency of construction for inferiority. Rather, she recognizes the

artifacts of production and the procedural markers of cultures as indicators of conceptual and material integrity.

12.

The Maladjusted Spectator does not expect to be pleased. She expects to be respected.

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13.

The Maladjusted Spectator is charged with great power and responsibility. When she watches a Moving-Image, she revels in the freedom of being responsible for her heart and mind while trusting the filmmaker to expand and enliven both. She grabs hold of the hand that reaches out to her from the screen and she Hangs On! She knows that those who lean back in their seats waiting for the little spoon to slide pre-digested images into their emaciated imaginations will starve. The Maladjusted Spectator loves to eat.

14.

The Maladjusteds approach their subjects, materials and resources with respect as these elements have their own stakes and sovereignty⁵. The ways in which their autonomy impacts the modes of production, form, and content of a work cannot be subjugated in service of the aesthetic, cultural, social or political preferences of the market. The filmmaker must internalize the agency of her collaborators and their environs in order to generate and guide the formal, aesthetic and conceptual constructs which define the Work.⁶

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15.

The Maladjusteds do not privilege radical form over radical content. For what is radical form if all it does is cloak and disguise regressive values and oppressive stereotypes? That is not art. That is placebo-art. Decorative, celebrity-dependent, convoluted theatricality bamboozles the spectator into believing that she has had a culturally-supreme artistic experience; for in spite of the obtuse structural devices and clumsy episodic sequences she was subjected to, she is encouraged to believe that

she managed to access deep-meaning from the work (a deep-meaning which is always attributed to the inherent supreme gifts of the placebo-filmmaker). No doubt, she *has* extracted meaning from both the radical form and the content of the film. In some cases, though, the primary reason that any coherence can be grafted from such works is because the placebo-film's signs and signifiers are in fact threadbare stereotypes, exoticisms, and cliches.⁷ In support of a commercially viable radical form, the placebo-filmmaker relies on the familiarity of minstrelsy for narrative coherence. The semiotics of hegemony are by their very nature a suffocating force that presses true radicality into the margins of culture.

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16.

The Maladjusteds do not mistake affect for information. Being moved by an image which claims to document a social ill is not the same as actually gaining mastery of the concepts and policies that create that social ill. The Maladjusteds are suspicious of “world-changing” agendas in filmmaking; as one might be suspicious of nation-building agendas in war. How can the world be changed by spectral outward projections which abjectify the *Other*, or reify a singular Hero? Beware of the movie (that claims to be non-fiction) that attempts to titillate then satiate your desire for knowledge in the same way that a video of people having sex titillates then satiates your desire for sexual gratification. A document-airy is not advocacy. It is a tool for Advocates to use in service of their cause. The non-fiction filmmaker must think of themselves as tool-makers in the same way that creative filmmakers must understand themselves as dream-custodians. The cinema-work itself, is merely an object, a tool, a dream. Action, resistance and change are the realm of humans, not objects, consciousness not sentiment. Beware of televisual narratives that exploit the well-adjusted viewer's ignorance by projecting fantasies of “the abject” as fact and substituting Platonic tragedy for subjectivity.⁸

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17.

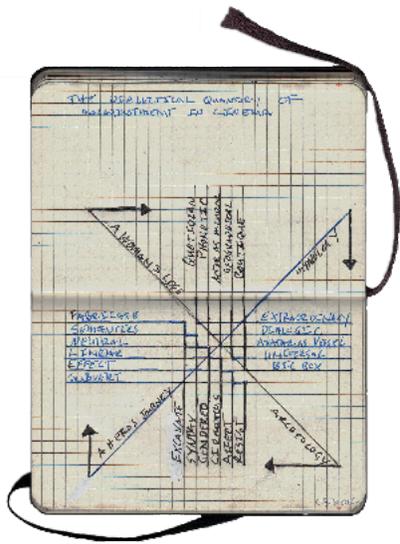
Knowing what we know about the power of materials which graft, manipulate, and mutate cinematic space-time, The Maladjusteds refuse to patronize the Spectator. This means we're mostly broke, in debt, and desperate for funding. But our profits return to us in the form of emphatic discourse, and creative responses to the destabilizing,

empowering, and energizing affects of creative maladjustment. Our bounty is the cornucopia (or vortex) of future-histories.

The Maladjusteds, when all is said and done, travel the cinematic spaceways of ecstatic form because we love our audiences so well.

~Pronouncements End. Listening Begins~

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LOVE AS PRACTICE. LOVE AS PRODUCTION.

For there is another thing about this philosophy that says you can stand before an unjust system and resist it with all your might and yet maintain an attitude of active good will toward the perpetrators of that unjust system. So it goes on to say that the ethic of love can stand at the center of the nonviolent movement. Now when I talk about love at this point, people always have questions to raise. They begin to say, what do you mean, love those who are bombing your home and those who are oppressing you and using any method to keep you in the state of injustice, the state of slavery. How in the world can you love such people? Well let me rush on to say that when I speak of love, I'm not talking about emotional bosh. I think in so many instances, this whole idea is misunderstood. It is absurd to urge oppressed people to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. I'm not talking about an

affectionate emotion at this point. I think the Greek language comes to our rescue at this point, there are three words in the Greek language for love.

There is the word "eros." Eros is a sort of aesthetic love, a yearning of the soul for the realm of the divine. Plato used to talk about it a great deal in his dialogues. It has come to us to be a sort of romantic love. So we all know about eros. We have experienced it and read it in all of the beauties of literature. In a sense, Edgar Allen Poe was talking about eros when he talked about his beautiful Annabel Lee with a love surrounded by the halo of eternity. In a sense Shakespeare was talking about eros when he said "Love is not love which alters when an alteration finds or bends with the removal to remove. It is an ever fixed mark which looks on tempest and is never shaken. It is a star to every wandering bark." You know, I can remember that because I have quote it to my wife every now and then. That's eros.

The Greek language talks about "philia" which is the sort of intimate affection between personal friends. This is a significant love and on this level, you love people that you like, people that you have dealings with, people that are friends. This is friendship.

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This pamphlet accompanies the public event
Skowhegan and Whitewalls Conversation #3:
Cauleen Smith and Greg Tate present
The Association for the Advancement of Cinematic Creative Maladjustment

Which took place January 15, 2012 at the New Museum,
New York, New York.

First Printing.
Edition of 100.

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Dr. King repeated this concept in many speeches over the span of several years and in many contexts including in a speech to the American Psychological Association. It seems that this idea was one he reserved for the college circuit and professional associations, which may be why his call for the *Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment* is less popularly known and quoted in Civil Rights histories. I have yet to determine how Dr. King came to insert the word “creative” into his programmatic plea. It is this generative qualification that interests me here in the context of discussing a dogma for film-making and a practice of resistance rather than subversion.

December 18, 1963. Transcription of a speech given at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI.

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² The Maladjusted are a tribe or creatives who use images in service of time-based media. The Maladjusteds love a good action flick as much as the next person. The writer admires filmmakers who blow shit up, propel objects in space, animate alien creatures, and imbue electromagnetic fields with punishing spiritual malice. However: The Maladjusteds do not require narrative to experience the rewards of time-based media. Narrative is incidental to image. As far as Maladjusteds are concerned, a filmmaker could tell the same story over and over and it will ever re-new if the form, materials, and environmental stakes of their subjects are manifested with the love, integrity, and openness that only an amateur can muster. Agape!

³ For over one hundred years, cultural forces, commercial interests, and well-adjusted consumers have enslaved the moving-image to a an oppressive and insatiable master: narrative. By reducing celluloid’ s alchemical powers to servitude of literary constructs, narrative stunted the growth of the most radical material art of the twentieth century thereby rendering it nothing but a shuffling lackey to theatrical effect and the fetishization of hegemonic and oppressive icons. When contemporary moviegoers discuss cinema, their discussions struggle to travel beyond an analysis of the (usually puerile) plot. The well-adjusted consumer idolizes the storytellers: actors are storytellers, directors are storytellers, writers are storytellers, producers are storytellers. Well, my friends, I say to you that if I wanted to indulge in an intricate story, I would READ A BOOK. I ask you, how many screenwriters in Hollywood are in fact frustrated novelists? Why does the market of cinema support mediocrity so well? But Hollywood bears only some of the blame. We well-adjusteds who consume these images have failed the images by submitting to our oppressor’ s language, internalizing our oppressor’ s values, and evaluating the viability of moving-image works based on political propagandistic markers of power, like mass agreement (*We all saw 1-2-3.*) rather than individual engagement (*I experienced X-Y-Z.*) Cinema has rules of which literature can barely conceive. Like gravity, Time works on an image. What is the science of time and its relationship to movement? Not the description of movement, no! Not the use of movement to get a character from one chapter of dialog to another, no! For The Maladjusteds, the science of cinematic time wrestles with the movement of objects, bodies, land, and air within the Film-Frame. The ineffable laws of cinema, are forever seeking and yet never expecting to find their Cosmological Constant. The Maladjusted filmmaker simply follows the image into space-time. Film is space is time. And it never stops moving. ~K.G.

⁴ Illusionistic cinema works to conceal the mechanisms and tactics deployed in service of creating seamlessness and forward momentum within the space-time of the film.

⁵ The chemical elements embedded in film emulsions and computer chips have been unearthed at great and sometimes deadly expense. At some point, (surely NOW) the Maladjusteds must face their complicity in the corrosive, exploitative, and violent extraction of resources which enables our access to materials. And once we face it, we must find non-violent modes of active resistance - as is the Maladjusted way.

⁶ This is why the works of a creatively maladjusted film-maker may not be easily recognizable as being produced from the same maker. The subject, rather than the signature of the maker, determine the applied tactics.

⁷ Example of placebo-films are the works of David Lynch which the 1950' s iconography of guileless blonds, silent cowboys, "spooky" little people, and one-legged Voodoo creatures with un-locatable foreign accents to manufacture a veil of mystery and suspense. Another example is the *Cremaster* series by Matthew Barney. However, Mr. Barney should be credited for elevating the lowly televisual genre of the Info-mmerical into the realm of high-art in which his episodic demonstrations of sculptural forms accompanied by celebrity endorsements exploit mass-media channels to convince the viewer of the essentialness and importance of his objects. Barney makes-believe with his fantastical fabricated devices and thereby demonstrates the potency and desirability of the real (and privileged in its invisibility) product that he is peddling: white-masculinity...*it slices..it dices, it dangles, it spangles! Buy one now!!*

⁸ A short list of works that demonstrate these values would include: *The Wire*, *Monster Ball* (2001), *Training Day* (2001), *Precious* (2009), and *For Colored Girls* (2010). It is so interesting that films which revel in the abject-itude of an imagined blackness these tendencies are often identified as the best work of the artist who made them. And in the case of *The Wire* and *Precious* referenced as a document of reality rather than the lush creative fictions that they are. *Monster Ball* won the Best Actress Oscar for Halle Barry (only second such award to go to a black woman in The Academy' s eighty-four year history). African-American Actor, Denzel Washington was overlooked for the Best Actor Oscar when he rendered a slave as defiant and dignified in *Glory* (1989), but won one for playing (quite entertainingly) a thug-stereotype in *Training Day*. Don Cheadle was **robbed** of the Best Supporting Actor for his complex, unpredictable, and dangerous rendering of a sociopath in *Devil In A Blue Dress* (1995). Such are the priorities of mainstream cinema and the well-adjusted.

⁹ Ibidem. MLK@WMU. 1963.