Year 10 PHOTOGRAPHY

INFLUENTIAL ARTIST CASE STUDY BOOKLET

TERM THREE 2015

Students Name: Joshua Bonello
Artists Name: Cao Fei
Teachers Name: Mrs. Hogan
SECTION 1: Basic Details about your Artist

a) Date of Birth: 1978, Guangzhou, China

b) Nationality: Chinese

c) Education: The Affiliated Middle School of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts (1997), Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts (2001)

d) PRACTICE – World

• Born 1978, Guangzhou, China (Developing country at that time)
• The Affiliated Middle School of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts (1997)
• Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts (2001)
• She earned a bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts
• Cao Fei’s artworks are blending many different cultures and diversity in Chinese art and global art
• China was rapidly continuing to urbanise which greatly affected the works of Cao Fei
• Cao created the film *Imbalance* 257 in 1999 while still a student. She directed and produced the 2003 experimental documentary *San Yuan Li* (三元里) with Ou Ning. The film examines the effects of development in Guangzhou on the village of San Yuan Li.
• Her 2004 work *COSPlayers* consisted of a photo series and DVD depicting teenagers cosplaying as anime characters. The players believe that their costumes give them special powers; the work follows them throughout the Chinese city.
• Her 2006 work *Whose Utopia?* explores the contrast of the workaday reality of lighting manufacturing plant employees in China’s Pearl River Delta with their aspirations
• In 2014, she presented a show and film entitled *La Town* at Lombard Fried Gallery. The show included the film and photographs from the set of the filming of *La Town*. The film begins with a post-apocalyptic scene of a destroyed McDonalds restaurant on top of a small apartment building while figurines mill about in the rubble of wrecked cars and buildings. The film follows the world of darkness following the apparent disruption.
a) Research examples of CRITICAL writings about your artist's work. Make sure you source your material accurately. Also make sure that you acknowledge the correct author.

Cao Fei is widely known as an artist and photographer who mixes and cohesively incorporates two or more cultures into one photograph. In Cao Fei's work, Deep Breathing (2004), she creates a balanced mix of Urban China and fantasy. She does this through using an urban backdrop in China and mixing it with people in costumes that suggest power, and a cow and zebra to add a fantasy element on top of what's already there. In Cao Fei's other work, Super-Junkman (2006), she is displaying an immediate contrast in cultures and shows the way today's youth, most likely will live the life of their parents. The man at the door (of Asia Nationality) is shown to be from a different time and culture, compared to the smaller and larger people, dressed in spider-man costumes. This display that both of these subjects are from two very different places and times. Fei joins these two through the use of red (a sense of unity) and the blending of real and illusions. This challenges the ideas of consumerism and globalisation of Chinese People and causes us to think of how many fantasy's exist in real life.

“Rapid urbanisation in China has led to an intense sense of absurdity, which turns real life into a continually changing soap opera. The rapidity has made urbanised life more illusory than an illusion, and more surreal than surrealism.” - Cao Fei (Quoted by Art World, February/March 2008, p.118)

“Cao Fei is one of the key figures of a new generation of Chinese artists too young to have had any real engagement with either the Cultural Revolution or the Tiananmen Square massacre. Her work instead responds to China's rapid urbanisation, its giddying pace of social and economic development and as such, Fei has built an online parody of Beijing.” - Cao Fei (Quoted by Brisbane Times - May 27, 2009 - Available [Online] at http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/entertainment/your-brisbane/cao-fei-utopia-20090527-bn8d.html#ixzz3iTCg6x7z

b) Write a short paragraph explaining the significance of this quote. (What does this quote tell you about the artist and the way they work? Does it give you an insight into how audiences react to the artists work?)

Both of these quotes address that Cao Fei is documenting, manipulating and creating illusions of subjects within photos of urbanising China. They also tell us about the rapid continuing growth, development and urbanisation of China. Cao Fei herself talks about how she is trying to go further than an illusion and surrealism in her photos - there is no barrier. In the article from Brisbane Times, it is stated numerous times that, she may have been too young to comprehend the problems and challenges China was facing at the time, but the cultural aftermath of these events have shaped her works and herself as an artist and photographer.

Concepts/Theories: (Artist/Artwork/World)

c) What concepts and theories are present in your chosen artists work? Consider things like social/cultural issues, politics, and the environment. The majority of Cao Fei's works explore the coming together of cultures and times and also effectively incorporates her past experiences or cultural experiences through her works. Cao Fei also will manipulate her photos using varying image editing software to add a sense of illusion and surrealism to her works.
### SECTION 4: ARTWORKS

#### a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artwork</th>
<th>Citation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Golden Fighter’s</td>
<td>2004 Digital c-print, 74 x 100 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Plaza, 2014</td>
<td>C-print, 80 x 120 cm Exhibited in Jane Lombard Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train Station, 2014</td>
<td>C-print, 70 x 130 cm Exhibited in Jane Lombard Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Life, 2011</td>
<td>Single-channel video with sound</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Still Image from video</td>
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SECTION 5: The Frames

Considering the images included select one image to answer each of the four questions below. Each question should consider a different image. By the end of the Questions, you will have discussed ALL FOUR images.

Eg, A) Discusses Image 2. B) Discusses image 3 etc.…

Subjective Frame

a) Title of artwork: Centre Plaza, 2014

Using descriptive language and examples, explain what you believe this artwork is about.

Cao Fei used the positioning of the body and the buildings to create a sense of mysteriousness and curiosity. Everything seems to and looks still and silent in the image even though many things would be going on. This work is quite dark and eerie, leaving the viewer feeling a bit detached and isolated. This work also has a major sense of loneliness, and Cao Fei conveys that through the use of dark colours and very real, yet fake figures in the image.

Structural Frame

b) Title of artwork: Train Station, 2014

Discuss how the artist has used compositional qualities such as The Elements of Design and Rule of Thirds in this artwork.

In this work, Cao Fei successfully utilises rule of thirds, separating the image into nine squares. She has used two half horizontally and has made the image look very free and like it is floating on water. Fei has used this technique to make this work very open, but still dark using shadows. Cao Fei effectively uses water in the work to once again, create a sense of freedom. Fei has used very straight structured elements in her work making it very aseptically pleasing to the eye.

Cultural Frame

C) Title of Artwork: Golden Fighter’s, 2004

How have cultural events during the life of the artist impacted on the artists choice of subject matter in this artwork.

This works main theme is combining traditional China and Chinese fantasies and combine them to create a link between the two subjects. Cao Fei has purposefully used asian people in the image to create a stronger link between the traditional Chinese buildings in the background. The meaning communicated by Cao Fei in this work is, two completely different subjects (e.g traditional China and Chinese fantasies) can be linked together cohesively, without seeming too different.
Identify what technology has been used to create this artwork and discuss how the artist has used it to create a meaningful artwork.

This work communicates a very modern use of shadows and small sculptures. Cao Fei effectively uses the sculptures in this image, to reflect shadows of tall Chinese modern skyscrapers and buildings. This communicates the post-modernism of China as the majority of her other works are incorporating traditional Chinese architecture.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

**ARTWORK WEBSITES:**


**INFORMATION:**

