

Sometime in 1973

It had to be sometime in 1973. After the riots. After the killings. We went to a Saturday matinee double bill in Chicago: *Soylent Green* and *Westworld*, both films made in 1973. They weren't my film choices. I hated Science Fiction. Sandwiched between my older and younger brothers, I sat unhappily in the movie theater. Popcorn and candy consoled my hatred of Sci-Fi.

To my surprise I loved both of the films. Dark tales for dark times. Each film spoke eloquently to my early adolescent soul. "*Soylent Green is people*", became an often-heard cry in our house at dinnertime, much to my Mom's chagrin.

In *Soylent Green*, an overpopulated world (set in 2022) can't feed its inhabitants. Interiors and exteriors are littered with human beings. Rotting bodies are everywhere. To get anywhere you had to step on top of dead and dying beings. There are bulldozers that clear the streets of all of the bodies. There is no space for the dead and no space for the living. Food is nearly non-existent and prohibitively expensive. The massive Soylent Corporation feeds the planet on high-energy vegetable concentrates in the form of crackers. The main character, (Charlton Heston), discovers through his friend, (Edward G. Robinson), and his visit to the Government run assisted suicide clinic, that the Government are making use of the euthanized bodies – providing the real main ingredient for the Soylent Corporation's product: *Soylent Green*. The end of the film depicts Charlton Heston screaming his grisly discovery, "Soylent Green is people!"

Have we got a Vacation for you! In *Westworld*, tourists are able to visit *WesternWorld*, *MedievalWorld* and *RomanWorld* where humans mingle with animatronic, anatomically accurate androids. The androids are there to serve and entertain the tourists, providing sex, hedonism, fights and anything a tourist could want in human form. Fantasy fulfilled without responsibility or consequence. The robots are programmed to pleasure the humans. The humans always win - until there are a series of malfunctions. A rattlesnake bites a tourist (Richard Benjamin). A robot gunslinger, (Yul Brenner), shoots and kills a tourist, (James Brolin). The *WesternWorld* computer system crashes due to viral infiltration. The managers of the theme-parks are overtaken by the machines. Yul Brenner begins to hunt Richard Benjamin through the entire park, eventually ending up in a service area for the androids. At this showdown, Benjamin manages to luckily kill Yul Brenner. At the end we see Richard Benjamin devastated at what his vacation has become. The only human survivor of this malfunctioned theme-park. Interestingly, *Westworld* is the first Hollywood film to use digital image processing. Occasionally throughout the film we see from Yul Brenner's point of view. In order to enhance the feeling and audience awareness of his vantage point, his vision is represented as pixelized, crude, visual forms.

The exhibition *Coming out of the Woodwork* is set in the future. It is difficult for us to know for sure how far into the future we are stepping. It may only be moments ahead of us. Or it could be years away. The future in this exhibition folds on itself: referencing the distant past, the recent past and the near-recent future. Simultaneously. One thing we do know – we are conceptually and physically the protagonists in this skewed future.

Making your way through these spaces it is impossible not to think of film. Movies. These three works refer directly to a cinematic experience as we physically navigate our way around these near-sets. If these three installations were films they would be a hybrid combination of; *2001 A Space Odyssey* mixed with *The Matrix* (Joe Watling), *Videodrome* mixed with *A Clockwork Orange* (Mark Selby) and *Brazil* mixed with *Day of the Triffids* (Richard Cramp). Sci-Fi classics.

Caught between post-fall and pre-crash in a breathtaking photographic-like moment, Joe Watling's collection of fluorescent lighting ceiling units are brought together in an elegant cascade of white light. The work is reminiscent of a satellite panel crashing to earth moments before impact – or maybe just a falling office ceiling.

Mark Selby's work is a network of spaces connected through galvanized air ducts. The plywood door of the central space makes the existing architecture complicit with the torture ahead. Passing into the chamber we are confronted with a trapped specter. His closed eyes are his only protection from our gaze. We suffer retina burn.

Richard Cramp's elevation is a clearly divided, symmetrical, architecturally extreme society. This model village is overrun with unwanted plants and barren of human presence, with the exception of ourselves – the spectators. We are not a part of this scene. It is happening in front of us. We are distant. Alone.

These artists are making their own worlds. As artists always do. As film directors always do. If this exhibition were a film genre it would create its own sub-genre: *Sinisterism*.

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