

Carnival Feasting: Dana Schutz, *Land of the Dead*, and the Re-Emergence of the Medieval Visual Art, Cinema, Death, Zombie, Eating, Carnavalesque, Social Revolution

Heather L. Castro
Temple University, Tyler School of Art
2102 East Susquehanna Ave., Philadelphia PA 19125
Email Address: heather.castro@temple.edu

The recent revival of Medievalism in visual art spills beyond crafting issues; the trend towards cooperative collectivity lends itself to a semiotic examination of the 2002-2004 “Self Eaters” series by American painter Dana Schutz and American filmmaker George A. Romero’s 2005 film *Land of the Dead*. The human body has long been a consumerist object in the Western world; within their respective works, both artist and director turn this capitalist notion on its head by depicting a humanity consuming its own (in the case of Schutz) or others flesh (as in Romero.) In doing so, both Schutz and Romero evoke a new communal cultural system through the revolutionary character of the Medieval carnival grotesque. By creating a body that digests itself and thereby offers an alternative ideological model to the social values present within contemporary society, the paintings and film present a base questioning of human existence and social understandings by revealing the “world inside out” and alive with alternates to official culture. Together, Schutz and Romero offer a new social outlook defined by group solidarity and mutual action rather than capitalistic individualism. This paper will discuss Schutz’s and Romero’s works in respect to the carnival grotesque, the inversion of the body hierarchy, the paradox of death and life, and the transformative powers inherent within self-digestion in comparison with theories on consumption, the body, and social and political revolution as put forth by Mikhail Bakhtin and Slavoj Žižek.

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