



# It's Just A (Screen) Play

*"The archetype of all fiction is the sexual act. In saying this I do not mean to remind the reader of the connection between all art and erotic in human nature.*

*For what connects fiction – and music – with sex is the fundamental orgasmic rhythm of tumescence and detumescence, of tension and resolution, of intensification to the point of climax and consummation.*

*In the sophisticated forms of fiction as in the sophisticated practice of sex, much of the art consist of delaying climax within the framework of desire in order to prolong the pleasurable act itself."*

Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (1979)

As a starting point in his videos, Meiro Koizumi uses the form of an innocent play or short performances acted especially for the eye of the camera. His scenarios are elaborate yet fixed, and when combined with image and sound, they form a unity with multiple layers and levels of interpretation. These seemingly disconnected elements – narrative, image, sound – sometimes appear to be part of different movies, but connected in this way, they give each other new and unexpected meanings. At exactly this point, the interpretation of the viewer enters: Koizumi's disjointed narrative and numerous visual symbols leave the open space for the viewer to inscribe his or her own interpretation onto the artist's exposed body.

The male body, and in a majority of his works the artist's own body, serves as the centre of Koizumi's attention. The viewer is directly confronted by it in the dark, closed and claustrophobic universe Koizumi creates in his videos. This body becomes aroused, distorted, even violated, but always marked by traces of usually invisible inscriptions from the surrounding world. At the same time, the narrative structure of his videos reveals the underlying connection between the physical body of the artist and the created work of art, but also the viewer becomes aware of parallel sensations that these works have on his or her own body. In the past several decades, the female body appeared on the agenda for liberation, but Koizumi underlines the fact that oppression is performed on the male body as well: the task of now and the near future is to liberate any human body from the matrix of cultural, social and political violence that is permanently performed on it.

**In Mum**, a man makes a phone call to his mother from a fictional battlefield. The narrative begins as a normal phone call would, but soon becomes disrupted and quickly metamorphoses into something completely different and unexpected. On this level of the narrative, biological and political components are symbolically connected through the man's (in this case, Koizumi's) body: the beginning (the mother) and the ending (the war) are put in dialogue with each other. On the other hand, the story told through image is different from the one related through dialogue. We see a young businessman arriving home from work, and the war battlefield becomes a metaphor for the battlefield of everyday life. Symbolically, his body serves as a sacrifice on the altar of an unknown other's pleasure: the warlords or business corporations, leaving no difference in the end.

**In Hardcore**, Koizumi explores even further the structure of narrative and the mechanisms of producing several levels of meaning in the duration of one video. The text read in the sound studio tells one story, the picture reveals another, and the accompanying sound seems to belong to a third. These three levels are physically united through a male body (again, the body of Koizumi), twisting and gaping in agony before our eyes, reminding us that most of the time, images of reality we see in the media have nothing to do with their accompanying texts or interpretations. In Lacanian terms, the relationship exposed through this image is the Möbius strip formed by the sexual and death drives: through this merging of opposites, one becomes the other and it is almost impossible to find their individual origins. This twisted, distorted body struggles to survive in a schizophrenic world, attempting feebly to satisfy its own desire. In this never-ending cycle of violence and plea for peace, the climax is reached, but the body can do nothing else but collapse.

**In the Art of Awakening**, Koizumi becomes the director – this time, he is the one behind the camera. The position of the viewer is at the exact same place, but in comparison with the active role of a director, the frustration of the viewer comes from this powerless, voyeuristic position. Chaos seems to ensue: close-up frames directly confront the viewer with the rise of excitement and energy in the movements of the male participants' bodies and eyes. Through this sophisticated play, the arousal of the male body becomes the embodiment of the narrative structure itself. On the other hand, the excitement of the viewer is blocked in front of this illusory act, in front of this seemingly absurd new method of sexual satisfaction achieved through the punching of a plastic bag with a plastic stick. Nevertheless, through this invention, male pleasure becomes displaced on a symbolic level outside of the body. In this game, the only sense that actually participates is the eye: the ingenious stick rules the universe and its performance is there for the pleasure of our eyes. Keeping in mind Susan Winnett's astute analysis of representations of male and female pleasure, "We all know what a male orgasm looks like," the question posed by Hardcore is: Do we really know what we think we know?

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