

DOCTORAL THESIS

Investigating Kracauerian cinematic realism through film practice and criticism: Life-world series (2017) and selected films of Lino Brocka

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Abstract

This dissertation is an investigation on the realist film theory of Siegfried Kracauer. It was principally conducted through film practice as exemplified by the ten short films that compose the omnibus film project, *Life-world Series* (dir. Joni Gutierrez, 2017, 118 minutes). To supplement the study's examination of Kracauerian cinematic realism (KCR), film criticism of selected works of Lino Brocka was also accomplished. The methodology involved three components: (1) research-based production of *Life-world Series*; (2) textual analyses of the said film collection and selected Brocka films; and (3) meta-analysis of the scholarly criticism on the Brocka film. This dissertation is the first to use film-making practice which was a part of the research project and devised to investigate KCR, which avows that the cinematic experience of physical reality as an object of contemplation fosters an intuitive understanding of the *Lebenswelt* (life-world) and, in turn, brings about the redemptive potential of film vis-à-vis the modern condition. The emergent design of *Life-world Series* opened the study to a wide range of possibilities that it could not have encountered if it limited itself to applying a particular theory as a framework in doing film criticism of pre-existing works. This project – through both its film practice and criticism components – is an interweaving of key notions from Husserlian phenomenology and the seven KCR tropes identified in the study, namely: (1) the quotidian; (2) the transient; (3) the refuse; (4) the fortuitous; (5) the indeterminate; (6) the flow of life; and (7) the spiritual life itself. The phenomenological engagement of this investigation has provided opportunities for expanding the inventory of KCR tropes, to conceivably include characteristics of the *Lebenswelt* which form part of the project's overall findings; that is, the life-world as: (1) expansive; (2) multi-layered; (3) flowing; (4) in the process of becoming; (5) resonantly intersubjective; (6) a thing of beauty; (7) relating to essences; (8) cyclical; (9) transcendent; (10) meaning-laden; (11) fragmented; and (12) malleable. The dissertation explicates how its phenomenological approach in inspecting KCR led to the construction of a prospective model of cinematic realism – the integrated quadrant model of Kracauerian cinematic realism (IQMKCR) – and finally, determines the implications and prospects of using film practice as an instrument in interrogating KCR.

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