GARY DEVORE ON FELLINI SATYRICON



Gary (Devore) is currently presenting a superb commentary on Fellini Satyricon – that sumptuous marvel of a movie – [Link]



In a daring and masterful tour de force, the director has violated every cinematographic rule by producing a film with no pace, no psychology, no stars, and no story.

Gary has opened my eyes to the way Fellini dealt with the presence, persistence, the reception and uses of the Roman past in twentieth century Italy.

I want to make a film which the audience can never feel familiar or at home … This is a journey into the unknown where the people are unknown …

The cinematography breaks with coherent illusion. Here is form that is non-representational, or, better, post-representational, in that the project of re-presenting the past is put in parentheses, is made conscious, overt, problematic. We are made aware of the work of engaging with the past, and that making sense of imperfect fragments, ruins, remains, is provisional at best.

I was even more fascinated by what wasn’t there than by what was there. Stimulated by the fragments, my imagination could roam … I was like an archaeologist piecing together fragments of ancient vases, trying to guess what the missing parts looked like. Rome itself is an ancient broken vase, constantly being mended to hold it together, but retaining hints of its original secrets.

To work, in fact, as the archaeologist does,… but (reconstructing) an artifact in which the object is implied; and this artifact suggests more of the original reality, in that it adds an indefinable and unresolved amount to its fascination by demanding the participation of the spectator.

Representation is thus mediation, and, perhaps, always archaeological – dealing, more or less, in fragments that only cohere momentarily, or under an ideological force that imposes understanding, that fascist Italy inherited an imperial grandeur that was ancient Rome, for example.

As Gary pointed out to me over the summer, this is Fellini’s way of dealing with the challenges I have been exploring in my photography, in theatre/archaeology (most recent thoughts – [Link] and [Link]).

Perhaps more than anything, we are left with everyday details, snapshots or assemblages of things, places, events – what I am calling noise, quiddities, haecceities.