

Pieter breugel's parable of the blind and yasumasa morimura's blinded by the ligh...

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Yasumasa Morimura's *Blinded by the Light* is a clear appropriation of Pieter Breugel's *Parable of the Blind*. In close reference to the materials, techniques and art elements employed by both artists, we are able to understand how they communicate their ideas, feelings and effects in their artworks.

Painted in 1568, *Parable of the Blind* is a religious painting where Breugel portrays "a single moment but implies a whole sequence of events." In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus tells a parable "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Breugel has linked the characters in a composition that's leads symbolically to disaster.

The characters in the painting cross the diagonal from top left to bottom right of the painting. The fact that they are linked together portrays their reliance on each other. He painted figures of his own time to represent themes of everyday life or religious subjects. These religious characters are not idealised as this painting is of a parable from the gospel used to teach morality. "Breugel's six blind men depict the results of straying from the straight and narrow path of Christianity. They are slowly falling on top of each other as they head towards a ditch."

On the other hand, Morimura has photographically reconstructed Pieter Breugel's *Parable of the Blind*. "Breugel studied various forms of blindness and portrays glaucoma, cataracts and atrophy of the muscles. Morimura's contemporary substitutes are 'blinded by the light.' This possibly alludes to the influences of a materialistic capitalist economy, blinded by the consummation of mass media, technology and the modern culture of consumerism.

Morimura is playing with traditions by using technology. Technology makes no image sacred. It makes any work fast, loose, immediate, and sometimes untraceable, but it gives a helping hand to artistic ideas like Morimura's. Morimura may be initially playing with Western assumptions of artistic importance, but he's also sometimes using technology that is further enabling the questioning of veracity.

He creates a 3D tableaux to replicate the settings of the painting, then dresses and styles himself to resemble the figures in the painting; enters the scene and photographs himself as part of the scene. Morimura applies digital computer-scanning techniques that enables him to merge 6 images of himself in the same picture; image cloning. He also shows that fixed identity is an obsolete concept in our contemporary, by cross-dressing as females.

Furthermore, we can see that Morimura's work creates an ambiguity between past and present, original and copy, male and female. Thus it surprises and undermines the viewer, and raises the question of defining the notions of fiction and reality, as well as defining the limits between them, in contemporary art.

In conclusion, we can clearly see that in reworking the Western masterpiece, Parable of the Blind, with an Asian male playing the the six blind figures, Morimuras's intentions in artmaking is to address the issues of essentialism, the " natural" categories of East (Oriental) and West (Occidental) and the " natural" categories of masculine and feminine.