

# Film and media essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Comedy](#)



The two films, *The Truman Show* (directed by Peter Weir and produced by Paramount Pictures, 1998) and *the King of Comedy* (directed by Martin Scorsese and produced by Embassy International Pictures, 1983) depicts the effect that media, especially television, has on us as we live through these technologically advanced age, and the way television, films, the computer, and other modern devices are fundamentally changing the way we think about the world around us.

The media industry have become so powerful that they can manipulate our very existence, by feeding us news, stories, entertainments and shows that influence how we feel and think. The penchant of today's TV audience for 'reality' programming is subtly suggested by the *Truman Show* while one's ambition and desire to become famous no matter what the consequence is, or the means for attaining fame is portrayed in the *King of Comedy*. And to the delight of television networks, these weaknesses ensure that the entertainment media will always be a very profitable business. The television industry is depicted in the *Truman Show* as being manipulative and permeating every aspect of life in this modern world.

The film is a metaphor of our lives as we are being bombarded daily with news, features, shows, advertisements and entertainments that persuade us to accept ideas, influence our way of thinking, change the way we perceive things, and lead us to believe that our way of life is ideal and secure. Thus, the television industry creates this fantasy of a perfect world by controlling and manipulating even the minute detail of a television show, be it an entertainment show or a news feature. Thus, we are lead to believe that US involvement in the affairs of foreign countries is for the preservation of our

democratic way of life, when in fact one of its hidden agendas, for example, is to ensure that the oil fields in the Middle East do not fall into the “wrong” hands. Thus, the media industry gives us an illusion and we are manipulated to believe that this illusion is true. Of course, what is at stake here for the television industry is the multi-billion dollar business that is there for the taking from a very gullible public. The King of Comedy portrays the television industry as end in itself for most people who lived in this era of television culture.

The desire to become famous is so attracting that some people would do anything to become one without thinking about the dire consequences of the means applied to achieve fame. The television industry reinforces this desire by flooding its audience about glamour, wealth, and the sophistication of being a Hollywood star. On the other hand, the audience’ obsession to reality TV shows and the need to be entertained has made television shows a very profitable business. Both films showed traits about the “postmodernistic” world that we now live in.

Postmodernism is characterized by the emergence of the post-industrial information economy, replacing the previous classes of aristocracy, middle class, and working class with the new paradigm: information elite, middle class, and underclass (Hartman, 1996). Some of the characteristics that differentiate postmodern work with modernist work are the following: (1) extreme self-reflexivity, (2) irony and parody, (3) a questioning of grand narratives, (4) visuality against temporality, (5) late capitalism, (6) disorientation and (7) secondary orality (Felluga, 2003). Both movies are not

only a satire of television; they also direct its sarcastic taunts on us, the audience, who made reality shows and other entertainments possible by lapping it up readily. The audience shown on screen watching the unfolding of the life of Truman in television is in actuality the same audience watching the movie *The Truman Show*.

We are innocent accomplices of the exploitation of characters and victims of reality shows and news programming due to our insatiable desire to be entertained. Both movies depict this exploitation for the audience entertainment. And our passivity and willingness to become part of this exploitation gives the television industry the means to become powerful and rich beyond their expectations. References: Felluga, Dino. "General Introduction to Postmodernism.

" Introductory Guide to Critical Theory. Last update: November 28, 2003, Purdue University. Retrieved June 27, 2007. <http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/postmodernism/modules/introduction.html>

Hartman, Paul 1996. What is " Postmodernism?" Retrieved June 27, 2007. <http://www.naciente.com/essay15.htm>