

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Looking for Truth in the Mediated World

Adam Leipzig · Wednesday, May 11th, 2011

The movie moved us, so my wife Lori and I decided to drive to the ocean. It was a clear and early evening, traffic surprisingly light. Voices on the radio complained about the White House not releasing photos of bin Laden dead. They would have proved nothing, Lori reflected. Critics would claim they're Photoshopped. That's what happened with the birth certificate.

How can we know anything anymore? I asked. Everything we think we know is mediated in some way. Visual effects are convincing. Photoshopping is easy. The reality with which we are presented feels less real than it did a decade ago.

Was Hilary Clinton in the Situation Room watching the bin Laden operation go down on May 1? The radio voice was asking the question. Not if you're an ultra-Orthodox reader of *Der Zeitung* in New York. That newspaper removed the Secretary of State and another woman from the photo because, as they eventually explained, "laws of modesty, [do not allow us] to publish pictures of women.... We apologize if this was seen as offensive."

Offensive doesn't begin to describe it. While it's easy to for us to understand that *Der Zeitung*'s readers cannot know what happened because they don't have access to information, the larger question is how any of us can know might be called Truth in the outside world.

Lori and I found a place to park at a meter on Ocean Avenue. We got out of the car and walked; as the light was falling from the sky, we made out Catalina Island, 20 miles away, a dark shape in the black-purple ocean.

We don't even know that we're seeing the same color ocean, Lori said.

Yet there we were, on the Palisades, both moved by the same movie. Isn't that why we go to movies – and all creative works: To find ourselves affected in the same way as another person, to find that common, coherent grounding of reality?

Artists express the way they see, and ask, through their creative work, if we are seeing what they do. When we support artists, and advocate for creativity, we're encouraging Reality with a capital R, because when facts are Photoshopped as a matter of daily life, the work of artists is the truest thing we have.

By watching a movie together, and being moved by it together, my wife and I have subtle intimate knowledge that we're both looking out at the black-purple ocean.

Image source here.

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