Tim Burton's Advancement of Dark Gothic Art

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Introduction

Tim Burton, a director and animator, produces a continuous stream of films . While it appears his works are influenced by the German Expressionist, they have instead advanced the traditions of Dark Gothic Art by continuing into mainstream film productions.

Gothic Art originated with architecture during the late medieval times in Europe and was ridiculed during the Renaissance period as an offensive style. Mostly found in religious buildings, the form was also seen in castles, city buildings, and colleges.

The advent of film at the turn of the 20th century, Gothic Art gained another attribute through the lighting of the sets and more significantly, the lighting of the architecture of the buildings. Shadows, long drawn elements, harsh contrasts, cold forms, and necessary at the time: black and white, produced the Dark Gothic effect.

The effect of shadows on the set give the dark element to the Gothic form and evoke the feelings of terror without actually showing something horrific. Dark Gothic Art applies to films, and only those that present the architecture so familiar to the style and an important part of the Expressionist form.

Expressionist Art

The expressionist art form distorts reality to produce an emotional effect. It comes from difficult social times, usually during recessions or immediately after wars. Created to express inner emotions, Expressionism began in Germany, spread throughout Europe, and eventually reached America.

A common example of the style would be the expressionist groups in painting. They used colors and odd compositions in order to depict on how they saw their subjects. The goal was not to produce an aesthetically pleasing reproduction of life but to create a dark emotional reaction. Expressionism expanded through all mediums: painting,

drawing, sculpture, and cinema and was primarily in Germany and Austria during the 1920's to the early 1940's.

Examples of painting and drawing are found containing pure black and white with the use of charcoal and a darker pallet of paint: browns, blacks, and blues. Oils, etchings, and lithographs all exhibited this feeling of a darker tone where politics, religion, and military governments were all subjects of the art form. A great deal of the art is portraiture and much of that self-portraits. These came about as an expression of what the artists were going through in their lives.

The effects of revolution, military defeat, and economic collapse resulted in the cities falling into the hands of the workers and soldiers. The artists' vague confidence in the changing times to transform their world, caused them to create their own statements of life in chaos.

Portraits were constructed in such a way to yield a sense of depression. Details were not the key in the imagery but the idea and feeling of what the artist and subject were going through at the time of creation.

An example of this is Otto Dix's self-portrait as a soldier in 1914 (Image 1). His painting shows morose somber colors of black, red and yellow conveying anxiety and depression. This was created by the use of slow, elongated and expansive brush strokes found in many paintings of the time.

Image 1 - Otto Dix's self-portrait 1914, Oil Painting.

Etchings and lithographs created the expressionist form from line art either with acid-etch or photographic transfer. By the

lack of detailed rendering, they were able to focus on expressing their opinions and feelings by showing the subject matter without the distraction of the background. These artists intellectually represented their ideas through this lack of detail rendering. The subject matter of these dealt more with the politics of the day and the subjective opinions on government policies. (Brandt 46)

Artists in Imperial Germany used woodcuts and engravings to create strong emotional pieces. The feeling of being lost and the direct contrast of black-and-white shows an expression of a group of people going through a struggle. In Berlin the graphics were of stark black and white images that drew powerful compositions, many of sick and tired women. Self portraits were common as the artists themselves were the only available models for their work. (Barron and Dube 77)

The woodcuts created during this time had the proof of the physical work done by artists themselves, from the evidence of broad lines and hard piercing angles. The lack of detail became the style as artists sought to express their beliefs through the emotion of the piece. Economics after WWI created an increase in woodcuts due to their low cost and availability of material, but the art form had been prevalent even before. (Barron and Dube 49) Erich Heckel in the woodcut of The Brothers in 1913 shows hand carvings of emotion in the image of a Gothic-distorted view of two men wrapped in each others arms for protection and comfort in a saddening time. (Image 2)

Image 2 - Erich Heckel,
Wood Etching.

Sculpture took on a more abstract role but with humanistic features. Massive pieces with exaggerated shapes and limbs showed people in different stages of emotion: sadness, despair, fear, and anger. The sculpture *The Fallen Man* or *Der Gesturzte* by Wihelm Lehmbruck during 1915-16 created from the war period was of bronze metal and had a dark appearance. Gray in tone, the young man had a uniform shape - kneeling to the ground in shame, exhaustion, depression, or forgiveness evokes a dark looming sensation. (Image 3)

Image 3 - Wilhelm Lehmbruck Der Gesturzte,
1915-16 bronze, 72x239x83 cm.

Most expressionists were influenced by August Rodin, the French sculptor, who's works represented inner feelings. One such follower was Ernst Barlach who later created sculptures of protest, mostly anti-war. The piece by Ernst Barlach, Magdeburg cenotaph in 1929, (Image 4) was requested as a heroic memorial of WWI by the city Magdeburg. When the statue instead depicted the desperation of war, it was removed and hidden until after WWII.

Sculptural architecture as well had a dark Gothic appearance. Buildings were erected during this time

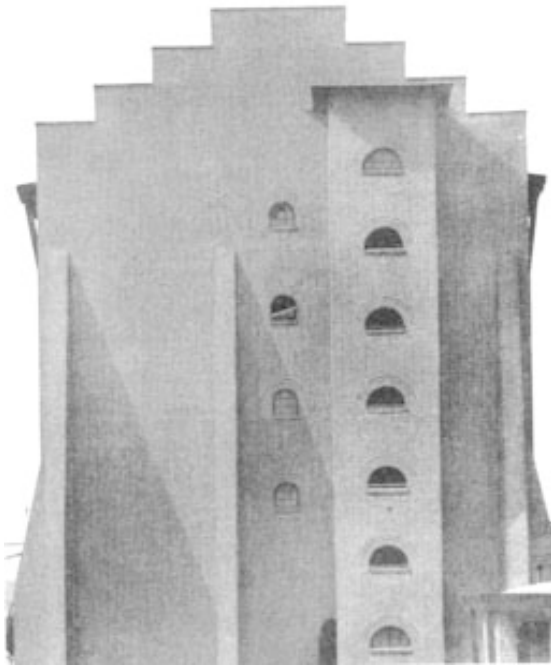Image 4 - Ernst Barlach, 1929
Magdeburger Ehrenmal.

Image 5 - Chemical factory, Designed by Hans Poelzig 1912, Architecture.

period in Germany and other areas of Europe that had been devastated by the first world war and were created with a surrealistic look but with functionality. A chemical factory building in Luban, constructed in 1911-1912 by Hans Poelzig (Image 5), appeared to be a three dimensional building of a two dimensional drawing of brick and sharp edges.

The lack of ornament and ornate facades came about through the simple means of construction. Function and art became one as architectural expressionism came into being through the Bauhaus Movement, later known as the International Style. The distorted image of the structures often communicate violent emotion. Hybrid elements or natural formations such as land forms were frequently used.

Cinema created during the first part of WWI through and slightly after had a dark reality. The stories were Gothic-horror in visual nature but had underlining romanticisms. It was a way for the public to get away to a world that was not as bad as what they were experiencing. The producers and directors utilized these connections in order relate both the work and the viewer together. Scenes within the films contain created buildings and sets. The set designs were similar to the architecture of the time, by having oddly shaped buildings that grew from the ground with a narrow base and then ballooned up to a large top. Many scenes were painterly in fashion and were not built into three dimensions but would have the illusion of depth. (Barron and Dube 105)

In the dream sequences in Genuine: *A Tale of a Vampire* (1920) by Robert Wiene, the background consists of lighting bolt shaped windows, Cubist in style and yet are hand painted two dimensionally. The sets aid the dark emotional horror by having elongated shadows and hallways which appear to tilt from one side or the other; this due to the illustrative nature and the odd triangular shapes. Walls appear to twist like vertical standing rectangular boxes of which the top and bottom have been turned in opposite directions and contain outlined liner edges. (Image 6)

Image 6 - Robert Wiene, Genuine 1920.

Backgrounds were designed to the style of the popular art movement. An example of this is in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, Wiene hired expressionist artists, Hermann Warm, Walter Rohrig, and Walter Reimann to design and build his movie background set. (Kraucer 34) As noted in the book *From Caligari to Hitler* there is a quote by Hermann Warm saying, "Films must be drawings brought to life". The lighting in Wiene's films reflect that of the expressionist woodcut pieces, with the harsh angles and deep strokes of the background, illustratively lit. (Image 7)

This film and many others, were produced in the 1920s after Germany's devastation in WWI. America as well found the German art forms – and their own during the Great Depression of the 1930s. After WWII Great Britain followed with this artistic art style from the aftermath of that event. Yet America was to have another economic downturn, again bringing about an interest in Gothic art.

Image 7 - Robert Wiene, Caligari 1919.

Black Monday of October 1987 occurred when the Dow Jones Industrials took a 500 point dive. The panic that followed, led to a sharp recession that hit hard on not only the United States, but also Canada, Australia, and Great Britain. Other European economies plus Japan's were also damaged. (Wikipedia.org)

The recession continued for over five years representing over a $120 billion loss to long term savings within the US, then slowly crawled back up to the levels of 1987 by mid-1995. The stock collapse of unprecedented size, represented a loss of 25% on the US stock market and 11% on the Canadian market or $37 billion.

The effects of Black Friday in the US caused alcoholism and drug abuse to dramatically increase, along with emotional depression for a period of up to a decade after that year. Recessions like the one of 1987-1995, have a devastating impact on the affected society, bringing about a resurgence in Gothic art.

In modern day films the true idea of Gothic art no longer exists as a whole. Films of today that took the place of Gothic works are of those of horror, gore, and violence like the current film, *30 Days of Night* (2007), a vampire film set in an isolated Alaskan

town that is night for a month. Gothic films were more about connections, the environment and how the overall look and feel connected to an emotion, much more than entertainment. Today's counter-part in expressionism within Gothic film is Tim Burton.

The Art of Tim Burton

Burton's work, as a collective, contains the dark Gothic element of expressionism with a distinct edge. Many of his sets are artesian or hand made and have the appearance of a human touch. There is a consistency in all his work with harsh lighting, muted color, period-design costumes, mono-chromatic set designs, and a surrealistic overtone to each film.

Films Before the Fall

In the black-and-white stop-animation short, *Vincent* (1982), a young Vincent Malloy dreams of being Vincent Price and is obsessed with author Edgar Allan Poe. Although living a normal life, he daydreams himself into a dark and macabre world, much to the chagrin of his Mother. Vincent Price was a stage actor in the 1930's and went on to be known for his roles in 180 Gothic Horror films during the 1940's to the 1980's. He was in such movies as The House of Wax 1953 and The Fly 1958. During the 1960's he played various roles from Edgar Allan Poe adaptations. In the later years during the 1970's Price became known for voice-overs and especially for dramatic readings of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories and poems. (www.imdb.com/name/nm0001637/)

The backgrounds in the film are lit in such a manner to give triangular shapes to tile floors and walls that do not have straight lines but obscure squares. There is a scene where the street pole curves and warps. Buildings grow from a small base in the ground to an large open oblique-square top. (Image 8) Elements have a heavy texture due to

Image 8 - Still shot from Vincent, 1982.

lighting and black, white and gray hues with harsh light in most scenes add to the Gothic feel of the piece. There is normalcy in the film with checkered wall paper in the rooms and common place objects in the scenes, yet these become Gothic symbols, even to Salvador Dali-like imagery. This overall style can also be seen in several of his other works.

Produced by Burton for a mere $60,000 supplied by Disney, the six-minute short parallels Burton's own childhood and is set in a dual world of normal life and the Gothic imagination of the boy down to his idolization of actor Vincent Price and his avid interest in author Edgar Allan Poe — the source for several of Price's films. The main character in Nightmare, Skellington, appears in a 'cameo' near the end of the piece. (Tim Burton 6) *Vincent* was Burton's first real venture into the art form, yet came before Black Monday of 1987.

A film short, *Frankenweenie* (1984), is a parallel to the Universal release of Frankenstein (1931) in which a boy named Victor, brings to life his dead dog 'Sparky'. Victor Frankenstein was the name of the character scientist in the original film, and is here as well. Victor uses Sparky in his home-made horror movies, until the dog is hit by a car

and killed. (minadream.com/timburton) After 'recharging' Sparky, the dog goes on to terrorize the neighborhood, ending with the once-friendly people on the block, chasing down Sparky to the old wind mill -- another parallel to the original Frankenstein. In this film however, Sparky shows himself to the true loyal dog he always was, rescuing Victor from the burning wind mill, and

Image 9 - Frankenweenie 1984, Film Still.

becoming the hero of the neighborhood. (Image 9)

A 1950's styled 'B' movie, with visually low quality techniques yet a higher budget look. The piece contains the emotional shadows and feeling of the original Frankenstein film, with the 1950's checkered patterns and home movie quality. Harsh lighting, plus black and white techniques, rely on the light rather than the object to portray the mood. The look is of a timeless era, as it is portrayed as though it can happen any time in history. Frankenweenie as well, came before the 1980s-90s recession and is due for a remake by Burton himself.

Film During the Economic Crisis

In *Beetlejuice* (1988), Adam and Barbara, a small town couple, happen to have just died and are now haunting their own home, a typical New England farmhouse. When the new yuppie owners move in, Adam and Barbara try to scare them out, however the couple use the ghosts to make an income. Beetlejuice, a bio-exorcist then is called upon to try to remove the new family. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beetlejuic)

Image 10 - Beetlejuice, 1988, Film Still.

Among the scenes, the hallway of the dead shows the hallway which appears to curve in perspective with an illustrative illusion. (Image 10) This effect is also found in smaller pieces with in the film. Burton intentionally made the scenes look cartoonish where the surreal sets are obviously sets where he constructed life size models. The non-realism is somewhat dreamlike in the non-living sequences of the piece and the lighting is harsh with deep emotional shadows lit from the side. Silhouettes are geometric in shape and transform into a warped reality. The house itself is shown in a flat monotone, as though it were a black and white pencil drawing. (Image 11)

Expressionist films had low budgets such that it was necessary to reuse sets and layouts. This became a style, deliberately used here for an emotional stylized effect, not because of budgetary constraints. The grotesque perspective of the sets are actually in the same location with the sets reorganized to appear differently. Often editing with cuts create transitions that are utilized instead of new constructed backdrops.
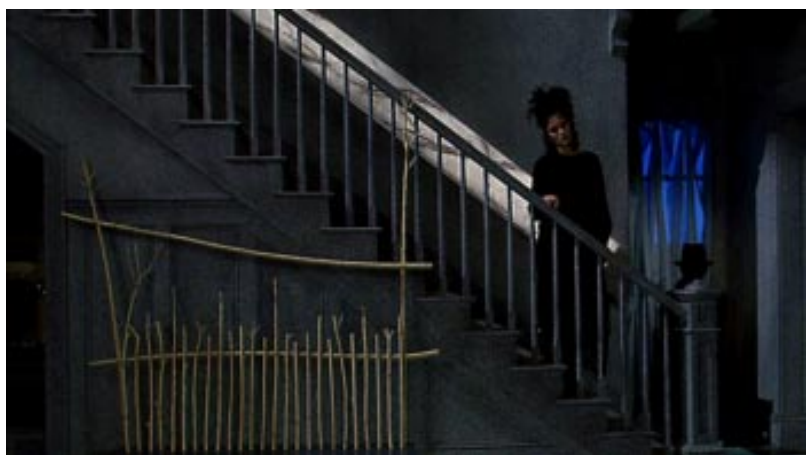
Although this was the first Burton film with a big

Image 11 - Beetlejuice 1988, Film Still.

budget of $13 million, far less than 10% was spent on special effects. Burton himself was quoted as wanting their effects to: "Be cheap, creaky illusions rather that state-of-the-art effects." This in combination with the set style of the 1920's, brought the film to the forefront and netted $73 million in receipts. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_Burton) Beetlejuice was Burton's first film after the recession began in late 1987 and although did not reach block buster status, represents a significant contribution to the art form.

A key element in Burton's collective of art is the feeling of the dark, morbid Gothic sensation. This comes across with various elements to express these feelings. The harsh lighting, key acting, music, and again the set design. (Image 12) In the dark film *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), a fairy tale set in modern times has an aged inventor creating a boy named Edward with scissors for hands. After the inventor dies, Edward moves in with the local Avon lady, who's daughter is enamored with the strange boy. Initially winning the hearts of all in the neighborhood, Edward eventually is framed for a crime and returns to live out his misunderstood life back at the inventor's castle.

Image 12 - Edward Scissorhands 1990, Film Still.

(www.imdb.com/title/tt0099487/)

Burton here again uses the American Gothic actor Vincent Price as the creator of Edward, along with the elemental music one can sense a dark emotion but still a feel

there is hope. Again the set details here give way to a handmade look of machinery and obscure looking architecture. The houses are all uniform and colorful but stark, giving the feeling of something cold and uninviting. The castle is actually more warm in feeling and humanistic due to the scattered props, and the fact that they actually make cookies as the inventor reads poetry to the boy.

The character Edward is reminiscent of the man in the cabinet, Cesare, in Wiene's *Dr. Caligari* (1920). Yet the roles here have been reversed: Edward in the ominous castle is the hero, where the suburban villagers are the antagonists. Burton uses the theme, stylized sets, and characters from the 1920 film, in his modern tale of another misunderstand dark persona. Although the earlier piece was necessarily shot in black and white, the later film while in the castle, gives the appearance of mute color in a black and white set. Edward Scissorhands was produced in the middle of the recession, was nominated for an Oscar, and won five other awards.

In the comic book turned movie *Batman* (1989) and *Batman Returns* (1992), Gotham City is protected by the Dark Knight himself - Batman - as he battles bazaar enemies such as the Joker, Penguin, and Catwoman. Living in the family castle, the alter-ego Bruce Wayne takes on his dark image when trouble comes, with the help of his ever-loyal butler Alfred. Each film continues the story of the never-ending crime-fighting hero Batman. (Batman)

Both films are pure visual elements of the Gothic world with cold hard concrete buildings that have a surrealistic image: although it appears representational of a real city, it actually has qualities that could not be possible in real life. (Image 13) They are architecturally driven with a 1920's American Art Deco and industrial feel that is dirty, grimy and not very pleasant. There is a scene where a church has the appearance of a tall Gothic tower, rounded buttress arms, and a sturdy illustrative square central tower.

Image 13 - Batman 1989, Sample of Metropolis, Film Still.

(Image 14)

The buildings themselves are all large, grand, and towering structures yet cartoon-like in appearance. The entire film in both cases is shot with a 1940's Film Noir lighting. Film Noir "a cinematic term" originally fit crime dramas emanating from Hollywood in the 1940's and 1950's (Image 15) — all in black and white. Literally French for 'black film,' the Film Noir style used here comes directly from the German Expressionist style although the term did not come about until 1946.

For Batman, Pinewood Studios in England was transformed into an impressive Gotham for $5.5 million. Writer Sam Hamm said in his script that it was: "... as if hell had sprung up through the pavements and kept on going" (Batman, 1989 film). The cathedral tower scene was not Burton's idea. It came from the theater version of Phantom of the Opera, when the producer Jon Peters wanted to put out
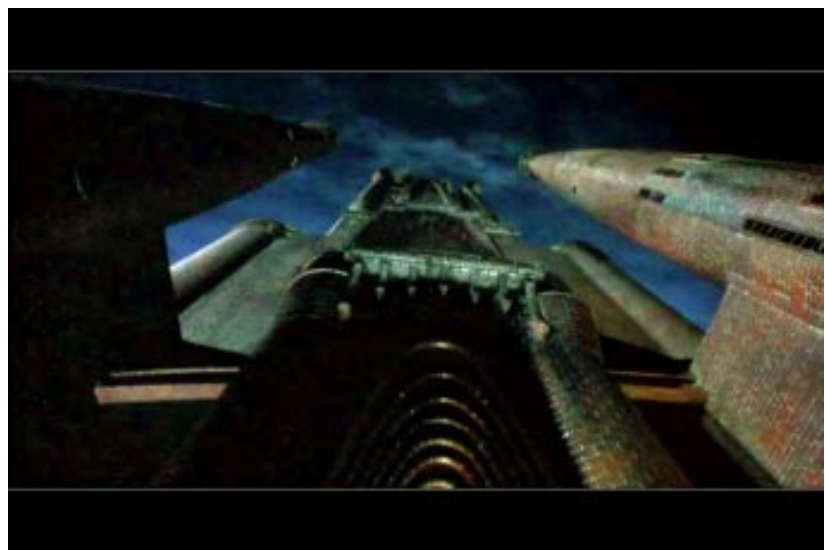

Image 14 - Batman 1989, Film Still.

another $100,000 to add it to the

film. Chris Kenny, Batman

Producer said:

Image 15 - Example of Film Noir, The Killers 1946, Film Still.

> When we brought Batman to
> Pinewood in 1988-1989, we
> had the whole of the backlot
> and basically, every stage in
> the studio. There was
> something like 28 miles of
> tubular scaffolding in the set on the backlot! I mean, it was the biggest set that
> had been built in this country, I think, since Cleopatra (1963). There's not
> many places in the world we could have done that. (qt. in
> www.pinewoodgroup.com/gen)

Batman would be Burton's first big budget, block buster film. Anton Furst did the
production design but committed suicide when he wasn't allowed to do so for Batman
Returns due to contractual reasons. (Entertainment Weekly) Gotham City in England had
been saved for the sequel but Burton chose to use Bo Welch, production designer on
Beetlejuice and Edward Scissorhands, to build Gotham on the sound stage at Warner
Brothers in Burbank. On this Burton said:

> Often times with sequels, they're like the same movie except everything gets
> jacked up a little. I didn't feel I could do that; I wanted to treat this like it was
> another Batman movie altogether. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_Burton)

Both Batman films were released during the height of the recession, yet high grossing
films. While Batman and Batman Returns were mainstream movies, his next film related
in style to his earlier work in claymation.

Continuing into his modern selections of this dark Gothic style, the stop-animation films *The Nightmare before Christmas* (1993) and *Corpse Bride* (2005) both follow this dark emotional design as well. Character Jack Skellington in The Nightmare before Christmas, lives in Halloween Town and discovers a forest in which each tree has a door that leads to another holiday. Entering into Christmas Town, Jack tries to take over, kidnapping Santa and enlisting the help from all the ghouls in his own town. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_nightmare_before_christmas)

In The Nightmare before Christmas, Burton uses the element of an animated set to create a world that is purely dark in emotion and keeps a color pallet that is dark, with the buildings sculpted with the narrow base and wide tops, giving it a mystical organic texture. (Image 16) The sets are swirling carved lines with dark shadows and again

Image 16 - Nightmare Before Christmas, 1993, Film Stills.

shows the use of harsh direct lighting. Everything has an altered perspective with monochromatic colors in Halloween Town of black gray and orange, while in contrast Christmas Town is vibrant with reds, greens, and white. Both sets have a physical presence although contain a hand carved look. The entire piece has an illustrative quality.

Burton originated the idea for the film with a poem and three character drawings (Jack, Santa, and the dog) while working at Disney studios in the 1970's Essentially the opposite of the Grinch Stole Christmas, the story is about the hero who wants to immerse himself in the holiday, but ends up destroying it in the end. He said he got the idea from seeing the store displays of Halloween being replaced by those of Christmas. Burton is listed as the writer (not director or producer,) but literally had a hand in each character, set, and scene. The sets were first drawn, then created as half-size cardboard mock-ups, before they were actually produced. Covering large areas in several studios, the sets were movable, to allow animators to reach all of the characters. Each week of production produced one minute of film and the production ran over three years.

Roger Ebert said the film was an: "Enormous achievement (with a) visual richness so abundant, (it) deserves more than one viewing" (rogerebert.suntimes.com) James Berardinelli stated: "The Nightmare Before Christmas has something to offer just about everyone ... the film is designed for all but the youngest children, (and is) an amazing achievement. "(Berardinelli) Nightmare is the highest rated film of all time on the Internet Movie Data Base, a paramount achievement for a Gothic film. (Berardinelli) Nightmare was the last of Burton's films during the recession and he stepped out of the genera for his next two productions, [*James and the Giant Peach* (1996), *Mars Attacks!* (1996)] and both were not considered to be financially successful.

Films after the Recession

Corpse Bride (2005) brings the animated story of the Victorian 1800's with Victor to marry Victoria. Working on his vows in the woods, he finds himself apparently married to a dead woman, Emily — the Corpse Bride. She takes Victor to the land of the dead, where he cannot adjust to the chaos of lost heads, popping eyeballs, and a host of bizarre characters. (www.imdb.com/title/tt0121164)

Not like in Nightmare, the living characters here deal with the drab living of day-to-day life in dark grays and shadows while the land of the dead is full of life and color: a hope within death yet very dark in emotion. This is a real world time piece with soft directional lighting yet everything is presented in a sickly depressing mood with rustic gray overtones. The drab historic appearance of Victorian life has lots of shadows and

Image 17 - Corpse Bride, 2005, Film Stills.

smooth textures where everything appears mechanical with metallic surface tones yet in a normal perspective. (Image 17)

The forest that transitions the story has deep shadows with elongated silhouettes coming from skeletal like trees with harsh lighting. The land of the dead has deep shadows but vibrant colors of pinks, greens, and bright neon hues. Textured woods and surfaces make this land seem more realistic than the living world. The sharp lighting gives a moody feel but the action is all in motion and lively.

Here Burton's continued recurring theme of two worlds, light and dark, makes Corpse the 'spiritual successor' of Nightmare. Although shot with still cameras, the new model puppetry allowed a smoother transition for movement and facial expressions than in Nightmare. Burton said:

> "I've always loved stop-motion animation. What's nice about it is that it's so tactile. Our Corpse Bride puppets are beautifully made and our animators are amazing. There's something wonderful about being able to physically touch and move the characters, and to see their world actually exist." (qt. in www.stopmotionworks.com/articles)

Corpse Bride was made a decade after the recession was over and although not a box office hit, was nominated for an Oscar, gaining 20 other awards and nominations. Sweeney Todd (Dec 2007) will be his next advance beyond Gothic film and will show whether his style follows society, or society follows his style.

Elements of Gothic Style

Burton's films contain the visual and emotional elements of Gothic nature but do not encapsulate the modern ideas of the genre of horror or gore. Even though the topics of death and the slight over tones of the morbidity come out in his films he does not fit

Image 18 - World War I German Allied Map 1914.

the contemporary horror genre. The German Expressionists were not about the horror but more about the emotional content of the terror.

German Expressionist art was created as a result of Germany's loss of World War I. The country went through a depression on various levels: emotional, social, economic, and artistic. Germany was sent into war through a domino affect with its allies that consisted of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey against England, Belgium, France, Italy, Russia, Serbia, Abania, Monte-Negro, Greece, Romania and Portugal. (Fisher 20) (Image 18)

The German people were patriotic toward the cause of defending their allies and their own country, and artists particularly climbed aboard the cause. Expressionist artists

volunteered for active duty within the services as medics as there was a wide spread need to be a unified country in time of war. By 1919 with the war over, Germany was in anguish. Buildings were destroyed, citizens were with out supplies, homes and families separated by death. Life was not pleasant to live in these conditions. The people had little hope and little money while looking to the outside world for assistance. (Koepnick 31)

These dark, depressing, and Gothic artistic values became a pattern in history. This trend was not only present in Germany but in the U.S. as well. There was great wealth in the U.S. during the 1920's, stock trading was rampant and the young adults lived to have a good time. Near the end of that decade the stock market crashed, leaving a nation of devastated poor and depressed people. As the 1930's artwork in the U.S. fell upon dark times, there came an emergence here of the German Expressionist work. This was seen in the wide spread popularity in the German horror films such as *Nosferatu* (1922) in 1929. A country that could relate to despair with little chance of hope.

Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens (1922) was a direct copyright infringement on the story line of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The lead character Graf Orlok was nothing like the persona in the book however, Stoker's widow sued and won judgements twice over the movie, the second ordering all copies of the film destroyed. The film had been released that year in the US, so copies continue to be readily available today. The Symphony of Grauens (horror) stars German actor Max Schreck (terror) — the same name as one of the characters in Burton's Batman Returns. The real Schreck plays the villain Graf Orlok (a Graf is a Count,) who is more of a traditional vampire than the cleaned-up modern-day movie versions. (Kracauer 14)

Taking ideas from other sources is a common tool used in art. The directors and writers of the German films did this for various reasons. The obvious is the lack of

income due to the economic hardships. In this case there was a reprimand and a demand from Bram Stroker's widow for monetary compensation.

Other countries went through similar monetary hardships. Britain went through the devastation of World War II and their film went toward the dark Gothic art form. There was an emphasis on terror and magic. "There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it", Alfred Hitchcock. (www.brainyquote.com/quotes/) A particular studio called Hammer Studio made horror films, such as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) and *Dracula* (1958).

Burton mentions in an interview that his influence was from the Hammer Studios collection of films. These works consisted of the terror, suspense and eerie locales. Britain being one of the countries involved with the war and near to Germany was heavily influenced by the German Expressionists. (Wexman 36)

Art is influenced and created by the individual's experiences with the world: the larger scope and social bias. Each country had their prejudices with the world wars. The United States had a different set of experiences from the world war but because of the Great Depression, America went through a similar phase.

These historic events played an important part in Tim Burton's film work; he too was not brought up in a vacuum. His parents, the people that raised him, experienced those events previously of the Great Depression. Burton is quoted speaking about how his parents blocked out his windows as a child:

> ... they covered them up for insulation, supposedly, and they put a little slit at the top of the covering so some light could get in. It was a suburban thing of keeping the heat in or something ... That is probably why I always related to Edgar Allan Poe, who wrote several stories revolving around the theme of being buried alive. (Fraga 47)

He is also quoted about having dark fantasies:

> ... if you grow up in an environment that is not passionate, you have no
> choice but to have these dark fantasies ... You got to understand, things are
> not perfect for children. There's a lot of abstraction. The only way to get
> through it is to explore it. (Fraga 136)

Tim Burton's situation is unique to himself but the emotional reaction as an adult is similar to those in a post war scenario creating an out lash to the norm, siding with the darker side of art. Every artist has their own views and their own opinions. Burton does this by out lashing the "Disney" look, the company that has employed him for many years, and going against the fluffy innocent look.

Tim Burton's Story

Tim Burton, born in 1958 and raised in Burbank, CA, was an artist from an early age and after high school, attended the California Institute of the Arts - funded by Disney. Burton was then hired on at Disney Studios in 1979 due to his animated short, *Stalk of the Celery Monster* (1979). (McMahan 10)

Later in 1984 after working on Disney films as an animator, Burton was given the chance to direct the live action short Frankenweenie and during this time also produced his stop animated short Vincent. This launched his career into creating his works of art in film. Since the year 1984 to the present, Tim Burton has directed and produced over fourteen full featured films, each containing similar aspects and style.

In order to better understand the relation on how his films are a modern counterpart to the German Expressionism, we must understand the films. In most of the Gothic films of Germany there is that misunderstood character that goes through great lengths to overcome some battle, an empathy of sorts.

Each of Burton's films have an entirely different story line and various sets and locations, have one element in common: they are rooting for the underdog, the unknown hero, or the one that is the least likely to succeed in the story.

In the German film *Metropolis* (1929), there was more than one underdog, or misunderstood character. One such person was the slave type worker belonging to the people of the underground, and the other the son of rich creator, Freder. Both characters were very important in gaining compassion both for those that had nothing and for those that did. Also, they both tried to understand each other and survive.

This film was a hall mark film when it was first released in Germany because of the great devastations within the country, and then later for the people of the United States when it came here in 1929 after our Great Depression. (Williams 17-24)

Film during the turn of the 19th century was an important technology as an art form. It started by combining visual elements with novels or writings into one media the artists ideas are carried out in real time with explanation and movement captured an organic moving transparent photograph. The story line, a key in transferring the ideas, and the dialogue - whether it was spoken verbally or written between scenes-made it more accessible to the common public to understand than the avant garde art of the day. (Kirkpatrick 27) This still holds true with the works of Tim Burton. His works relate to the youth of Tim Burton's time - 1970's. His work became a great success with the 1980's icon of "Pee-Wee Herman," Paul Ruben and the story in which Tim Burton visualized. His work definitely follows a progression and growth.

In *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* (1985), the connecting element is the story of a young man getting kicked while down on the ground, his bicycle being stolen but on this adventure he grows, finds love and even his beloved bicycle. In Batman, The Nightmare Before Christmas and Corpse Bride, the main characters have a difficult life or a boring

mundane life in which makes them act out. They are not the ones you would expect to succeed but they do. The likeness in Batman of which we know as Bruce Wayne, witnessed his family being killed as a child. Being warped with a sense of black revenge, he dresses in dark attire yet becomes the hero of Gotham City. The character Jack Skellington in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) has become so consumed with his own desires to break the mundane that he becomes physically and emotionally wrecked - but finds the one element that was missing which pulls him together - romance.

The Corpse Bride's (2005) Victor Van Dort, is the only child of a fish merchant and learns about romance and to appreciate beauty through a world of darkness. In order to be with the one he loves, he must follow the rules but can not. He only realizes the importance of going after what he wants in life until it is too late, even if it means the end of his own life.

Art's Parallel to Society

There is a parallel pattern in dark art in society when there is a somber or dark period in history. Films of this type were created in their time because of the unfavorable situations. Patterns can be seen of these periods for the German, American and Great Britain experiences of the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940-50's, respectively.

Previously in history as noted after World War I, this dark time for art was called Expressionism in Germany. The U.S. then became absorbed in it after the Great Depression, caused by the fall of the stock market. An economic fall created a lowered morale as well as the quality of life nation wide that was expressed through art. This was true for Great Britain after the devastation of World War II. In the late 1980's through the 1990's a recession brought another pattern of dark art. Dark Gothic art became more

popular in the younger generation making it possible for the form to grow and be a larger part of the artistic society.

It would make sense that Burton's influences would come from the previous generations in America, leading all the way back to Germany. His own personal characteristics as an artist fit with the lonely emotional content of the German Expressionists.

Future of Dark Gothic Art

Burton, without knowing that his art form is expressionist in style, produced a series of Gothic styled films: before, during, and after the 1987-1995 recession. While the bulk of his Gothic work was created during the time (1988-1993), his early films Vincent (1982) and Frankenweenie (1984) pre-date the recession. As well, his later films Sleepy Hollow (1999), Corpse Bride (2005), clearly post-date that economic downturn.

Instead, the artist became Expressionist-styled through the type of projects he has created and continues to create with the film Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet street (2007), wrongly imprisoned barber returns to reap revenge by riding those who have done wrong to him in hopes in reuniting with his daughter. Burton has a continual overtone of the Gothic style, yet is a mainstream artist with big budgets, major stars, and high-profile promotion.

Clearly, Burton's films have advanced the traditions of Gothic art by continuing his work beyond socio-economic boundaries. Although Gothic-styled, his is one of a mainstream art form. The X-generation's fascination with Tim Burton's films will continue because they grew up during the time of the 1987 recession. If other artists take the challenge to parallel Burton's efforts, they too will find popularity with this group.

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