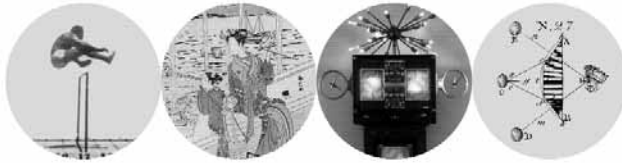


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Seeing Differently: From Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) to Shezad Dawood's *Make It Big* (2005)

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Abstract

This article makes use of London-based artist Shezad Dawood's 2005 reworking of Antonioni's 1966 *Blow Up* in his photographic and installation work *Make It Big* to explore a shifting regime of vision and power in Euro-American culture between the 1960s and the present. Via an analysis and comparison of the terms of vision and knowing in *Blow Up* and *Make It Big*, the author argues that Dawood's project articulates a subject that is newly hybrid and networked. Working postcolonial theory against new media theory, the article also puts pressure on the tendency in debates about new media to attribute all shifts in contemporary experience to the advent of the digital, arguing that these debates fail to acknowledge fully the crucial importance of broad social and political shifts since the Second World War, such as the migration of people across borders, transformations in concepts of identity and belonging, and changes in the way intellectual, aesthetic and financial capital circulates.

Keywords

cinema • modernism • new media • photography • postcolonial theory
• subjectivity • vision

Inspired by a particular project – the evocative multilayered photographically based 2005 piece *Make It Big* by Shezad Dawood, which itself takes inspiration from, responds to, and reworks aspects of Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blow Up*, this article is about a historical shift in a way of seeing and making sense of the world that has taken place since the 1960s (Figures 1 and 2). Dawood, a London-based artist born in London in 1974 of South-Asian parents,¹ created and displayed *Make It Big* across two continents, in the UK and Pakistan; Antonioni, a highly regarded filmmaker



Figure 1 David Hemmings in Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966), film still. BLOWUP © Turner Entertainment Co. A Warner Bros. Entertainment Company. All Rights Reserved.

born in provincial Italy in 1912 and based in Rome until his death in 2007, made *Blow Up* in London. Via an extended analysis and comparison of the terms of vision and knowing in *Blow Up* and *Make It Big* (the title *Make It Big* is derived from a direct translation back into English of the Urdu title of *Blow Up*), the article addresses this historically new way of seeing, and argues that it is intimately connected to a historically new kind of subjectivity which

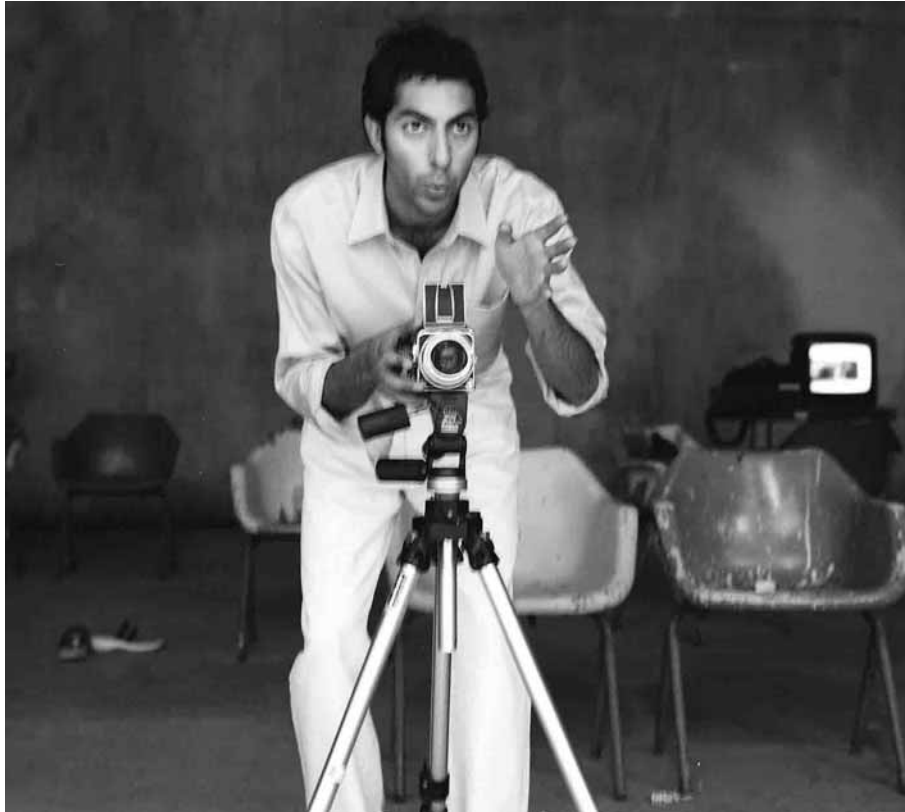


Figure 2 Shezad Dawood, *Make It Big* (2005), production still.

differs from the mythical ideal subject of Euro-American modernism in that it is hybrid and networked, dissolved across identifications, rather than centred and coherent.

As a corollary argument, I want to use this discussion of Dawood's project to put pressure on the tendency in debates about new media to attribute all shifts in contemporary experience to the advent of the digital – arguments that rely too heavily on the ontology of media, failing to acknowledge fully the crucial importance of broad social and political shifts since the Second World War, such as the migration of people across borders, transformations in concepts of identity and belonging, and changes in the way intellectual, aesthetic and financial capital circulates. Techno-theorist Katherine Hayles (1999) thus suggests in her important definition of the 'posthuman' subject that it results purely or at least primarily from the move into digital communication technologies:

Different technologies of text production suggest different models of signification; changes in signification are linked with shifts in consumption; *shifting patterns of consumption initiate new experiences of embodiment; and embodied experience interacts with codes of representation to generate new kinds of textual worlds.* (p. 28, original emphasis)

While this article takes a great deal from Hayles's notion of a posthuman subject – a subject defined in reciprocal relation with the networks she or he engages, rather than (per modernist projects such as *Blow Up*) centred in vision and knowledge – it diverges from the idea that this subject is defined purely via the transformed codes of signification linked to digital technology. I draw on Dawood's project, and on postcolonial theories of globalization and postmodernism (in particular the work of Arjun Appadurai), to suggest that a much broader view of the networked, processual and dissolved subjectivity indicated by the term 'posthuman' is called for – one that accommodates and even foregrounds (as Dawood and Appadurai do in their work) aspects of experience linked to migration and the flow of capital as part and parcel of what constitutes contemporary experience and what differentiates it from previous modernist ideas about the place of the self in the world.

Enacted through particular kinds of photographically based visual culture (with this term I mean to include cinema and other camera-based imaging regimes), I would argue that this new way of seeing parallels the networked logic of digital information systems but is not necessarily or entirely built on or sparked by a material shift in modes of representation: it is not only posthuman in relation to the digital; it is, as postcolonial theory would have it, *hybrid* and *diasporic*. This new way of seeing can be expressed through digital *or* analogue means but is linked inexorably to the flows of capital, populations and information in globalized late capitalism.

Make It Big's structures of production, dissemination and reception produce reciprocal networks of cultural engagement central to what I am arguing to be its reworking of modernist modes of subjectivity. Ultimately, I suggest that, while Dawood's project is deeply invested in a history of photographic representation, it moves beyond the subject of vision proposed by these modes of representation. I make use of *Make It Big* in relation to the earlier project it references in order to come to an understanding of the shift over the past 40 years, since the making of *Blow Up*, in the way in which visual culture (in particular, that we characterize as 'art') is made, circulated, given value and meaning, and positioned in the (art) world – in turn, reflecting a broad shift in modes of subjectivity and ways of being in the world since the late 1960s.

The article, then, makes use of *Make It Big* as an example of a newly networked logic of making, dissemination and display and a, correlatively, new mode of subjectification (of subject formation). Both Antonioni's *Blow Up* and, from a different historical location, Dawood's *Make It Big*, examine shifts in technologies of imaging and the subjects they both presuppose and produce. In order to establish the terms of comparison I have sketched more clearly, I first describe the subject of vision produced by *Blow Up* in contrast to the possible subjects offered by the *Make It Big* project. This will enable an in-depth exploration of what I mean by a modernist versus posthuman and hybrid subject of viewing and enable me to outline the contours of what I am arguing to be a major shift in visual practice that echoes a broad shift in how we experience and make sense of the world at the turn of the 21st millennium.

Blow Up and the Modernist Subject of Viewing and Knowing

Not the least because *Make It Big* takes *Blow Up* as its model, inspiration, and perhaps also irritant, the two pieces provide dramatically different examples of how the subject of vision was produced and negotiated in the 1960s versus how it is perceived and experienced today. I am arguing that *Make It Big* functions on multiple levels – including aesthetic, economic, social, and specifically in terms of individual and collective modes and types of identification – to promote the demise of the Cartesianism and perspectivalism that structured Renaissance through modernist Euro-American models of seeing and knowing and (as such) forms of subjectivity. In contrast, *Blow Up*, as many theorists have argued, explores the structures of a modernist way of seeing and knowing structurally encapsulated in photographic media (particularly in cinema).

The subject at issue in *Blow Up* is perceived by the viewer implicitly as (at least) dual. Made by Antonioni, a filmmaker ‘auteur’ displaced from his culture of origin (Italy), an outsider looking at (and constructing) the hipster scene in 1960s London, *Blow Up* explores and articulates the modernist subject as exemplified both by Antonioni and by the white, middle-class, resolutely heterosexual male fashion photographer, ‘Thomas’ (played by David Hemmings), who is the centre of the film’s action. The creative force one identifies with Thomas is Antonioni himself but Antonioni as an ‘author function’, in the Foucauldian sense, rather than an actual flesh and blood origin of intentionality; ‘Antonioni’ is thus a shorthand for the multi-leveled cinematic/photographic agency linked to the director as well as to cameraman Carlo Di Palma and editor Frank Clarke, among others, and playing out in relation to what we think we know of the filmmaker (Foucault, 1977[1969]).

Blow Up narrates the story of Thomas, a swinging fashion photographer who captures the world of things (usually women’s bodies *as* things) in his photographic gaze. At the same time, while his mod lifestyle conflates his sexual seduction of various gamines and models with the act of photographic capture (substantiating the phallic implications of the model of seeing and knowing encapsulated in the analogue photographic act), his acts of photographing are, in turn, captured by the filmmaker Antonioni.² *Blow Up*, then, explores both the power and the limits of the perspectival ‘male gaze’ by posing the photographic gaze within the filmic one: Thomas is both a figure of power (capturing the women’s bodies visually and sexually) and himself disempowered, an object of a cinematic gaze (Antonioni’s; ours). Thomas performs the way in which (according to Lacanian theory) anyone ‘gazing’ is also ‘photo-graphed’ within the purview of the gaze (Lacan, 1981[1964]: 107; Silverman, 1996: 125–55). His disempowerment is, of course, also exposed through the narrative content of the film, which tells the story of his failure to discover the ‘truth’ of a murder through the enlarged photographic image.

The primary plot of *Blow Up* involves Thomas, having taken a roll of photographs of a couple in a park, blowing up the images and, realizing that one of the photographs reveals a dead body in the background, attempting to figure out what happened. The more he blows up the image, the more diffuse and hard to read it becomes. The film pivots around the impossibility of attaining the truth in the indexical, analogue image: the particular kind of grainy diffuseness of the blown up photograph is, of course, a function of its analogue nature.³ *Blow Up* is about chasing down the truth with the photographic apparatus, and within the photographic image. While Thomas seems to believe that infinitely zooming in will somehow gain him access into the depths of the image, into its 'truth', he finds instead that it reveals the diffusion of truth into surface.

This search for the truth is a relentless tracking – one that is at the basis of modern subjectivity (the desire to sustain the myth of the centred subject) and one that can only fail. This failure is instantiated by the film: after finding a blurry body in the blown-up photograph, Thomas races to the park to find the 'real' body; it is night-time and the scene is unreal as Thomas appears to confront the staring supine body of a dead man. And yet he fails to convince anyone else or to inspire them to care that there is a 'real' body present; his failure to convince means that he can never 'prove' his agency as seeing and knowing the truth. He can never substantiate his existence as a coherent subject. In this sense, *Blow Up* appears to enact the agency of the straight white middle-class European male only to deflate completely this subject's claim to coherence and authority. The photographer's (Antonioni's?) seeing is *not* knowing, or at least not knowing fully.

Thomas thus never finds out what happened; he begins to doubt what the camera has captured and the supposed indexical 'truth' of the photograph as it dissolves into grainy patterns through repeated enlargement. *Blow Up* is thus at least in part about what theorists of postmodernism and new media have identified as our experience of the real *as* representation (an experience that is most dramatically promoted via photographic technologies). It is the very *fact* of Thomas's identification as a photographer (and, it is implied, Antonioni's role as a filmmaker) that both empowers them as subjects of vision and forever dislocates them as the loci of knowledge. Because the 'real' only exists in and through their acts of representation, which constitute our understanding and experience of it, there is no authoritative position from which the 'truth' can be known. Far from securing the power and dominance of the heterosexual white male subject, the photographically secured male gaze is actually exposed in *Blow Up* as an endless charade: an ongoing and always failed attempt to secure a power that can never be secured.

Blow Up, it could be said, explores the limits of modernist viewing structures just at the tail end of their viability, when they were simultaneously at their most hegemonic and at the brink of becoming obsolete due to massive shifts in ways of communicating and comprehending the world relating to post-industrial economic transformations and expanding globalization. *Blow Up*

marks the culmination and (one could argue, as I do here) the incipient collapse of the modernist belief in the Enlightenment conception of the centred subject (linked to beliefs about the real). *Blow Up* exposes the limits of this gaze by pointing to the impossibility of this putative male subject positioning himself securely at the apex of a cone of vision that corroborates the subject's coherence and ability to see all, to see the 'real' before him.

In *Blow Up*, the failure of the gaze is marked explicitly as a sexual failure; vision is thus enacted as sexualized. With Thomas in *Blow Up*, the object of his photographic gaze is often a naked or semi-clothed female body; he is shown apparently consummating the sexual (as well as photographic) act with these objectified bodies. As he takes pictures and 'takes' women, the narrative and visual structures of *Blow Up* both pivot around the literally visible body and gazing eye of Thomas, who is implicitly connected to the filmmaker (Antonioni, the author function understood as the origin of the film text). However, hyperbolically narrating the role of the white, heterosexual, middle-class male body of the photographer, *Blow Up* violently denaturalizes the veiling of this body that traditionally secures its authority. For, as feminist film theorists have pointed out, it is only through being 'omniscient' and presumed rather than explicit that the agent of the male gaze can sustain power over the visual field – if the actual photographing/gazing male body were to be revealed, as it is in *Blow Up*, the seeming inevitability of its power would be deflated and, additionally, the man would be revealed as himself an object of a gaze (see Mulvey, 1975: 52).

While most feminist film theories (including those addressing the vicissitudes of the male gaze) pivot around the example of classical or Hollywood film, *Blow Up* is hardly a typical Hollywood product: among other things, it was made by a group of Europeans living in London, with British actors, and has clear pretensions to interrogating rather than simply repeating mainstream structures of visual knowledge and male/female relationships. At the same time, while it is generally viewed, and has been canonized, as an 'art' film and thus as authored by the *auteur* Antonioni, the film is not highly experimental in structure or narrative; the film's story takes place through a more or less conventional diegetic structure, and is narrated from Thomas's (and thus apparently Antonioni's) point of view – this is no *Man with the Movie Camera*, and the making of the filmic text itself is not denaturalized. Although there are some innovative camera angles and edits in *Blow Up*, it is the *content* of the film more than its structure which unveils the mechanics and ideological beliefs at the root of the male gaze – or, more broadly put, of the mythical centred subject of Euro-American modernism.⁴

Blow Up is thus at least in part about the failure of photographic representation to secure truth – and thus its failure to produce a stable, centred (and implicitly white, middle-class, heterosexual and masculine) subject of vision, although it pivots around the fantasy of doing so. In contrast, *Make It Big* is about the new regime of vision and (not) knowing which, I am arguing, is linked to a newly complex subject that defies the myth of coherence linked to the subject of modernism. Not only decentred, this subject is hybrid and

radically scattered across networks of migration and of the flow of information and finance – including those of visual information, but visual information not as a rendering of the real, but as produced, processed and given meaning across networks of capital and value.⁵

Making, Displaying, Viewing *Make It Big*

Dawood's project relies first and foremost on performative engagements (on the part of actors, artist, 'filmmaker', and other creative agents) taking place on cinema sets as documented through analogue photography, documents that are then disseminated via a networked system of exchange based on the art and real estate markets and the individuals involved in these markets. Dawood's project takes place through an array of technological imaging practices and a range of techniques of articulation, display and marketing, from concept to still photographs – taken with a 6 x 7 analogue camera – relating to a supposedly 'lost' film (which was actually never produced) to a performative moment of display in a particular corner of urban space, all of which function together to explore this network of forces at work in the conception and experience of human subjectivity in the contemporary period (Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3 Shezad Dawood, *Make It Big* (2005), film still.

Dawood notes that using old-fashioned analogue cameras was crucial for him in that it served to retain the 'retro-styling' of the original images from *Blow Up* – the logic of analogue photography being built into the way the images are staged. Through this means, Dawood perversely retains what he calls the 'continuity of inauthenticity', a continuity that cuts across analogue photography's claims to truth value – perversely because the entire logic of the piece is networked and new media-like (if not digitized) in its conception and display.⁶

To produce *Make It Big*, Dawood relocated the site of *Blow Up*, travelling from London to Karachi in Pakistan (doubling over and complicating Antonioni's temporary displacement from Rome to London in the making of *Blow Up*). In Karachi, Dawood had the set of *Blow Up* (specifically Thomas's bachelor pad-studio) reconstructed. Over several months, Dawood recruited and hired a group of top Pakistani models and actresses, including Vaneeza Ahmed (probably Pakistan's most famous actress and model), to play the



Figure 4 Hemmings photographing a model in his studio in *Blow Up* (1966), film still. BLOWUP © Turner Entertainment Co. A Warner Bros. Entertainment Company. All Rights Reserved.

roles of the women in the fashion shoot scene from *Blow Up*. According to the *Make It Big* press release, the sets were constructed by local craftspeople inside a former colonial film studio from the 1930s and the top Pakistani hair and make-up stylist, Nabila, primed the women and prepared them for the ‘film shoot’ (see Dawood, 2005; Le Feuvre, 2005). Taking on the persona of Thomas (involving treating the models roughly, ignoring them, or shouting at them as Thomas does in *Blow Up*), Dawood immersed himself in the scene, taking still photographs while being photographed himself by another still photographer, who photographed him photographing, echoing if not exactly replicating the precise creative conditions of production of *Blow Up*.

It is significant that the promise of cinema exists with *Make It Big* but no actual film – hence my placing of the term ‘film shoot’ earlier in quotation marks. The models were under the impression that a film related to the film

Blow Up was being, or would soon be, made. The press release for *Make It Big* states that the film project was a failure (begging the obvious question of whether Dawood ever intended to make a film in the first place), and notes that all that remains of the supposed film is ‘a series of colour stills shot by a hired local photographer and a series of black and white “behind the scenes” shots taken by the artist and others working on the set’ (Dawood, 2005).⁷

The existing documents of *Make It Big* are thus a series of black and white production stills and a series of color images that seem to be stills, representing something ‘lost’ that, in fact, never existed. In one black and white still, Dawood is shown in the background, a model looming in the foreground next to the set of Thomas’s studio (Figure 5). Dawood stands behind what appears to be a movie camera on a tripod (but is actually the 6 x 7 analogue camera), the camera positioned exactly at his crotch as if to literalize the psychological role the camera has played in western culture as an extension of masculine phallicism (or, viewed in a different way, as a prosthetic extension that is adopted to cover over the failure of the penis to become the phallus – to secure male power). In another shot, he mimics precisely the gesture and position of Thomas in one of the famous production stills from *Blow Up* – standing behind the camera on a tripod, raising his left hand with fingers spread as if directing the models, his eyes intent, exactly like those of Thomas in the earlier still (see Figures 1 and 2).

By reproducing the stills from *Blow Up*, which is so firmly connected with a great white European male genius (Antonioni, symbolically conflated with Thomas), Dawood’s images point to the way in which the subject of modernism is a normative subject. The stills that comprise *Make It Big*



Figure 5
Shezad
Dawood, *Make
It Big* (2005),
production still.

disperse and decentre this subject both by exposing the structures through which men gained dominance in patriarchy (such as the agency of the photographic) and pointing to the radically dislocating effects on western concepts of self produced by the movement of non-white peoples across the borders of European and North American nations. The images from *Make It Big* portray and/or position Dawood as the camera eye: in the colour 'film stills' he is shown directing the Pakistani models and crouched behind the camera as he photographs them mimicking the poses of the white models in *Blow Up* (see Figure 3). At the same time, the images clearly document the fact that he is also 'being seen' by other subjects of photographic vision (the nonexistent 'filmmaker' or, as it were, production still maker, but also subsequent viewers of the stills) – paralleling but also exacerbating the way in which Thomas is pictured being seen by Antonioni/Di Palma's viewing/filming eye (and that of subsequent viewers as well). In an abyss of dispersed identifications, Dawood is simultaneously the character Thomas, the actor David Hemmings, the filmmaker Antonioni (after all, it is Dawood's project and he constructed the overall situation) and the cameraman Di Palma, 'filming' the scene.

Make It Big is more, however, than simply a group of photographs based on a live event. The project eventually found its way into the market by way of Dawood's incorporation of it into his *Paradise Row* project from 2005. *Paradise Row* was a house in Bethnal Green, London, which Dawood purchased with bank loans, renovated with the help of an architect (Tughela Gino), put on the real estate market and opened as an art gallery displaying the stills from *Make It Big* as well as himself. Dawood lived and worked in the studio space of *Paradise Row* while the project was being shown to the public. In order to see the exhibition, potential viewers had to book a house tour with an estate agent, and were also forced to engage with Dawood himself within the house.

Dawood's display of the production stills and fake film stills from *Make It Big* (on a light table, hung from a line, framed, stored in a chest, scattered across the floor) mimicked the display in Thomas's studio in the Antonioni film, providing a fully three-dimensional, embodied and time-based meta-commentary on the spaces and economies of the film (and also making the image of Dawood, as Thomas, as well as his actual presence ubiquitous within the house) (see Figure 6). In a sunken gallery just below the studio, Dawood displayed four paintings reproducing the original *Blow Up* film posters, which he had commissioned from a Bollywood poster painter named Faiz Rahi and his studio (Figure 7).⁸ The house thus recreated other aspects of the film, including the presence of Thomas's surrogate, Dawood. But of course Dawood, the artist or author of the project, is also a surrogate for the filmmaker Antonioni – his presence in the house, in conjunction with the recreated displays from Thomas's studio, puts in motion an abyss of references and counter-references, further (and productively) confusing the usual boundaries that keep the author as a transcendently imagined origin of meaning and value separate from the images or objects that constitute the 'art'.



Figure 6 Dawood's (Thomas's) light table at *Paradise Row* (2005).

Figure 7
Hallway with
Dawood's (Thomas's)
photographs hung on
display and Faiz Rahi
studio's recreated
posters in *Paradise
Row* (2005).'



By forcing anyone interested in *Make It Big* to book a tour through the estate agent, Dawood also insistently emphasizes the *economic* bases of all cultural or aesthetic value in western culture, and the way in which the art market is co-dependent on real estate and other markets. Through this contextualization of the project, Dawood makes it impossible not to ignore the market and the body of the artist himself (as he remains in the house), as central to the way what we call art is disseminated, displayed and exchanged. The selling of the house, which is both the artist's domestic and studio location as well as the site of the work's marketing, is intertwined with the selling of the art works and, crucially, with the 'selling' of Dawood as the artistic origin of the meaning of the project.

Make It Big and the Author in Flux

Dawood's *Paradise Row* exposes the way in which the art market paradoxically *constructs* the very artistic genius who must be defined as transcending it. And yet, far from transcending the market or the making of its products, Dawood activates it, immerses himself and his work in it. Also, both *Paradise Row* and *Make It Big* point to the way in which we attempt to understand and give value to art by referring back to the authorial origin, fixing this author name; at the same time, the projects make it difficult if not impossible to fix Dawood as a market brand. He is 'there' in the house; his image is everywhere, and yet he is not attainable or knowable as origin of the project. As the curator who worked with Dawood on *Paradise Row*, Chris Hammond, notes, *Make It Big* (as installed in *Paradise Row*) 'appears in a state of flux'; with the strategy of hiring poster painters, Dawood allows us to 'witness the diversity available from an individual, rather than the outdated artist branding that we have become so used to' (Hammond, 2005).

Dawood's project goes beyond the modernist logic of oppositional difference (of self versus other, photographer versus model, white versus black, European versus non-European, male and female) sketched and activated by Thomas's role in Antonioni's film to posit a networked and hybrid subject who (although not without the potential of having agency) is not determinable in relation to the work in any simple way. This is a *subject scattered across identification*; a subject who, within modernism and the identity politics discourses it spawned, would previously have been positioned in relation to something else that was his opposite: heterosexual male gaze vs gazed at female bodies; Pakistani vs British; artist vs viewer/buyer/market. Dawood (gazing but gazed at; British but Pakistani; artist but marketing agent of the work as well; seller but sold) lingers on each side of the equation, defying oppositional structures and deferring our capacity to determine his identity as origin of the meaning and value of the work.⁹

The equivocal position of the artist can be teased out in relation to Dawood's restaging of Thomas's voracious and predatory relationship to his female models. In *Blow Up* there is an erotic sex scene in which Thomas playfully (yet menacingly as well) chases two young female models through his studio, capturing them with his camera even as (it is suggested but never explicitly revealed) he ultimately consummates the sexual act with both of them. The refiguring of the Thomas character in *Make It Big* reiterates the refusal to confirm Dawood as transcendent origin of the work – he commands the photographic gaze, and orders the models around authoritatively, but never consummates either the cinematic act of representation or (as far as we know!) its parallel, the sexual act.

Film theorist Colin Gardner (2002), in an otherwise brilliant article on *Blow Up*, argues that the sex scene is an irrelevant interlude. Far from being irrelevant, however, I would argue that the fact that the sex is rendered only as aftermath and only as ambiguously consummated (Thomas is shown still clothed in the seemingly 'postcoital' scene) makes the scene crucial. The

ambiguity of Thomas's 'conquest' parallels the way in which the 'truth' of the image (like the 'truth' of the female sex, the 'truth' of the exotic other, the 'truth' of white European male superiority, or the 'true' meaning and value of the work of art) can never be attained. The deferral of sex metaphorizes the deferral of representation, the deferral that constitutes what we want to believe is the real.

The corollary of the sex scene in *Make It Big* is perhaps most directly symbolized by two aspects of the project: first, the supposed loss of the film stock, that which would substantiate the 'consummation' of representation, the turning of the models' acts of posing into cinema; and second, Dawood's inclusion in the stills as both the artist/author and the object of our gaze. Dawood produces images across an array of photographically enhanced visual but also virtual (not materially enacted) gazes: the failure of the consummation is thus also marked as a deliberate failure to take up a singular (white, heterosexual male) gaze. Thus, in this way, Dawood is producing himself wilfully in relation to what Arjun Appadurai would call a diasporic, networked cultural regime; he is a subject informed by the confluent forces of media and migration in the contemporary world of late global capitalism. Dawood is both everywhere and nowhere. As such, he confounds our desire for the visual to be fixed and knowable in relation to a creative origin as revealed in the structure of the work of art.

Dawood produces a project that functions to unhinge the very *expectation* of authorship (the subject of making as a supposed singular and unitary 'origin' of the work) as a source of meaning and value. In *Make It Big* there is no 'indexical' relation between the artist and the work, no simple apparent one-to-one relationship between the work of art and its author (as there continues to seem to be with *Blow Up*, at least as the film is marketed). With *Make It Big* there are only networked interconnections that, in turn, scatter 'Dawood' across a number of corollary artistic agencies (the models, the Bollywood sign painter; the architect, the curator, etc.). In turn, the project engages potential viewers on these multiple registers. *Make It Big* creates feedback loops, positioning itself within networked relations in which we can immerse ourselves conceptually in order to gain understanding of how cultural values are produced and negotiated. What *is* new, then, in the work of the most interesting younger generation artists such as Dawood is the extent to which they work through the decentring of the author on multiple levels, including the various levels of imaging production and representation sketched here, as well as the level of the interpretation and marketing of art works and films and, ultimately, the level of subjectivity itself (as constituted in relation to the visual, but also through structures of production and reception). Dawood de-instrumentalizes the subject.

The Hybrid Photographic Subject of *Make It Big*

Given that *Blow Up* pivots obsessively around the photographic as it constitutes the modern subject (or at least as it promises, but inevitably fails,

to secure the mythical coherence of this subject), it is useful to explore the networks that *Make It Big* activates differently, in terms of the logic of the photographic. Among other things, this might afford a greater understanding of how artists have begun to interrogate this mythical coherence, in some cases by deploying digital media, which (as Hayles's (1999) argument suggests) challenge our belief in the author as a centred origin, of 'presence' or the 'real' as preexisting guarantors anchoring meaning and value; but also, more importantly, I am arguing, by activating new networks of production and dissemination both to engage and critique this logic and the mythical subject that subtends it.

Dawood's opening out of cross-cultural circuits of making, exhibiting and viewing exposes the structures through which, in modernism, the photographer or filmmaker is positioned at the apex of a cone of vision, his omniscient seeing instrumentalized through the camera and made into what Martin Heidegger called a 'world picture' via the photographic image. As Heidegger put it in his 1938 essay discussing this dynamic, the modern age 'introduced subjectivism and individualism', with the individual linked to the notion of objectivity and an empowered kind of vision. In the modern age, Heidegger argues, 'man becomes subject' by becoming the coherent locus or origin of a seeing that confers knowledge: he positions himself in front of the world 'conceived and grasped as a picture', and as such imagines himself to be a coherent subject of seeing and knowing, a subject of the world as 'that-which-lies-before, which, as ground, gathers everything onto itself', into a picture *to be seen and known* (Heidegger, 1977[1938]: 28). This understanding of the world as arraying itself before the one who sees in such a way as to substantiate this seer as a subject centred in vision is a rich description of exactly what I mean by the logic of the photographic.

Ultimately, it is Dawood's reworking of the explicitly modernist photographic logic of Antonioni's *Blow Up* – both within the terms established by *Blow Up* (analogue photographic methods) and as enacted across newly vitalized networks of exchange linked to diasporic lifestyles and travel, Bollywood poster-painting, photography, (non)film, performance and real estate marketing – that defines *Make It Big* as such a rich and provocative project. It is Dawood's negotiation of both the *technological* aspects of contemporary culture and the *diasporic* networked economies of subject formation identified in postcolonial theory that makes *Make It Big* exemplary of how contemporary visual arts works can intervene in previous structures of making, displaying and viewing art.

In his important 1996 book *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai joins a consciousness of technological shifts in modes of representation with an insistence on the importance of postcolonial political and economic transformations in coming to an understanding of how we navigate the world around us in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Appadurai stresses the importance of *networks* in relation to contemporary experience, arguing that the period since the 1970s has been characterized by massive shifts in relation to 'electronic mediation and mass migration', changes that spark

new kinds of 'imagination' (exemplified by Dawood) and produce new 'diasporic cultural spheres' in relation to new diasporic subjects (pp. 2, 4). Appadurai describes the flow of media and migration in relation to five inter-related forms: ethnoscapas (the flow of people), mediascapas (the flow of electronic media), technoscapas (the high speed movement of information), finanscapas (the movement of capital) and ideoscapas (the dissemination of nationalist and/or political ideals such as democracy) (p. 33).

As my description of it should make clear, Dawood's project crosses over all five of these networks. As a diasporic British subject raised in a media-saturated culture, who produced a project in the part of the world from which his family initially migrated, using photographic media that enable the transplanting of the project back to a house/studio/gallery in Britain, Dawood exposes the way in which all art takes its meaning and value from global finanscapas and ideoscapas (the latter, in relation to art world ideology, predicated on modernist conceptions of subjectivity and aesthetic value). In so doing, Dawood's *Make It Big* exemplifies and enacts the shift from a modernist way of seeing (and being) to new modes of experiencing and navigating the world that are diasporic and hybrid. These are modes that, in Appadurai's terms, no longer rely on the myth of an individual subject centred in seeing and knowing (as gathering a world picture) but, rather, perform subjects who are ultimately mobile, embodied but never transcendent and never fully knowable.

As Homi Bhabha (1995) has argued, the hybrid is marked by the 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications' (p. 4). As Bhabha's theory indicates, in a world of diasporic hybridity there is no subject who is singular and fixed, or who can be known or situated in terms of a singular 'identity'. The 'fixed identifications' Bhabha notes are thus revealed as always having been mythical rather than achievable: in practice, there are only a range of identifications to be had in relation to other subjects, other visual engagements. *Make It Big*, in its various manifestations, offers a range of possible identifications through a range of photographically produced images, which are situated in a network of exchange across cultures and modes of display. A final close examination of how the project functions will clarify how *Make It Big* activates these networks.

Mimicry and the Hybrid Subject of Vision and (Not) Knowing

If *Blow Up* looks at visuality at the tail end of the modernist episteme, then *Make It Big* could be said to explore a regime of visuality (and thus a mode of subjectivity or being in the world) which goes beyond the earlier film's questioning of the assumption that to see is to know. *Make It Big* is, in contrast to *Blow Up*, an incisive exploration and enactment of the dispersed and decentred subject of late capitalism or the imaginative, diasporic or hybrid subject Appadurai notes engages media and migration in creative ways, intervening in the flows of information and capital. It is through the very structures of viewing, making, disseminating and marketing the image that Dawood's project pushes the limits of a set of intertwined visual,

conceptual and economic relations paralleling the networked structures of global late capitalism – both commenting on and going beyond the logic of the photographic. *Make It Big* explores visuality precisely through the act of appropriating or mimicking terms set forth in *Blow Up*, an act of mimicry that moves the exploration of the subject of vision in new directions that connect models of vision articulated in relation to photographic media with structures of hybrid subjectivity linked to global migrations over the past 50 years (Figure 8).



Figure 8 Shezad Dawood, *Make It Big* (2005), film still.

Returning to Appadurai's (1996) theory, I would argue that the 'scapes' that Dawood crosses over are extremely complex, functioning on multiple levels of finance, geographical location, ethnic and ideological codes, through various technologically enhanced means (including air travel and photographic media) and the explicit activation of the art and real estate markets. With *Make It Big* Dawood specifically crosses over British, US and South Asian cultural referents and structures of production and reception, refiguring the quintessential 1960s hipster photographer (as voyeuristically imagined by Italian film *auteur*) as the 21st-century figure of the cross-cultural artist as global entrepreneur.

The global entrepreneur is in turn performed in relation to an array of bodies that signify visually in complex ways. The models in Dawood's/Thomas's shoot, some of them (particularly Vaneza Ahmed) recognizable by those in the know as major figures in the Pakistani film and fashion industries, are garbed in snazzy updated versions of saris, cholis, dupattas and western-style dresses made with South Asian fabrics. For anyone who knows the earlier film, they read as mimicking Antonioni's/Thomas's objects of desire in *Blow Up*. They adopt the postures and are made to situate themselves in an environment reminiscent of the terms set by the earlier film – but, at the

same time, they shift its visual codes noticeably through a kind of post-colonial mimicry that produces friction in relation to the cultural instance that is being appropriated and restated, potentially making viewers aware of its normative limits and exclusions.

As Homi Bhabha (1995) writes, in the colonial situation mimicry represents an 'ironic compromise' within the 'conflictual economy of colonial discourse . . . [in which] the vision of domination – the demand [on the part of the colonizer] for identity, stasis' coexists with the colonizer's demand that the colonized be *different*. In the colonial situation, mimicry produces its own ambivalence and slippage – or, in Bhabha's words, it marks the possibility of rupture in the colonial fantasy of the unified subject of the colonizing nation, built on a construction of the other as both fixed in terms of sameness and difference: 'The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace' (pp. 85–6).

The Indian subject of the British government, pre-1947, could, in Bhabha's terms, find himself working in the interstices offered by this ambivalence, producing increments of change leading to the overthrow of the British government after the Second World War. In the *post*-colonial situation, such as exists in contemporary Pakistan or the UK, the strategy of mimicry is even more complex. The mimicry Dawood puts in play in *Make It Big* deploys photographic media and other technologies facilitating the flow of information and capital to produce a friction between the 'original' (the models posing in *Blow Up*) and the mimicked 'copy' (the Pakistani models, who are ordered how to stand in order to refashion the scene and thus produce a new movie of the same theme).

Bhabha argues:

the *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object. (p. 88)

Dawood's redo taps into this menace, insistently opening out the 'double vision' that makes the unified subject of European modernity an impossible figure. The act of mimicry that generates *Make It Big* encourages the viewer to look in both directions: towards the 'original' (the European avant-garde film) and towards the appropriation, the copy (the British/Pakistani art work). Ultimately, the *Make It Big* stills are reminiscent of but obviously not the same as those of *Blow Up*; the subjects of *Make It Big* are visibly different from those articulated in *Blow Up*. With *Make It Big* there is no unidirectional flow of meaning and value from model to copy, no 'real' that is then represented as 'fake', no 'origin' for the meaning and value of this dynamic cultural intervention.

Also, there are other clear referents for *Make It Big* that mix up the standard Eurocentric fantasy that European 'originals' always come first. The film stills

and posters read in relation to Antonioni's classic film but also (particularly the posters) in relation to Bollywood films, the imagery of which has become ubiquitous not only in Pakistan, India and 21st-century UK but even in far-away Hollywood (for example, in highly successful cross-over films such as the 2004 *Bride and Prejudice*, directed by Gurinder Chadha, based on Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* and with 'Indian Palace' scenes filmed at the Officer's Mess at Halton House near London, and released by Hollywood's Miramax company). Dawood's project shifts the terms of mimicry out of the usual model of 'dominant' versus 'subordinate' cultural forms into one of lateral (networked) influences and referents, none of which is an 'original' or a dominant form in relation to the other.

Make It Big plays with (but never fixes on or resolves) apparent visible differences across a range of identifications – national, ethnic, racial, class-based and sexual in particular – such that meaning and value are suspended rather than achieved.¹⁰ All of these identifications shift according to the viewer's specific access to the codes being drawn on and purveyed. One has to be of a certain class (linked to the common art-world demographic) in order to be savvy about real estate and to 'get' the irony of the display system Dawood activated with the *Paradise Row* project. One has to be familiar with *Blow Up* in order to read the *Make It Big* stills as copies. One has to know Pakistani clothing and Bollywood poster styles in order to get what is going on with the models in *Make It Big*. *Make It Big* thus activates the specificity of cultural knowledges. This is another one of the ways in which the project institutes a system of breaks into the processes through which what we call 'art' is produced, marketed, disseminated, viewed and institutionalized in the 21st century in the context of the Euro-American art world.

Coda: Non-Digital New Media and Incoherence as a Virtue

As suggested in this article, I insist via Dawood's project that it is not *only* the digital that puts pressure on modernist modes of knowledge and beliefs about how subjects view and inhabit the world; and that the digital is not simply constitutive of contemporary experience but exemplary of the vast new networked logic of flows of information, money and people across borders identified by Appadurai and others. As Appadurai suggests, this networked logic is itself informed deeply by the late 20th and early 21st-century globalized processes of migration, finance and representation (the latter dominated by American-style mass media, but also inflected by Bollywood and other internationally circulated permutations of media culture). Making use of precisely the 'new markets' that Appadurai argues are produced around the world through deterritorialization, *Make It Big* opens a 'space of contestation' just as Appadurai (1996) describes, inflected by (but also interrupting and exposing) the flows of media and migration he notes as inspiring new diasporic public spheres (p. 38).

The importance of Appadurai's arguments and Dawood's project is that they work across postcolonial, postmodern and new media theory – areas of

debate that too often remain discrete, as if the migration of peoples and hybrid subject discussed in postcolonial theory has nothing to do with the flows of capital and information noted in theories of postmodernism, globalization and new media. *Make It Big* works across these areas of debate to encourage new diasporic public spheres and new modes of imagining subjectivity.

The networks of meaning and value explored and put into play by *Make It Big* negotiate and help produce what Hayles identifies as a *posthuman* subject, but with Hayles's concept expanded such that the posthuman subject is also a hybrid subject who is not centred in vision, but produced (Bhabha would put it) through multiple traces and identifications. The subject is posthuman in the sense that it is no longer *humanist*, no longer secured by the modernist mythical structure of coherence as instrumentalized in photographic vision. It is linked to the diasporic flows Appadurai outlines, and to what Hayles identifies as a new regime of pattern and randomness, a shift in modes of being and communicating that no longer relies on the oppositional structure of self versus other, itself linked to a modernist regime of knowledge based on an oppositional model of presence and absence (a belief that the subject of vision is 'present' and full, and that representation mimics an absent reality but cannot replace it) (Hayles, 1999: 26–7).

If *Blow Up* encouraged at least a recognition of the structures of presence and absence through which the (white, heterosexual, middle-class male) subject identified and cohered himself, provisionally and mythically, within Euro-American modernism, *Make It Big* goes a step further. Engaging with Dawood's project, we are encouraged to situate ourselves only provisionally through its networked logic that both link us to and keep us from coincidence with the agency we understand as authorizing *Make It Big*. In this way, this project exposes the way in which the networked, diasporic culture of our globalized late capitalist world produces embodied subjects of new kinds of seeing and new kinds of knowing that might not be knowing, in the modernist sense, at all. Dawood's subject of 'knowing' can grasp what it 'sees' only provisionally, always experiencing what is offered in the visual field as contingent and part of a larger network of relations. Rather than bemoan this newly insecure state of affairs, we are encouraged, engaging with *Make It Big*, to empower ourselves as provisional subjects aware of (rather than mythically suppressing) our relationship to incoherence. This awareness might lead us to an awareness of the incoherence of others, and to a less imperialistic relationship with those visuals (bodies and spaces) we don't understand.

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Notes

1. His father's family was originally from what is now India, his mother's from what is now Pakistan and they lived in Pakistan together before moving to London, which they did before Shezad Dawood was born.
2. On his collaboration with Antonioni in constructing the look and feel of Antonioni's films, see Di Palma and Szklarski (2001).
3. In contrast, depending on its resolution, a digital image can be enlarged with no loss of value until the edges of the pixels begin to become visible, the picture to break into squares, the visible light value determined by the 0s and 1s of the digital code. The pixel and the digital code that determines its value is not generally thought of as indexically related to the thing it is representing. Laura Marks (2002), however, offers an interesting interpretation of the digital as indexical or at least as 'existentially connected to the processes they image' (p. 161).
4. For a contrasting view, see Warren Neidich's fascinating article '*Blow Up*: Photography, Cinema and the Brain' (2005:113), where he argues that the movie changes neuronal structures in the viewer because of its radical transformation of cinematic codes.
5. It is questionable whether even to call this disseminated version of human agency a 'subject' at all. I retain the word subject only because it is useful as shorthand to designate what it is we think we are, as people acting and reacting in the world.
6. These terms cited here are from a discussion between the author and Dawood; see Dawood (2007).
7. The press release states the putative reasons for the loss of the film stock:

In the first instance, through over-identification with the central role, and the series of temper tantrums and generally obnoxious behaviour that followed, the artist managed to alienate most of the cast and crew, before shooting was even halfway. Secondly, the rushes that were shot disappeared along with the artist's luggage on his return to London early the following year. All that remains of this rather ambitious project is a series of colour stills shot by a hired local photographer, and a series of black and white 'behind the scenes' shots taken by the artist and others working on the set.
8. Including a poster representing the same image that was used to market *Blow Up* – the incendiary rape image in which Thomas is shown with camera straddling the prostrate body of the model named in press materials as simply 'Verushka'. This image perfectly conflates Thomas's photographic agency with phallic penetration.
9. This deferral is indicated across the body of practices Dawood enables, including the exhibitions he organized at his residence in 2006–7, a flat in the highly desirable Knightsbridge area of London, which he 'borrowed' from a collector, renovated and turned into a public gallery – Artist's Studio. The exhibitions I have seen in this space all play off of the space itself. See <http://www.artistsstudio.org/flash.html>
10. For the artist's negative view on identity politics-based art making and art marketing see Dawood (2004). I disagree with Dawood's final statement, following on a comment by Dutch curator Johan Pijnappel, who argues in favour of attending to cultures formerly excluded from the art world: 'This means embracing difference, when actually what we need is to move out of the ghetto of difference and into a world where there is no difference between me and you.' Far from simply erasing difference, I see Dawood's work as making it

'visible' differently so that it cannot be pinned down. To say that 'there is no difference' is to deny the political and social sticking points where bodies are brutalized because they are perceived as being 'other' (such as the Brazilian man, Jean Charles de Menezes, murdered on the London tube soon after the 7 July bombings, 2005, by the police, who mis-identified him as an Islamic extremist).

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