



Left: Exhibition view, Alejandro Jodorowsky's 'Dune', The Drawing Room, London

Right: Rosalind Nashashibi, 'Bachelor Machines Part 2', 2007, 16mm, 5min

○ **London**
Alejandro Jodorowsky's
'Dune': An exhibition of a film
of a book that never was
17 September — 25 October
The Drawing Room

Authors. They 'impede... the free composition, decomposition and recomposition', Foucault claimed. Their very construct is only down to the fact 'we fear the proliferation of meaning'. The question of narrative (or any other object of production) and its struggle from the confines of its originator, together with the question of narrative evolution and reinterpretation, seems to lie at the heart of this tight curatorial experiment by Tom Morton. It is an inexhaustible and perennial subject however, so it is useful (and much more entertaining) then, that Morton removes the debate from the confines of contemporary art and looks at it in relation to Alejandro Jodorowsky's ill-fated 1976 attempt at filming Frank Herbert's sci-fi pulp fiction classic *Dune*, 1965, to create the exhibition.

Residing within the pantheon of books dubbed 'unfilmable', the cult novel had several attempted celluloid outings before

David Lynch got it into cinemas in 1984, only to be critically panned. Jodorowsky for his part is quoted as believing that a narrative has its own life and that his film would not seek to serve Herbert. *Dune* for Jodorowsky was autonomous. In contrast, Herbert was quoted as saying about Lynch's version 'They've got it. It begins as *Dune* does. And I hear my dialogue all the way through' (*People* magazine, 1984). To him, *Dune* was a reflection of himself; a universe made in his image, spoken in his words.

Jodorowsky had brought in graphic artists Chris Foss, HR Giger and Moebius to envision their interpretations of the geography, scenography and palette of the future universe, further diluting any directorial autocracy. Morton integrates the resulting, now archival, material by these artists with three new responses by Steven Claydon, Matthew Day Jackson and Vidya Gastaldon. The contemporary works operate their own narrative tendencies, but refuse to give anything definitive away. Gastaldon flipped through the pages of the original book, pictorially interpreting a sentence taken at random. The resulting seven, seemingly semiotic and at times anthropomorphic, landscapes in watercolour and acrylic, recreate the sentence anew.

There is an ambiguity to them however, the viewing taking sole responsibility for any meaning. Day Jackson's 'to infinity...', 2009, a skull which is geometrically simplified over seven incarnations, ending in a tetrahedron, weaves its own intricate set of psychoanalytical allusions combined with a reverence to the angular retro-modernism contained within much of Chris Foss' works. For his part, Claydon operates in the sphere of narrative-determined minimal assemblage, combining a bust within a multi-faceted totemic structure, he again merely gives us the apparatus to make our own concepts. Each artist seems to be seeking to find a path away from the story of *Dune*, yet like the evolutionary trace found within Day Jackson's work, keeping a lineage for us to trace back.

If the show's all-encompassing curation, with its formal tricks (a striking blue painted wall, referencing the film's 'Eyes of the Ibad', architecturally pulls the works together for instance) dominates the artists themselves, then this is just another successful deliberation on the authorship convention. The works may be by the artists, but here they belong to *Dune*.

Oliver Basciano is a writer based in London