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Hierophany

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Hierophany

Abstract

This is a film review of *Hierophany* (2023), directed by Maria Nitek.

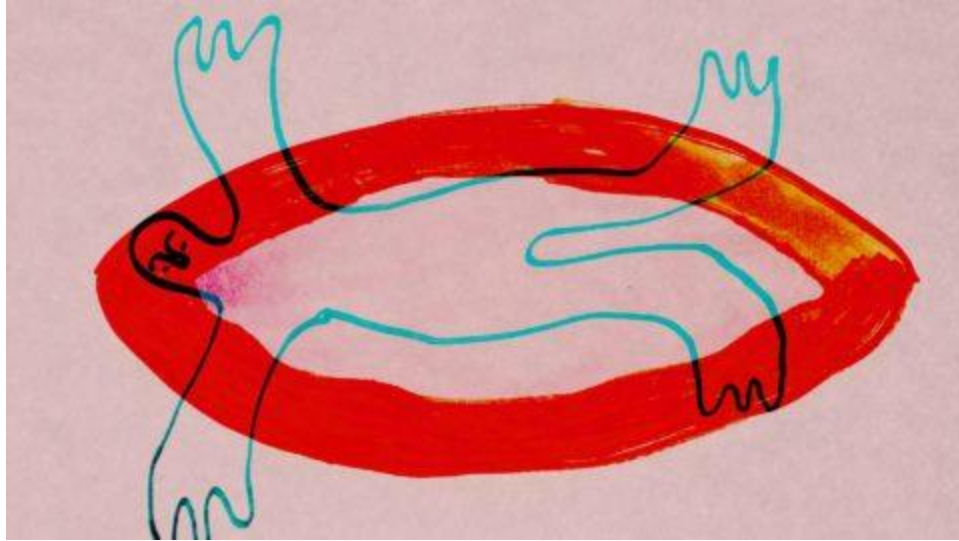
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Author Notes

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***Hierophany* (2023), dir. Maria Nitek**

Historian of religion, Mircea Eliade advanced and defined the term *Hierophany* to refer to a manifestation of the sacred. More precisely, it refers to an eruption of the sacred in profane (non-sacred, ordinary) circumstances or places, permanently influencing the ceremonial life of an individual or group and marking the site of the manifestation as a place of ritual and pilgrimage. Importantly, the term allows for the divine to reveal itself in non-human form, as opposed to *Theophany*, which refers to an encounter with the divine in theistic form only.

Against this conceptual backdrop, director/screenwriter, Maria Nitek's short, animated film, *Hierophany* symbolically depicts the power of divine materialization as a cosmic creative process. The film begins amidst a dark void, slowly giving way to white multilimbed entities that resemble the famous clay character, Gumby. The meaning is open-ended, but it could refer to hierophany as a kind of "big bang" inaugurating the creation of the cosmos itself. The forms are in constant motion and intertwine with each other until a giant red oval shape appears.

Different colored balls of energy emanate from the red oval and penetrate one of the entities. From there, the balls of energy rapidly begin to flow within and throughout the other

numerous entities. This may be a depiction of the pervasive randomness of a hierophany, akin to cosmic spokes on a wheel touching and influencing everything around them. Eventually, the red oval morphs into a giant pair of lips, consuming everything, only for the process to begin anew, with a solitary multi-limbed entity slowly making its way back out of the lips; the eruption of the sacred into new beginnings and possibilities remains endless.

Hierophany is an interesting and artful attempt to examine one of Mircea Eliade's most enduring ideas within the study of religion—the spontaneous appearances of the sacred and its influence on humanity and the larger cosmos. The music goes well with the kaleidoscope of colored lights and geometric shapes, providing the viewer with a rich sensory experience. While visually engaging, one small criticism is that even if the viewer is familiar with the concept of hierophany, it would be helpful if more clarification was provided in interpreting the film. Nitek intended for an enigmatic, immersive, symbolic portrayal, but a bit more explanation nonetheless would help decipher the meaning behind some of the symbolism about a fascinating religious concept.