

Title: Art and Its Functions in Polanski's Films

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**Abstract:**

Throughout the ages creativity as a phenomenon has evoked exceptionality and/or uniqueness, with artists usually the objects of admiration and in some cases outright idolization. However, in the films of Roman Polanski the image of the artist tends to be ambiguous—sometimes questionable and occasionally even repugnant. Focal characters in *Cul-de-Sac* (1966), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Pianist* (2002), *The Ghost Writer* (2010), and *Venus in Fur* (2013) practice various forms of creativity—canvas art, acting, literature, music, and stage direction, respectively. Their differing talents span a broad spectrum from mediocrity (*Cul-de-Sac*) to genius (*The Pianist*), providing insight into their personalities and motivations while in some instances furthering the plot. Though creativity is never the major concern of his films, for an artist like Polanski it manifestly carries enormous significance. Drawing on existing scholarship on the role and image of the artist on screen, my presentation explores how art functions in Polanski's films, in particular, how it constitutes part of the diegetic world yet also supplements it.