

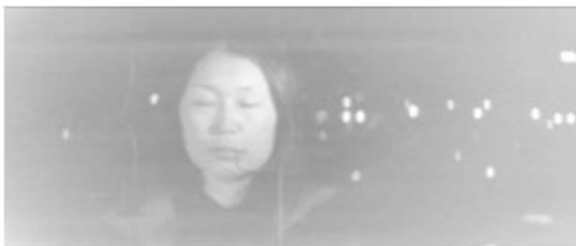


DRIFTING CITIES

Drifting Cities (2017) - Michael Higgins

Thanks to this last movie, Higgins reveals to be one of the most versatile and amazing directors of the Experiment Film Society, capable to go from an immediate, chaotic and dynamic performance, like Stone Boat, totally characterized by the improvisation, to an evanescent and elusive work, like Drifting cities, that was long meditated.

Drifting Cities is evanescent in the widest meaning of the term: the two leads of the developed, or rather displayed, plot, are outlined through thoughts and memories that emerge in the shape of ethereal images, frozen and made eternal, suspended in a limbo of mnemonic reminiscence, in the balance of two distant and opposite worlds: the present and the past, the life and the death. Ectoplasms linger in a colorless and a drift world, that survives and lives only thanks to old repeating film clips, as if the only way to continue and (r)exist was holding on to the past by the filmic medium. Is the cinema that turns into the world or vice versa? In both cases, in Drifting Cities the two elements fuse together to such an extent that it's difficult to recognise the border between the reality and the medium that represents it, that is the film.



The narrative and visual structure, based and evolving on a pure meta-cinematographic level, is the nerve center of Higgins' entire work, putting the plot away in the background, because it seems to be only an opportunity to show the infinite possibilities of the filmic medium: the cinema. The undisputed character of Higgins' work is, indeed, the cinema, that shows up both as a substance, in the act of existing, and as a (material) form, in the act of making things exist. The former, concerning an inner dimension of the work, is described through sequences of ecstatic images, that express the plot mainly in the form of a homodiegetic narration: diaphanous faces remember far memories in long ecstatic silences. The latter, on the contrary, that should relate to the external dimension of the work, the physical and mechanical one, made up of the image reproducing tools, normally hidden from the spectators, is made explicit by the background film noise in the most part of the work, by the clips about family life and, most importantly, by the big screens, like the one in the ending sequence, where we attend an unexpected meta-cinematographic operation: the film itself is projected onto a large panel, which is a kind of a huge video-installation showing memories of a past or future life.

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We will remember the world because of cinema

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Higgins, this way, breaches definitively the border between fiction and reality: the means corresponds to the end, the difference between the real world outside the film and the inner fictional one vanishes. So we witness a renewed vitality depicted on the big screen by the two leads, that cut loose and start an unrestrained and energetic dance, which is an indication that all is cinema:

"We will remember the world because of cinema, we can recreate or reenact our memories through cinema. We can even reinvent our memories. Cinema will go back to the past, the present, the future...now! Cinema will bring us to the past, the present, the future...now! Cinema is being." - (Century of Birthing, Lav Diaz, 2011)



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