

Autumnal Sleeps Review / Cenas de Cinema

Cecilia Barroso / 22-08-2020

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Excuse the digression before I begin... What wonder to dive into Michael Higgins' images! That's it, thank you! Now we return to "impersonality".

In all its workings, *Autumnal Sleeps* creates a disturbing experience. From a non-palpable narrative illustrated by fortuitous images, we arrive at Dr. Epstein's madhouse. All things visible are strange and almost random, strengthening the somber aura of the film.

Clearly shot on expired stock and most likely using an antiquated camera, *Autumnal Sleeps* is anchored in the past and it's nostalgia. Returning to the 19th century, it brings back the gramophone and the daguerreotype, combining them with other elements out of their time. The style it borrows is from 1920's silent film, but its format, speaking of the screen ratio, is from later than the 1930's. This purposeful imprecision reinforces the film's visible surrealism.



An implausible atmosphere, sprinkled with strangeness, as if Lynch and Maddin had met by chance in a walk in the woods and were invited in for a coffee at Murnau's haunted mansion. There's anxiety, terror, and an almost morbid curiosity that draws the spectator in, wishing to spend more time with all these characters. Intensely experiencing a supernatural that one would normally wish to distance oneself from.



This feeling comes mostly from the way in which Higgins fabricates the story. Despite getting lost at times, such as in the long scene with the daguerreotype, his visual creation is so ecstatic that these occurrences go unnoticed. The precision of the unusual framing, the curious lighting, and the magnetic visual experiments come together in a meticulous and self-reflective structure.

Experimentation and randomness are tied together without faults, in a terrifying story of monsters and ghosts. Throwing the spectator into an unknown environment, *Autumnal Sleeps* effectively triggers the most instinctive feelings of fear. In conclusion—and excuse me once again for the digression—how unbelievable and precise Higgins reveals himself!