

Films about Somewhere
Friday, July 17 2015, 8:30pm

Elsa Abderhamani, James Greenway, Marie Menken, Helena Wittmann
Invited by Silke Nowak and Astrid Rostaing

Apremont, Elsa Abderhamani, 2014, 8 min
Imagin'd Corners, James Greenway, 2010, 4 min
Glimpse of the Garden, Marie Menken, 1957, 5 min
21,3 °C, Helena Wittmann, 2014, 16 min

What is out there? Are we the passive observers of a dominating visual reality? Should we try to invent ways of constructing our own vision and imagine other spheres of reality? In their moving images, the invited artists seem to propose a viewpoint from which they can alternate between seizing and admiring the world as is, and choosing to focus on an aesthetical experiment. Here are four liberating meta-naturalistic works that exist somewhere in between framed improvisation and scenographic escapism...

In *Apremont*, Elsa Abderhamani presents a strange landscape. Characters and machines appear and mingle in a wild and maintained nature. *Apremont* is part of the series *Tout autour* (All around). This series of sequences has been directed according to certain rules of cartography: by marking out a perimeter and by following people and animals in their environment. Here, we see a golf course, which is being prepared for the players in the early morning. Through her camera, the filmmaker observes this scenario without judging it. "Instants, positions and crossings are being noted. A long scouting work precedes the shoot. We feel there could be an after – an event that would make everything tumble yet the tension inscribes itself elsewhere, where it is not expected."

In *Imagin'd Corners*, James Greenway films the sea, rocks and seagulls on the Irish coast. He follows single birds as well as small groups of birds. The seagulls take off, approaching again and disappearing occasionally behind the rocks. This is where, in 1976, Werner Herzog filmed the final scene of *Herz aus Glas* (Heart of Glass), a film about the collapse of a town's economy, based on the production of a precious ruby glass. In 2010, Ireland was dealing with an economy crisis. "In composing imagery and language that make transparent my processes of association, I create an aesthetic logic that deals with the sense of latent otherness, present in the expectation and observation of change. An accumulation of thoughts that leads to a gradual unveiling of knowledge."

For *Glimpse of the Garden*, Marie Menken undertakes a close gazing search into the garden of a friend. She films the whole picture and the small details. We see the arrangement of the plants in the garden, some stones, a lake, a house in the background as well as rainwater beads on a flower stem, calyx, fine hair, the structure of leaves and blades, and spines of cacti. We can also constantly hear repetitive bird twittering. "When you see her films for the first time, it is as if there was nothing there... yet at the same time it is about everything, everything that we are."¹

In Helena Wittmann's *21,3 °C*, we are looking into a room as well as outside of it through its window. Behind the latter we see a façade that is filled with more windows. While the film itself changes little, the little that is changing becomes even more important: flowers on the table are being replaced, the lighting conditions of the room change as the day passes by. In addition, noises can be heard: someone is practicing on a piano, and we hear a construction site. Wittmann works with reduced cinematic means: light, shadows, noise. Only the temperature in the room does not change, it is 21.3 °C.

¹ Jonas Mekas in *Kurzfilme und Filmgedichte von Marie Menken – Zusammengestellt von Ute Aurand*, 1994

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