



If cinema prints 24 times a second " - death at work " as asserted by Cocteau, or if cinema is interesting because it seizes – life and the mortal side of - life, as surmised by- Godard, it is because it follows the example of photography, a mechanism which "produces death while aiming to preserve life" (Barthes). Heir to both sides of the principles of camera obscura and optical games, - the aesthetics of shadow and light are immediately produced, fantastic, cracking and floating; inhabited by a world of ghosts, of strange and twinkling creatures attacked by spasms or a sickness induced syncope.

The cinema of Viola Groenhart is a cinema of absence. - The luminous print records contort spatiality in parallel- times. In *Sanctus* (2007), shadow people appear - from the darkness. First, in the foreground the orchestras, then a tapestry of progressively lit groups of figures appear in the background. They are suspended in mid air, motionless, as if held there by the voices of the Gregorian chorus of the *Berliner Messe* (1990) by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. The levitating spectres hanging in the blackness are like wax figures, brilliant appearances filmed like a Flemish seventeenth century pictorial aesthetic, on which the mystic of Pärt flows. Silent ghost- people convened by a voice of the hereafter, they possess the magic qualities of the photographic. The film replays the black box of the camera obscura, the ray of light reveals the filmed objects as presence and absence. This aesthetic of the resurgence is the dialectic of passage, of appearance to disappearance, of stillness to movement, of life to death. The cinema is the magic habitat of luminous protuberances on hold.

In *Two Ways* (2009) Groenhart shoots two men climbing the Wasdale Head fells in the northwest of England. The first man follows his path powerfully with agility, the second is in trouble / struggles. In subjective shot the camera records his difficulty, his instability, his incapacity to follow the trail mapped out by the one who outstrips him. Then, inhabited with a quasi-supernatural autonomy, the camera goes back and slides down-, brushing the flow of dark and angular stones. Then a static shot on the stones. The aperture of the diaphragm does not move but as the sky clears and the cinema displays a movement by the appearance of a sunbeam on the ground. Here the film catches something that only - cinema could capture: an undetected and dazzling change in the light. Because cinema captures change and transformations; because it is in itself transformation and a luminous device of metamorphosis.

Viola Groenhart says of *Sanctus* "I made *Sanctus* with the desire to make visible this 'sacred' element I find both in music and in silence. But *Sanctus* also speaks about a certain human incapacity or refusal even, of reaching this." If Viola states the importance of the notion of "stillness" in her work, the ambiguity of this notion refers at the same time to the peaceful and to the still/ frozen image, the fixed or photographic image in - cinema. In both cases the silence and the immobility are associated with death, because the stopping of - movement refers de facto to the end of something: the story and at the same time, the cellulosic ribbon /celluloid ribbon. Stillness as opposed to motion, the orchestra versus the choir and the fixed frame in front of convulsed movement, here we find the resurgence of the photographic in - film, the death instinct of the cinema that haunts it like the shadow of Yakov Petrovich Goliadkine could torture his master.

Viola Groenhart is born in 1981 in the Netherlands. She lives and works in transit between Amsterdam (NL), Lille (FR) and Vieux-Fort (GLP).

Film Programme

Sanctus

2007 / 16 mm transferred on dvd / 5'30 / col. / sound

Two Ways

2009 / 16mm transferred on dvd / 8' / col. / sound

Sur moniteur

Passage

2006 / video SD / 3' / col. / sound

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