

Raymond Bellour

THE TIME IN MOVEMENT

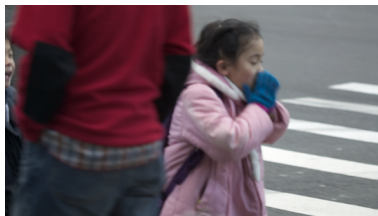
Der hier folgende Text wurde für den – nicht veröffentlichten – Katalog der von Raymond Bellour und Sergio Mah kuratierten Ausstellung *States of the Image: Instants and Intervals* geschrieben. Sie präsentierte im Centre Cultural de Belém im Rahmen der Biennale LisboaPhoto 2005 Arbeiten von 12 Künstlern (Chantal Ackerman, Jean-Louis Boissier, Dara Birnbaum, David Claerbout, James Coleman, Pedro Costa, Masaki Fujihata, Yervant Gianikian / Angela Ricci Lucchi, Thierry Kuntzel, Shelly Silver, Michael Snow, Jeff Wall). Shelly Silvers Videofilm *WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR* (USA 2004) wurde dort als eines von drei Elementen einer Installation gezeigt. Der Film selbst lief auf einem Bildschirm in einem dunklen Raum. Im vorangehenden Raum waren an gegenüberliegenden Wänden zum einen eine Reihe während der Dreharbeiten entstandener Fotografien aufgehängt, zum anderen zahlreiche Ausdrücke der Webpage des Projekts, die das Werk erst ermöglichte. (R. B.)



Shelly Silver: *What I'm Looking For*, 2004, Installation (Monitor, Video, Dokumentation, Fotografien), Shown at the exhibition *States of the Image: Instants and Intervals*, LisboaPhoto, 2005

Shelly Silver:

WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR (USA 2004),
also the following illustrations



You are a film or video artist. You decide to compose a film, made up exclusively of photographs. You are yourself the author of these photographs. You accompany them with a commentary, which attaches to the singular experience from which these photographs emerge, divulging your inner detours, while simultaneously seeking to reflect a vertigo on which the film insists. You choose a female voice for this commentary, a truly evocative voice, personal and invested, which colors everything with its effect. When you do all this, you find yourself seized by the power of these things in the inexhaustible space that has opened up in the twenty years that separates two films, which intersect without resembling each other, marrying their respective qualities of fiction and witnessing: *LA JETÉE* and *SANS SOLEIL* by Chris Marker. You know this. You can't help thinking it. "He writes." "He writes from Japan." And the most beautiful present that you knew to give yourself, and that strikes your audience (to whom you are then offering it), is that you have succeeded to create the conditions of extreme liberty from this obliged interdependence, that belongs to the reality (of art).

The curious visitors to the internet dating site www.personals.salon.com can come across the large shot of a closed eye that serves as self-portrait of "roothofasecond", the username that Shelly Silver gave herself in order to enter the community. The film, the resulting video that we watch – like a nearly private spectator sitting in an armchair facing a monitor –



this film is above all an experience of the speed at which this eye, taken over by the camera, opens and shuts to pick up signals of the reality in the faces and bodies that it has become obsessed with.

In the already lengthy history of films composed of photographs, *WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR* seems to have the particular feature of being given the subject of the re-creation of a movement, of movements that correspond to real-life perceptions of a reality that the photo arrests on principle in its instantaneous abstraction. Being obsessed by time, wishing to stop time, this is what Shelly Silver (or her narrator) confesses to straight away. But she wants, above all, to take from time what she already stole from it in reinventing, with her montage, the virtualities of all its possible facets. It is, of course, a chimera: no language, made up of images, is able to render the hypothetical life of a body. But it can try. And it can succeed at perturbing us if it reaches visual hypotheses that become similarly-weighted perceptive creations.

Many images of this film follow each other in a simple way: whether it's the relationship between a detail and its context, or vice versa; or whether it is sequences of (more or less) rapid takes that translate into an immersion in street scenes, in crowds, effecting a sort of defoliation. Quickly: two Asian children; then a woman who is advancing with her back to us in a strange robe. Extreme accelerations are produced,



according to very varied forms and it would be a bit vain to want to seize them in words. But these moments, which multiply themselves, have the common quality of producing movements which approach (without using the force of power or wanting to conform) the movement of cinema and its illusion of life. In one of the most disturbing sections, a longish part towards the end of the film, a mouth appears that flickers from one shot, or photograph, to the next, and as much as these units of images are brief, they mime an expression, making it look as though something is being spoken. One even hallucinates (wouldn't this be fitting?) that there are two mouths there and that it's a sketch of the dialogue that would have taken place at that moment. It doesn't matter that it's real or not. The thing that counts is that such an impression makes an echo of the two main forces that mold this film.

Firstly, a passion for the encounter with the other, which also animated the previous work of Shelly Silver (from *MEET THE PEOPLE* to *SUICIDE* by way of *FORMER EAST / FORMER WEST* or *37 STORIES ABOUT LEAVING HOME*). Whatever it is, here, in the street, flying towards the other with images or, in a more elaborate fashion, striking up a baiting dialogue on the Net, it continues in the reality of an encounter (with the surprises, the dangers and the agitation that one imagines). Next, we retain a relatively unique way of standing there between





perception and hallucination, as though between mechanical recording and mental imagery, and this duality has the same explicit proportions which delimit cinema and photography. The end of the film is, in this way, exemplary: the images surge in floods, scanning various darkneses, as though surging from these darkneses; images that are steady, miming the physical reality of an imaginary film with this bombardment of light and forms, animating the projection (from which we seize the internal principel) of an intermittent parade of images on an interior screen.

Such a feeling adheres to the fact that this film, in the face of which we isolate ourselves – as its creator intended – is at the same time the end of a journey that the two previous moments issued. On the one hand, the photographs, some of the photographs that allow for the film, and for which each can be thus matched with its own portion of time. On the other hand, above all, there are the printed pages that belong to the website, which permitted the adventure of the film. The distress these pages cause is huge. Hence it induces an effect of concomitant reality to its imaginary capacity. We can also read, into life itself, that which each participant of the *www.personals.salon.com* is “looking for”. Lives are handed over well across truths that are equally masks. Desires are expressed, the fictions of desires try to become true. We remember, as though in passing, that Chris Marker’s film *LEVEL FIVE* (his



Within the installation *What I'm Looking For* one sees three separate uses of the photograph: the photograph as framed object, the documentation photos from the website of the respondents self-representation, and the photos, linearly arranged in time and sequence, of the film itself



third most important film) also found its principle in the fiction of a game of life and death across the internet. But here, with fiction, we touch the reverse of an inalienable experience. A “this happened” close at hand and different from the one that Roland Barthes assigned to photography. Different because many of the varied terms nourish and modify the images that are delivered in these pages. But close at hand, if the whole photo has really “been” as recent as it is. But again different if these photos, of which there are three, as is permitted by the website (which also allows there to be none, we find at least one example: “no photo available”), engage a look that is already beyond what we call “cinema”.

The man that goes by “For2nutone” has thus conceived of three images. Two of them are immense vertical shadows of a silhouette of a man cut off at mid-leg, one of them, blurred, projected against a background of earth and branches, the other, more clear, shows him on a carpet of dead leaves. The third image shows two lower legs, feet clad in red shoes and the suggestion of the forms of two stacked chairs. The thing that is so immediately striking is that this image, or this shot, at least in terms of form, regards the idea of a point of view, like a virtual reverse shot of each of these two shots of shadow. As if a shadow could see, like the closed eye of “100thofasecond”.

Paris, 2005/Translation: Natasha S. Randall