

no home
movie

a film by
Chantal Akerman

Filmmaker's statement

I've been filming just about everywhere for years now, as soon as I see a shot. Not with anything specific in mind, just the feeling that one day, these images will make a film, or an art installation. I just let myself go, because I want to, and instinctively. Without a film script, with no conscious project in view. Three installations have been created from these images and have been shown in many locations (at the Art Film Festival in Belgium, for example, etc.).

And I continue to film. Myself. Alone.

Last spring, with the help of Claire Atherton and Clémence le Carré, I brought together around twenty hours of images and sounds still not knowing where I was going. Then we started sculpting the material. 20 hours became 8, then 6, and then after a while, 2. And there we saw it, we saw a film and I said to myself: of course, it's this film that I wanted to make. Without admitting it to myself. If I'd had to admit it to myself, if I'd become aware of what was happening, if I'd set up a project from the very start, I probably wouldn't have made the film. I would have been afraid. Or not afraid enough. Because this film is above all a film about my mother, my mother who is no longer. About this woman who arrived in Belgium in 1938 fleeing Poland, the pogroms and the abuse. This woman who we only see in her apartment, nowhere else. An apartment in Brussels.

A mother who was left all the time and then found again after long trips made by one or the other of her daughters, my sister and me. So it's a film about my mother, but not only.

Interspersed in the shots, the moments spent with her, are moments spent far away, in lands that are sometimes arid.

And each time we come back to her, each time she's failed a little more. Until finally she can barely speak to us, falling asleep between each phrase.

But she mustn't sleep. The doctor told us: don't let her fall asleep. So my sister and I try to keep her awake in a scene that is absolutely heart-wrenching. We call out to her: "mama", "mama", "mama"! She is deaf. But she hears us anyway.

After that we leave her once more; we see deserts, we hear the wind. And then I find myself in the apartment. In a little room I tie my shoelaces, I toss back my hair. I close the curtains.

This shot is followed by another, which will be the last. A shot we've already seen. A still frame. Looking towards the kitchen, towards her

bedroom. But there's no longer anyone in this apartment.

The film is a film about the world that moves, which the mother never sees; she practically never leaves her apartment anymore. But the world outside is really there; it insinuates itself between the shots of the apartment, like a touch of yellow on the canvas that makes the rest of the painting exist.

It's also a film of love, a film about loss, sometimes funny, sometimes terrible. But viewed with an eye that keeps a respectful distance, I think. A film where a transmission occurs, discreetly, almost effortlessly, without pathos, in a kitchen in Brussels.

Of course right now the film is raw material, rough-hewn, like one speaks of "art brut", or outsider art. But it should never be polished; it would lose its force. The film is awkward at times, but here awkwardness is a plus. The film wanders without our really knowing where it's going. And yet, it can only lead us to one thing, death. The death of the mother, which we will never see. Only the apartment, now empty, speaks of her in silence.

The film begins with a tree being shaken by a violent wind. The shot lasts forever.

I felt it like that, static, like a beginning. A fixed frame but filled with movement, noisy, howling. It looks like it will never stop, but it does. A sunless shot, with a grey light, diffuse, without contrast, a beige light. This shot is followed by a sunny shot in a Brussels park, probably filmed in the spring when the green of the grass shines so much it dazzles you. In the foreground, an old man seen from the back, sitting on a park bench. This green was necessary after all that sand; calm was needed after the storm. And that's precisely how the film has been edited; the shots aren't there to give information; they work emotionally, affecting the spectator, touching him/her. The narrative advances step by tiny step, a little like how we enter this apartment in Brussels, where a woman walks with the fragile grace of someone who is trying to maintain her precarious balance. A woman who doesn't let herself go...

by Chantal Akerman



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This film is above all about my mother, my mother who is no longer with us. About this woman who arrived in Belgium in 1938, fleeing Poland, the pogroms and the violence. This woman who is only ever seen inside her apartment. An apartment in Brussels. A film about a world in motion that my mother does not see.



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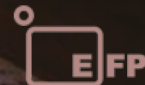
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