

Hinterhof. The Gaze Led Upon the Garden Path.

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In *MÔWN*, Ariane Loze already experimented thoroughly with the basic principles of film editing: shot and reverse shot, the belief of continuity of movement and the psychological suggestion of a narrative. In *Hinterhof* (2010), she takes her research that centers around inviting the spectator in a maze in which (s)he ought to find the own way out, one step further. This time, the maze is inhabited by multiple characters (all of which are performed by Loze herself), but the basic principle remains: the spectator construes his/her own movie out of the basic elements that are being passed on through the film screen.

In *Hinterhof*, cinema goes back to basics. No grand sets or expensive special effects, no extended cast, nor an expanded crew of production assistants. Only one actress who continually renames herself into other characters. This multiple duplication could easily be approached from a psychoanalytic perspective. But rather than calling into being a narcissistic mirror palace, the chosen strategy of duplication creates a kaleidoscopic universe in which the body is used as the simplest of tools to uncover the mechanisms behind the medium film (like the development of narrative, the editing process and our perception of the dramatic space). In doing so, Loze returns to a number of basic questions with which the filmic medium – and broader: visual culture – is already engaged for quite some time now: how is fiction being created? How does an interplay come into being between estrangement and suspension of disbelief? And how can the process of cutting, sampling and pasting (in short: editing) be exposed as a practical film process that is more important in generating meaning than creating a believable fictional world?

In this research, the position of the (cinematographic) image is therefore radically reconsidered: the (cinematographic) picture is obscure in its simplicity, and therefore radically depends on the images by which it is surrounded. This relation is complicated even further as a result of the integration of (a part of) the filmic history.



Hinterhof is based on *Rear Window* (1954) of Alfred Hitchcock, but is at the same time no re-make at all. *Hinterhof* restages scenes, direction of view and characters of *Rear Window*, and involves them in another narrative and another pictorial language. As a consequence, intertextuality is here to be understood as a recontextualizing of Hitchcockian elements, as visual quotations that are embedded in a fresh, new and contemporary research that centers around activating the spectator by means of the medium film. In reconstructing characters and narratives, the more experienced gaze of the frequent movie spectator will obviously appeal to the knowledge and experience of *Rear Window*, while the less experienced spectator is ought to search his/her own way through the labyrinth of characters that Ariane Loze realizes through her specific method.

Hinterhof shows the radically voyeuristic gaze of a girl that is fascinated by the outside world that develops in front of here eyes, to the extent that it becomes impossible for her to look away. In this compulsive viewing, EYE does not only see the world; she also shapes the world upon which she looks from a safe distance. In that sense, *Hinterhof* puts the finger on the voyeuristic trouble spot in making clear how the forbidden gaze theatricalizes reality. In this process, EYE's opposite neighbors become characters of her fantasy, and the window frame (her "frame on the world") becomes a theater window of which the stage is filled by a housefront that again constitutes numerous theatrical



Screenshots of Ariane Loze's *Hinterhof* (2010)

(window) frames. The whole builds up a palimpsest of show-boxes that exposes the private sphere of her opposite neighbors; one of the last remaining bastions of personality and subjectivity in a society that tends to render more and more spaces public. So EYE does not only peep; she also theatricalizes the outside world from the moment that its depictions appears on her retina. Neutralized by this constant transformation, her window becomes a medium of enjoyment that, zapping from the one window to the other, must fulfill her visual desire again and again (and as a consequence also her boredom). Only when the scenes and EYE's personal projections upon them (in *Hinterhof*, the one cannot be detached from the another) become too extreme, EYE's theatrical window is smashed into smithereens, and as a consequence, the film ends with a transgression that is at the same time a challenge for the main character to become active herself.

Through the different peepholes that are at work in *Hinterhof*, a mobilized gaze is created. A gaze that jumps from one frame to another, from the whole to the detail, and from reality into fiction in a hybrid dialectic between recognition and entanglement. In this complex reciprocity of inside and outside, interior and exterior, façade and depth, the impossibility of synthesizing all possible gazes to only one coherent essence, is exposed. That impossibility of the zapping gaze stupefies, paralyses even, to the extent that looking itself becomes a means for intoxication. In that manner, this exercise of the dissociated gaze visualizes the enchanting abundance of contemporary visual culture, in a filmic research in which the maker becomes the viewer, and the viewer becomes the maker.