



*For me the whole piece is like throwing a stone into the river and then creating ripples and ripples and ripples and ripples...*

Chantal Akerman

*Maniac Shadows*, a solo project from 2013 by Chantal Akerman (Brussels, 1950; lives and works in Paris and New York) is a multi-part installation comprised of a three-channel video of footage of Akerman's homes and travels in various cities and countries; a suite of 100 photographs from her series *Maniac Summer #2*; and a video of Akerman reading an excerpt from her autobiographical text "My Mother Laughs".

Using the methodology that has established her as one of the most important avant-garde filmmakers of our time, in *Maniac Shadows* Akerman overlays the personal with the public, the autobiographical with the testimonial, the child with the parent, memory with observation. Akerman's mother -- a Polish Jew who survived internment at Auschwitz, and a central figure throughout every phase of Akerman's oeuvre -- provides the work's emotional core; the portrayal of her that emerges over the various sections of the overall work is both intense and intimate. At the same time, in *Maniac Shadows* Akerman assembles another portrait -- of place and of places, of bedrooms and street fairs, of windows and hallways, of shadows and sounds.

Through these often oblique and often refracted overlays, in *Maniac Shadows* interior and exterior are not so much conflated as made to oscillate, both on the literal plane of indoors and out-of-doors (hence the motifs of windows, reflections and silhouettes) and also on the metaphorical level of interiority and exteriority, of an inner life and a life lived in a specific time and place, of a sense of self and a sense of others. And through this oscillation, what arises is nothing short of history -- but history as poetry, as vivid as it is complex.

In keeping with Akerman's signature artistic practice, the operative narrative technique in *Maniac Shadows* freely employs jumps and juxtapositions, quick cuts and extreme circuitousness, repetition and porousness. It does not seem seamless, nor seem to seek seamlessness; the connections, however, are not absent, but rather latent, just beneath the surface. They are like the connections between shadows and the objects that cast them; or, as Akerman herself has said, like the connections between ripples, and between ripples and the rock that gave them birth. They are delicate, and they are irresistible.

Chantal Akerman has been a leading figure in experimental cinema since the 1970's, and since the early nineties she has also used video and installation in her larger exploration of film form. Akerman's most recent retrospective, *Too Far, Too Close* was presented at MUHKA, Antwerp in 2012. Her 2008 U.S. survey *Chantal Akerman: Moving through Time and Space* traveled to MIT's List Visual Arts Center; the Miami Art Museum; the Contemporary Museum of Art, St. Louis, the Blaffer Gallery at the Art Museum of the University of Houston, and the Jewish Museum, San Francisco.

*Chantal Akerman*, a major retrospective survey of her work, was organized by the Centre Georges Pompidou in 2003. Other solo exhibitions have been seen at the Camden Arts Center, London (2008); Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2006); Princeton University Art Museum, (2006); MALBA, Buenos Aires, (2005); and L' École Supérieure des Beaux Arts de Toulouse (2004).

Akerman's work has also been included in such significant group exhibitions as the 29th São Paulo Biennial (2010), Documenta XI, Kassel (2002), and the 49th Venice Biennial (2001), as well as numerous international film festivals.

*Maniac Shadows* is Akerman's second exhibition at the Elba Benítez Gallery. The show forms part of **Festival Off - PhotoEspaña 2014**.

George Stolz



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