

# Sini Pelkki



## *Embarkation*

Whilst the camera traverses the scene, at any one moment the screen contains a select discursive detail of the encompassing environment and peripheral detail is then played out in an imagined space, in the domain of the non-image. On Embarkation, Pelkki is quoted as saying ‘The camera moves within an imaginary 10 metre wide photograph’ and in this sense the 7 minute piece is as much about what is not seen as that which is seen or made visible within the filmic frame. The space is divided into the unpredictability of the natural, the hardened surface of the man made and the central subject. The liminal space of the frame or edge of the tracking shot is something we cannot make out, or in many cases is something the camera does not touch.

Embarkation is best described as a durational photograph or a temporal image. As the camera documents only a particular detail of the whole, there are innumerable trajectories of rhythm and forms at separate moments in time that we do not see and yet we can glimpse discernible rhythms that interpolate the frame as well. Oscillating fissures in the concrete mark a base stillness that is animated and coerced by the camera, an angled steel railing is the incisive border of a mass of sporadic green leaves receiving the index of the wind and foregrounded trees interrupt the scene, moving at their own pace across the image. Optical rhythm (or a sequence of rhythms) and it’s many depths was once the subject of puncture by Marcel Duchamp in his 1926 film ANÉMIC-CINÉMA.

Whirring layers of disks became epitomic of the subjectivity of vision and the journey into the supposed flatness of the image. Pelkki’s particular aleatoric rhythms present themselves most effectively within a practice of the reductive, where nuances are so attuned to be made visible out of what is otherwise chaos.



One hears the soft overtures of an industrial landscape, a modest camera mechanism and the affective echo of the film grain and the frantic departure of pulsing sound as the frame is breached. Such aural acts of self-reflexivity are rooted in Brecht; namely the exposure of technical structures that compose illusion which were in turn deconstructed (most potently in cinema by Godard) and playfully interrupted within structural film and expanded cinema. Embarkation is instead concerned with the re-reading of an image and not in a politicisation or critique of realism. In fact suggestions of narrative litter themselves throughout, through the cassette tape tied to the branch of the tree and the petals dispelled to the side of the road, they are involved within a flat narrative or to be more specific; where narrative is subsidiary to the elemental.

When focusing on the female figure, the body is less a character or protagonist than a form; her still, cinematographic body eludes more to ontology than psychology. The person is only a detail as much as the rail or the leaf. This is a clear motif within Sini Pelkki's practice, where the body is not the locus of event but a congealed texture that is imbued with rich narrative under an already loaded process of absorbing detail by way of the cinematographic. The film or durational photograph then, naturally negates a too often anthropocentric style of cinema since here is a distinct lack of dramatic expression to dissect; in some post-Freudian arrangement of hysterical, psycho-sexual analysis. We are instead presented with the simplicity of the elemental and their very nuances: figure, concrete, steel, leaves, trees and the rhythmic intersections of stillness and movement.

This is not to say that the feel of a body does not exist however. On the contrary, gesture and the corporeal is present within the choreography of the camera. When it reaches the edge of the frame it goes back on itself, the focus is adjusted, the zoom is tempered with and there is a vivacious re-direction. This action embodies something of the mistake, a container for something that is inherently bodily, honest and emotional. Thus Embarkation is not a cold film but a lucid depiction of emotion through the improvisational and a deep affiliation with landscape through the exposition of chance.

In Blow Up by Antonioni a photographer believes he has witnessed a murder in the distance of a London park, the protagonist records the scene and develops the film only to find a vague and indiscernible shape. The character processes the photograph repeatedly and is absorbed into the depths of the irresolute image, eclipsed by the indecisive interpretation of event. Pelkki's practice may be about this same methodology of uncovering an image within an image: exposing detail, depth, nuance, line, colour. Techniques devised not through an operation in simplicity – considering the sheer density of perceptual content – but rather a positing of reduction and limitation where we are invited to sensuously read and re-read the infinitesimal image within image.

Text by Josh Wilson

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