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Mannerlaatta

Tectonic Plate

Mika Taanila

2016, DCP, black/white, 73 min., Finnish. **Producer** Jussi Eerola. **Production company** Elokuvayhtiö Testifilmi Oy (Helsinki, Finland). **Text** Harry Salmenniemi. **Music** Mika Vainio. **Sound design** Olli Huhtanen. **Editor** Mika Taanila. **Translation** Lola Rogers.

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After returning from a lengthy business trip to Tokyo, a nameless protagonist is inexplicably stuck at a hotel nearby the Helsinki airport. Not only that, he is also stuck in an endless loop of multi-tasking, his awareness split up, and his activities constantly divided into several directions at once. Various technical devices demand his attention, such as phones, computers, and heart rate monitors. His consciousness is modified; his time-management disintegrates.

A "camera-less lettrist film" about fear of flying, security checks, and time zones, *Mannerlaatta* uses photogram techniques and photocopying to produce its images, exposing objects placed on 35mm reversal film and printing documents related to air travel directly onto clear film leader. The result is an almost body-less film quality, aesthetically channeling the self-referential inner monologue of the protagonist, caught in a maelstrom of thoughts and images.

Machines of public and private control determine the international lifestyle of permanent jet-laggers. The time spent daily with screens of various kinds is greater than direct human contact. Lonesome monitoring of bodily functions has become a respectful past-time norm.

Mika Taanila

Paranoia is at the core of flying. At the airport, everyone is suspected, everything is controlled, and a bag left alone is enough to produce chaos.

While constant security checks are humiliating, they are, of course, necessary for the system. To enjoy the freedom of air traveling, one has to accept standing in the line and being body checked. Ever increasing security is making flying more and more difficult, but at the same time safer.

As airports tend to be uninteresting and expensive places, and sitting in the plane is pretty much the opposite of comfort, the flying companies face a difficult task in promoting flying as a pleasant experience. For a writer, the language used in this marketing is of a great interest.

When writing *Mannerlaatta*, I was following up twitter accounts of different flying companies and airports. I've seldom seen such desperate communication. After all, it's not easy to convince someone that a sandwich in a plastic box is simply a delicious meal and that sitting still for ten hours represents the utmost freedom. However, there is some beauty in this marketing language, and I must confess I fell in love with the complexity of different bonus systems.

I knew the text would be essential in creating a story for the film. But I didn't want a traditional story, I wanted a futurist one: rather many contradicting stories and possibilities than one story line. A lot of paranoia, honesty about the fear of death, some moments of beauty, some confusing jokes, and big plates of ready-made text – and all this wrapped in the pseudo-rational context created by prologue and epilogue.

Harry Salmenniemi

Mika Taanila was born in 1965 in Helsinki, Finland, where he lives and works as a film director and visual artist. His projects address the notion of human engineering, whether filmmaking, visual arts, or music. His works look at the progress of technological evolution and the intersection of art and science. From 1985 to 1988 he studied Anthropology at the Department of Culture Studies, University of Helsinki. In 1992 he graduated with a diploma in Crafts and Design from the Institute of Design and Fine Arts, Lathi University of Applied Science. Taanila's short films and moving image installations have been screened and presented worldwide at film festivals and major international group shows. In May 2015 he received the Finnish Ars Fennica Award.

Films

1997: *Thank You for The Music – A Film about Muzak* (27 min.).
1998: *Futuro – A New Stance for Tomorrow* (28 min.), *Pori* (35 min.).
2000: *RoboCup99* (25 min.). 2001: *Verbranntes Land* (7 min.).
2002: *Future Is Not What It Used To Be* (52 min.), *A Physical Ring* (4 min.). 2005: *Optical Sound* (6 min.), *Stimulus Progression* (4 min.). 2006: *Sommerreise* (3 min.), *The Zone of Total Eclipse* (6 min.). 2010: *Twilight* (6 min.). 2011: *Man and Science* (00:37 min.). 2012: *The Most Electrified Town In Finland* (15 min.). 2013: *My Silence* (15 min.), *Six Day Run* (15 min.). 2016: *Mannerlaatta / Tectonic Plate*.