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## Xénogénèse

### Akihiko Morishita

1981, single-channel video installation, color, 7 min., silent.  
Producer Akihiko Morishita (Kôbe, Japan).

Contact: [bibliotheque208M@softbank.ne.jp](mailto:bibliotheque208M@softbank.ne.jp)

An experimental film that focuses on the duality of its medium: material and image. A figure dressed in shirt and tie – the filmmaker himself – walks in circles around what appears to be a junkyard and confuses this duality as more and more vertical scratches are introduced to the surface of the image. The film employs tactics of trompe-l'œil to comically allude to the circular nature of human life and, in its function as the artist's self-portrait, gently mocks the home movie genre.

*Xénogénèse* was first shown in Berlin at the 1984 International Forum of New Cinema as part of a program curated by Image Forum Tokyo. This year, a newly produced 16mm print will be presented again in the Forum as an opening film to several screenings. The print was manually scratched using a specially constructed device. A digitized version of the film, exclusively produced for the Forum Expanded program, will be presented as a single-channel video installation.

## On My Work

My recent work has to do with the concept "Film about Film". (see: Birgit Hein: Film über Film, in: Documenta 6, Catalogue, Kassel 1977) I would like to explain the background of this.

Today, in our daily life, we usually experience the world by and through various man-made reproduced images of it (photography, film, television). In such an experience, our attention is first directed to the object represented (the world) while the way of this experience, that is, the functioning and mechanism of image-media (an objective aspect of image) and the mental process of the viewer of the image (a subjective aspect of image) remains unnoticed. With this situation – the inundation and everydayness of images – we may cope in various manners.

Roughly speaking, as long as I am concerned with this I want to make a counterattack against such a situation, and deal especially with the image itself in two ways. (Nam June Paik said: "Television has been attacking us all our lives, now we can attack it back.", in Gene Youngblood: Expanded Cinema, Toronto and Vancouver 1970) One is to make an iconic study of the image. The other is to let the image itself make explicit its own functioning and mechanism as media. For the present my interest is in film, so: "Film about Film." And in particular I grapple with a problem of the conflict between film's representation and its materiality, which theoretically exclude each other. Setting up fields where this conflict could occur, my immediate intention is to develop a critique on film-media. Scratching the surface of film is one means of achieving this.

Akihiko Morishita: *On My Work*, in: *Cantrilles Filmnotes*, Issue 43/44, Februar 1984, page 17

He (Morishita) appears in *Xénogénèse* and has picked up the nickname "Mad Scientist Dr. Morishita" by the way he walks around in the film. There might be, in creating a self-portrait, a strong inclination to see the film as a mirror: And there have been many 'meta-films' whose theme was the elemental idea of an "artist looking into a viewfinder of a camera, and taking a shot of himself in a mirror," but Morishita's works take a new bold direction in that they incorporate the scrutinizing 'relationship' of the camera, film and the artist as part of the basic concept.

The visually noisy film shows in its background a mountain of old school chairs (like an object made up of rusted throw-aways). I never get tired of seeing the blue glow of the film *Xénogénèse*. This landscape was part of Kyushu Institute of Design during the making of the film, but when I visited, the chairs had been cleared away. (...)

Akihiko Morishita's film are lucid and mysterious at the same time. They are instruments used to make the audience think, especially about what image is about.

*Excerpts from "Deconstruction of the Iconosphere – Notes regarding Akihiko Morishita's Films.", Norio Nishijima (Translated by Makoto Fujimura), 1990*

Akihiko Morishita was born in 1952 in Kanagawa, Japan. In 1979 he completed a postgraduate study in Visual Communication Design at Kyushu Institute of Design, Fukuoka. He taught at Kobe Design University from 1989 to 2010. His body of work encompasses many experimental films and videos. From 2010 to 2014 he organized regular screenings of experimental film and video art at the National Museum of Art in Osaka, and curated exhibitions and screenings such as "Survival 8" in Osaka in 2014. He has conducted research on artists such as Hans Richter, László Moholy-Nagy, and Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, and also on the history of design education in Japan. He is interested in the media history of the 19th/20th centuries. Currently he's working on establishing an artist-run center for preserving experimental films and video art works in Japan.

## Films

1972: *Shikyo* (1,2m Loop). 1975: *Toro Ningyo* 1974: *A Documentary of Traditional Doll Play* (35 min.). 1980: *L'eau d'artifice* (6 min.), *Iconoface* (9 min.), *Exophtalmie* (16 min.). 1981: *Xénogénèse*. 1982: *Ægosome* (3 min.), *Xéno-parasitisme*, 1 (9 min.). 1983: *Étiologie ébouleuse* (6 min.), *Æsthésiometre* (3 min.), *Xanthopsie* (7 min.). 1984: *Æsthégiogène* (3 min.), *Xérophtalmie* (9 min.). 1985: *Æthrioscope* (3 min.), *Xérophilie* (11 min.). 1986: *Ænigmatite* (3 min.). 1987: *Yponomeute* (5 min.), *Æriférese* (3 min.). 1988: *x* (10 min.), *Æ* (3 min.). 1989: *x-d* (13 min.). 1990: *x-o* (15 min.). 1991: *To the Distant Idea* (15 min.), *x-f* (15 min.), *Perfect Fakes '91* (5 Min). 1992: *x-n* (5 min.). 1993: *Le temps de la Télévision* (26 min.), *Le parc* (performance, 5 min.), *Postscriptum* (5 min.). 1994: *Coin de la Télévision* (25 min.), *Anagram #43* (performance in collaboration with Jean Dupy, 3 min.). 1995: *L'homme à la Télévision* (14 min.), *z-591* (10 min.). 1996: *--x--* (video performance).