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IF SEX TAKES NO TIME (and is not a lebendes Bild)

A FILM IN THIS ARCHIVE

The archive given life or assumed alive by the Living Archive project contains a French film from 1978, *L'HYPOTHÈSE DU TABLEAU VOLÉ* by filmmaker Raúl Ruiz. Ruiz, who had just escaped from Chile, met Pierre Klossowski in Paris. An idiosyncratic encounter whereby the political refugee crossed paths with this expert in Old Latin, ex-monk, Nietzsche exegete and Benjamin translator.

The film shows the fictitious search for a (fictitious) lost picture, a painting from the 19th century. The picture being searched for is reconstructed with the help of tableaux vivants. A narrator leads the viewer through the rooms and through the film. His guided tour can hardly be deemed exciting, given that he falls asleep in mid-sentence and enters his own dream.

This film is just one of around 8000 in the Arsenal archive. The very existence of all these films raises the question of the time needed to watch them, or even just some of their number. The time someone has left; left for what, to watch films? What does that even mean, to watch something, let alone a film? A film set in the past (which is every film to a certain extent).

A tableau vivant, a "living image", consists of people recreating a picture. They recreate it by holding a pose, by staying still; they try not to move, that is. Yet you can't stop moving entirely, that's only possible in a real picture. The bodies or rather people continue to breathe. A tableau vivant being filmed represents a special configuration in which two opposing measures of time converge: the figures are standing still, imitating a picture, a photo in which time no longer passes, where time is fixed, standing still. Where bodies no longer breathe and atoms are no longer in motion. The bodies in the tableau vivant approach a state of non-movement (in the same way that any movie corpse is a perfect tableau vivant). And the camera filming

a living picture measures an empty interval. We are, that is, those of us watching, are also present in this empty interval. It pulls in the invisible nature of those watching in inverted fashion. It reifies passive time. Is it dead time, just as those haters of spectacle always said (those who hate entertainment for the way it steals or expropriates time, who in the 18th century already saw books as comprising the same sort of theft, who later hated film before obviously moving on to television above all; I'm not really sure what they now hate)? The fit of this interval in any case, the motionless bodies in the tableaux that are people; they aren't dead, that's the whole point, they're still alive.

AGGRESSIVE TIME

Artistic products and films in particular presuppose being seen. They demand to be seen, they only exist when they are seen (even if this process of being seen is deferred to some point in the future). Seen as a whole, with regards to all the many people that produce something, who have either enough or not enough of the commodity "audience" at their disposal, it's an aggressive battle for attention. It's about everything after all. But everyone who might be able to watch does themselves produce...

KLOSSOWSKI'S CONCEPT OF THE IMAGE

Pierre Klossowski says that he is under the dictation of the image. The inscrutability of the image corresponds with the incommunicability that forms the basis of the subject. Author Klossowski gave up (philosophical) writing at some point and only continued with drawing, usually large pencil drawings that stage theatrical scenes. Klossowski returns again and again to a specific configuration in which a figure is placed at the centre of the image which often looks outside of it and is held by unknown forces, held up, placed in the image, framed, supported. The voluntary and the involuntary hang in the balance. The body of the person shown is held, like an object, an object up for exchange. And exchange is possible between the person being held, who experiences his or her own body as an object, the person holding (on to) the body and those where the held body's gaze is directed: the spectator.

Exchange can be sexualized. But exchange does not last, exchange precludes convention.