

From *Standing* to *In Between*

by Guylain Desnoues

In his series *Standing* (New York, Paris, Philadelphia), Aurélien Grèzes offers the viewer an original experience. A video camera, always positioned at an ambiguous place (neither really close nor far), filmed motionless people standing in the street, as if they were suspended to an hypothetical wait. The pedestrian traffic flowed around each participant in a street or a park. The direct recording confirmed the sensation of immersion without solving the question of the camera's position. Various cities, people from various ages, ethnicities and social conditions: there is no sociological coherence to reveal any obvious intention. The diversity and the street energy were immediately clear.

Each of the videos helped to better frame the concept. If differences appeared from one to another (more people in New York, split-screen in Philadelphia, slow motion in Paris, etc), the coherence of each video was obvious.

The strange fixity of the people and the non-narrative succession of shots confronted the spectator with an experience of duration that he can only solve by delving into the interiority of people he was staring at, or by looking away. Then, the viewer has to project himself, or to see himself, in the mirror turned toward him. Who is this woman, an actress or a passer-by? Is the footage stolen? Is this man waiting, dreaming, drowsing, or maybe anxious? Is this other man having the same feelings? Am I over-interpreting what I am looking at or is the hypnotic immersion into the film slowly changing my mood? Open perspectives quickly became vertiginous and each spectator was invited to imagine, from an infinity of fictions.

At first sight, *In Between's* concept is the same : a motionless man, filmed in the street, looking around him. The camera is positioned higher than street level, but it is still difficult to determine the distance. Yet, despite of these similarities, the feeling is distinct. The man has a different presence, a charisma. Is it because of his body structure, underlined by his sleeveless top? Is it because he is sitting on the ground, without looking like a beggar? Or because he is falling asleep despite the traffic and the pedestrians passing him? Soon, we realize that, unlike the silhouette of *Standing*, the man will be the only subject of the film. As we could sense, something new is at stake, slowly being unveiled.

The relentless presence of the moving camera contrasts with the dozing man. An unexpected eye contact, quickly driven out by the black screen of the opening film credits.

A wider shot, filmed from above, reveals another man sitting. There is still a duration imposed on the spectator, but also the impression of a repetition, a variation. Time is no longer stagnate, time is passing, the light changing, and then we are back to the beginning. Are we still watching stolen footage, or is it the same scene acted and re-enacted? Are we imagining again, or are we manipulated?

In between brings the viewer to the edge of the staging and the concept in a playful way. Though, after *Standing*, what interests Aurélien Grèzes is not the issue or the true vs false (or documentary vs narrative, acting vs non acting) but ambiguities of representation and presence, nuances between control and letting go, interstices between consciousness and absence. As in his previous film *The Chosen*, he is both looking for the performance (whether it is an actor or a non-actor) and what escapes the person.

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