

Dossier Copenhagen - Lisa Strömbeck

In the tradition of Nordic Film and literature, such as the films of Ingmar Bergman, there is a focus on the small world, and its flows of desires and meanings in everyday life. Themes that are recurrent in the video and performance-based artwork of Lisa Strömbeck, whose work is at once intensely private and very public. Most of her works take their point of departure in everyday occurrences – sometimes intimate, sometimes nonsensical – that are interwoven with the spectacles of popular culture and issues of gender, shot through with a large dose of melancholia and loss.

In Strömbeck's early videoworks, such as "Lady in Red", 1996, and "Keen Competition" (a collaboration with Andrea Creutz), 1997, we are witnessing an ironic and iconic displacement of the media-generated images of women into an everyday enactment here-of. In the latter piece, Strömbeck and Creutz are competing over the attention of a small baby, and in front of the camera trying to be the best, most loving and lovely mother-figure – at once mimicking and circumventing television gameshows and reality programming. An even more obvious *misé-en-scène* can be seen in "Lady in Red", in which Strömbeck is depicted cleaning house to the soundtrack of Chris DeBurgh's romantic mainstream ballad. But whereas the song is a hymn to the romantic vision of the perfect, beautiful womanhood, Strömbeck is instead seen at work, as a housewife or just ritually cleaning house after a break-up of a romance. And since the pictures are sped up the video gets a simultaneously hysteric and ironic feel to it. A vision of womanhood that is outside representation is humorously contrasted with the classic masculine vision of woman as object of desire.

In her later videos, Strömbeck has stepped somewhat in the background as performer, and has instead replaced presence with absence: Loneliness and loss seems to be the subject of both "God's Gifts", 1998 and "One Day", 1999. A sense of loss that was always present in the work are not at the forefront of the actuality video "God's Gifts", that simply and enigmatically shows the artists in the company of wild dogs on an otherwise deserted beach. The short 3 minute video ends with the dogs walking off, and has no dialogus, but only the actual sound of the waves, and captures a fleeting moment of minimal, but perhaps profound contact. A similar theme is central to "One Day", a video that departs from Strömbeck's earlier, minimalistic home-video aesthetic, by using multiple locations, actors and a filmcrew. In the film we follow one day in the life a young woman, where her only contact with other people all day is an occasional "hello". It captures the loneliness of contemporary work-life in the city, and is perhaps Strömbeck's most melancholic work: A musing on loneliness.

Strömbeck's recent video installation *Hvilerum* (eng. trans. "A Space for resting"), tries to find solutions to the above situation by creating a space of tranquility and rest. The installation involves the imagery of dogs, now a recurrent theme in her work, shown sleeping on four separate monitors placed around a bed in a dark and intimate space, where it was actually possible for the spectators to lie down and have a rest. Perhaps we can, then, also find solace in our solitude, Strömbeck seems to offer.

