Looking, Really Looking! The Films of Chantal Akerman

Looking, Really Looking! The Films of Chantal Akerman 1968-2015 is a film and performative program which surveys the work of the Belgian/French filmmaker Chantal Akerman and places it within a conceptual, thematic, and historical context at the intersection of film and contemporary art. Akerman, whose work defies easy categorization, is often placed within feminist, queer, Jewish, and avant-garde circles, yet her oeuvre moves across genres from the documentary/essay to the musical and multi-media installations. Akerman, who took her own life late last year at the age of 65, presents us with complexities and doubts in a body of work that spans forty years and revolves around her personal family history, identity, memory and displacement, often portrayed in long takes within the modest aesthetics of everyday life.

Looking, Really Looking! is presented by the Northwest Film Center and Zena Zezza, a Portland-based contemporary art project, and is curated by Sandra Percival and Morgen Ruff. The project begins with four screenings this summer and resumes in September 2016, running through May 2017.

Friday, June 17, 8 pm
I Don’t Belong Anywhere: The Cinema of Chantal Akerman, Belgium, 2015
dir. Marianne Lambert (67 mins., Documentary, DCP)

I Don’t Belong Anywhere explores Chantal Akerman as a nomadic filmmaker and portrays her in conversation with her long-time collaborator, Claire Atherton. Akerman discusses the origins of her film language and charts her cinematic trajectory, one that never ceased to interrogate the meaning of her own existence. Lambert’s sensitive, inquisitive portrait includes excerpts from many of Akerman’s 40-plus films. “An attempt to capture something of Akerman’s infectious spirit and thirst for worldly experience, as both an artist and a human being...I Don’t Belong Anywhere always gives Akerman the final word and, in almost every case, it’s to all of our collective benefit.”—Clayton Dillard, Slant Magazine. (French with English Subtitles)

Friday, June 24, 7 pm
Dis-Moi (Tell Me), France, 1980
dir. Chantal Akerman (45 mins., Documentary, Digital)

The first film, after over 10 years in filmmaking, in which Chantal Akerman—herself the daughter of an Auschwitz survivor—engages with the Holocaust through intimate discussions with three Jewish grandmothers, all of them survivors of the Shoah. Akerman conducts the interviews herself, bearing witness to stories told by these elderly women and how they have been cut off both from their pasts and themselves by the experience of such horror. Dis-Moi is “history as weft. The lineal facts may provide the warp, but without the weft we are unlikely to
feel, because we all know what it is to sit beside a mother and hear the family history.”—Adam Roberts, *The Huffington Post*. (French with English Subtitles)

**SCREENS WITH**

*Là-bas (Over There)*, Belgium, 2006  
dir. Chantal Akerman (79 mins., Documentary, Digibeta)

*Là-bas* is one of Akerman’s most fragile and powerful works, in which she uses her own voice to personalize and narrate the visual images. For a month in Tel Aviv, Akerman points her lens outward through two large windows with blinds that filter the light of the exterior world. Apprehensive about a recent bombing, Akerman constructs a profound meditation on whether Israel is indeed the 'promised land' or merely a new form of exile. Winner of the Grand Prize at the Marseille International Documentary Festival and nominated for a French César, in *Là-bas* Akerman, who was heavily influenced by structural filmmakers like Michael Snow, “takes the aesthetic strategies of the minimalists and marries them to the humanist content that they suppressed. Fragile…and powerful.”—Amy Taubin, *Film Comment*. (French and English with English Subtitles)

Saturday, July 16, 7 pm  
*Un jour Pina M’a Demande (One Day Pina Asked)*, Belgium/France, 1983  
dir. Chantal Akerman (61 mins., Documentary, 16mm)

Born a decade apart, Chantal Akerman (1950–2015) and Pina Bausch (1940–2009) were two remarkable female artists who redefined our cultural expectations. In theatrical dance works, Bausch took commonplace gestures and transformed them into extraordinary pageants, while Akerman choreographed wonderful cinematic compositions made of rhythmical everyday elements. In *One Day Pina Asked*, Akerman documents Bausch and her dance company for five weeks while they are on tour in Germany, Italy and France. The encounter is a meeting of sensibilities, a perfect combination of the filmmaker’s sage framing and the dancer’s flamboyant world-making. *One Day Pina Asked* "reproduces the pull between meaning and its impasse that structures Bausch’s dances. Focused under Akerman’s lens, Bausch’s oeuvre resolves as a matter of the quotidian, pathologized, its order deranged not through an absence but an acceleration of some underlying logic: something, in other words, like the readymade subject of an Akerman film.”—Courtney Fiske, *Artforum*. (French with English Subtitles)

Friday, July 29, 8 pm  
dir. Chantal Akerman (approx. 90 mins., Short films, Various formats)
This program presents a series of short films by Chantal Akerman from her earliest film *Saut ema Ville* (1968) to those critically acclaimed--as well as largely unscreened--films from 1971 through 1997. The program brings together autobiographical explorations of Akerman’s sexuality and life as a filmmaker, such as *Le Chambre* (1972) and *J’ai Faim, J’ai Froid* (1984), along with *Rue Mallet Stevens* (1986), which introduces the music of cellist Sonia Wieder-Atherton. In *Ecrire Contre L’oubli* (1991), Akerman engages with the plight of the tortured in El Salvador’s civil war and highlights the filmmaker’s budding engagement with different geographies and human conflicts, an interest which would continue from the early 1990s until her death in 2015. (French with English Subtitles)