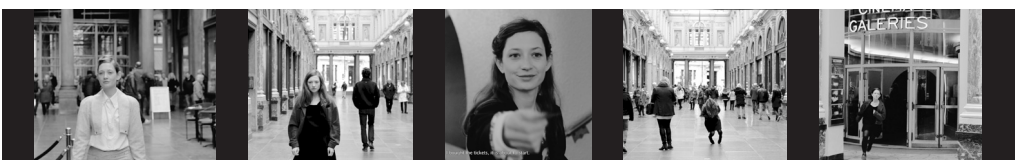
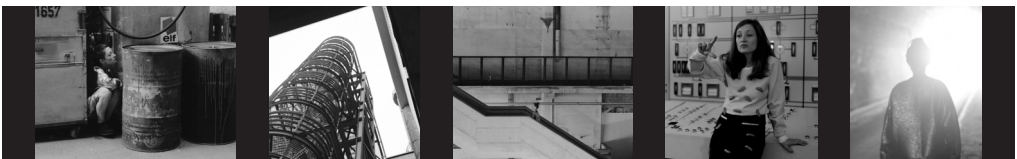
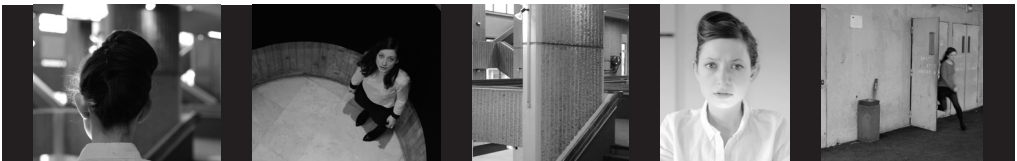
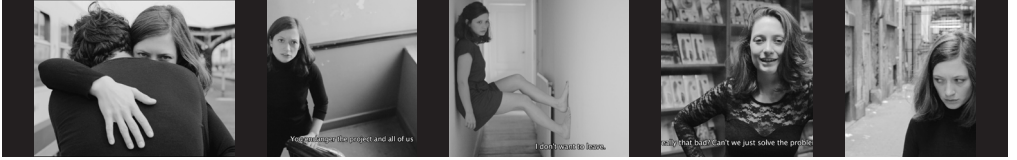


MÔWN

Movies On My Own

Ariane LOZE



Staging film: a woman and her camera

An article written by Jeroen Coppens

Ariane Loze's *Movies on My Own (MÓWN)* is an artistic project which started during her research period at *a.pass* (Advanced Performance And Scenography Studies) in 2008. The video series looks into the narrative principles of film, investigating how sequences of seemingly unrelated images achieve to construct an imaginary fictional space and a credible narrative development. In this endeavor, *MÓWN* reduces film to its absolute minimum, requiring only one actress that embodies different characters while at the same time also serving as a director, a camera woman, a set designer, etc. This way, *MÓWN* dissects the grammar of film, cutting away the non-essential elements of cinema (an army of actors and crew members, immense set designs, multimillion dollar budgets, a well-defined scenario). Instead, the video series leaves us with the most basic building stones of filmic illusion: a woman, her camera, montage, and a willing spectator.

MÓWN duplicates the body of the actress and stages intricate interactions and dialogues between these body doubles through montage. The clever usage of the classical editing principle of shot reverse shot and of continuity of movement complicate the minimalistic set-up of the movies, paving the way to look at the interactions between the different characters as a narrative in progress. *Movies on My Own* invites the spectator to take up an active role by creating a personal story from the minimalistic elements of the movies (characters, movement and space). In this sense, the video series plays with two conflicting perspectives on filmic illusion: the spectator's awareness of the impossibility of what is seen (two identical persons interacting with each other) and the spectator's willingness to look at these scenes as believable interactions nevertheless. As such, *MÓWN* exposes the fact that if we see illusion and progressing story lines in films, it is only because we actively decide to believe and participate in them; a process that has been called the "willing suspension of disbelief" in the discourse of film studies.



Shooting, *Anaphora*, Brussels 2015



Performance, *Subordination*, Berlin (2015)

However, *MÖWN* is much more than only the end product of the different short films. The shooting of the movie scenes is also a public performance in which the audience is granted a look behind the scenes. During the site-specific performances, the audience sees how Ariane positions the camera and adjusts the lens, but also how she constantly changes costumes and hair styles to embody the different characters, using the tripod of her camera as a coat stand. This way, these performances show the process of making film with minimalistic means. This becomes most poignant in the moments in which Ariane records a shot, subsequently looks at and evaluates the recording on a monitor, and does a retake of the shot if necessary. At the same time, the performances move beyond the “making of”-perspective on film by departing from one central restraint: the performances record the shots and scenes of the movie in a linear way;



in the same temporal order as they will appear in the final montage of the movie. As a result, the performances are an interdisciplinary endeavor in which the rules of one medium (film) are imported and applied within another medium (performance). This strict temporality causes an interesting choreography of the actress and her camera, obliging the actress/director to change costumes and camera positions for each part of a dialogue or a dramatic action.



Performance, *Anaphora*, Brussels (2015)

The body of the performer and the camera dance a *pas de deux*, a duet in which the body and the machine interact with and determine each other. In a way, this choreography visualizes what remains unseen within mainstream cinema: the (per) formative function of editing different shots and camera positions into a coherent and credible narrative sequence. Moreover, the live shooting generally takes place before the audience sees the final montage.



This way, the spectator is challenged to imaginatively edit the different shots and scenes of the performance together in a personal narrative and montage. As a result, the live shootings of *Movies on My Own* bring into the picture the making of a movie to come and invite the spectator to participate and engage in the formation of a narrative in progress.

MÔWN is a long-standing research project that has evolved and shifted since Ariane Loze's first filmic experiments in 2008. The first movies are mostly set in enclosed spaces and remarkable architectural buildings. Their narrative suggestiveness mainly stems from haphazard improvisations (and sometimes almost surrealistic turns) during live shootings. *Dinner for 4* (2008) and *Betaville* (2009) are only two examples of these initial experiments – excerpts and pictures of both can be seen on the artist's website. Recent movies in the *MÔWN*-series show significant evolutions in the work, both formally, technically and conceptually.



Discovering the scenario

In *The Assignment* (2014), Ariane Loze takes *MÓWN* to the public space, shooting scenes in different public and semi-public venues in Brussels. Thematically, the movie is inspired by well-known mainstream spy movies and takes up the theme of 5 *doppelgängers* involved in a mysterious conspiracy. As the movie combines different places and complex interactions between a broad number of characters, it became necessary to work with an elementary story line and scenario.

As a result, *The Assignment* is the first movie in which explicit narratives and storylines were implemented, while at the same time also allowing enough openness for improvisation, both for the artist in making the movie, as well as for the spectator in looking at and interpreting the final montage of the movie. It is also the first experiment with extensive dialogues between the different characters, partly improvised, partly pre-written, and partly inspired by dialogues and quotes from popular Hollywood cinema.

This way, the movie alludes to the audience's knowledge of film history. Origin-

The Assignment, Brussels (2014)



nally, the movie was shown during the *Nuit Blanche* in Brussels in the erotic movie theater *Cinéma Paris*, while Ariane recorded new and additional scenes in the lobby of the cinema. Upon entering or exiting the cinema, audience members saw the live performance and continuation of the movie they were about to see (or had just seen). This way, *The Assignment* underlines the live performance as the basis for movies as an end product.



The Self and the Other: Identity Crises

In *L'Ordre Intérieur* (2015) and *La Chute* (2015), two recent movies in the MÔWN-series, Ariane Loze explores the potential of her filmic language and the *doppelgänger* motif to deal with issues of identity and community. *L'Ordre Intérieur* was developed as a short movie for the *Videofformes festival* in Clermont-Ferrand. The film shows different body doubles that seem to be caught in a mysterious, labyrinthine environment. Unable to escape, strange encounters take place while the central character wanders through the building. Then, she ends up in a waiting room filled with body doubles. The characters exchange gazes and smiles in a surreal and estranging montage. Finally, she enters an interrogation room, facing harsh questions from what seems to be an official of some kind.

The movie never explicitly clarifies the context of these actions and conversations. Instead, it suggests a *Kafkaesque* (or maybe even a totalitarian) society and a disobedient character that is

caught up in the bureaucratic maze of that system. As such, the movie brings up issues of the self versus the other, and more particularly of the self that is always already embedded in a reality that it co-creates, even when resisting that reality. The paradoxical entanglement of the self and the system it tries to resist becomes visible in the final scene, in which one body double expels the other from “the system”. In this instance, it remains an open question who is “the self” and who is “the other”.

La Chute, created for the *Traverse Vidéo festival* in Toulouse, deals with the issue of identity from a different perspective. The film is loosely inspired on Albert Camus' book of the same name, in which the main character judges and condemns his most pitiful desires and fears in or-

der to come to a true image of who he really is. In the film, one character jumps into the Garonne in Toulouse, leaving behind three body doubles. Maybe they are sisters, maybe close friends. Trying to cope with the sudden disappearance, the three characters get caught up in a conversation about who the fourth character actually was and who they are themselves. The conversation ends up in a heavy fight when they realize that their identities are much less stable than they would have hoped. This way, the film proposes to think of the self as a fluid identity, or even as a schizophrenic subjectivity.

The *doppelgänger* motif of MÔWN serves well here to ask the question: what would happen if the self is no longer frenetically defined as a sole coherent essence, but rather as a plurality of different (and sometimes colliding) thoughts, fears and dreams.



Stills, *La Chute*, Toulouse (2015)



Choreography of the Human and the Machine

In *MÔWN*, the intricate connection between the human and the camera as its mechanical counterpart is never far away. This relation is, however, far from one-sided. In her choreography with the camera, the device is far from a passive machine operated by the artist.

Rather, the camera determines and alters the dramatic actions to the same degree as the actress/director does.

This complex imbrication of subject and technology is explored in *Subordination* (2015), a film recorded at the Medienwerkstatt in Berlin for the Berliner Liste art fair.

Set in the industrial environment of a former energy plant, the movie suggests a cold, machine-like and even posthuman reality. An immense control room filled with buttons, control panels and indication lights serves as the main location of the movie.

The characters that handle these control panels seem to direct the actions and movements of a test subject that convulses and trembles when different buttons in the control room are pushed. As the movie contains no dialogue or spoken word whatsoever, *Subordination* becomes an almost mechanical choreography driven by a mysterious machine.

At the same time, the movie also deals with the themes of obedience and authority. After a while, it becomes clear how the women handling the control panels do not control the test subject, but rather torture and hurt her.

The controllers hesitate to administer another torment when they see the test subject in agony. Yet, they are convinced over and over again by an authoritative person apathetically ordering further torture, until the inevitable death of the test subject. This way, *Subordination* looks at how people uncritically obey orders and the dire consequences this can have in an era in which human powers have become almost limitless through an estranging alliance with the machine.





Subordination, Berlin (2015)



Metacinema

The most recent Movie On My Own, *Anaphora* (2015), was created for the *Hors Piste festival* in Brussels. Although the movie deals with the difficulties of coping with a past romance, the main point resides in its self-referential spiral effect. *Anaphora* is divided in three scenes, all opening with an encounter of former lovers, and finally ending up in a movie theater where the girl watches a screening of *Anaphora* together with a friend or possibly an older sister.

The subsequent scene then functions as a movie within a movie, where the lovers avoid each other. The final scene is, again, a movie within a movie, in which the former lovers casually talk. But when the girl later sees the movie screening of this version of *Anaphora*, she pulls out a gun, aims it at the cinema screen and shoots her on-screen body double. She runs out of the cinema complex and looks at herself dying in the arms of her former lover.

In *Anaphora*, the formal metacinematic aspect of previous *MÔWN*-videos becomes the dramatic structure of the movie itself. Rather than exploring divergent temporalities of the same event in different scenes, the movie





Anaphora, Brussels (2015)

opens a vortex effect in which contrasting versions of reality and fiction of a past romance are explored. Each version seemingly opens a new parallel reality, a movie within a movie; a self-referential spiral that can only be stopped with a murder that is at the same time a suicide.

The images of *The Assignment*, *La Chute*, *L'Ordre Intérieur*, *Subordination* and *Anaphora* have been created in close collaboration with Yohan Guignard, who took care of the photography. Yohan Guignard is a filmmaker and studied documentary film at IAD (*Institut des Arts de Diffusion*). At this moment, he prepares the short film *Adieu La Chair*. The costumes for *Subordination* are from Jean-Paul Lespagnard's Le Savoir Faire collection. The costumes for *Anaphora* are from various previous collections of Jean-Paul Lespagnard. Marion Cambier has been assistant during the shooting of *Subordination*, Alex Aynié and Thomas Larrouquère during the shooting of *Anaphora*.

Jeroen Coppens collaborates with Ariane Loze as a dramaturge. He is also a researcher at Ghent University's Studies in Performing Arts and Media (S:PAM) research unit. He just finished his PhD. on the status of (visual) illusion in contemporary theater, entitled *Visually Speaking. A Research into Visual Strategies of Illusion in Post-dramatic Theater* (2015).

