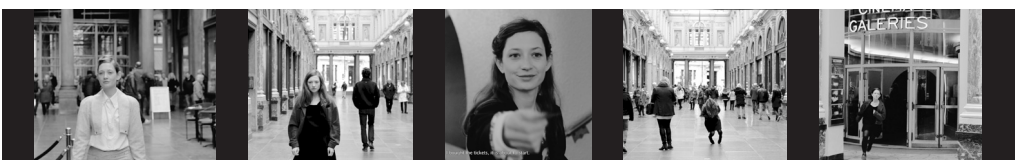
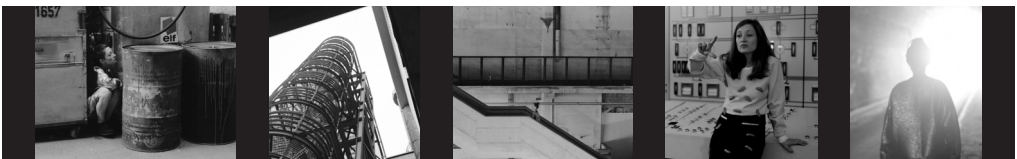
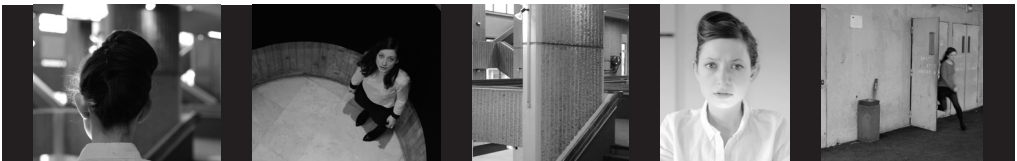
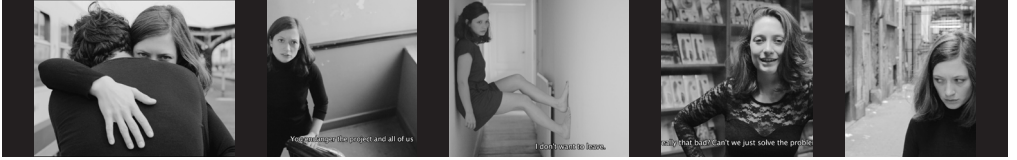


MÔWN

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).



Marc-Antoine Vaugois

INTERVIEW

Interview conducted and transcribed by Marc-Antoine Vaugois

THE ORIGINE

How did you conceive the series *Movies On My Own*, and more precisely how did you find this way to elaborate such a specific position to film making?

Performance, *L'ordre intérieur*, Clermont-Ferrand (2015)



Ariane Loze

In 2008 - 2009, I participated in a post-graduate program for performance called *a.pass* (Advanced Performance and Scenography Studies). I had applied with a project concerning photography, to create a performance in which I would describe one image from an invisible photograph to an audience in a very detailed way. The aim was to stimulate the imagination of the spectator, inviting them to recreate the described image with their own references and then confronting this imagined image with the real photograph, which was revealed at the end of the performance. This first step of the research was advancing well. I then decided to develop these descriptions further by integrating the codes and grammar of cinematographic language.

To document my research, I first read Yves Lavandier's book *Dramaturgy* which fascinated me, but didn't give me the knowledge or "know-how" to write for the cinema. I wanted to take the place of the cameraman, the boom operator, or the director of photography from a typical film crew who would normally be recording a scene, and by playing these personas I could then direct the gaze of the audience solely by describing what they would hear and see from one of their perspectives. I started reading more technical books about film making, for example about how a film scene is divided into shots via the storyboard etc.

During a residency at *Pa-f* (Performance Art Forum), I started to experiment with a camera around the few notions of cinema I had studied. With a small DV-camera, a tripod and very basic editing software, I started shooting a short video in which I performed all the characters and for which I was doing all the technical tasks (light, camera, sound, editing). I showed the result to the *a.pass* participants and my mentors Jan Ritsema and Elke Van Campenhout, who showed some enthusiasm. I decided to repeat the experiment in different locations of the *Pa-f* residency; which is an enormous old cloister. A setting that provided me with a proper cinematographic set.



M-A.V

**ARCHITECTURE
AND COMMON
SPACES**

Anaphora, Brussels (2015)



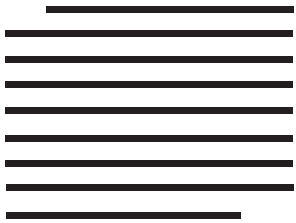
A. L

After this residency, we travelled to different cities and festivals with the a.pass program. I adapted my shooting system and my performance to these spaces, using the buildings as a décor. The concept had changed a bit: instead of orally describing a single frame of a film to an audience, I would use a minimalistic film set and the audience would observe me playing all the characters of this film-to-be that appeared through the performance.

The space was modified to exemplify the different characters and their conflicts. The camera angles changed for each character. The spectators were invited to imagine and put together the finished film in their heads, while observing its filming and so are confronted with their phantasm when seeing the final projection.



Shooting, *Anaphora*, Brussels (2015)



M-A.V

Most of the story lines used in the *Movies On My Own* come from archetypal motives that appear in genre films. How did the shooting locations that were chosen for their set-like qualities influence the stories that develop in these spaces?

Anaphora, Brussels (2015)



A. L

I soon realized I needed characteristic locations to stage the *Movies On My Own*. For *Betaville*, filmed in 2009 in Berlin, I shot in the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt*, a place that reminds me of the 1960s minimalistic science fiction movies. I centered the film around a few sentences and motives borrowed from Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* (1965), which is a model from this genre. After that, I shot a video at *Kunstencentrum Vooruit* in Ghent, a classical building from the beginning of twentieth century. These spaces inspired me to use the common memory from these

periods and from the films about these periods like *Casablanca*, *To be or not to be* or, *The Third Man*.

I did the same as for *Betaville*, borrowing some dialogues and choosing timeless costumes to develop a narrative. Most of the films in the series are constructed this way, assembling narrative clichés, without trying to pass on a predefined message through them. Above all I wanted to experiment with the codes of film grammar and lay bare the ways in which we interpret them.



M-A.V

Embodying all the characters present in the image, you impose a fragmentation of the body that goes hand in hand with a fragmentation of the space. The video offers a reconstituted space.

The multiplication of your body image creates a total presence: that one body is in charge of the conflicts between all the characters incarnated by the same actress. We can wonder, by extension, whether the protagonists are not all the avatars of a single character.



A. L

This idea that you articulate brings us to the psychoanalytic dimension of the project. This is an issue that many spectators raised over time and which I became aware of, without it ever being a determining force in creating the videos. The project embodies a notion that human nature is double or even multiple by its very principle. Nevertheless, I always wanted to stick to this desire to dissect the cinematographic codes to reveal their artificiality rather than develop a reflection on the multiple images of a body.

That said, the latest films of the series were written in a slightly different way, and you can actually detect in them some questions about certain psychological phenomena more easily. The latest film, *Anaphora* (2015), can also be interpreted as a variation on a known narrative motif (the *mise en abyme* of the film within the film), rather than as the representation of a character's psychological state who would be caught in a moment of endless reconsideration.

Anaphora, Brussels (2015)



M-A.V

IN THE FOLDS OF A FICTION

The story of *Anaphora* explicitly shows another reflection that the research of the *Movies On My Own* renews in each of the film series: the idea that fiction contaminates daily life and our relationship to spaces and to the various bodies that we are confronted with every day. Our way of understanding reality is influenced by the codes of cinematic fiction, so much so that we manage to make our own fictions without needing a different partner than ourselves.

The dispositive reveals the totalitarian dimension of these writings models, to which the multiplication of your body in the image seems to respond. By embodying all the characters present in the image, you eliminate the possibility of including an otherness that would feed the drama. There is, so to speak, no possible relationship outside the one created by cutting and editing.



A. L



Performance, *Anaphora*, Brussels (2015)

Absolutely. Today, we all live with a common film culture, having integrated many codes defined by this cinematographic writing.

I quickly became aware of this principle while editing the first *Movies On My Own*: if I edit a shot of an actor who nervously taps his foot on the floor, alternating with a shot of an actor that runs through the city, the viewer will immediately conclude that the first character has an appointment with the second character who is late. The viewer constructs

80% of the narrative because he knows how film grammar works. This brings us to the question of the fiction pact, which I think is central to my approach in this project.

My roots lie in theatre and performance. In theatre, an actor can move forward on an empty stage and say «We are in Germany in 1930» to frame the actions and words that follow. The audience must accept this dispositive and let their imagination work to be able to project themselves into the story that is told. In film,

the pact with the spectator is slightly different because the main quality of the medium is based on the accurate recording of a material reality. If the story that is told doesn't rest on evidence which makes it tangible, the viewer could easily cringe and not adhere to the film.

It is precisely this limit that interests me: by revealing the artificiality induced by a certain cinematic grammar, I can renew the fiction pact with the viewer and question his/her relationship to this medium.



M-A.V

NEW TRACKS

At one point, the filming of the series was interrupted. The Nuit Blanche recently proposed you to make a new episode, *The Assignment*. Subsequently, other festivals and events have offered you various frameworks to continue shooting the series. To what extent did you take the opportunity to experiment with new ways in this dispositive, formally or in writing ?

Somehow, social conventions supersede the conventions of cinematic genres. The characters no longer speak with phrases borrowed from film dialogues but with titles of sociological surveys. In this dispositive where the same body becomes the vehicle of these contradictory words, the exchange between the different characters becomes all the more distressing because it suggests that we are all the same, agitated by the same issues that determine our reasoning and our acts.



A. L

One of the major advantages of the dispositive is that it gives me a fairly wide field of experimentation, within which I can set new challenges every time.

I already mentioned earlier the specifics of the latest film, *Anaphora*, in which the story goes beyond the variation on a narrative motif or figures borrowed from a film genre a little more consciously, in order to reflect on a psychological phenomenon. I think that the renewal in the writing is visible in other recent

films as well, for example in *The Assignment* and in *La Chute*. Let's say that for the first time, characters in my movies seem to realize that they are bound by something else than the drama only. They gradually manifest this confusion about the fact that they «share» the same body, which affects the story.

La Chute is possibly the film in the series where the writing takes a more radical turn. I wanted to stage characters who express their identity quest by speaking

and exchanging ideas. I did not want to make the issue of a split personality the subject of the film. What mattered to me was to include a political speech in the dialogue for the first time, putting dialogues in the mouths of characters that I can hear or formulate myself in everyday life. I explicitly wanted to evoke the «identity cram» phenomenon: the very contemporary need to affirm with some violence who we are and what defines us as individuals in society.



Performance, *La Chute*, Toulouse (2015)

That's right, but the opposite is also true. We can think that these doubts and reflections are from a single person who expresses them through these different characters, namely mine. This would mean that, for the first time, I worked with the psychoanalytical dimension implicit in the series more deliberately. This should be a sine qua non condition for addressing these issues of content and to go beyond the mere placing into the perspective of film grammar that initiated the series at its origin.



Biography

Ariane Loze is a Belgian performance and video artist. After studying theater direction at RICTS Brussels, she graduated from *A.pass*: Advanced performance and scenography training. During this year of research, she developed her project *MÔWN (Movies On My Own)* in which she questions the mechanisms of the medium film.

Recently she performed and created videos for *Videoformes* (Clermont-Ferrand), *Traverse Vidéo Toulouse*, *Medienwerkstatt Berlin* at the Berliner Liste, *Hors Piste* at Cinéma Galeries (Brussels). Ariane Loze also created a *MÔWN* video for *Karaoke(ART)* a project by Davis Freeman (*Nouveau Théâtre de Montreuil, Palais de Tokyo*). During the *Working Title Situation #03*, Ariane Loze presents the last 5 videos of her *MÔWN* series.



WORKSPACEBRUSSELS

Workspacebrussels is a workspace for live arts and installation art in their most hybrid forms. It collaborates with young and emerging artists through an intensive residency program, co-productions and coaching of creations and research projects.

Intriguing artistic developments and promising results of the residency program are presented twice a year, in June and December at the Working Title Situations. These gatherings aim to confront research projects, presentations of work in progress, finished performances and installations with a passionate

audience, in order to brisk up an inspirational dialogue.

For the realization of the residency program and its festival, workspacebrussels can rely on an engaged partnership with five major players in Brussels: Kaaiteater, Rosas, Les Brigittines, Ultima Vez & Beursschouwburg.

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