

"LES BALLETS RUSSES"

Interview with ORSTEN GROOM & ÉLODIE TAMAYO

We screen the short film « Enculé » [« Fudge Pack »] out from the series of shorts « Foster », first set of the program « Les Ballets Russes », what's it all about ?

Groom: Tamayo has been involved in a literary publication last year, in which her texts had been noticed for their geniusish characteristic. Therefore she's been offered the challenge to adapt them into another form. That's when I was born.

Tamayo: Thus we had a battery of texts and, as a visual reverse shot, an arsenal of downloaded videos, stem from our passion for subgenres such as cysts drainings, enterprise movies, or wild goats birthings.

G: We started agglutinating the materials to see (literally speaking) how they schmutz their way together, and we quickly noticed that some associations fell under pure magic : a relevance along with an amazing fluency. When it's in tune it's in tune, as Florence Foster Jenkins once said. We ended up realising that the videos had tied secret bonds to one another, created patterns, some sorts of recurring characters (like, for instance, the « poet »). The writing and the architecture that underpin the whole appeared when doing the assembly : we had given birth to a monstrous program of rhythmic and narrative precision. We've been overjoyed, and in the last place the work consisted in staging and enhancing this writing, like Jodie Foster does, hence the title, and our moniker hammered down by the program's last sentence : « The Russian ballets has taught us that in History as in Literature, almost nothing happens », which is the truth itself.

T: As a matter of fact our Ballets are a derogatory though lyrical program of a rather fucked up state of creation. Everything's awful, and that's OK this way.

*In this movie, two techniques are mostly noticeable : « found footage » => what does it reveal of your relation to image, to shooting, to Internet ?
surtitles => what technique of writing have you put up in this film, and what does it mean for you afterwards ?*

G: The way in which at last one can seize a tool such as the phone and displays any pulsionnal bullshit, has, in our opinion, given birth to the most beautiful shots in the history of recorded picture : the video of the guy who cries for joy and emotion, watching the « Double Rainbow », is so incarnate, so accurate in the way he stands and moves to see what's happening to himself... « Oh my god » flowing, this we hunt then this we shunt.

T: There's a correlation between the image writing, from found-footage, and the surtitles writing also created according to a method of picking up pre-existing sentences. Both of these writings are stimulated and generated by the buttbreacking interfaces that are YouTube and Google.

G: The text is comprehended as an image in itself, or rather as an independent part of the image. Its occurrences and disappearances are thoroughly organised to replace the action while documenting it, or to get nutrient from it, a bit like bugs mists on

hippopotamuses or Mike Love in the Beach Boys. It's both a rhythmic element that makes the global picture groove and the interpretation that pecks at it. Now, I reckon you're asking us about the quality of the ready-made image (roughly : why don't we shoot them ourselves). Well, it's exactly the same : this move of seizing, be it a situation with a camera, or a done-shot with its dropping jaw and fast-speed vibrating eyebrows. In both cases there's a writing, an aim, a tracking, then a strategy to reveal the savour we sense in it. (It's the question of the frame that makes everything. If John Cage claims : « I am gonna get a throat microphone graft and drink carrot juice, this shall be my next work », it will be, for he identifies his proposition. Otherwise it would only be a guy drinking carrot juice. Badluckily enough he has'nt.)

Do you write, besides ?

T: I write, in French, objects that I call "Pick-Up". It started while I was reading all-together Tales of Grimm and the Grammar « Bescherelle ». Roughly : the point was to inflict a sort of impoverishment on a source, making it degenerate. A dislocation of the form (text, sentence, word) by omission. Then I adopted a next-of-kin technique that consists in making it « congenerate ». The texts became a great congenital kinning, a coancestry of sentences, of words, with, as a syncopated reverse shot, a decadent and obsolete form of the French language and literature. To say it quick : the « Pick-Up » is a chewing attempt.

The paintings of Orsten Groom are currently exhibited in the hall of Ciné 104 (M : Eglise de Pantin). Until christmas.



Orsten Groom, *Black TurtleNeck*, black & white photographic reproduction by the painter.

G: I manufacture sort of little cubist film noirs, that resemble « cut-up » poems. To step out of your own tongue allows an immediate plastic relation to the medium -« Oh yeah » is not « Ah ouais », and the way the sounds sound provides necessity for the « Oh yeah » of the arrangement. I'm not reluctant to forge a word if I need a « Brr » for let's say « Brisling Beetroot » something... and I joyfully glean into Russian, Polish, Upper-German to fill in, and to smuggle moods. It's highly rewarding. Afterwards I make songs of them. Apart from that I write short stories and scripts, and pamphlets against the Nouvelle Vague. And « congénerescence » is a word of mine, don't let Tamayo fool you - even though we vibrate along through thick and thin.

T: Our favorite book is a guide for German shepherds training, in which the word « dog » is replaced by « item ».

G: « Wonderful item crushed down the ground by the master's will. »

Laughingly you say that some of the videos you captured in « Jodie Foster » (one showing a goat giving birth, another showing a nurse draining a cyst of a patient) make you cry for emotion ; I don't think it's mere provocation : what touches you in the pictures you seize ?

G: As I told you for the « Double Rainbow », what moves us is the 1st degree. The others are, as a matter of fact, poor or unilateral, like a pun addressed to the only insider, « in complicity ». We're struck by hysterical joy when the goat farmer encourages the one that's breeding with a : « You're doing good Star Trek », so licentious. It expresses it all : his tenderness and his participation in the situation (and, therefore, in the shot), as well as the swing to the grotesqueness of a countryside deviant pornographer. 1st degree allows all readings, allows to agglomerate all the degrees and, most of all, to let them shift through several potential regimes while viewing the video. In « Enculé » (« Fudge Pack ») the text seems to be addressed by turns to the washing-machine then to the morons who are smashing it up, or to come straight

out from the machine itself : everything matches.

T: Yes. In a way the Ballets Russes are trundle-dolls, caught in lime of emotional transports. Right from the image capture, the elected videos are enfevered with loving (or obsessed) transports for the shot object. This adhesion to the figure is fascinating. As in the 3D promotional video for swimming-pools, or even in the execution of the washing-machine.

G: ...or this guy waving at himself in « Suce » (« Suck ») [another of the « Ballets russes » sequence, NDLR].

Would the verb « charrier », in all of its meanings [« to carry along », in regular French ; « to make fun of » in slang], be sufficient to sum up your approach in your movies ?

G: « Charrier » is in fact a kind of a mantra of my own practice in painting and films.

Both regarding the muddy and disgusting substance I'm fond of, into which the figure has therefore to « charrier » (to pass through), and the grotesque tonality or « sour burlesque », as one says: « Faut pas charrier » [don't push too far]. For the Ballets, it's almost a method of process, of reading ; we give the bullocks back to the plough [« charrue » in French].

T: Yes. The verb « charrier » suits us. The material at work within ourselves has to do with waste, residual, raw matter. We don't « charrie » pearls. But as Orsten says: « Don't push too far », we are 1st degree (meaning all degrees). And there's a fluency and a « grace » in the Ballets. What we do is also « transport » (in the old, fairly lyrical, meaning of the term).

Elodie, you are currently a booker in a cinema, can you succeed in organising very personal screenings ? What do you enjoy to book, can you give us some examples of former or future programs ?

T: All that's at stake in this work is, in fact, to pass from a punctuated scheduling (I work in a city council theater, where I have to schedule a bit of everything, stick to the current issues, foresee the

« expectations » of the audience) to a punctuating one. I'm lucky to be very free to place my exclamation and final points where I find it the best. That is : in deeply motivated, necessary writings, projects that blow the current landscape of cinematography (the French one). One of these prowess lately : the screening of the last documentary of Herzog, along with his last fiction, produced by Lynch, unreleased in France. Then to have the theater invaded by Groom's canvases and to show three of his films. It's an invitation to objects that drastically differ from propositions such as those we're used to see. Next (on the 22nd of December) we're putting up a program to make the last Trier and the last Ferrara discuss together.

G: And our « Stupeflip » group buddies will come and stick to some « Residents » movies in February. « La classe » (« How classy »).

Orsten, you already have directed several movies, you're also a painter and a musician : what makes it necessary for you to touch all the fields ?

G: I grab anything I want whenever I want to, as simple as that. Of course my cardinal practice is painting, into which I'm involved in a very organised way and which spreads into everything that evolves elsewhere : painter's movie, painter's music, painter's chili con carne, etc, schmock's canvases. An idea of chair regards the chair medium : you're not going to set watercolours out of the blue. If this happens (if the idea charrie other images, other ideas of form) then the formats rearrange themselves, and sometimes conspire to projects like the Encyclopaedia I'm currently making, or more mundanely to what builds a movie. I find it normal to be the obstetrician of all its elements. When you can you can (as Florence Foster Jenkins once said), even if in that case it's also a lack of means. Even to renounce to your own project you must have written the conditions that will lead you to be screwed up.

Interview : H.G.
Translation: Nina Rojzman



Orsten Groom, *Palms down*, black & white photographic reproduction by the painter.