

**GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL**

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**Marine Hugonnier**

INTERLUDE

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**Interview with Florence Derieux**

Translated by Brian Holmes

**FD:** The instant of coincidence is always fortuitous and unpredictable. It seems to me that coincidence is always on the order of the fantastic and that your films, which could be defined as belonging to a 'Cinema of the real', describe a reality which exists in and by coincidence alone. For Georges Kubler, actuality is the only thing we can directly know. He gave the following definition of it: 'Actuality is when the lighthouse is dark between flashes, it is the instant between the ticks of the watch, it is a void interval slipping forever through time, the rupture between past and future, the gap at the poles of the revolving magnetic field, infinitesimally small but ultimately real. It is the interchronic pause when nothing is happening. It is the void between events.'(1) I find this definition interesting because when it comes to naming your films you have made use of the rhetoric of the instant 'T' which indicates the date and the time of the event: Impact. 21.05.99, 11:02 (1999), Highlights. Moorgate Station. 17.08.99, 5:35 (1999), Highlights. London Bridge. 13.10.99, 6:15 (1999). In parallel to that, you set up this space of the interlude which in Impact corresponds to a black interruption that chops up the film like a stroboscope.

**MH:** Kubler's definition seems quite apt to me, as the space he describes is exactly the one I am attempting to define: that instant 'T' in which reality is an emotional charge. Hyperrealism is always charged with a curious ambiguity because reality suddenly seems as familiar as it is strange. Blending the genres of documentary and fiction provokes the same kind of gap. For me it is not a question of presenting these two genres in opposition, but on the contrary, of remaining within a relative ambiguity that allows me to create a state of sympathy with the real.

The word 'sympathy' might seem odd, but it designates the intuitive comprehension of reality and its resources. This would then be the possibility of measuring the incredible complexity, the swarming details of reality, which can provoke either an emotion or a sort of nausea. And that moment is a feeling which is familiar to me and which I wish to retranscribe. You describe coincidence as being on the order of the fantastic. I think you're right, at least if the word 'fantastic' is not considered as a means of escape, but instead as a way of getting a grip on the real. Indeed, 'fantastic' simply means 'to make something appear'. In that sense, the fantastic is an effect of contact with reality.

The formal recurrence of the interlude allows me to offer a space to the viewer. Unlike the 'fade-over', which is a classical narrative device for introducing an end or a beginning in a film, the black cut or what I call the 'interlude' is a suspended instant, a reflexive movement toward the spectator, a moment which is conducive to intuition, allowing the public to 'feel' what they have just seen. It's a delay in a flow of information. This desire to punctuate space and time in order to celebrate the present instant is recurrent in all my work. I remember carrying out a piece for an exhibition where I installed a tree on a sidewalk and glued a little round mirror on each of its leaves. The tree glittered and cut the space of the street into a thousand fractions (Tree, 1994).

**FD:** How was Highlights, Moorgate Station. 17.08.99, 5:35 shot?

**MH:** By accident. I had just arrived in London and I was next to the station with my camera and quite a different idea in mind. I had run into this young woman in the street and I filmed her by chance. Then the next day I came back, introduced myself to her and told her I was going to film her. She accepted. But none of that footage was as good as the first. So I used it.

**FD:** And Highlights, London Bridge. 13.10.99, 6:15?

**MH:** London Bridge is different. My studio is nearby, at Delfina Studios. I cross the Thames on this bridge in the evening. The mass of people who cross it during rush hour is impressive. One day while going

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across, deep in thought, upon looking up, I believed I had seen the same scene or the same person twice. After that I looked for two twins and I asked them to walk by my camera on the same bridge. They are the ones who found the best combination to retranscribe the sensation I'd had.

**FD:** The film *Impact*. 21.05.99, 11:02 seems to be based on much different premises.

**MH:** *Impact* was shot with a fifteen-person team, including seven cameramen whom I directed from a distance, by walkie-talkie. We spent eight months in preparation for a shot which was not to exceed twenty minutes. I hired cameramen from television, specialists in real-time filming, for example, sports events, but also people from the cinema, like my director of photography (Valérie Le gurun). The film was edited in the same way I directed it during the event by shifting my gaze from one monitor to the other; the black cuts were there and I was already in an editing process. But still more, it was the memory of this incident that gave me the formal solution for the editing. An accident provokes the kind of memory in which time seems incredibly short and yet also long, because it's swarming with details, while space appears without any depth of field.

'11:02' is the hour marked on the dashboard clock of the car which is going to provoke the accident, an image one sees in the film just a few seconds before the impact. The sound track corresponds exactly to the images I filmed. The little noises that punctuate the film, when the black appears between two shots, are the beginning of the sound that matches what will be the following image. In short, these sounds are the possibility of an image, an image which I subtracted in the editing.

I chose to work on this subject and to film it because it raised a certain number of intriguing questions. To give you the context, a French city was organizing car accidents in the framework of a auto-safety campaign, in order to raise the public's awareness of the risks of speed in the urban environment. So the accident was painstakingly prepared in advance, then carried out in the center city at rush hour. I found it interesting that a municipality should choose to carry out an event in real time, which would only involve 2% of the population, even though it would have been possible to buy advertising space on TV or finance a billboard campaign. Having been through the experience, I think the people present on the scene did not all believe in the truthfulness of the event. A few elements were missing for the proper unfolding of this operation: not only certain details of the staging, but also the natural, 'just happening' quality, the coefficient of reality that makes you believe in something. However, the people on the scene did experience a real collision. And this shock, whether staged or not, had a real impact. That was what counted. So the reactions of the people are ambiguous concerning the status of what they are witnessing, but the collision, the impact, is definitely real. What seemed important to me was this aesthetics of shock, of contrast, which for Fernand Léger "is an eternal means of equivalence to life". In our societies, the shock, the contrast, seems no longer to involve a formal reorganization of elements, but a mix of different levels of reality.

(1) George Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, Yale University Press, 1962.

### **Interview with Pierre Huyghe**

Translated by Brian Holmes

**PH:** When you shot *Highlights*. Moorgate Station. 17.08.99, 5:35, you filmed the girl but you don't fix on her only, you also film what's around her. There's a coexistence between the characters, a free play between the full set of elements within your frame, as though you were seeking some existential reason for the presence of this violinist...

**MH:** I looked to see if the events were affected by her presence. The violinist acts like a trigger, she attracts my attention and I instinctively turn my camera to see if this effect has consequences, if there's a relation of influence between her and her context, and also to find out the nature of the shock she provokes.

**PH:** You film a situation, a conjuncture...

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**MH:** A conjuncture? A confluence of circumstances.

**PH:** That's it. What seems important to me is the montage you carry out through the choice of what's going to enter your frame... A woman lighting a cigarette, a snatch of conversation on a cell phone, a man walking toward you. A link springs up between these moments. It's on the order of the infra-thin.

**MH:** All of that is only possible because I look ahead before making my move, and because I use a very light camera which allows me that suppleness.

**PH:** And because you look ahead, it gives me the feeling that what I see in the image is out ahead of what is shown, it's like a preview, a foresight.

**MH:** Foresight? Isn't intuition the better word?

**PH:** We're not far off. Foresight is a relation to the image, I don't mean it in relation to something you could foresee: it's a moment, a shot that allows me very quickly to envisage what's coming up or what may have happened, even before I'm able to see it as an image. You create the possibility of an image in another image or an event in another event before they actually happen, but the intervening time between them is so short that it's 'fore-sight', in two words, that really fits. As though an image were keyed into another, the second continually suggesting itself before I've really seen it.

**MH:** For Henri Bergson, intuition is a mode of knowledge, a moment of connection to the real. To him it's a tool for apprehending reality. Intuition is an immediate consciousness, a vision one hardly distinguishes from the object, a coincidence. You 'understand', which is to say, 'you feel'...

**PH:** You experience?

**MH:** Yes. It's the same with the candle, whose smell, when you light it, is the same as that of a candle you've just put out (Candle, 2000). In a single instant I mix the present and its immediate future.

**PH:** Pier Paolo Pasolini uses the example of the Kennedy assassination when he gives a definition of the sequence-length shot. You can't sum up the subjective points of view on a single event, yet that's what you'd need to do to reconstruct it in its totality. The image of a moment is the event seen through a set of subjectivities, it's their coordination. The instant would be the time of these different 'subjectives', as Pasolini says. In your film *Impact*. 21.05.99, 11:02, you try to come as close as possible to an aggregate of subjectives. *Impact* is a continuous reverse-angle shot, where the initial angle is always the same, i.e. invisible, and the reverse angle is always different.

**MH:** When you see this film, you're faced with the different emotions the impact has provoked. When you live through such a violent event, you share all these feelings: fear, fright, compassion, joy. It's the sharing that brings you to the heart of the event and the shift to black, the interlude, allows you to make links and to reconstruct it.

**PH:** It's a time...

**MH:** ...that gives you the possibility to include yourself.

**PH:** This space is the missing time of the event, and the time for you to fit into it. It's what you don't see, what accepts you. Each time I'm in the black, I'm in the event, at the center.

**MH:** The interlude was a motif from television, from the ORTF (former French national TV), it was the point where television first became 'interactive.' It was a space for subjectivity - a space which has disappeared.

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**PH:** It's a moment of suspension that refers you back to yourself. It's an awareness of the instant, something which often comes up in your work. The motif of the accident, recurrent in your last films, is a way of accounting for it.

**MH:** The first image of the film *Impact*. 21.05.99, 11:02 comes at the same time as the second, and the black replaces an action that happens at the same time as well. So the time in *Impact* is slowed down, since what you see in the image is necessarily longer than the event itself.

**PH:** We're not at a football game, I mean, watching live on television where the movement of camera 1 is picked up again by camera 2; we're not following a linear progression in time, like the player running across the field. There's a distinction between showing an event and grasping it. And if you want to grasp it, editing becomes a necessary stage in order to reconstruct this situation, to translate it.

**MH:** *Impact* is also the reconstruction of an event through the viewpoints of several subjectivities. What I try to show is the sensation of the accident.

**PH:** That's where one can return to your idea of intuition. Intuition is what you feel when you're facing a situation, and fore-sight is the effect produced by the way you retranscribe this sensation in images. In both cases, it's a time stretched out in the instant. Intuition would be a way of going through all the conjunctures, through the set of situations that make up the event: a capacity to envisage the full set of possibilities that make it appear or permit its existence.

**MH:** This grasp is only possible if you move in a fraction of a second through the conditions of the event. It's knowledge which is not of a discursive order. Intuition is perhaps what precedes thought...

**PH:** That's right, it's not an analysis, since analysis is still a commentary on the event. In fact you're quicker to envisage a set of circumstances that constantly readjust, there is no progression but permanent change. You go faster than the time needed for an action to unfold, so you're faster...Faster than reality. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, Louise K. Barnett, 1986.

Henri Louis Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1975