



## **Emmanuelle Michaux**



In 1982, aged twelve, Emmanuelle Michaux produced her first film. Little did she know that the fiction was the beginning of an artistic quest that would span a lifetime.

In the film, a ghost, a woman, captures a little boy in the land of the living and takes him back to the other side with her. At the end of the film the deceased boy holds up a sign saying “The End”.

A mere product of the young artist’s subconscious, the childhood production has nevertheless influenced all of Emmanuelle Michaux’s subsequent work. Her films focus on vacuity, memory, heritage, death, incarnation, repressed images, the materiality of time, narration and the perception of reality in film.

Her approach can be compared to that of Chris Marker and Jonas Mekas. She explores Christian Boltanski’s idea of “individual mythology” and in the manner of Sophie Calle she portrays her own life in her work.

If Emmanuelle Michaux does not seem like a filmmaker, it’s because she merely projects dreams. Not her dreams, but her father’s, a film fanatic and amateur director whose life is overshadowed by the death of his mother whom he found dead as a child.

Michaux examines her family’s “founding story”, unravelling the thread from film to film.

However, her academic research and artistic approach remains an analysis of mythology in film as a social and historical phenomenon. She uses the moving image to make one’s own reality, employing fiction to tell the story of everyday life. What is true? What is shown? What is hidden?

In the same way as Roland Barthes sought to understand photography, starting from a very personal standpoint and transcending the object, turning it into a universal question, Emmanuelle Michaux looks at film and its relation to death.

She uses technical and creative mechanisms to strip objects bare. She questions her own background and the path she has followed as a screenwriter for television fictions alongside her other creative work. It’s her way of pinpointing the paradoxes of the language of image that are shaping today’s society.

This fragile attempt at preserving life and memory gives rise to a series of works with related meaning: films, videos, texts, collages that use everyday life to decode the violence of the passage of time and our relation to the void.



**The daughter**

Do you remember the first film I made when I was 12?  
Do you remember what you said to me?

The father ponders.

**The father**

No... I can't remember.

**The daughter**

You said, "if you carry on like that, nobody will understand  
what you're trying to do".

*Extract from the film les anonymes.  
Emmanuelle Michaux - 2010*

*In 1996 and 1998, Emmanuelle Michaux presented two films at the International Art Film Biennial at the Pompidou centre.*

*Each one looks at the mechanics and the illusion of recreating movement in film.*

*Going back to the origins of cinema, Michaux examines her father's passion for the medium, that he has passed on to her and which weighs on her subconscious. Here begins a long process, an attempt to understand the way in which cinema can help rebuild one's world.*

### ***Pluie chromatique (Chromatic Rain)***

1996

35 mm, CinémaScope - 2 minutes



κίνημα/*kínēma*, movement and γράφειν/*gráphein*, write.

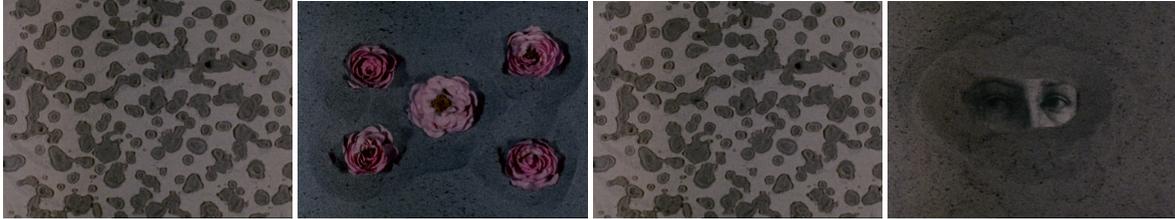
It is an etched, painted graphic on synchronised film based on Prelude 21 from The Well-Tempered Clavier by Jean-Sébastien Bach.

*Selected for the 5th International Art Film Biennial at the Pompidou centre.*

### ***Sables (Sands)***

1998

16 mm - 4 minutes - In collaboration with Frédéric Papon



The film was made using the stop motion animation technique.

A succession of photographic images is recorded on camera. Assorted objects appear and disappear in the sand.

The essence of cinematographical mechanics, *Sables* brings the inanimate to life.

*Selected for the 6th International Art Film Biennial at the Pompidou centre.*



**The daughter**

After your mother died, how often did you go to the cinema?

**The father**

Sometimes three or four times a week. At least. It was escapism as far as I was concerned.

**The daughter**

It was another world.

**The father**

Exactly.

**The daughter**

Something to marvel at.

**The father**

Something like that.

*In 2000, Emmanuelle Michaux became a student at Le Fresnoy, the national studio of contemporary art. At school, she pursued her exploration of cinema as a medium, producing two works of fiction.*

*By looking at real-life shooting, she explores so-called “classic” film and questions the link between cinema, mimesis and narrative construction.*

*The two works were presented in 2002 at the Panorama 3 prototype fair in Fresnoy, curated by Christophe Kihm.*

## ***Dehors, il y a... (Outside, there's...)***

2001

Vidéo et installation - 23 minutes - Dimensions 300 x 250 x 600 cm



The film draws a parallel between two stories. The main theme is based on a true story: a Japanese girl held captive by a man from the age of six is found in Tokyo. At the same time, another young woman, interpreted by the artist herself, is on a train bound for the seaside.

A *mise en abyme* of true, symbolic or made-up stories, the film has no regard for the notions of storytelling and questions narration in filmmaking. From a “true” story in the news, the artist makes a pure fiction that seems to shed light on her own story in an autobiographical dimension.

The viewer is invited to watch the video seated in the kidnapper’s chair in the surroundings of the young captive, which consist of two walls. The set-up examines the notion of illusion in film.

Production: Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains

With support from CRAC Nord-Pas-de-Calais

Exhibition: Panorama 3, salon du Prototype. Curator, Christophe Kihm

Film selected for the *Rencontres Cinématographiques* film festival in Digne-les-Bains.

## ***Madame Bovary, fragments***

2002

Vidéo et installation - 24 minutes - various dimensions



Continuing her examination of narration in film, Michaux proposes a work on literary adaptation.

In this work, she looks at the artistic legitimacy of film and its affect on literary heritage.

Michaux chose Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* because the work has often been adapted for cinema.

The story of *Madame Bovary* also reflects the artist's analysis of the relationship between fiction, reality and autobiography.

In the film, the artist looks at literary adaptation through ten extracts from the book and makes a silent film coupled with collage.

The video is shown on a table with a copy of Flaubert's work annotated by the artist. Viewers/readers are confronted with their own feelings about the work through the different mediums.

Production: Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains

Exhibition: Panorama 3, salon du Prototype. Curator, Christophe Kihm

Film selected in 2003 for the Festival de l'Encre à l'Écran in Tours



***La Fille* (off) (The daughter [voiceover])**

Above my desk, the photo of the screenwriter's body in the pool,  
from the film *Sunset Boulevard*.

*Emmanuelle Michaux continues to produce her artwork while also writing for television.*

*Having two strings to her bow engenders a double personality where the artist examines the reasons why the dream passed on to her by her father has become a “labour”, a hindrance that prevents her from following her own artistic paths to their conclusions.*

*This analysis gives rise to her first feature film, which she produced herself, financing it with the revenue earned from her television work.*

*When the film was released, she published a book of the complete screenplay.*

## ***les anonymes (the stangers)***

2010

Vidéo - 99 minutes



The film is an autofiction made up of sequences shot over a 12-month period: the body of the pregnant artist, a path from season to season, an actress filmed on the path, the father of the artist at the cinema, amateur films.

In creating her archives, Michaux confronts different sources of images, documentaries, amateur, fictioned, pursuing her interrogation of the cinema.

The film is like an object searching for itself, an errance, an echo of the artist's own pursuit. The voiceover is a text read by Michaux, which harks back to the legacy passed on to her by her father, who as a child found solace at the cinema when his mother suddenly died.

In this sense, *les anonymes* is a therapeutic work. Although it is her story, the artist's intentions are far from individualistic, her themes are universal issues of filiation, life and death.

When the film was released, she published a book of the complete screenplay entitled *les anonymes: notes for making a film*.

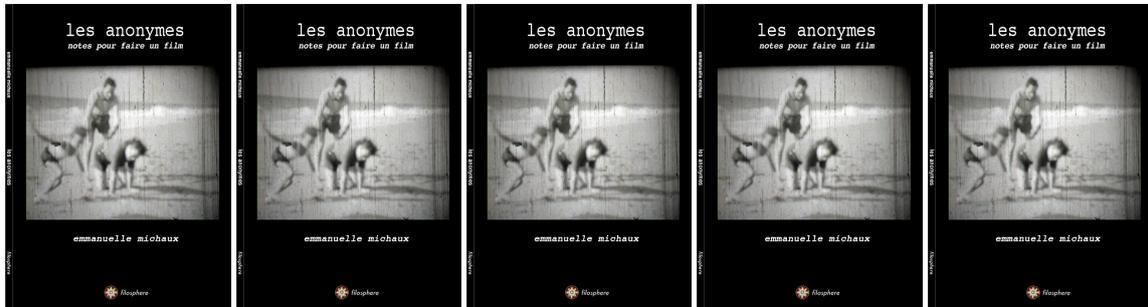
Production: M101 Productions

Distribution: Maison des arts du Grütli, Geneva

***les anonymes, Notes Pour Faire un Film (the strangers, Notes for Making a Film)***

2010

Livre - 101 pages



When she had finished filming *Les Anonymes*, Emmanuelle Michaux felt the need to publish the screenplay.

Many of the words and phrases are not in the film itself. Yet the artist is not really seeking to make up for their absence. Her intention is to enter into conversation with the film. The conversation strikes a balance between saying, showing and hiding. The text gives the film a memory, anchoring the work in time.

Publisher: Filosphère



**The daughter**

They're all dead, there...

The father bursts out laughing

**The father**

That was quite a discovery!

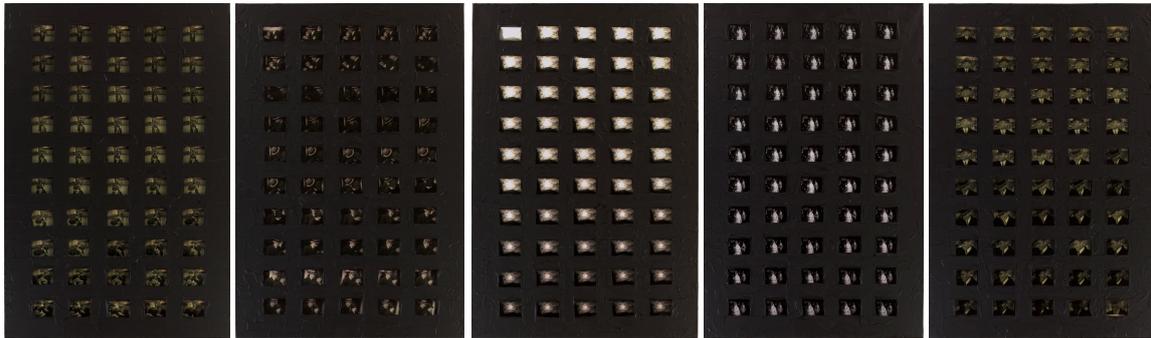
*The feature-length film, les anonymes, introduces a new material, amateur film, which combines individual and collective memory.*

*Fascinated by these images, the artist extracts from them a series of works, canvas collages, backlit photographs and videos.*

## Trois secondes et deux images (Three seconds and two images)

2012 - 2015

Paper collage and acrylic on 30 canvases - 120 x 80cm



In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes perfectly defines the difference between film and photography. “...in the cinema, no doubt, there is always a photographic referent, but this referent shifts [...] “In the Photograph, Time’s immobilization assumes only an excessive, monstrous mode: Time is engorged.”

It is this “engorgement” of time that Michaux seeks in her work, stopping the motion and selecting fifty successive photogrammes. Fifty photogrammes - or three seconds - two images of a film shot at sixteen frames per second.

In this way, the artist emphasises what the recording misses. There is life on the screen but there is also an absence, darkness, death between the images.

The choice of medium and material is typical of the pictorial genre of vanitas.

Exhibition: artgenève 2016

***L'homme au chapeau (The Man With the Hat)***

2015

5-copy series of 10 backlit photographs: 23.5 x 18.5cm



A man by the sea, a seagull swirls around him. He approaches the camera.

In this work, the artist has randomly extracted ten images from an amateur film. Just as in *Deux Secondes et Deux Images*, it stops the cinematographic movement, breaks the “constitutive” style of film and leans towards the “constative” strength of photography.

This notion is underlined by the highly contrasted images, printed on thick paper, backlit and framed in velvet-trimmed thick black frames. The man’s traits disappear and he becomes a spectre animated by an artificial sun. The images became shadow puppets. The photogramme becomes a fetishised object.

Exhibition: artgenève 2016

***Dans “amateurs”, il y a “aimer”*** [The French word “amateur” stems from the word for “love”, “aimer”]

2012-2014

Series of thirty 20 to 90-second videos for screens - various sizes



Poetic, absurd, disturbing, these seemingly harmless little scenes from amateur films personify and sometimes betray the unconscious desires and thoughts of amateur filmmakers.

The artist takes this raw material and uses sound and image to reveal and to analyse.

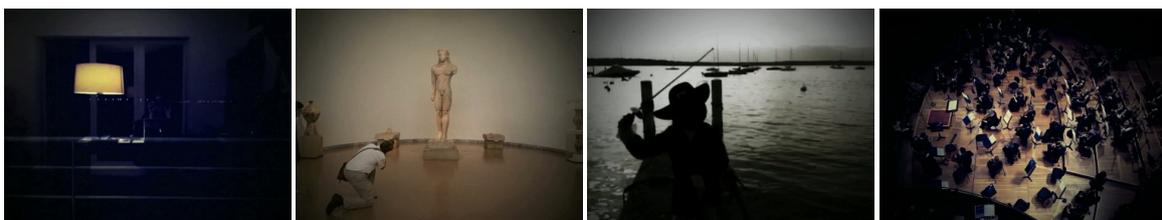
If, as Roland Barthes says, “to give examples of punctum is, in a certain fashion, to give myself up”, this series can be seen as a Chinese portrait of the artist.

Exhibition: artgenève 2016

***Les souvenirs du présent (Memories of the Present)***

2012-2016

Series of fifty 1-minute videos for screens - various sizes



Having hitherto avoided filming her family and friends, Emmanuelle Michaux begins a new piece of work, recording her life in 1-minute instalments, as one might observe a minute’s silence.

But Michaux covers her tracks. The images are filmed with a programme that recreates the effects of much older equipment, making them difficult to date.

This work highlights our overconsumption of images, the constant need to film, photograph and store on our telephones what we promptly forget.



**The daughter (voiceover)**

To be wise is to know your limits,  
as my father likes to say.

*Confronted with her father's refusal to pursue his dream of being a filmmaker, Emmanuelle Michaux examines her own difficulties in being an artist. This new work continues her analysis of personal and social limitations.*

## **Nos rêves, unfinished (Our dreams, unfinished)**

2016

Videos and Installation - Various sizes



When Emmanuelle Michaux produced her first short film at the age of twelve, she dreamed of making films, while her actor, who was the same age, dreamed of becoming a dancer.

Thirty years on, the artist films her childhood friend on stage in a cabaret show. She films the wings, portrays the gap between their childhood dreams and reality.

At the same time, the artist took an interest in the assassination of the Empress Sissi by an anarchist in Geneva. Elisabeth of Austria was a young wild thing who became empress out of duty. The Italian anarchist Luigi Luccheni lived in misery and chose to kill a woman who had always wanted to die.

The two apparently unconnected events give rise to a text and film that looks at social conditioning and free will.

A producer was interested but the project was shelved due to lack of funds. The rushes and sixty pages of voiceover text were already complete.

Michaux decided to proceed all the same, displaying the anatomy of her fragmented work in an installation as an act of “non-resignation”.

A series of sequences from the rushes are shown on screen and snatches of the text can be heard. It is up to the spectator to finish the work.



**The father**

Do you recognise yourself?

Laughs...

**The father**

It's strange to see yourself like that, isn't it?

**The daughter**

I have to say, I don't have the impression it's me.

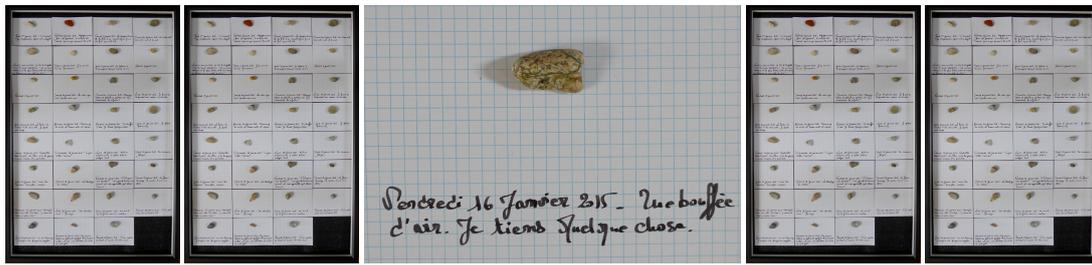
*Emmanuelle Michaux's work continues to intertwine the universal and the intimate. The narcissistic "I" becomes "other".*

*The year 2015 marks a turning point in the artist's life and it isn't until the end of the year that she realises how much so. Strangely, her work that year amounts to a review of her life so far.*

## Diary stone

2015

Installation - Dimensions : 12 x (91 x 61 x 5 cm)



For the last ten years, Emmanuelle Michaux has kept a diary. In 2015, she collects stones on the path featured in her film *les anonymes*.

This time, there is no place for film and the project concentrates solely on text and object. A year in the life of the artist takes the form of 365 pebbles and 365 cards on which are written extracts from her diary, placed in twelve display cases.

The strong narrative of this work represents our struggle with our inability to conceive sustainability when faced with the vacuity of images.

## ***La Maison (The House)***

2016

Video - 52 minutes



Inspired by a quote from *La Vie Matérielle* by Marguerite Duras, Emmanuelle Michaux begins filming in a holiday home as she awaits her husband. That summer, she reads a children's edition of *The Odyssey* to her son. Later she mixes with these images a film of a holiday that her father made in Greece in 1965 and amateur films of weddings or mediterranean holidays.

This work takes the same puzzle form as *Les Anonymes*. From this apparent dispersion, the spectator recomposes the story thanks to vision and sound material that questions relations between men and women, maternity and woman's place in creation.

A modern-day Penelope, Emmanuelle Michaux uses fallible, even trivial everyday life to create a mise en abyme in the myth of Ulysees or what Paul Ardenne would call "aesthetics of existence", a work that we can all see reflected in our own lives.

## ***Le film de mes scénarios (The film of my screenplays)***

Work in progress - Performance - Video



Through a mutual acquaintance, Emmanuelle Michaux is introduced to a major Parisian gallery owner. The sentence is pronounced, immediately, not violently - on the contrary, softly, accompanied by a desire to help: “It’s too late”. She is 45.

Like a painful echo of her life’s work, everpresent death, the passing of time, the artist hears the words and bursts into tears, unstoppable, incapable of overcoming the emotions that engulf her, terribly ashamed.

The meeting jolts her into realisation. What if she had been wasting her time? If so, how, against what criteria? And how could she claim it back?

The first act in this quest is *Le film de mes scénarios*. Forty scenarios and films written in fifteen years of television are read before the camera. It is a non-stop performance, a marathon of sentences, dialogues, a succession of stories, read in a neutral voice, until tiredness sets in.

In this work, Michaux retraces her life, where the “too late” becomes a part of the creative process and questions the logic of contemporary society.



**The father**

That's when you realise that a lifetime is nothing.

Long silence.

**The daughter**

*(In a half-whisper)*

Time flies.

**The father**

Yes, it flies.

Invited by the Galerie Patrick Gutknecht to engage in artistic dialogue with their 20th-century art furniture, Emmanuelle Michaux has produced two installations, two meditations on time.

They will be exhibited in Geneva in November 2016.

## **Monsieur Marcel Hass 1931- 2015**

2016

Installation and photographs - various dimensions



Did Monsieur Marcel Hass exist?

Yet today we have traces of life, proof of an existence that subsists in photos, extracts from his diary, some of his furniture, a desk, a couple of chairs, a paper knife...

This attempt to reconstitute a life from archives gives rise to an ambivalent feeling that oscillates between the truth, which the documents seem to certify and the lie of an imaginary reconstruction, a fiction that is the artist's mask.

Exhibition at Galerie Patrick Gutknecht, November 2016, Geneva

***Et la lumière fut (And There Was Light)***

2015-2016

23 carat gold leaf and acrylic on 10 canvases - 120 x 80cm



Invited by the Galerie Patrick Gutknecht, Emmanuelle Michaux proposes an installation of a helical lamp in black varnished wood made by Jean-Michel Franck and Salvador Dali circa 1939. The artist chose this work, which she first saw without a lampshade, as a bare sculpture.

The particularity of Jean-Michel Frank's work lies in having breathed intense life into a desert-like decoration with existensialised objects that sum up the enigma of the living, as author Claude Arnault says.

This enigma also forms the core of Emmanuelle Michaux's work, and inspired this installation of a series of paintings entitled *Et la lumière fut* (And there was light).

A gold leaf gilded square, the same size as the little images from the *Trois secondes et deux images* series. A compact black, sandy material gravitates around it as if drawn to or repulsed by the gold leaf.

By putting the material and immaterial back to back, the artist produces a memento mori.

Exhibition: art Genève, December 2016, Galerie Patrick Gutknecht, Geneva

## **ANNEXES**

**Emmanuelle Michaux:**  
**“Right from the outset, intimacy seemed a subject in itself”**

*Interview with Arthur Dreyfus*

*French-Swiss writer (Gallimard), journalist (Technikart - France Culture)*

**How did you choose the title of your exhibition at artgeneve?**

I had long since been fascinated by the words “sculpting in time” drawn from a book by Andrei Tarkovski. In reflecting on my relationship with animated, cut-up, frozen images, it appeared an obvious choice. I also thought of a subtitle that is subtly different: “For fear of the night closing in”.

**The fact that “the night” has not closed in is thanks to your father, who passed on his collection of films: family archives, second-hand vintage negatives.... Roland Barthes refers to the detail that shoots out from a scene like an arrow and pierces the observer as the *punctum*. What ‘pierces’ you in a short sequence and makes you want to cut it out?**

First of all, I know these films very film for having worked with them for my full-length feature film *The stranger* (2010). They have pervaded my consciousness. In addition, there is always an element of chance in any choice. Nonetheless, the decisive argument is always that of motion. *The Conga*, for example, is a moment of absolute happiness that is very fleeting. Its contagious joy is an encouragement to single it out. There is also another sequence that is not part of the selection: a woman wearing a small hat who is a guest at a party and suddenly emerges from the shadows. The moment when her face is touched by the light touches me instantly.

**Do you know the characters in these films?**

Some of them. For example, one of my grandfather’s friends called Julien is fooling around in one of the sequences. He was someone I appreciated that I got to know as an elderly man but who still had the same smile.

**Basically, all these people were just living their lives without thinking that “magical seconds” of their existence were engraved in any way, nor that a gallery would exhibit them a century later...**

As far as I’m concerned, I’m only aware of experiencing those moments when I take photographs of them. I need to go via the lens in order to see reality in a different way. That’s possibly why I handle lenses so often...

**What do you feel about the fact that the characters are deceased?**

It is indeed quite dizzying. There is a sense of vanity in the artistic sense of the term. I think that this relationship with death via images is bound up with my own history.

### **In what way ?**

This takes us into the realm of psychoanalysis! My father lost his mother when he was very young, just twelve years old. He was the one who found her dead in the flat. Throughout my childhood, this subject was basically taboo. When his mother died, my father dropped out of school and seeking refuge in cinemas. His passion for films dates from that period and also remains associated with this bereavement. In the course of my childhood, I understood that my father also took refuge behind his film camera. And one day, when we were looking at some of these images, he said "You see that woman, that could be your grandmother."

### **People with an obsession for film - or photography - seem to store up "life reserves" for later...**

Yes. In my father's experience there is clearly a quest for life through images - especially since he has no films of his mother. Filming someone shows a wish to keep their image alive forever. My first Super 8 film told the story of a dead woman coming back to look for someone on earth...

### **Why did you not become a purely fiction-based film-maker? How did your experimental technique arise?**

As it happens I am also a script-writer, but I have never imagined "creating" a fictional script myself. As soon as it comes to an image, I find myself adopting an abstract approach: I have even been so far as to scrape a film.

### **Coming back to Barthes and his definition of a photography, as a certificate of presence. Photography shows something that undeniably *has existed*. When looking at your deteriorated black and white images, are you aware that the characters they depict *have been alive*?**

One must distinguish colour from black and white, which tends to make things more unreal. Curiously, the use of black and white instils a certain doubt, a distance. Reality appears to be closer in the first Super 8 films of the 1960s and 70s. This nearness makes them seem more "real" to me.

### **Did you ask yourself what there was *between* the 16 or 24 images that a camera captures every second?**

On the film, the space between images is black. In my works, I've chosen to stick to this black and to reproduce it.

### **And what is black?**

Pierre Soulages proved that it's light... But for me, in this instance, it's the loss of images between images. It's life that has existed but will no longer exist.

Since I do not feel entitled to reinvent it, black prevents me from entering the realm of fiction.

**When looking at 50 almost identical images, does one observe each picture separately, or does the eye reconstitute the overall sense of movement?**

There is an awareness of general movement; but the spectator will also *seek movement* in each fixed image, whatever its place or format...

**What is the significance of the 4/3 format of the photograms you cut out?**

Contrary to 16/9, 4/3 is a window. There is no sense of horizon. It is therefore more intimate, more secret.

**Do you remember the first moment when you had a camera or a film camera in your hands?**

I remember the day I received my first film camera. I was happy. The first thing I filmed was my house, its furniture, the people around me, and myself in a mirror. Looking back on that, what struck me was that I was filming daily reality and not a special occasion such as a birthday or a Christmas meal. Right from the start, intimacy seemed to me to be a subject in itself.

**Do you still film people in your immediate circle?**

I prefer taking photographs of them. Because I'm afraid that the film might vanish once I'm no longer around to take care of it...

**Does one need to care for films?**

Yes, because of the volatility of the media involved. A film is not lasting, whereas a photograph, once placed in an album, seems to be there forever and does not require any medium.

**Therefore, by cutting up films, you transform them into photographs...**

That's right; I keep them safe, I take care of them.

**That's very kind of you! Do you have a sense of giving a touch of eternity to the characters you reveal?**

Yes, especially since they're strangers. The paradox of cinema is to create stars who seem timeless, despite being doomed to oblivion like everyone else. With *Three seconds, two images*, I give a space of representation to people who had never even thought of that: I ensure that they are not forgotten by restoring some light to them.

**Isn't there a somewhat ghostly element in this series?**

I won't deny it. An act of memory involves a somewhat macabre side; but in this series, I give priority to the life light radiating from happy moments, festivities, smiles... If there are any ghosts, I hope they are friendly ghosts.

**On a personal level, how do you manage to make the most of happy moments, to savour this “life light”?**

It's a daily learning process, but the birth of my child made be more than ever away that all the tiny little moments lived with him were precious because they are unique. I long preferred the night, but have recently been learning to love the day.

**Photography is the art of light - and therefore of day...**

Of course, and the awakening of a child, the development of his gaze, his first words, have the power - just like photography - to make time stand still.

**That reminds me of another your works *And the light was, the golden square surrounded by a black area...* Here too, the miracle of light, lost in the mass of eternity, seems to make time stand still.**

For me, this work is a battle: I did not want observers to know whether the black matter would cover gold, or if the gold would expand to absorb black. That is in fact how I envisage life. A burst of light amid chaos. The infinitely small human consciousness isolated amid a boundless universe...

**On the scale of the universe, I think that the gold square would be smaller!**

Definitely, but in my view the black extends further the canvas. Beyond the frame, which is merely an artificial limit, the blackness stretches to infinity. Hence the importance of looking for gold zones, wherever they are, and of celebrating them, whenever one can.

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## THE PARADOX OF THE PHOTOGRAM

### HERVE LE GOFF

*Journalist, art critic, essayist French jury member at the Niépce Prize*

Like most adults, Emmanuelle Michaux was a child whose efforts and whose good behaviour were rewarded by pictures. These were of the moving variety, those of films by the favourite directors of her movie-loving father: Cocteau, Tati, Fellini and Truffaut. They were soon joined by shots taken by a first Super 8 camera she was given at the age of 11.

From these youthful years, Emmanuelle Michaux has maintained a perpetually fresh taste for representing not only people and things, but also fleeting moments that stir emotions or remind us of them at a distance – in the same way that scents, flavours and the magical effect of the names of certain countries have such an effect on us. And one can easily imagine that the shadow of the Narrator is never far off, that the model for this role could easily merge into the person of the artist's grandfather, an amateur film-maker and the first creator of these images that rub shoulders with other film fragments picked up in flea markets. As contemporaries of Marcel Proust, the Lumière brothers – who had worked so hard to capture movement and release it once it had been seized – were themselves keen amateurs, skilled in portraying small family joys on the pretence of demonstrating cinematographic techniques. Working backwards, in *Three seconds and two images*, a contemporary artist now separates the photograms that unfold in sets of fifty, into ten lines of five dots, according to the order the movement of which she deprives them. 50 images, meaning three seconds captured at the cadence of 16 images per second, plus two more. In all that makes three seconds and one eighth, for these small 8x6cm photographs that all look exactly alike unless one takes a closer look, since they give rhythm to a performance (*The Dance*, 2014), a line of party-goers (*The Conga*, 2014), the intensity of an embrace (*The Kiss*, 2014) – and even the infinitesimal variations in the path of the sun (*The Sun*, 2014).

The latter is also the topic of *And the light was* that replaces the 50 images with a single piece of the same size, adorned with gold leaf, inlaid in the same black sandblasted and matt panels, the same cold lava shared by reminiscences and obsessions. Two sequences in the same format and material to conjure up that which once was, fragments of true intimacy borrowed without consent, reproduced in the universal assumption of art work. Whether memories of a “Sunday film-maker” grandfather or boxes of films by an amateur who will remain forever anonymous, these images in perforated strips – whose mission was to counter the passing of time by reproducing it – thus achieve, if not eternity, at least an enduring existence displayed for other anonymous individuals, be they visitors or collectors. Drawn from sequences taken from the 1930s to the 1980s, recovered thanks to probably hasty family successions, the 30 or so short videos grouped in the generic series “Amateurs” includes the Latin word for love feature a play on the double pattern of diversion and return through a set of deliberately aggressive effects, similar to those of time and wear on over-frequently screened copies. The length varies from 20 to 90 seconds, corresponding to the duration provided by the length of the Lumière film spools available at the time. The video production of

Emmanuelle Michaux is nonetheless far removed from a pastiche style, instead achieving a new aesthetic, an amusing incursion or an erotic suggestion backed by such diverse means as the sound environment, image processing or the choice of sequence. Through its extreme slow-motion interpretation, *The Man wearing a hat* (2012, 92") portrays the movement of an elegant figure, filmed by the seaside, visibly satisfied and resembling the protagonist of *The Man who smiles* – one of the unstructured shots from the series *Three seconds, two images*. We know nothing more, but one can guess at a context of tangible and perfectly assumed happiness, just as one can imagine outside the off-camera background of a seaside resort – maybe even that of Cabourg-Balbec – in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the pleasure of being seen, the savour of encounters among socialites vied with the benefits of health cures and dips in the sea. Alongside the interplay of transitions between genres and image transformations, Emmanuelle Michaux also adds ten variations of The Man wearing a hat, which returns in 2015 in the form of slides with a diffuse backlighting, the deceptive light of against-the-light shots of a sun invented on a sheet of Canson drawing paper. Yet these are authentic portraits of an ordinary fellow immersed in the mystery of a fiction hovering between a dim polar light and a Far Eastern twilight. Frozen in the midst of a stroll that made him into an unusual and jovial character, the man with the hat becomes the protagonist of a novel adapted for the screen involving a complex installation – borrowing “transparency and reveal” special effects from the cinema of the 1930s to 50s. This is no coincidental link, since the sculptural work that Emmanuelle Michaux has been doing since the early 2010s returns to the very roots of the longstanding ties between photography and film, between photograms and stage-setting, between artifice and artefact. Stripping down a random shot; infusing it with new meaning by aligning on canvas its images taken according to a particular cadence; stretching out the rhythm so as to model an atmosphere; reversing the luminous flow of the screening to dramatize the now fixed image: Emmanuelle Michaux appears to be far from having exhausted this incessant and fruitful exchange between generations of images. Four series do not define a life work; but in this instance they produce a consistent and legible ensemble liable to overcome the barrier that all too often confines contemporary art to the circle of art dealers, critics and collectors. Literary in terms of the background of memories, precious by their formal richness, entertaining by the stories the artist invents, these reprised images – following following on from each other in successive metamorphosed versions – go well beyond the meaning one expects from a reasoned work, instead producing a show inherited from the magic lantern of moving picture exhibitors, and from the ever entrancing mystery of filmed things.



## **Biography**

1970-1988

Emmanuelle Michaux is born near Paris.

At the age of 12, she produces her first short film with a Super 8 camera that is a gift from her parents, followed by a second at the age of 14.

1989-1993

She moves to Paris, begins a degree in modern literature at Paris IV Sorbonne University, and then enrolls in a combined degree at Paris 8, where she studies experimental filmmaking. She starts work as an assistant on circular and 3D movies for Futuroscope productions.

1994 -1995

She graduates with a Master's degree in modern literature with a dissertation on the *Encounter of cinema and Surrealism between 1918 and 1930* and works as assistant on the making and editing of a circular film using archive material and entitled *The Price of freedom* by Dominique Benicheti. The following year she is awarded her Master's degree in filmmaking.

1996

Selected to be screened at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Biennial of art films at the Georges Pompidou Centre with a CinemaScope film painted directly on emulsion, *Chromatic rain* – and begins a post-graduate diploma in filmmaking. Passes the entrance examination to the European conservatory of audiovisual writing (CEEA).

1997-1999

Completes a trimester on a Master's in screenplay writing at UCLA, Los Angeles, and starts a movie painted on IMAX film, produced by the Imagica laboratory.

Back in France, she publishes a book based on her filmmaking dissertation entitled *From Pictural panorama to circular cinema, origins and history of another type of cinema*, published by L'Harmattan. She is selected for a screening at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Biennial of art films at the Centre Georges Pompidou along with a 16 mm film entitled *Sands*. Starts a second 3D IMAX film using 3D archive images, *Memories of an Egyptian journey* produced by Ex Machina. Obtains her post-graduate diploma in filmmaking.

2000-2003

Joins Fresnoy National Contemporary arts studio and is accepted by Jacques Aumont to do her thesis at the EHESS (School for Higher Education in Social Sciences) on the *Aesthetics of total cinema*. With the support of the DRAC Région Nord- Pas-de-Calais (ACRD Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region), she produces a film and an installation, *Outside, there is...* presented at the Fresnoy Panorama 3, curated by Christophe Kihm. The film is screened at the Rencontres Cinématographiques in Digne-les-Bains. Still within the framework of Fresnoy, she produces a second film, *Madame Bovary, fragments* which is selected at the De l'Encre à l'écran festival in Tours. Parallel to this she starts writing fiction for television.

2004-2006

Graduates from Fresnoy and publishes a text on the history of dioramas in a work published by the Artistic Action of the City of Paris, *Paris and the World Fairs*. Along- side teaching at the European Conservatory of Audiovisual Writing, she co-writes 12 original scripts for a series initiated by Michel Alexandre (*L627*, Bertrand Tavernier). Moves to Geneva and on behalf of the watchmaking brand Vacheron Constantin produces a film which wins the Bronze Laurier at the Creusot International Corporate Film Festival.

2007-2009

A member of the graduation jury for the filmmaking department, in 2007, at the HEAD (Haute école d'art et de design de Genève – Geneva University of Art and Design), she begins the writing and production of a feature film. Delivers a seminar on *The Links between architecture and filmmaking* within the framework of the annual assembly of the Society of Architects and Engineers of the City of Geneva, and writes a two-part television film, *Agatha versus Agatha*, described by one critic as, "A hand-knitted story in which the spectator is immersed with childlike pleasure." (Armelle Cressard – *Le*

*Monde*, March 26<sup>th</sup> 2007). The film is screened at the Luchon Festival. She also delivers a seminar on the history of panoramas within the framework of a conference held by Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Image Devices*, at the Université de Paris III.

2010–2012

Her feature film, *the strangers*, is screened at the Maison des Arts du Grütli in Geneva. On the same occasion, she publishes *the strangers, notes for making a film*. Writes seven films for a series written by Thierry Jonquet based on his novel *Artisanal Miners – Les Orpailleurs*.

2012–2015

Begins the writing and production of a second film and delivers a series of three seminars at the HEAD, *Filming space, conceiving the city*.

2016

She completes a 50-minute documentary *The House*, and presents her work in the Patrick Gutknecht Gallery at ArtGenève in January 2016. An exhibition follows at the Patrick Gutknecht gallery in autumn 2016.