

Spectacle, spectacular and a piece of wood



pens other than that monotonous movement. We are rocked by the everlasting sound of the waves. Suddenly the wood breaks into two pieces. This separation is the beginning of a story that easily opens the doors of anthropomorphic and symbolic comprehension. This piece of wood was one and now they are two and those two will never get back together. They flow apart and ultimately one disappears at the horizon. It is the tragedy of separation brought to a simple, material form. It is also just a piece of wood breaking apart on a beach.

Why is this movie more than a somewhat clumsy nature film? What tension is coming out of those images? Why was a camera there, at that moment, putting her eye on something that would have remained unnoticed without her presence? Is there a truth to those images? And who is holding this camera? Whose hand left the wood there on the beach and how much did this person know of what would happen? Was it just a walker passing by? Or some kind of demiurge forcing the laws of nature to his will? And finally what is the spectator doing in all this?

He is watching. He is fascinated. He is asking those questions.

What a spectacle!

If we talk about spectacle we talk about the spectator. There is no spectacle without spectator. On that note I am reminded of this curious French hyperonimous expression “spectacle vivant”, living spectacle. As if there would be a dead spectacle... Theatre, dance, performance, mime, all forms of events that place bodies in action in front of a group of people all find a place within the category of living spectacle. Films, video screenings or any sort of gathering of people with the main activity of watching are also considered spectacles but not as living spectacles. This simplistic differentiation is too easy to dismiss to even keep on arguing about it but it has the merit of drawing the attention to the act of watching. **They are all spectacles because people are watching.** If at night with my laptop on my knee I am watching a downloaded movie it is not a spectacle because it is a lonely activity. There is no gathering. But on the other hand, being alone in the situation of watching the movie is something that could in turn be considered a spectacle if there were, for example, a hidden spectator watching me like in Diderot’s imaginative performance of *le fils naturel*.

If we then draw our attention to the spectacular we are brought onto something else. We would probably talk about an explosive extension of the notion of spectacle. Spectacular is what brings spectacle to its culmination. Things would become bright and loud and would involve strong feelings and provoke them all together. Following Plato and Guy Debord we would be separated from the action. **Dumb cows following the spectacular travels of the train in the lowlands, eternally separated from its speed piercing the space, forever ignorant of the exotic stations it will stop at.** The spectacular has provoked a whole tradition of critique of spectacle and the spectator. This cow should act and not just watch the train passing by! She should either try to stop the train and enter it in order to become an active passenger and see the world! Or she should organize a movement against the train line that is destroying the landscape and expropriating the farmers of their land! In Abbas Kiarostami’s *Five* we follow the destiny of a piece of wood. It lies first on a beach and is quickly seized by the peaceful waves. It moves between the sea and shore repeatedly. Nothing hap-

- Is it true that we are at the phase of a more generous and dramatic treatment of the theatrical space?
- Can we say that this treatment of the theatre is spectacular?
- What in fact is spectacular?
- Is the spectacular connected to the sublime?
- And in what way?
- Is it important in your own work?

Igor Dobricic says on page 4: ...we are the only audience for whom the spectacle is performed. In an enlightened absence of the "god's eye", the voyeuristic, tyrannical role of a spectator is the one that precedes and defines the existence of all the others possible parts.