



Interview with Keren Cytter
MARTI MANEN

Marti Manen: Let's start somewhere. Let's start with Venice. The work at the Biennale presented a situation on stage, we could see the actors, the moment before and after the acting, the audience, there was a plot... all the elements needed for a play were there. Also reality and acting. Is there any distinction between reality and acting?

Keren Cytter: In life? Of course there is. Reality is all the problems and happiness people are going through, and theater is form of entertainment – a representation of life. No?

I think there is a problem with acting in life, because it something one does, even when he doesn't want too. And unreliable people are also acting consciously – means – they are manipulating people by their words and their tone of speech... There are times when one doesn't act – In shock or in extremely tired situation. I am noe extremly tired right now.

MM: The film has a beginning and an end, but the spectator can enter whenever she/he wants, as it seems to be a kind of circular construction. What do you think about it?

KC: I'm doing it on purpose because I don't find sense in showing a video in an exhibition place – where the viewers has a very little chance to come and watch the movie from the beginning to the end. I think it's not the optimal way of showing videos. I also think that if a movie doesn't have a beginning or an end, it should be flatten - means - it will be story with developments but with conclusion. The structure should abstract the content.

MM: I have to say that the film was perfectly presented. The architecture for it was great. How important for you is to think about the presentation space?

KC: Usually the presentation in the space is not really important to me, or it is - but depends where - If the place is a white cube, I have nothing much to do but to project the video on the wall. If the space looks a bit different, it become important to me, because it is more interesting for me to deal with problematic situations then with common ones. Generally I don't think the presentation is an essential thing - I watched many movies on my computer, or in bad conditions - and I still could see if they are good or bad by their content.

MM: How important is the plot for you? Is everything under control before the shooting?

KC: I don't think it's the plot - I think this is really a Hollywood thing - to have a plot. I

think you mean story line - it's extremely important to me. I won't start shooting a movie without a list of shots and without a fixed script and without memorizing the order of the shooting. I think what's drive me to make movies is an idea I want to see becoming reality. So I must know everything before. Joy or Fun during the making of are not really triggering me, although they are welcome.

MM: Yes, I see. A video like "Something Happened" shows that the story line is crucial and also the idea of the characters. It's amazing to see how some sentences are repeated but they mean something completely different because you play with them in different times and situations. Watching your videos one can fly from what you see to think about the process of production of the film, as a viewer you are putting things together and, in one way, start thinking about cinema as a construction of items. Is it important for you to work by fragments or parts? Do you want to offer a single item or some traces to build something different?

KC: Yes, that's the way I work – shot by shot, with a general concept that is related to the length of the shot and for the text and image. I try to create different atmospheres like that. I don't work differently. I don't work by 'scenes,' for example.

MM: In "Family" we can see that you are working with, let's say, people, not actors. But the story is still there and the viewer can follow the drama. What is, for you, the minimum amount of things that defines something as a movie?

KC: I think there's need to be a story, and at least one person in it. And if there is one person only in it, he shouldn't talk to the camera. At least not more than one time.

MM: Reading a book from you like "The man who climbed up the stairs of life and found out they were cinema seats" the reader can feel that is watching a movie. You are using text as movie, also as some specific genres. Is it the same attitude behind the books and the films? Is is the same kind of project for you?

KC: No. Writing is completely different. It's much harder, but the freedom is bigger. It's also more interesting to write, because I just need to think about the language and every word is part of the work. While when I'm writing the script, I'm writing every shot, just that I'll remember what I should do when I'm shooting. Also I'm writing stories (novels) in a very short time, so it is mentally very hard to concentrate so much every day, and just keep on writing.

MM: Well, writing is completely different, but in your writing there is some "cinematic effect" and in your films some literature construction. What about the relationship between the two fields?

KC: Yes, but in the writing – the connection for me somehow is more natural. I imagine the actions as if they happened through a camera. Without thinking about it. Maybe because it is pure fiction and I can't really describe pure fiction in realistic way. Also sometimes the story is told in an abstract way that can't be translated to a script (thoughts, feelings or general situations.)

And when I'm writing a script it's enough to have two people in a room, to start a dialogue. The dialogues are written sometimes in an archaic literal way, because the

situations in my movies are not realistic most of the time. Also I don't really trust acting and I like to have a strong atmosphere that will isolate the viewer a bit, from reality.

MM: Is the truth something important for your work?

KC: Honesty is important to me. Truth is something you should avoid, I think, if you want to make something with artistic value. You need to lie a bit to create some interest from the viewer. Also it is more playful to lie than to say the truth. Unless you mean 'honesty' – I believe it is very important to be naturally honest to your own work, and to your own ideas, or lack of ideas.

MM: Your work can be presented within an art museum, a literature context or a dance festival for example. Is it difficult to jump from one place to another? Are we talking about different arenas or it is the same thing?

KC: I don't like so much to do one thing, so doing different things at the same time is very refreshing for me, and help me to feel free. I don't really jumping from one kind of presentation to the other. I mostly show in art context. I would love to show it much more in other contexts.

MM: Who is the narrator? Who is the off voice? Is the narrator separating us from what we see or is he instead putting us in the middle of everything?

KC: I think the narrator is separating us from the story, it is also helps us to know more, that's the good thing about separation.

MM: Are you trying to separate us from your stories?

KC: No, I'm trying to make them understandable - the dialogs are very confusing. 😊