

Emily Wardill
***The Palace* (2013)**
16mm film with sound, 7 mins, looped
Shown with "Fire Shakes Itself in the Air"

In the Kabinett, Emily Wardill (UK) presents *The Palace*, a recent film with both English and German versions. The Salzburger Kunstverein is proud to produce the first German version of this stunning film, in collaboration with Tomas Friedmann, Director of the Literaturhaus Salzburg. The film is presented alongside two new, two-dimensional works from the series "Fire Shakes Itself in the Air."

Emily Wardill's films investigate the complexities of communication and representation, the limitations and imprecision of language, and the individual nature of imagination. What is seen in the 16mm film *The Palace* is not altogether clear. It begins with an English gentleman saying, in a deep, somewhat troubling voice, "In a room ... it began, in a room ..." Then he goes on to speak about space and vision, and a woman's inability to grasp colours in her brain. The camera, accompanying the voice, appears to wander hesitantly along the surface of something architectural, albeit with an apparent inability to decipher what it sees. The surfaces appear akin to the images produced by an electron microscope or some sort of digital imaging system that is working or struggling within its own computations and processes. It is not clear whether the source material is digital nor analogue, and its presentation on the very analogue material of 16mm film confounds this lack of clarity further, serving to heighten the lack of perception that the voiceover refers to.

Somewhat of a biographical narrative begins to emerge, where the voice speaks somewhat amiably about this woman, perhaps a distant lover, and her own attempts to grapple with understanding and experiencing this inability to perceive colours. The voice continues and recounts about trying to grasp a sense of space and the world, as the camera continues to wander over the strange surface. The voice itself struggles, situated between certainty, withdrawal, nostalgia, authority and vulnerability, speaking about her knowing and not knowing within her inability to perceive, about spaces that he could encounter and she could not and thus feared, and her awareness that "what she doesn't know is much bigger."

Wheezing, gasping from time to time, the voice stammers slightly, and then continues to describe his own past activities, perhaps as a double agent, relating this experience to the workings of memory and his own understanding of "memory palaces" – a creative mind-mapping used by mathematicians that enables someone to remember complex amounts of information, itself dependent upon a concrete visualization of space, which as a notion runs counter to the confounding images of both the narrative and the projection itself. What continues in the narrative is perhaps nonsense, perhaps lies, perhaps misremembrances, or indeed, perhaps the truth, as the narrator changes course and describes the apartment from his childhood from which he had himself built a memory palace for his later complex

and clandestine activities. Although appearing often certain of his own narrative, the voice remains unsettled and unsettling, even disturbed and disturbing, then at times both trusting and moody, and interrupted by and ultimately also made up by slight hiccups of inhaling, almost like digital blips, sighs and pauses, as if out of breath, appearing and disappearing like the images themselves, despite the clarity of voice and the confidence in his narrative, ending with the words, “my palace.”

Emily Wardill writes the following about her new work “Fire Shakes Itself in the Air:”

This series , where a marbling effect is excessive – tries to take a form which is outside of our control which then becomes fixed. The frames themselves – made from wood which is psychedelic – won’t allow the image to rest either. As Eisenstein writes in his famous essay on Disney – there is an attraction to ‘a rejection of once and forever form allotted form, freedom from ossification, the ability to dynamically assume any form’. There is a line, a form – a momentary settling – but it’s style is that of an ever changing, messy world. And this space – between being one thing and another – is like language trying to be an image. Images trying to be music and music attempting to have the hold of religion. The desire is created from an impossibility – the desire that keeps us moving.

Placed at the entrance of the Kabinett space, where the installation of *The Palace* is housed, these two-dimensional works both introduce the film and underscore some of the elements of perception, understanding and experiential questioning that the film explores, while presenting their own visual and conceptual autonomy.

Seamus Kealy