

SCREEN: Ahold of Get the Things To by Daniel Jacoby

April 15th, 2015



Film by: Daniel Jacoby

Title: Ahold of Get the Things To

Screening: April 15 – May 6, 2015

With: Unn Faleide, Luca Hillen, Niels Weijer, Veniamin Kazachenko, Jack Cawood

Year: 2014

Duration: 16'52"

Camera and photography: Andrew de Freitas

Music: Liisa Hirsch

Costume: Karim Adduchi

Interview with Daniel Jacoby

Art Viewer: Let's start talking about the space where your film *Ahold of Get the Things To* takes place. It looks like an indoor climbing gym, which certainly reminds me of a kind of brutalist architecture. You've made use of these kinds of climbing elements in your recent work. It's interesting how you create open narratives through these objects and turn those gestures into a film.

Daniel Jacoby: Some time ago, I took a climbing course at the Klimhal, the indoor climbing gym that later became the stage for my film. That's how I became acquainted with that sport's world. What you call brutalist architecture was indeed a motivation when it came to challenging gravity while hanging from those inclined walls. Climbing is certainly not easy, but the feeling of being surrounded by this gigantic, sort of stone star observatory, was rewarding enough.

What I realized during the course was that climbing is not as much about strength as it is about strategy. A climbing route is a meticulously studied operation that you need to envision before you start and then perform efficiently. I wanted to replicate this approach in my film. Therefore, the screenplay was written as it was a climbing route: a precisely synchronized performance for three characters that would go from one climbing hold to the next as they narrate the story. In the meantime we came across the unfortunate – and later fortunate – discovery that the 16 mm camera we had gotten hold of had a fundamental limitation: it could only record 25-second-long shots. This made us have to fragment the significantly long shot in short clips, each starting and ending at a given climbing hold. The grips then became marks along the routes of both performers and camera man. There was very little room for error, though at the same time a lot of freedom between one cut and the next – pretty much like climbing.

AV: You can certainly feel that tension in the film and in how the characters relate to each other. The film opens with a scene in which we see one of the characters falling down to the ground and repeating the same action over again. The film is quite physical. Gravity creates tension and tension creates form, it is like one of the lines in the dialogue of the film: There was once a squared girl who fell in a round hole, and when she got out from the other side she was round. You can also feel the actual weight of the camera following the characters as they move through space. The camera becomes another object in the film.

DJ: Indeed, the camera was conceived as another character from the beginning. Not necessarily that it represents a fourth person, but it certainly narrates part of the story with what it frames and how. The whole film has a sort of choreographic rhythm that the camera somehow needed to go along with. Like you said, its movements are deliberate and even announce the actions, like with the synchronized dance in the main space.

In general, decisions like these came from working collectively, which is something I've been trying to do more and more lately. Working with my friend Andrew de Freitas for the camera, for example, and with a young Estonian composer called Liisa Hirsch, highly enriched the project. Both shooting on actual film and composing an original soundtrack were things I had never dealt with before, so I had no option but to blindly trust my crew. It may sound scary, but it's actually quite liberating. So much that they ended up becoming characters of the film, in a way. To emphasize that, I designed these posters where I portray three members of the crew – myself included – as protagonists of a film that is referred to in my film and is titled *The Hold*.

The squared girl proverb is repeated a few times throughout the film, always with different endings. It's one of those things that you can't remember if you heard it somewhere or if you completely made it up yourself. Needless to say about the ending – I obviously didn't know which one to go with and decided to make them all coexist. It's funny, the one you registered was the one with the "correct" transformation. The image I had in my mind was that of a little kid playing with one of those shape matching toys, where they have to fit the triangular piece in the triangular hole and so on, but squeezing plasticine pieces through the holes. Try to picture that box from the inside, with the plasticine popping in, and it shouldn't look much different from a climbing gym.

AV: The film is inhabited by animals, like the whale, the tortoise and the parrot. What role do they play in the film? What relationship do they have to one another?

DJ: Most dialogues in the film revolve around this dystopian future where beings have infinite life and thus have already been through all possible permutations of what a life can possibly be. The "she" in the film, however, represents this other entity that for some unknown reason behaves under a different principle. To contrast these two poles, I chose names of, on the one hand, long-lived animals like a whale and a tortoise and, on the other hand, a shorter-lived one as the parrot. The basis for these animals doesn't go much further than that, but of course once they are incorporated by the performers and through means of pure repetitions, they become more of mythological symbols, even though they are still quite random.

AV: Ahold of Get the Things To is full of stories that intertwine and go in many different directions even beyond the film itself. How do you relate this film with your other works?

DJ: Intertwining things (or entangling them?) is something I tend to do automatically. This film in particular got to a level of excessive complexity that I love and hate at the same time. It's become a sort of puzzle, waiting to be solved – even for myself. There is a number of insignificant details and gestures that one just can't register in the first viewing. Many of them are just mentioned briefly, but not really developed. As to your question, it's through the works that followed the film that I've tried to further explore all these open ends that the film barely manages to introduce. Not so much to try to clarify things with these new instances, as to simply familiarize with a sort of own vocabulary. They all add up to a web of connections, but not necessarily help make sense of it.

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