

CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FILM *RENATE* BY UTE AURAND Robert Beavers and Ute Aurand



Robert Beavers: Can you describe the beginning and end of your new film *RENATE*?

Ute Aurand: My latest portrait *RENATE* with my filmmaker friend Renate Sami is a kind of collaboration. I accompanied her in some of her daily activities - like a walk in the Lietzensee Park in Berlin, where she goes almost every day. It was spring, when we started filming, and we sat on her favorite bench. Here I shot the first image and it became the first image in the final film. The same with the last filmed image in Autumn also in the Lietzensee Park, it became the last image in the final film. Both are out of focus - yes, actually the film begins and ends out of focus! I just realized it while talking with you - it surprises me!

R: In *RENATE*, we have the rhythm of the film as your voice, and we also have Renate speaking and reading a Friederike Mayroecker text - the place of her voice makes it quite different from your earlier portraits...

U: To have her voice in the film was not intended - it came out of being with her in her apart-

ment and I often record sound while filming. But yes, I vaguely had the idea that she might read a text because Renate is an avid reader and the Mayroecker text she reads is very meaningful to her. And we were talking while filming and I use some of this en passant talk.

R: The whole film has the feeling of being filmed in the present not like some of your earlier portraits where you collected footage over several years.

U: I hadn't filmed Renate earlier and I wanted to make this film with her now and she agreed. Everything was filmed for this film, even daily things like her unrapping flowers in the kitchen, sewing or bicycling.

R: Is *RENATE* more biographical than your earlier portraits?

U: I opened more windows onto her personality - Renate has reached the age of 86 which means one doesn't reach out so much and memories are getting stronger, things refer back to childhood, to youth, to the lived life.

R: ...like her mentioning her early experiences of going to the movies?

U: Yes, she speaks about the cinema of her childhood and teenage years long before she became a filmmaker herself.. Renate and I first met in 1990, when Maria Lang and I showed her first film "Es stirbt allerdings ein jeder, die Frage ist nur wie und wie du gelebt hast. Holger Meins" (We all die, the main thing however is how and how we live. Holger Meins) from 1975. Over the years we became close friends and from 1997-2007 we organized the monthly FILM-SAMSTAG in a group of 7 filmmaker-friends, curating rarely seen films in the cinema Babylon-Mitte in Berlin, but I almost never filmed her.

R: When you film an older person, does it automatically have more to do with memory?

U: I think so - but also the now, the present moment becomes very strong, like sitting on a bench, just being here, looking out into the present world, observing others...time changes its character...

R: What place does color have in your film?

U: It is not intentional, it is not arranged and I don't make decisions because of color. Color is inspiring, so when I am filming and colors appear, they can be important ingredients, like the yellow dandelion at the beginning or the blue shirt Renate wears while sewing and the blue&white striped dress she shows us...

R: As much as color the quality of light is eloquent - like the moment when Renate is walking in silhouette through the passage way at the Lietzensee and we see the diamonds of light on the water sparkling...

U: If you work with the visual and you want to speak through the visual, color and light are important elements in creating atmosphere and emotions...

R: ...and rhythm...

U: Yes, rhythm is mainly created in the moment of filming by editing in camera. The present is a continuous "it is". While filming I take things apart and put them together in a new order and time. When Renate sits at her desk I am filming short clusters of images while moving around her, towards her, away from her - I create small units in a kaleidoscopic way. These images of different lengths create the rhythm. Then at the editing table, I make the final decisions in the montage - which situation follows another - and I edit within the clusters which were created while filming. The final film becomes itself a kind of kaleidoscope of Renate - it allows tiny insights into her life, her personality, but leaves gaps and space for the spectator's own feelings and thoughts.

R: I see you in 'the family of spontaneity', leaving a space for spontaneous choices - and that's connected to your rhythm...

U: My rhythm is connected to moving the camera in the moment of filming - an improvisation also created by the movements of my body - I film with a handheld camera. I am moving physically around what I am filming - it's a spontaneous process, without plans in advance. Even when I decide where to film, the moment and the movements and the rhythm is decided while filming.

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