

# Little Song Films

**Newsletter Number 2 October 2004**

## **Intro**

Some good new films are up now on the site - details are on page 2.

Our interview for this edition is with Norwegian artist Heidi Morstang. Heidi has 2 films featured on the site taken from video installations that she has done. The interview deals principally with *In Between* which is being shown again in London, November to January.

**Images** - the images that currently are on the website are by Pauline Thomas and they appear on the last page of this newsletter in normal format. Text is a poem by Li Po translated by CH Kwôck & V McHugh.

# Latest Films

## Latest Films

### Christina Reenberg Jensen - Taking My Junk For A Walk

Added to the site on 17/09/2004. In Christina's words :-

*In this video, I play around with the idea of animating objects; personal and everyday objects. Wherever I walk the objects follow me, and the camera records it. I want to keep it hidden who is actually making them alive, though it's quite obvious that someone is dragging the string with the objects.*

### Simon Vince - Time Painting

Added to the site on 06/10/2004. The following is adapted from Simon's notes on the piece.

*The inspiration for this project began with me being given a copy of Yoko Ono's 'Grapefruit' book of instruction pieces, which she originally released in the 1960s. I was fascinated by the visual aesthetics of Japanese calligraphy and its origin of a pictorially based language made up of three alphabets according to their visual representation rather than western language that is based upon sound. The book is beautiful, simple and poetic – which truly reflects Yoko Ono's work and the content of the book itself.*

*I didn't know much about Yoko Ono but wanted to find out more about her and this intriguing book. As my research developed, I came across a touring festival in celebration of the last 40 years of Yoko Ono's life and work entitled 'YES Yoko Ono'. This became the basis of my project and which I constructed into a self initiated brief. The brief is set as if Ono has commissioned student audio/visual artists to develop and update the original still black and white photographs into new visual expressions that reflect and emphasize the meaning of her instruction pieces. In this sense she is asking others to carry out her written instructions visually, and interpret them in their own way and style whilst still conveying the message of her work.*

*The piece I chose was Yoko Ono's 1961 instruction piece – 'Time Painting'.*

***'Make a painting in which the colour comes out only under a certain light at a certain time of the day. Make it a very short time.'***

*The final film for 'Time Painting' focuses on the growth, life and death of a single leaf on a tree, to its one off journey that it takes down to the ground joining all the other leaves to create a beautiful and natural painting, only to rot away with time. The 2-minute animation incorporates live DV footage with still animated photography and drawn animation. I composed the simplistic soundtrack, which provides and adds to the overall motion, depth and feeling of the piece. The 'Time Painting' instruction piece is featured at the end, along with the poem spoken in Japanese.*

# Heidi Morstang in conversation with Rob Vasey

I'd like to talk about *In Between* because it's on the Little Song Films website and you're going to be exhibiting it again soon. When was it commissioned?

*Well it wasn't a commission. I did it for my MA when I was doing a master in documentary photography, and I started working with video. At the time I did a three months placement in a hospice in Wales - it was a photography commission. And I found it really intriguing to work with the people who knew that they were facing death. I found it really difficult how to portray visually what these people were going through so I did lots of sound recordings, I did lots of recordings about their thoughts about passing from one stage to another and that time "in between" was what was really fascinating. I made the sound recordings with about thirty people.*

Talking about what they thought about dying?

*Yes. The thing is what struck me which is universal is that nobody knows anything about this time. In every single religion, every single belief, people have their thoughts about it, but I don't think anyone can know. So I found this subject intriguing because I knew I would never get any answer to it - maybe that's why I wanted to challenge it. But I still didn't know how to visualise it until I finished this placement and I travelled to Spain for half a year and then just by being by the sea and seeing people there was something quite eternal about it and then suddenly, gradually the pictures started coming to me and I wanted to work with figures as a representation more than a document - in a way I was studying documentaries - it was based on documentary material that was not possible to portray. So then I started developing the visuals - I didn't want to include the interviews. I wanted to create more an atmosphere of something unknown.*

So were you in Spain when you started work on the video ?

Yes.

And do you feel that where you were added to the feeling of the visuals? Because it doesn't have a feeling of a sunny place.

*No, not really. I don't think the place was important. What was important was that I had the time to do it. I was away from where I normally was working. But I was by the sea and I was reading a lot about the history of the Mediterranean and early settlements and I was really intrigued by that. I read about Atlantis and it was all those mysteries and archaeology I was interested in at the time. And I think that by being by the Mediterranean inspired me to look at something that's timeless and that's where the figures were coming from.*

So when you were first thinking about the life and death the figures didn't occur to you straight away?

*I wanted them to be abstract. I started with *In Between* being between life and death I think for me now by looking at it, in a way, it's similar with any stage in life of being "in between" - something being in transition and you can recognise the figures and the shapes of the*



*figures tell more about the psychology of different struggles and of loneliness, because in the piece they are individual figures - none of them are joined - they are all separate and they are all standing in silhouette - it's just people passing..*

But some of them are grouped.

*They are grouped but none of them are together. They come across as solitary figures.*

Did you have anything in mind from the idea of near-death experience?

*Well I think that by talking to the people - of course that was something we talked about but for me, I've never had a near death experience so I'll have to wait and see what happens. I think for some people the piece can give associations to that although it hasn't been intended. And what also I find is very interesting when I worked with the images that I can see a lot of symbolism that has been used in religious art and that has been unconscious probably. Because I studied art history before so maybe it's been shaped sometimes with the images we are used to see in the western world. There's one part where two people meet and join and the combined figure moves its arms almost like a cross and then splits into three figures and I think that must have been an unconscious influence. Although the background for making the piece was by talking to people who were facing death, the piece is not necessarily about that. I think it has much more to do with living and being in between certain stages in one's life. I made it because I found the conversations intriguing and challenging but looking at it now, I think it has more to do with living than dying.*

And you studied philosophy as well didn't you? Is there anything from the philosophical side that you brought into the piece?

*I think so. I think again that it's *the* question that we'll never get an answer about. That people can ponder about for ages and we don't get any answer. And that is my view on it now that I don't have a firm belief on what is afterwards or if there is anything afterwards. That time of passing in between life and death might be a passage but where do people go? That will always be a question.*

In the piece the colours are very strong. There are a lot of greens. Did you consciously select a colour that you were going to emphasise?

*No, it happened by accident. Because the way that I made it is I did video stills by the sea and then from that videotape I transferred that to a monitor then I re-photographed them from the monitor to abstract them and that's where the green colour came from - it's from the monitor itself. And I liked it - I liked that colour so it happened by accident so it doesn't really have any meaning, but I do like the blacks. That's been a challenge to me to get the blacks really black almost like silhouettes. That's what I wanted. Then also the white light when it cuts through.*

It reminds me a bit, has a feel of the Northern Lights. I wondered if there was an influence there from growing up in Norway.



*I do like blues and greens I think that is an influence in all my work I think - the light. That stays with me and I want that - I want to work much more with the light and colours and that might be why I chose the green because I don't think I could have done the same with pink because I don't really like pink.*



Your last piece, A Doll's House had more a blue presence - was that a conscious decision to use that colour?

*I think with A Doll's House I tried to work with the colours of the snow and how the light falls on snow. There you can see the Scandinavian colours really coming through with the light. They are not manipulated as they are not coming from the monitor. Its just the colours of the landscape.*

Typically dawns or twilights?

*Well midday as well. A lot of the winter light is really blue but not only the winter. The Nordic summer light has blue tones as well.*

Anyway, to get back to In Between - you did it for your MA. Then how did you go about getting it shown?

*I sent it out to different galleries and curators and the first time that it was shown was in a museum in Valencia in Spain and that came by chance - somebody had heard about the piece and the curator asked to see it and it fitted the exhibition she curated.*

Then there was the Watershed in Bristol?

*That was again the same - I approached them and they decided to show it. And now with the one coming up in London that was a request by the other artist I'll be exhibiting with.*

And where is that?

*It's at London Gallery West which is part of the University of Westminster. The sculptor I'm exhibiting with is Christie Brown and she works with clay and she makes sculptures that are similar in a way to the figures in In Between so it will be interesting to show it alongside her work.*

Will they be in the same room?

*Not in the same room. In Between is shown on two screens and it's a dark space, so the installation needs to be in a room by itself.*

Have you always used two screens?

Yes.

What made you decide on that?

*I wanted to work with the interaction of the piece itself of being "in between" because on*

*one screen when it's moving the transitions are moving from one image to the other. Because I worked with a constant rhythm of the moving image, it was important that this continuity would be emphasised in the final presentation. The piece has very slow movements and when it is shown on two screens, it becomes a visual dialogue.*

So you'd always have the two screens opposite each other? And they're out of synch?

*They're slightly out of synch and that is the whole point really. Because as one image stands still the other one is moving so you can never have both screens simultaneously still. There's always something moving on one of the screens. As a viewer you find yourself in between the interaction of the moving and still images.*

I'm looking forward to seeing it again. When is the exhibition on?

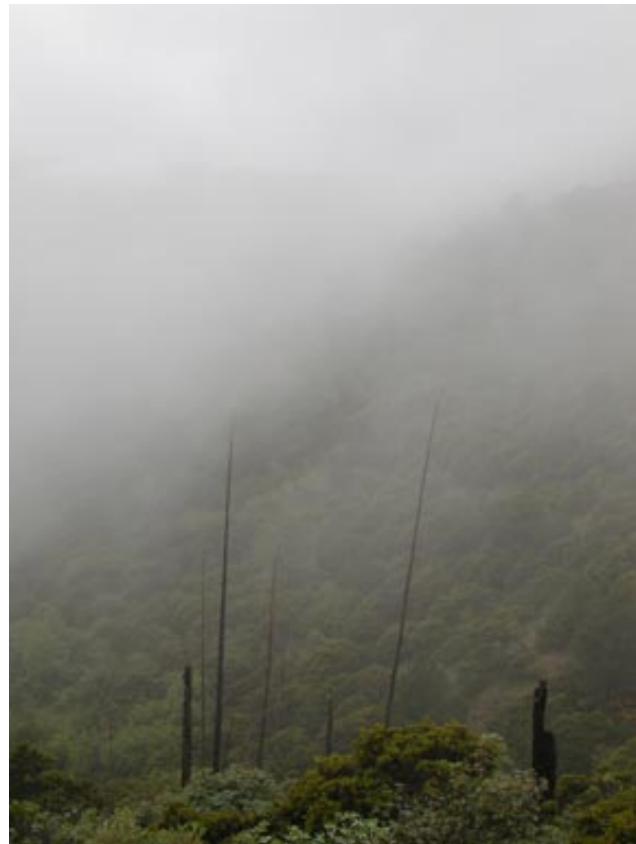
*It's opening is November 11th and it's on until 9th January.*





**You ask me:  
Why do I live  
on this green mountain?  
I smile  
No answer  
My heart serene**

**On flowing water  
peachblow  
quietly going  
far away**



**This is another earth  
another sky  
No likeness  
to that human world below**