

Nothing to say

Chantal Akerman

In the synopsis of the film *Chantal Akerman par Chantal Akerman*, I wrote that *if this film were directed by anyone else, he could make “as if” more easily. As if the filmmaker’s words contained the truth about his work, as if they actually opened a breach on the origin of his desire to do, and then keep doing. As if he, the filmmaker, his face, his smile, his silences and his body told more about his job, and finding the word of the author were always a temptation, rather than trying to know more through himself, and he, eventually, reveals himself, if a veil actually exists.*

I wrote that *to do something on herself and his own work raises many questions, disturbing questions indeed (...) The question of the I and the documentary, the fiction, the time and the truth, and, therefore, a lot of questions, which obviously cannot be answered in this particular film.* Neither in this book. And why not? Because. Because I don’t understand, at least I don’t understand everything. And, probably, if I had understood everything, I wouldn’t do anything.

In the synopsis of this film I call *Cha Cha*, I added: *This questions a whole life and even many others. Then, which pact may I establish with myself, how may I make as if?*

This pact may be the pact of an assessment. Now I’ve been working for 25 years –36 years now–, and sometimes I have the impression of a desperate gesticulation. One film after another, and all that spent energy, a dodge of being in the real (...) Everything would be so simple if it were possible, if there were progress, if there were a tension towards something clearer, to do a better film each time and what a better film is. Everything would be so simple if an assessment were possible.

I could appear as my double, a stronger, more intelligent double, one that had understood what its other double had tried to do for such a long time. But with a mere thought on it, fear overwhelms me, as happens to the hero of that Dostoievski’s story, who burst into home absolutely pale without taking off neither his coat nor his hat, walked through the corridor and, as if struck by a lightning, he stopped in the threshold of the room. As I have already done in some of the films where I have performed, I could

also show me in a burlesque manner to not take me seriously. I could tell the same for this book. Word by word. Stop repeating those old stories, my father used to tell me, and my mother kept silent. There’s nothing to repeat, my father used to tell, there’s nothing to be told, my mother used to tell. It is about this nothingness that I work. •

Excerpt of the book Akerman, Chantal (2004), Autoportrait en cinéaste. Paris. Centre Pompidou.