



Exhibition «THAT'S NOT ENTERTAINMENT! Film answers film»
22/12/2006 – 18/03/2007

Face to face

For five years, now, the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona has had regular cinema programming. The aim has been to present films of an experimental kind banished from traditional exhibition circuits. We frequent, then, what we might call the creative limits of cinema. Works that, without any kind of commercial ambition, attempt to force this medium—often via minimalism and the maximum simplification of language—and to take it to the frontiers of expression, where it may even seem that the very notion of cinema becomes blurred.

The history of this type of cinema is as long as it is little recognised. Historiography has frequently scorned it, confining it to a basically marginal role. These filmmakers have had to get round this as best they could. At times museums have welcomed them as an expression of contemporary avant-garde creativity. But the most important aspect of this tradition—that's not entertainment—is that it's always striven to look at cinema face to face. It doesn't attempt to create a separate space for itself or to approach the so-called visual arts—as would be the case of video art—but to reply to cinema in cinematic terms. It could be said that cinema hasn't taken much account of these kinds of filmmakers, yet they've never stopped placing it at the centre of their thought. I think that the difference between experimental cinema and so-called video art is significant. Video artists don't situate themselves in the camp of cinema: their intention is not to renew film language but to place it in the camp of the visual arts, trying to both influence them and let itself be fertilised by them and their critical system. Experimental cinema, on the other hand, moves entirely on the terrain of cinema and launches its challenge from within.

Cinema answers cinema back. This idea presides over Xcèntric's various activities: its programming, the archive of films screened during these five years, this book and the exhibition. One seeks, with all this, to resituate the forms of experimental cinema within the debate about the cinematic medium. The archive has no other comprehensive aim: it's merely the permanent mirror of what the programming has been, the compilation of the films presented during these five years. This is why there's a section for consultation in the show: a way of putting a number of materials within people's reach, materials that aren't always easy of access. This book is like a record: the record of recognition of an area of cinema history that sometimes appears invisible; and the reminder of a regular programming that bears the mark of different programmers. Because the idea that Xcèntric has promoted, and which will go on motivating it in the years ahead, has been to create a lively series, the outcome of the different ways of understanding cinema of the individuals who've organised it. Experimental cinema doesn't have precise boundaries. And the different programmers have given shape to the project without shutting it in on a reservation, which is probably what a more official historiography would wish.