

We are poetry

by Jaap de Ruig

I love video. It is image, sound and word. It is fantasy and realism. Video is suitable for documentaries, animation, cartoons, movies, music videos and commercials. I love it because it is a medium that easily connects with our daily existence. It is like fire, both useful and dangerous. It can cherish and disillusion. It can be democratic or suppressing, a tool in the hands of activists as well as the government. Video was the most important eye witness of the fireworks disaster in Enschede, a city in the eastern part of Holland, and it gave a more than stereoscopic image of the attacks on the W.T.C. in New York.

As an artist, when making a video, I can choose between an ultra short film of several seconds and an ultra long one of many hours. Between recording reality and composing fiction. I can make a loop; a photo stretched out in time where the end blends seamlessly into the beginning, so that an event perpetuates itself. I also have the choice between background hiss or a stack of sound-fragments, between loud voices or the passing of a text in silence. I can sing, play musical instruments, enhance the sounds or distort them monstrously.

The medium of video is my sketchbook. Video registers and can be erased like a pencil drawing. My camera fits into the pocket of my jacket, so to speak. After recording reality outside, I can crop and recreate it at home. My workshop is a negligible space; it only contains a table with a cupboard above it. The storage of my work is simple, a shoe-box is enough. If needed my workshop travels with me in a small suitcase. A picture of a few square centimeters can, when projected, be blown up to many square meters. Pictures of the whole world can be displayed at an LCD screen the size of a match box. Like a god I can influence reality, like a wise man I can observe without judging.

I enjoy the risk video shares with photography; that everything that is recorded immediately takes on a certain esthetic sheen. Even the misery of others changes on film into beauty, cruel beauty. Video transforms it into a form of visual poetry. When I state something in a film as a metaphor for human life, I change human life at that moment into poetry, as a way of staving off chaos and pointlessness. It is giving form to something that is shapeless. It is framing and high-

lighting a seemingly insignificant detail, that takes on a certain value that way. A short video is comparable to a poem, like a movie can be compared to a novel. I create as a poet, I play and scrap, change and sharpen, I polish pictures as someone else would polish words. Man, animal and objects provide me with images. They give direction to my thoughts. The camera is my eye, the computer my magic box and the trackball my wand.

We are poetry is a group of twenty short videofilms. When making them, I did not set myself a time limit, like I did in the *52 Weeks* series in 2000. The short videos of *We are poetry* differ in intention and intensity, they are also of different length, but they are all based on the same thing; our life, my life. For a moment I am the battered water-bottle blown across the asphalt by the wind. A bottle that, despite its dents and scratches, despite car-wheels whizzing past, succeeds into almost happily skipping along. After that for a couple of minutes I become a toy dog that is bossed around by a loud male voice. At the same moment I recognize, by the sound of the voice, the frustrations that are being vented. I am the old lady who sees a dream come true; being a fashion model for the first time in her life at age ninety-four, while I also see in her eyes the inevitability of Alzheimer's disease. A little later I am literally a poet. Aided by three flourworms, forming oriental looking characters, I write short sentences with a light sensual undertone.

As a video artist I live the life of a thousand others. At the same time I am as free and as independent, that I even would be jealous if I would be one of those others. My life is like a poem that I try to stilize as much as possible. If the circumstances do not allow that, and of course they don't, I can only represent it in a way that shows the underlying necessity. Man has the capacity to see the humour or the beauty in the inevitable.

From *Jaap de Ruig, beeldend werk/visual art #4, 2001-2002*