

# GALERIE MARIAN GOODMAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**CHANTAL AKERMAN**

*From the Other Side*

9 December 2021 – 5 February 2022

Opening Thursday 9 December, from 6 to 8 pm

*"Even though my work uses repetition and exhaustion, as a human being, I don't want to be in exhaustion. I need things to be new every time." Chantal Akerman*

Marian Goodman Gallery Paris is pleased to present an exhibition by Chantal Akerman, a filmmaker who is considered one of the most important European directors of her generation, which will feature two video installations: *From the Other Side* (2002) and *Je tu il elle, l'installation* (2007). Each work is centered on the fundamental themes that inhabit Akerman's cinema: frontiers, isolation and otherness. Like almost all of her installations, the two works are linked to films made for the screen, *De l'Autre Côté* and *Je tu il elle*, which will be screened at Luminor - Hôtel de Ville Cinema in conjunction with the exhibition.

Presented on the ground floor, *Je tu il elle, l'installation* makes its major exhibition debut in the Paris space. It was created in 2007 from her first feature film *Je tu il elle* (1974). Told in three parts, the film features three characters played by Claire Wauthion, Niels Arestrup and Chantal Akerman herself. *Je (I)* is played by 24 years-old Akerman as the main character, while *tu* (you) is the recipient of the letters she writes, *il* (he), a truck driver who confides in her about his relationships with women, and *elle* (she) is the young woman she meets at her home. As in her first short film, *Saute ma ville*, Chantal Akerman illuminates the screen with her presence, with a persona that borders on the burlesque. The first part, in which she is a recluse in her home and repeats the same everyday gestures trapped in the domestic space, precedes and predicts the heroine of her emblematic film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, released one year later. The film is ahead of its time in its open expression about lesbian sexuality. Bold in its narration and in its form, the film affirms what will become her signature cinematic style: the employment of tracking shots, the precision in frontal framing, the use of voice-over, and above all her singular technique of extended sequence shots. This expression of temporality is fully asserted by Akerman, who emphasizes the experience it provokes: "I would like the viewer to have a physical experience through the time used in each shot. To have this physical experience that time unfolds in you, that time enters you."<sup>1</sup>

The transition from film to installation allowed Chantal Akerman to experiment with time in a different way, but also to explore the use of space. The editing of images and sounds have always been carried out under the close care of Claire Atherton, who has also accompanied her for a large number of her film editing. The discovery of this new creative process gave Akerman total freedom and allowed her to rediscover the innocence of her first films: "When I work with the material of installations, it's like shooting a documentary, you don't know where you're going to end up, you sculpt a material, it starts to organize itself, and suddenly the work is there, it arrives as if it were obvious. (...) In the installations I don't follow any thread, it's magic, the multiple possibilities arise while I knead the material and it's the material that carries me along. I work it, it becomes other, and there we are. The invention comes from the transformation, the process is free and fascinating, a pure enjoyment."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, with *Je tu il elle, l'installation*, Akerman delivers her revision of a fiction realized more than thirty years before, by rearticulating the images into three projections. The simultaneous juxtaposition of the three parts of the film deconstructs the temporal linearity of the narrative and creates new resonances in the space.

On the lower level of the gallery, *From the Other Side* (2002), like the documentary *De l'Autre Côté* made the same year and presented out of competition at the Cannes Film Festival, focuses on the plight of Mexican migrants seeking to cross the border into the United States, who were deported against their will by American authorities to a mountainous desert region in Arizona. "It's a story as old as the hills, yet every day it becomes more relevant. And every day more terrible. There are poor people who, at the risk of their lives, sometimes have to leave everything to try to survive, to live elsewhere. But elsewhere they are not wanted. And if they are wanted, it is for their labor power. Work that we ourselves no longer want."<sup>3</sup>

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Touched by their plight and their personal stories, Akerman personally collected their testimonies, before, subsequently traveling to the Sonoran Desert and progressively passing to "the other side" where she continued her interviews with border patrol officers and the local community. The installation, like the documentary, testifies to Akerman's incredulous view of the tragedy unfolding before her eyes – and ours, making her, by extension, the voice of a nation in exodus.

The installation *From the Other Side*, specially conceived for Documenta XI in 2002, has not been shown for over 10 years. It unfolds in three parts and in three spaces, with images shot by Akerman or taken from archives recovered from the American authorities, scrolling on monitors that punctuate a dense and immersive environment. Like Akerman crossing the desert, the visitor walks through two rooms before finding himself/herself confronted with an installation within an installation, a poetic *mise en abyme* in the form of the final projection entitled *A Voice in the Desert*. "It is with the installation of the Documenta that I took myself to the game of art. For the first time, I had the idea of the installation before the film. I wanted to put a screen in the border zone of Mexico and the United States, project a part of the film on it, and then refilm it in that space, its authentic space. The third part of my installation was born before everything else."<sup>4</sup>

In conjunction to the exhibition, two rare screenings are taking place at the cinema Luminor - Hôtel de Ville, 20 rue du Temple: the screening of *Je tu il elle* (1974) on Tuesday 14 December at 8 pm will be introduced by Elisabeth Lebovici, and *De l'Autre Côté* (2002) on Tuesday 18 January 8 pm will be introduced by Claire Atherton.

An international symposium dedicated to the work of Chantal Akerman, "Intérieurs sensibles de Chantal Akerman : films et installations - passages esthétiques" will be held on January 27, 2022 at the INHA and on January 28, 2022 at the Centre Pompidou and at the University of Chicago Center in Paris, organized by the IRCAV - Institut de recherche sur le cinéma et l'audiovisuel (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3), in partnership with the Centre Pompidou's New Media Department and the University of Chicago Center in Paris.

Chantal Akerman (1950-2015) is a Belgian filmmaker, artist and writer who lived in Paris for a long time. She made her first short film *Saute ma ville* at the age of 18. After several years spent in New York in the underground and experimental film scene, Akerman directed her first feature film, *Je tu il elle*, in 1974. Her rich and multifaceted filmography includes nearly fifty films, both short and feature. Among her most important fiction films are *Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Brussels* (1975), the comedies *Golden Eighties* (1986) and *Un divan à New York* (1995), the literary adaptations *La Captive* (1999) and *La Folie Almayer* (2013). She is also the author of several documentaries such as the trilogy including *D'Est* (1993), *Sud* (1999), *De l'Autre Côté* (2002). *No Home Movie* (2015), her last film, was completed just before her death. Since 2014, a large number of retrospectives dedicated to her cinema have been organized in many countries, including at the Cinémathèque française in 2018.

From 1995 to 2015, Chantal Akerman created about twenty video installations, presented during her lifetime in many international museums such as the Jeu de Paume, the MNAM - Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the SFMOMA in San Francisco or the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg in Germany. Chantal Akerman participated in Documenta XI in Kassel in 2002, in 2010 at the 29th Sao Paulo Biennale and in 2011 at the 49th Venice Biennale with her latest large-scale installation *NOW*. In recent years his artistic work has been the subject of important solo exhibitions: in 2020 at the Eye Filmmuseum in Amsterdam, in 2019 at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Toronto, in 2018 at Oi Futuro in Rio de Janeiro, in 2015 at Ambika P3 Gallery, University of Westminster in London. Her installations are in the collections of the Centre national des Arts Plastiques (CNAP) in Paris, the Jewish Museum in New York, or the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA). Chantal Akerman is also a writer and the author of several books including *Hall de Nuit* (1992), *Une famille à Bruxelles* (1998), *Ma mère rit* (2013).

This exhibition was conceived in collaboration with the Chantal Akerman Foundation and the CINEMATEK - Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique.

<sup>1</sup> Chantal Akerman, in Balthazar n°6, summer 2003

<sup>2</sup> Chantal Akerman, *Entretien en pyjama*, interview by Nicole Brenez, 2011, in *Chantal Akerman, Bande(s) à part, Bobigny 2014*

<sup>3</sup> Synopsis, *De l'Autre Côté*, 2001, Archives Fondation Chantal Akerman

<sup>4</sup> Chantal Akerman, in *Interview, Akerman sans frontières* by Elisabeth Lebovici, *Libération*, 2002

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