

Toshie Takeuchi, A House Placed In Between (work  
in progress, c. 45min).  
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Written by Eve Kalyva



Toshie's films are a true pleasure to watch, even though "pleasure" is not what the films are about. With quirky imageries that captivate the viewer from the beginning, their delicate sequences of shots, stills and takes simulate slice-of-life situations and deliver poignant social commentary without being didactic.

Works such as *Tampopo Head and the Name of the Dogs* (2017, 17min) and *Work-In-Progress=Towards* (2013, various lengths) explore the relations between daily life, urban geographies and socio-political context. They delve deeper into issues of isolation, the lack of communication and the search for human contact, and articulate the complexities of contemporary societies from the partial point of view of lived experience.

Technically speaking, Toshie's films are craftily put together. The frames are shot with photographic precision, and space is configured through the actions that take place within them. For their part, actions pivot around the body rather than the camera lens, showing how bodies experience the space around them. Such explorations of space and form unfold as explorations of one's self, and of one's relation to others. The editing enhances the sense that three-dimensional space is something that gradually becomes known through fragmented temporalities. The result is films that have a clear conceptual framework and elegant aesthetics. Through the careful positioning of the camera and with evocative soundscapes, their staging of absurdist yet relatable situations appears effortless. The films are often light-hearted, and always profoundly honest.

Toshie's latest work, *A House Placed In Between*, negotiates a complicated socio-political context and hits close to home. It is based on her experience living in the ad hoc former embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo in The Hague, which was consequently squatted. Rather than offering a linear documentation of events, the film creates only a subjective entry point to the matter at hand. Overlapping narratives intertwine with *mise-en-scène* takes, convolutions and ramifications are relayed through multiple viewpoints, and impromptu questions are met with provisional answers and group discussions. This may as well be the only way one can make sense of the related events. As such, *A House Placed In Between* can be understood as a film about a film or, more precisely, an exploration of the process of making sense.

In order to stage complexity and avoid a hierarchy of perspectives, Toshie employs several technical devices. Visually, the film comprises different takes, cuts, varying vantage points and fluctuating tempos. Editing cross-stitches static and moving images, and weaves a captivating incongruity between visual and audio output. This will be matched, in the film's final form, by an installation of multiple screens and audio channels. In addition, intensity and complexity rise and fall as the film progresses. Because of this, the film gains internal momentum and remains interesting for the viewer to watch without being saturated by technical mannerisms or bogged down by discourse.

Of particular interest are the devices of diverting explanation and of doubling functions. The confusion that was felt at the time of the events doubles on the uncertainty of what the viewer is looking at. However, this process is modest and well controlled. Rehearsals, interviews and re-enactments are combined with static frames of the house's interior and moving images of its exterior. A cardboard façade stands erect in an otherwise empty studio and strange images of bent human figures intercept our view. Questions appear before and after scripts are read and shots are taken, and clarifications are given to the performers. Through this multi-layered staging of polyphonies and uncertainties, the film moves away from the interest in extracting definitive answers. At the same time, its laying bare of the processes of its own making opens up space for reflection.

*A House Placed In Between* is a provisional attempt, a work in process, to uncover multiple identities. For the artist, the making of this film helps her make sense of her own experience living in this in-between zone. This comes by way of contemplation, reflection and critique of one's own environment, striving to give a better response or perspective, in hindsight, to a situation that involved insecurity, confrontation, frustration and disarray. Some topics are difficult to approach because they are complex and sensitive for those involved, as well as for specific audiences. They require a careful treatment, respect and the willingness to listen. Creative processes that bring some of those audiences and people involved together, even in passing, can have a liberating, healing effect. This is the direction that *A House Placed In Between* beckon us to consider.

*Eve Kalyva is an art critic and a writer. She is author of Image and Text in Conceptual Art: Critical Operations in Context (2017).*