

A Journey with Pina Bausch

Smadar Sheffi, 'Haaretz' Newspaper

Coffee with Pina is a film that refuses to adhere to conventions. It is not fiction, yet not quite documentary either. More than anything else, this film is a study of documentation, memory and experience. This film creates a stream of consciousness that immerses the viewer in beauty, strength and an intense joie de vivre. Within these one can find a rare ingredient that can be defined as realistic optimism.



The film starts with the first meeting between Lee Yanor and Pina Bausch, one of the greatest dance artists of the last 40 years. Bausch has created in her field, *Tanztheater*, that frequently touches on visual arts, a series of works that make a lasting impression on anyone who sees them.

The acquaintance between Bausch and Yanor, the filmmaker, began in Paris in the early 1990s. Yanor, a visual artist, was working at that time with many choreographers and had made several short films about dance. *Coffee with Pina* was filmed in three sessions that took place in Paris in 2003 and in Wuppertal, Germany, in 2005. Yanor filmed the dance performance *Agua* (Water) in Paris. She also filmed Bausch in her favourite café, Mistral, at rehearsals and in the park next to Les Halles. Yanor arrived in Wuppertal to see the premiere of Bausch's *Rough Cut*. She filmed parts of the dance, encounters with the dancers at various moments, but most of the film consists of meetings with Bausch at her home studio.

The film created by Yanor comprises images from these intimate meetings interweaved with dance parts filmed at rehearsals and performances, although most of them have been changed beyond recognition. Yanor's camera focuses on the characters on the margins of the stage. She transferred musical elements from parts of the performance to other parts, introduced sounds of trains, wind and rain into the soundtrack and created layer upon layer of images.

These images are interspersed with snippets of natural landscapes (especially from the forests that surround Wuppertal) and urban pictures such as Wuppertal's unique train (the only one in the world to be suspended from

upper tracks,) the zoo or street scenes and Parisian architecture. All the fragments come together into a stirring tapestry that takes the spectator on an internal journey full of emotion.

Yanor, who uses photography extensively (her last solo exhibition was in HaHeder [The Room] Gallery, Tel Aviv, in 2004,) created a film that could be frozen at any given scene and framed as an image in its own right. She offers the viewer an abundance of images that at times becomes almost abstract, although the entire film is figurative. The meetings with Bausch are short, include little verbal communication, but are rich in expression and beautiful movements, and she appears at times to be a fictitious character, a woman whose movements are so complete, whose presence is so intense, that they seem almost impossible.

We can look back at her short appearance in the opening scene of Pedro Almodovar's film *Hable con ella* [*Talk to Her*]. Almodovar filmed Bausch in *Café Müller*, one of her better-known performances. Yanor filmed her in her Wuppertal studio where she danced part of her solo from *Danzon*, a dance that premiered in 1995 and is seldom performed. Bausch appears to search for the right movement and then immerses herself in it as if changing her physical state; her intensity gives the viewer the feeling of watching a ceremony, a feeling amplified by the minimalism of the scene and the lack of scenery.

Yanor used super 8 mm film and video to create the film. The images throughout switch between colour and black and white. In the editing room, Yanor created many strata of images reminding us of screen upon screen of transparent cloth. The result is a fantastic *mélange* of situations: Paris buildings on a sunny day under a layer of water (from water fountains, also in Paris), dance scenes over and under a polar bear moving in water, or pictures of a forest over/under a dancer spinning round in circles, wearing a green dress.

The intensity of the film is captivating. It ends in a black and white shot of Bausch and leaves the viewer with a new insight into the power of motion as a means of touching the soul, the most inner self. The images, that appear so evasive, linger in memory long after the film is over.

Coffee with Pina; Director and Cinematography: Lee Yanor; The film will be screened at the Jerusalem Film Festival on Saturday at 8:30pm and will appear on Channel 8 on the 22nd at 9:30p

Smadar Sheffi is an art critic for Haaretz newspaper and a cultural theoretician. In recent years she has addressed the affinity of visual arts and dance, and in 2006 gave a series of lectures on this topic in the Suzanne Della Dance Center in Tel-Aviv. Lee Yanor was a guest at one of these lectures.