Tacita Dean

Patricia Brignone

Translator: Simon Pleasance

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/36718>

DOI: 10.4000/critiquedart.36718

ISBN: 2265-9404

ISSN: 2265-9404

Publisher

Groupeement d'intérêt scientifique (GIS) Archives de la critique d'art

Printed version

Date of publication: 27 November 2018

Number of pages: 89-91

ISBN: 1246-8258

ISSN: 1246-8258

Electronic reference

Patricia Brignone, « *Tacita Dean* », *Critique d'art* [Online], 51 | Automne/hiver, Online since 27 November 2019, connection on 07 December 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/36718> ; DOI : 10.4000/critiquedart.36718

This text was automatically generated on 7 December 2019.

EN

Tacita Dean

Patricia Brignone

Translation : Simon Pleasance

TACITA DEAN © JIM RAKETE, WITH COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

- 1 Talking about Tacita Dean is tantamount to paying tribute to the idea of the journey as a metaphor of art, and its quest, and to summoning up the echoes of narratives and tales which weave her imagination. It is also to praise a sensitive perception of time and space, to such a degree does the œuvre of this artist (born in 1965 in Canterbury, in Kent, and currently living in Los Angeles, after a spell in Berlin) has all the elements of a crossing involving human beings, things, and events. At a very early stage there

appeared among the elements informing her films (with a pronounced interest in the 16mm format), her images and her writings a daydream-like quality offering access to travelling, but also to the strangeness of haphazard situations transporting her to the four corners of the globe. Her words about the sea overlap with the fates of uncommon figures, such as Donald Crowhurst, an amateur sailor whose destiny was as unusual as it was tragic, drifting from the falsehood of a simulated victory to madness and death; Bas Jan Ader, who set out alone in a 13-foot sailboat for a final performance on which light has never been shed; and the Australian Jean Jeinnie, a stowaway on a ship which was wrecked in 1928... a surprising odyssey in which reality merges with the imaginary.

- 2 The journey and the sea's pull are imposed not so much as a simple theme, but more as a private escape ("The sea was the last free place on earth [...]", she wrote¹), where there is at times a link between a quest for the absolute and a cathartic dimension (thus *Disappearance at Sea II*, 1997, a 16 mm film shot at Longstone lighthouse with the significant subtitle in French: *Voyage de guérison /Healing Journey*).
- 3 From the outset (as soon as she left the Slade School of Art in London with the astonishing *The Story of Beard*, 1992), Tacita Dean's oeuvre has been forever cultivating back-and-forth movements between image and narrative. The finely finished shifts between media (film drawing, photography, installation, writing) weave a poetics which transfigures the fleeting impressions of the ordinary. Among the figures accompanying her, Marcel Broodthaers gave rise to a film titled *Section Cinéma (Hommage à Marcel Broodthaers)*, made in 2002 in her den-like basement studio in Düsseldorf, where, with a simple gesture, the artist focuses on bringing forth the light of the bulb on the ceiling of the original installation. To her understanding of the challenges of this resolutely poetic and conceptual work, Tacita Dean adds her imprint via the optical humming sound of the camera in a subtle sensation of fiction and reality, made up of presence and absence.² One thinks of those words of René Magritte (which Broodthaers said contained his calling): "Instead of lending a meaning to things, the mind can see the meaning".³
- 4 It is to these layers of meaning and the diffracted grasp of varying types of representations of the world that her particular use of film tends. This is illustrated by its strong position in *Kodak*, a 16 mm film made in Chalon-sur-Saône in 2006 on the site of the Kodak factories which were in the throes of ceasing to produce film (incorporated in an installation of the same name), and, in a different way, her anamorphic 35 mm film *JG* (2013),⁴ whose starting point was the attempt to go and find the *Spiral Jetty*, designed and built by Robert Smithson in the Great Salt Lake, in Utah (*Trying To Find The Spiral Jetty*, 1997). She failed to locate it—which in the end of the day tallied perfectly with her interest in obsolescence⁵—, but it was to a no less dizzy-making trip to the centre of the enigmatic vortex that Tacita Dean invites us, just like her entire oeuvre, like a precipitate of time, matter, space and mixed perceptions, which still ring out in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, with her installation *Film* (2011), a masterly defence of the medium of cinema and film.

NOTES

1. Newman, Michael. "Sauvetage", *Tacita Dean : Textes*, Paris-Musées ; Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Göttingen : Steidl, 2003, n.p.
2. Through the almost recurrent use of her lens, its author is keen to conjure up the quality of the "choreography" of the sound itself, along with her capacity to be "emotionally in relation with a place", as noted by Jan Svenungsson, "Introduction", *Tacita Dean*, Strasbourg : Ecole supérieure des arts décoratifs, 2011, p. 34-35.
3. Guideri, Remo. "Poésie", *Broodthaers : conférences & colloques*, Paris : Jeu de Paume, p. 14
4. The title borrows the initials of the science-fiction writer, James G. Ballard, a great admirer of Smithson, incidentally, with whom the artist was in contact prior to his death.
5. "For me, obsolescence is a normal state", quoted by Michael Newman, "Sauvetage", *Tacita Dean*, *Op. cit.*, n.p.