

vertiginous (albeit momentary) disorientation of scale, horizon, foreground and background.

During the chimp's ride on the carousel, the sound becomes simultaneously more natural—like a heartbeat alarmingly speeding up—and more violently mechanical. It's as if the beast and the machine had become one. Meanwhile, the background blurs, the carousel keeps spinning, its fabric cover flapping like a giant fan. But the spin also has other permutations; it radiates, a ripple—it echoes in the twirl of a woman's skirt that reveals her white underwear, in the gyration of a grinning clown, in the alarmed gazes of onlookers, and in the close-up of the ape's ruffled, forever blank visage. The viewers are also included, implicated, though they can never be sure of their position: now suspended, now on the boardwalk, watching the ape's act, then suddenly closer to the swimmers' backs and the women's behinds—a position that's both voyeuristic, suggesting some cooler, calculating gaze, and yet incredibly sensual.

Heller also slips in some keen observation of how femininity is created—it too a dream, a mirage: Young women parade on the boardwalk in their swimwear, as part of a beauty pageant, while male judges measure waists with tape as the film features close-ups of body parts. It almost seems like a feverish invention of an ape's mind: mundane reality suddenly rendered strange. Is it a summer adventure, madness, both? The world swoons, the wind picks up with a frightening intensity, becomes a thundering thud, the shaking of the frame suggesting both the wind itself and a film reel's mechanical jitter. From the hardness of traction to the plasticity of a woman's head gently poised on her shoulder as she slumbers—to the brief image of the ape's seemingly transfixed expression—*Last Lost* builds its feverish world with sublime assuredness, only to gently wipe it away with the last wave. Then comes the ending—"Eve Heller," written in the wet sand, buffeted by waves—the elements and the film are one.

Ela Bittencourt

## UNDER TWILIGHT

JEAN-GABRIEL PÉRIOT

2006

by  
Frances Guerin

Jean-Gabriel Périot's *Under Twilight* (2006) is a creative re-presentation of archival footage culled from World War II documentaries, attached to a sound score, and lasting a little over five minutes. Despite its brevity, the film's references are extensive and its resonances are wide-ranging.

From the opening frames of *Under Twilight*, we are reminded of the stroboscopic effects of Peter Tscherkassky's *Instructions for a Light and Sound Machine* (2005) and Paul Sharits' groundbreaking mandala films from the 1960s. Like the work of these avant-garde filmmakers who glean images from the archive and innovate through variant process of re-presentation, Périot's film has sensorial impact on the mind of the viewer, creating an aesthetic of urgency. In their reworking of found image and sound, all three filmmakers re-cast narrative into a barrage of re-edited still frames to attack our vision and audition. The bombardment of sounds and images is clearly trying to tell us something important.

However, we soon recognize that Périot's film operates in a different context from those of his fellow filmmakers. *Under Twilight* sees flickering images of airplanes, bombers and jets taken by military and news cameramen. Across five minutes, the footage moves from black and white to color, from figurative to abstract images, from visions of planes in the air to those on land, soaring above the sea and back again. As such, *Under Twilight* takes off into a cinematic world in which war and its representation occupy centre stage. Périot's reworked footage is a vision of symmetrical, apparently mirrored images of Allied World War II planes and bombs, seemingly performing for cameras they cannot see, but must be watching. The spectacle of war seen through the windows of other flying machines is far removed from the bloodshed we know to have resulted from the deadly activities on the battlefield.

Original title: Under Twilight

Director: Jean-Gabriel Périot

Year: 2006

Duration: 5min. 11sec.

Music: Patten

Color

Original format: HD video

Courtesy of the artist. © Jean-Gabriel Périot



bombs raining through a saturated-blue sky. The amorphous static on the soundtrack becomes a buzz, a ringing rises, the sound starts to do battle with bombs falling, landscapes passing, the image flashing. The sounds become dense, the volume increases until it is almost deafening, and the image dilates into a graphic abstraction. Three and a half minutes into *Under Twilight*, war has become an aesthetically gorgeous image, like a painting. We have forgotten the European lands below being blown to smithereens.

Before long, the soundtrack shifts; it starts to remind the viewer of a machine gun constantly firing. Across the five minutes of *Under Twilight*, a techno-produced whirl builds on different sonic registers, colonizing the soundscape, until it starts to resemble the metallic buzz of film going through the projector. Thus, as the sounds of war and those of film collide, *Under Twilight*'s images transform: they become devoid of beauty thanks to the destructive thrust of the multilayered soundtrack. Even though the color-graded footage reminds us of an abstract painting, washing over us like the serenity of Monet's waterlilies, the soundtrack—that element of film that is often forgotten—transforms the depiction into a violent, apocalyptic reality. In a final act of camouflage, ensuring our vision of war is as opaque as we thought it was transparent, Périot's film was made to accompany the sound, not the other way around. The UK artist patten (Damien Roach) invited Périot to create a video of his then soon-to-be-released record, *Under Twilight*. Thus, sound pre-existed image.

While the film re-presents the beauty and destruction of World War II, its implications have never been so urgent. Around three minutes in, viewers might start seeing or imagining references to the exploding Twin Towers, the world hidden under a cloud of dust, the structures slowly collapsing.

The "ballet" of planes and their searchlights and the drama of bombardments hitting land in long shots so distant that they contain no human suffering have filled the images of war given us by governments and proffered by the mainstream media for decades. According to those "official images," war is a visual spectacle designed to entertain the masses at home before the television: there is apparently little to no blood shed in this arena. A generation of culturally diverse film and image-makers have sought to challenge such spectacular visions of war. Périot's piece likewise takes the official image and re-presents it, calling for new ways of seeing war. The urgency of this aesthetic jolts us into recognition of the discrepancy between what we see and what we know of war.

To be sure, deception is woven into the fabric of *Under Twilight*: we think we are seeing mirrored images, but the effect of mirroring results from the superiority of cinematic over human vision. In the re-presentation, Périot has edited single frames with the same subject in an identical composition flipped across either the left/right vertical or the horizontal axis. We see a mirror image where none exists thanks to the speed of the moving image. Our "blindness" to the manipulation of the cinematic footage is at the root of our inability to see the devastation taking place in the theatre of war.

And yet, for Périot, the technology of war and its representation is also beautiful. The opening sequences of *Under Twilight* are accompanied by a magnified static and a hum reminiscent of the sound of an orchestra warming up, only technologically treated to produce a metallic reimagining. Around ninety seconds into the film, the volume increases and the hum starts to alternate in short fragments with a higher-pitched drone. Simultaneously, the image takes on a strained blue with flashes of violet. Flashes of film appear, transforming into white

UNDER TWILIGHT

The resemblances are created through Périot's pulling apart of the image, isolating certain patterns in the destruction of sixty years earlier, and confronting the spectator with the perpetuation of war, albeit in a different arena. In the final frames of *Under Twilight*, the gaping holes in the earth fall into obscurity thanks to the polluted atmosphere left in the wake of annihilation. The effects of destruction are seemingly with us to stay.

\* My thanks go to Jean-Gabriel Périot for his clarifications on the technical and sonic production of his film.

*Frances Guerin*

THE GARDEN OF DELIGHT

MICHAEL FLEMING

2017

by  
Clint Enns