



CHANTAL AKERMAN: ADVENTURES IN PERCEPTION

Golden Eighties

J'ai faim, j'ai froid (I'm Hungry, I'm Cold)

Director: Chantal Akerman

Production Companies: J.M. Productions, Films A2

Photography: Luc Benhamou

Editing: Francine Sandberg

Sound: François de Morant, Jean-Paul Loublier

Cast:

María de Medeiros

Pascale Salkin

France 1984

12 mins

Digital (restoration)

Restored by Royal Film Archive of Belgium (CINEMATEK), Fondation Chantal Akerman and Cinémathèque française.

Golden Eighties

Director: Chantal Akerman

Production Companies: La Cécilia,

Paradise Films, Limbo-Films

Participation: Ministère Français de la Culture,

Ministère de la Culture de la Communauté

Française

Producer: Martine Marignac

Production Manager: Jean-Luc Denéchau

Assistant Production Manager: Paul Giovanni

Production Supervisors: Martine Marignac,

Jacqueline Louis

Assistant Directors: Serge Meynard, Lorraine

Groleau, Isabelle Willems, Vincent Macheras

Screenplay: Chantal Akerman, Leora Barish,

Henry Bean, Pascal Bonitzer, Jean Gruault

Directors of Photography: Gilberto Azevedo,

Luc Benhamou

Editor: Francine Sandberg

Art Director: Serge Marzloff

Set Dresser: Manudécors

Costumes: Pierre Albert

Wardrobe: Catherine Lefebvre, Magali Ohlman

Make-up: Éliane Marcus, Nicole Mora

Music Composed and Arranged by: Marc Herouet

Lyrics: Chantal Akerman

Musician (drums): Jean-Pierre Onraedt

Musician (bass): Evert Verhees

Musician (guitar): Thierry Plas

Musician (piano/synthesizer): Jean-Luc Manderlier

Musician (synthesizers): Marc Herouet

Musician (programmation Emulator 2):

Erwin Autrique

Musician (saxophones/flutes): Pietro Lacirignola

Musician (saxophones): Johnny Dover

Musicians (violin): Tahnos Adanopoulos,

Raymond Vincent

Musician (alto): Galina Zinchenko

Musicians (violincello): Edmond Baerts,

Sonia Wieder-Atherton

Musician (counter-bass): Dirk van Gorp

Music arranged and produced by:

Jean-Luc Manderlier

Music recording and re-recording: Philippe Delire,

Erwin Autrique

Sound Recording: Henri Morelle, Miguel Rejas

Sound Re-recording: Jean-François Auger,

Alain Garnier

Dubbing: Suzanne Sandberg

Sound Effects: Jonathan Liebling, Loic Berthezene

Cast:

Delphine Seyrig (*Jeanne Schwartz*)

Myriam Boyer (*Sylvie*)

Fanny Cottençon (*Lili*)

Lio (*Mado*)

The screening on Monday 3 February will include a Q&A with cellist and composer Sonia Wieder-Atherton

Shopping precincts are as good an indication as any of our moral condition. Just as the Passage Choiseul, where in the early years of the century Céline's anti-hero watched his parents sinking deeper and deeper with every passing moment, identified the wellsprings of petit-bourgeois resentment, so now in the 1980s, from Las Vegas to Les Halles, the tinted marbles, the hothouse plants and the fountains create an environment that literally encapsulates the hedonism of a life lived permanently in a conservatory. These people are sheltered from the elements, maintained at the perfect temperature, insulated from the inconveniences of the outside world but with all the advantages and semblances of it (shops, cafes, cinemas, passers-by...). The shopping mall, today, is the nexus of postmodernism and consumerism.

To judge from its title *Golden Eighties*, Chantal Akerman's film is an explicit comment on the malaise of our civilisation, a sidelong and witty look at our aspirations and moral values. After the years of lead come the years of gold-dust! These neatly shod female feet which populate the title sequence, briskly criss-crossing the strawberry-coloured slabs of stone, bent on crucial and important missions, these are the locomotive of the economy.

But *Golden Eighties* has another economy too. It was Jacques Demy who first realised that the enclosed space of a gallery and its symmetrical design is the perfect foil for a musical, with the constraints of the setting justifying and shaping the choreography of the formation dancing and making the musical romanticism seem more fantastic in contrast. This is Akerman's tribute to Demy, although it does not have the desperation that certainly underlay his last film *Une chambre en ville*. *Golden Eighties* is jokey and fast-moving, with one of the liveliest scores, by Marc Herouet, and wittiest sets of lyrics, by Akerman (alas, not well subtitled), for many years.

But where is the happiness in these golden eighties? This is the sad tale of Mado, the hairdresser's apprentice who loves Robert, son of the owners of the clothes shop opposite, although Robert only wants Lili, Mado's sexy, flirtatious and untrustworthy boss who is Monsieur Jean's mistress. So Robert should make a sacrifice and settle down to a life of effort and responsibility, just as his father Monsieur Schwartz had settled down with Jeanne. But at what cost? For Jeanne had loved an American GI called Eli who now, remarkably, comes strolling through the mall, recognises her after all these years and tries to persuade her to come away with him. This is a goldfish bowl in which every move the principals make is observed and maliciously commented on by the chorus of male layabouts and shampoo girls. A continuous, edifying spectacle that almost everyone dreams of leaving.

The point is, however, they construct their dreams the better to remain where they are. Rather like Marie-France Pisier in *Souvenirs d'en France* (André Téchiné, 1975), Lili, terminally bored with Monsieur Jean's attentions, takes off with the Eli whom Jeanne has just rejected, only to return two months later, ludicrously and heavily disguised in headscarf and dark glasses, just in time to seduce Robert and so sabotage his wedding. Sylvie, the girl who runs the bar, is thrilled with an escape that keeps her rooted to the spot, in the form of letters from her boyfriend who has gone to Canada to make his fortune. 'He hates it there,' she says. 'So he's coming back?' they all ask. 'Not yet,' replies

Pascale Salkin (*Pascale*)
Charles Denner (*Monsieur Schwartz*)
Jean-François Balmer (*Monsieur Jean*)
John Berry (*Eli*)
Nicolas Tronc (*Robert Schwartz*)
Roselyne Brunet, Laurence Camby, Murielle Combeau, Solenn Jarniou, Charlotte Leo, Nathalie Richard, Dominique Rousseau, Claire-Marie Zenska (*hairstressers*)
Olivier Archard, Laurent Allaire, Dominique Compagnon, Simon Reggiani (*Four Boys members*)
Françoise Goussard (*saleswoman*)
Marie Pillet (*Sonia*)
Isabelle Gruault (*teenage girl*)
Nathalie Guérin (*girl with split skirt*)
Kathy Guisard (*Sonia*)
Emma Wolff (*customer*)
France-Belgium-Switzerland 1986
96 mins
Digital 4K (restoration)

Restored in 4K by Royal Film Archive of Belgium (CINEMATEK), Fondation Chantal Akerman and L'Imagine Ritrovata, Bologna

In partnership with

FONDATION
CHANTAL AKERMAN

CINEMATEK

All restorations by Royal Film Archive of Belgium (CINEMATEK) and Fondation Chantal Akerman unless otherwise stated.

Season generously supported by
Philippe & Stephanie Camu.

With thanks to Céline Brouwez, Fondation Chantal Akerman; Joanna Hogg and Adam Roberts, A Nos Amours.

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

SIGHT AND SOUND

Sylvie with an angelic smile, and her world would clearly be shattered if he did. All the other characters construct scenarios as unreal as the mall itself, all except Lili are incurable romantics.

Yet even their romantic yearnings ring repetitiously. Monsieur Schwartz's disquisition on the work ethic parrots the pages of *L'Expansion*, but bears absolutely no relation to reality or the people around him; Lili's sentiments in regard to Monsieur Jean are radically inauthentic; both are typical of the world of the shopping mall: everyone is recycling snatches of sentiment and belief that they have taken off the peg in order to help them stay exactly where they are. Exogamy, it would seem, is virtually impossible, as is thought beyond this infernally constructed spiral.

It is the Schwartz couple who are the absent centre of *Golden Eighties*. Delphine Seyrig as the gracefully ageing Jeanne, whose radiant smile is half designed to sell clothes and half the result of her detachment, perfectly incarnates the mentality of caution and prudence, while Charles Denner as Schwartz, in his over-neat suit, his concern for *Lebensraum*, his designs on the floor space of Lili's salon, has learned the lessons of modern commerce so well that he embodies its stresses, his grandiose ambitions contrasting markedly with his slightly pinched appearance and slightly nervous demeanour. Neither is capable of articulating clearly what they want. When Schwartz wants to talk he goes into the mall and paces up and down; when Jeanne wants to talk she goes into the cinema and unburdens her heart in front of a screen playing old, romantic movies. Indeed, when any of the couples in *Golden Eighties* meet it has to be in a cubicle for they have no space outside the mall itself.

Golden Eighties does not bear thinking about too closely, and indeed does not require it. The film is as frothy as the shampoo in the hairdresser's, a film in a much more popular and accessible mode than some of Akerman's earlier works, and a film which contrives to be witty and tender and sad, despite its devastatingly accurate observation of the way we live now. And if the musical genre is one which many audiences traditionally find difficult, this film should go a long way towards effecting a reconciliation.

Jill Forbes, *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1987

J'ai faim, j'ai froid (I'm Hungry, I'm Cold)

Two girls wander the streets of Paris looking for love and a meal in this episode from *Paris vu par... vingt ans après (Paris Seen By... 20 Years After)*.

Chantal Akerman Collection Vol.1: 1967-1978 (Limited Edition 5-Disc Blu-ray Box Set)

Spanning the period 1967 to 1978, and representing the first significant release of Chantal Akerman's work in the UK, this 5-Blu-ray set includes her most famous film, *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. Available from BFI Shop from 24 February.



Sight and Sound presents the auteurs series: Chantal Akerman

Revisiting material from the *Sight and Sound* and *Monthly Film Bulletin* archive and also publishing exclusive texts and images from the Fondation Chantal Akerman archive, *Sight and Sound* presents the auteurs series: Chantal Akerman. Available now from BFI Shop.



Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged | Browse online at theb.fi/programme-notes

Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk