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Marcellvs L.

Time—this is the principal subject matter of literature, film, and life itself. In Proust and in the films of Warhol, in the progression of history and of the narrative, in the age of zapping and of attention deficit disorder, time is the ultimate question, the unresolved mystery, mankind's last frontier. Marcellvs L.'s works can be seen as a relentless reflection on time. In his videos, time has been analyzed, scrutinized, suspended, opened, enlarged, widened, and slowed down.

In the artist's ongoing *Rhizome* series, Deleuze and Guattari's concept becomes not so much a reference to be illustrated, but a production device. The title of each of the individual video works, 27 of which have been produced since 2001, consists of 4-digit numbers which are defined according to the throwing of two dice (the sum of the chance numbers in each throw will define each of the 4 digits, 10 translating into 0, 11 and 12 being cancelled in the process). Taken as a whole, the resulting titles may compose a series, yet as a narrative, they resist progression and chronology. The resulting numbers will also be used in the distribution of the video. With the number at hand (0778, 8762, 0964, 9564, 0075, 0696, 8246, 7692, 3476, 2376 are some of them), the artist randomly opens up the phone book¹ of his native Belo Horizonte until he finds a street that matches the title of his video and then mails it anonymously to that address.

The images in the videos of Marcellvs' *Rhizome* series consist of a single sequence² shot with a high definition digital camera. The camera is held invariably still, though at times there is a slow zooming in or out of the scene. There is a great deal of play with the aperture of the lenses, often allowing too much or too little light to be recorded, or other manipulations, which in some instances recall early experiments in avant garde film. The sound performs an important role, and is frequently manipulated. The content of the videos is rather commonplace, or at first it may seem to be—scenes shot in the city, on the road, at the beach. If the concept is the rhizome, and the subject matter is time, the theme is life itself. Yet when these seemingly ordinary moments of quotidian life are framed and put under the microscope by the artist, when they are extracted from the chaos of the everyday and rendered in close up or detail, when the images or sound are manipulated, they gain new, wonderful and poignant nuances.

The videos are always shot outdoors. Some of them seem quite abstract or have strong painterly qualities, recording city lights (5040) and the rain (0314) in close up, shadows cast by the city traffic (0696) or fishermen at the beach shot with a wide aperture under the blinding sun (0075) (the Venezuelan modernist painter Armando Reverón comes to mind). Other works reveal a rather melancholic spirit, recording a solitary character who seems to be captured without his own knowledge: a man standing in the middle of the city traffic tries to cross a busy street (7077), another one walks along the shoulder of a road (0667), a third one crosses a street that is flooded with water up to his chest (0778), a man runs in a treadmill in a glass encased gym while a horse lost in the city stares at cars driving through the streets (8246).

¹ In Brazil, there exists a phone book organized by street addresses.

² With the sole exception of one the first works in the series, 8246.

A recent work focuses on two boats anchored at sea which slowly move in uncanny synchrony, composing a casual choreography that suggests a dialog or a strange courtship ritual (0434). Marcellvs' first video recorded after his recent move to Berlin is one of his most complex works: at a train station, the camera is directed to empty tracks through a rather smudged and scratched glass window which reflects passers-by in a hallway (2003). All is still but the busy yet faint reflections and barely noticeable cars that drive by a road behind a row of trees on the left hand of the screen. No trains come or go and the image seems motionless (in fact, for the first time the artist has frozen four frames for 90 seconds each throughout the video), yet the audio of people walking, talking and trains coming and going in other tracks beyond the camera's viewpoint confer movement to the scene in a ghostly fashion.

Marcellvs has remained faithful to video for several reasons: he is interested in the "portability" of the medium, which gives him independence in production and distribution, allowing him to engage in a solitary process where he can manipulate the material during the act of recording. The resulting works retain a striking freshness, and chance seems to play a certain part in the recording of unrehearsed scenes of everyday life. It is as if Marcellvs were asking us to slow down and focus, stop and ponder, calling attention to what would otherwise pass quickly by us as quite unremarkable.