



JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING

A DENIS CÔTÉ FILM



A METAFILMS PRESENTATION

PRODUCTION SYLVAIN CORBEIL NANCY GRANT

CAMERA JESSICA LEE GAGNÉ EDITING NICOLAS ROY

SOUND FRÉDÉRIC CLOUTIER CLOVIS GOUAILLIER

CONCEPTION PRODUCTION DIRECTION DENIS CÔTÉ





QTJD

With
Guillaume Tremblay
Emilie Sigouin
Hamidou Savadogo
Ted Pluviose
Cassandre Emmanuel
Olivier Aubin

A Metafilms presentation
Writer, producer, director: Denis Côté
Producers: Sylvain Corbeil, Nancy Grant
Production coordinator: Audrey-Ann
Dupuis-Pierre
Cinematography: Jessica Lee Gagné
Sound: Frédéric Cloutier, Clovis
Gouaillier
Editor: Nicolas Roy

Canada – 2014 – 70' – HD/DCP

SYNOPSIS

An open-ended exploration of the energies and rituals of various workplaces. From one worker to another and one machine to the next; hands, faces, breaks, toil: what kind of absurdist, abstract dialogue can be started between human beings and their need to work? What is the value of the time we spend multiplying and repeating the same motions that ultimately lead to a rest — a state of repose whose quality defies definition.



Interview with **DENIS CÔTÉ**

1. Talk to us about your inspiration. Is the final product the way you'd imagined it?

I've always found it hard to come to terms with myself as an artist. I've often asked myself if some work was nobler than other work, if there is some kind of abstract hierarchy of work. What is it that makes it official that this day has been properly filled with real work? Those are somewhat tortured and pointless questions, but I wanted to hunt for a certain definition of work. Obviously I didn't find it. Next, I let myself be haunted by the terrifying idea that we all have to work and eventually find serenity, rest, a sense of accomplishment. Those are abstract questions that only a fairly abstract film can address. At first, I wanted to film the effort and beauty in the movements of work; people who lose themselves in their work, who are happy at work, who don't think about it. I knew it would lead to an allegory. I also knew the device would be shattered along the way, and that I'd include some trickery, some concocted or manufactured parts, some actors. I never intended to balance things out. Chaos, something very open, was necessary.

2. You reject issues-based cinema, preferring to take an abstract look at the world of work. The film can't be called a documentary. What should we take away from this allegory? In other words,

how should we approach or unpack the project's message, if it has one?

There's no doubt this is the kind of film-essay in the same lineage as my smaller-scale films, which look for the unfindable (*Carcasses*, *Bestiaire*) and question language. I take a great deal of pleasure in making films that don't easily reveal themselves either to me or the viewer. They need to be out there for a long time, they need to get around. We have to put words to these sound-and-image experiments. I hope viewers won't go crazy; I hope they'll watch work in action, thought in action, research in action. There's a little humour, a hypnotic element, some distancing moments, but there is no real issue or end to the film either. I enjoy watching a film get to a moment when I know I am in the process of watching a film. Maybe I don't understand it, but I turn it over and look at every side to see how we did it; I think about it, let it exist.

3. The actors and fictional parts appear late in the film. In what ways do they enrich the demonstration or the statement?

We could have filmed work for 70 minutes and left it at that. But we settled on a certain structure based on the viewer's potential level of interest and attention span. The first 45 minutes work by accretion. Something that knocks you out or stuns you, that

doesn't leave us much time to think about what we're watching.

There are hints that the film might switch to fiction, but they're subtle. I also wanted to create some distance, some breathing room. Rightly or wrongly, I wanted to put words to what we'd just seen. Unnamed characters appear in industrial settings.

They state two or three ideas about fatigue or the absurdity of spending a lifetime working. The film becomes something else. I was looking for shock, and poetry. But I wasn't looking for truths on the order of "work is this, work is that." I also wanted to avoid putting the worker on a pedestal or demonizing the boss. And of course there's nothing activist there. Cinema is too open, too full of possibilities to be used as an activist soapbox.

4. You like to alternate between more narrative projects and experimental ones. What are your ambitions for *Que ta joie demeure*?

This film will probably be seen mainly by film geeks, but it's still another brick in the cinematic structure I'm building. I need to feel totally free in between more ambitious, narrative-driven projects. QTJD is the kind of liberated film that keeps me going, keeps me creative.

5. The sound design is spectacular. What were you looking for with that almost immersive approach to sound?

There are always doubts. There were times when I told myself "nobody's going to want to watch this thing." So I looked at what I had, and found I had the ingredients and industrial landscapes to create a hypnotic and immersive soundscape. I don't want it to assault the senses, but I'm not unhappy that the film

grabs the senses and grips them tight. I think it has its mental landscape, which is very musical. You can almost watch it with your eyes closed. That meticulously crafted soundscape becomes almost a character. Viewers may like or dislike it, but either way they're going to have a strong memory of the auditory experience.

6. You chose not to film manual labour, focusing instead on heavy industry. Why did you choose those particular jobs?

I wanted to make an allegory about work, so I needed to film things steeped in connotation. There's little room for the subtlety of filming an accountant, notary or security guard. I wanted there to be motion, hands exerting strength, doing heavy lifting; bodies moving very deliberately. I was necessarily drawn to industrial jobs, where everything seems amplified. It's a cliché that the most "real" and most "noble" work is manual, repetitive, noisy, even dangerous. I dove right into that cliché. I wanted it to be explicit.

7. You filmed in several different factories. How did you explain your project to the managers and employees?

It's tough. You quickly start looking like some kind of weird tortured artist if you try to explain it in too many words. We had to present it in simple terms and prove we weren't doing industrial espionage. Some managers are delighted to help, others are completely focused on their profit and don't have time to let us hang around. Some are afraid. Some think it's dangerous. Some think we might give them exposure. You have to be discreet, not infringe on people's dignity, explain yourself when necessary. Come, go, say thanks.

8. Are there any parallels between *Que ta joie demeure* and your other films?

I think people who are familiar with my work will recognize my formalist tendencies, the precise framing, the attention to sound, the crisp edits. I think I'm very interested in the herd and the feeling of belonging to groups and communities. I very much enjoyed visiting these places where I probably never would have gone otherwise. I am solitary and not always aware or sensitive enough when I encounter a new community that has its own strict rules. I always ask myself who's the shit-disturber in the room. Whether it was the world of JP Colmor in *Carcasses*, the zoo in *Bestiaire*, the snow country of *Curling* or the village in *Etats nordiques*, I think there's always something on the verge of going haywire. Going and filming chaos and the machines' innards is absolutely an extension of the idea of a place where "something could happen."

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