

New City, 4. 1991

Reelism, Repertory and revival

Cosmopolitan filmmaker Vivian Ostrovsky is on a cross-country tour with a batch of her wonderful little films. Made between 1982 and 1988, they offer a whimsical archeology of the everyday-perceived by this visitor to New York, Moscow, Paris, Berlin, Milan, Rio, Amsterdam and Jerusalem.

For a retrospective, the Pompidou Center called her films “mosaic journals”. She’d rather be identified by gauge (Super-8mm) than by genre (e.g., experimental). In a telephone interview she demurred, “I like cats, not categories”. Cats and cute pets are inter-cut with people eating in her film “Eat”, a zoological overview of “table manners”. Editing with cartoonish music, she toys with sped-up shots and candid camera tactics, shooting from a tourist’s vantage, she relishes in microscopic takes on the mannerisms of wacky French folks at their leisure.

Before “L’ Atalante”, French director Jean Vigo made “A Propos de Nice”, a sarcastic travelogue predating Ostrovsky’s “Copacabana Beach”. Vigo believed he had caught, in 1930, “the last twitchings of a society” that would “give you nausea and make you an accomplice in a revolutionary solution”. Instead, Ostrovsky -once an author of children’s books- serves up a bourgeois apology for aerobics by the seashore and weekends in the country. The recreation, if not the revolution, will be televised.

Bill Stamets