

Filmwerkplaats Collective *Hometown*

February 28, 2019 — Yerba Buena Center For The Arts
presented in association with SFDutch

Based in Rotterdam, Netherlands, Filmwerkplaats is an artist-run collective and photochemical film lab dedicated to DIY analogue practice and to filmmaking which embraces the haptic and tactile expressivity to be found in celluloid film's "stubborn physicality." Representing Filmwerkplaats, filmed entirely in Rotterdam, the haunting, collectively authored *Hometown* (2015) interweaves sonic and imagistic contributions from collective members Nick Aberson, Lichun Tseng, Esther Urlus and Nan Wang to form a drifting, subtly surrealistic song of life and landscape—"a search for traces of heroism"—in contemporary Rotterdam.

Hometown (2015) by Filmwerkplaats Collective; 16mm, black & white, sound, 67 minutes, print from the makers

The first image in *Hometown* shows a kind of film set being demolished. Rather than being built, started off, here something is being taken down, ended. This is a good example of the unusual approach that will characterise the film. The search for 'traces and figures of heroism' and an 'imaginary fatherland' is not a simple adding up of separate parts. Rather, it is the search itself that is central—the straying, sensing and freely associating—more than attaining a sharp, clearly defined result.

A prominent role in this process is reserved for "good old" 16mm black-and-white stock. The grainy and usually somewhat bleached-out nature of the images creates an elusive sense of transience. In combination with the beautiful soundtrack, usually running asynchronously from the visuals, this makes for a film that has to be experienced instead of simply watched/heard. (International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2015)

Although photochemical film is now largely considered insignificant and ill-suited to a modern society of efficiency, instantaneity and convenience, its cumbersome machinery, awkward manual interventions and time-consuming processes nonetheless remain a desirable form of image-making among large numbers of contemporary artists.

We are now at a time that alternative infrastructures and practices allow artists to control and reinvent every stage of the once-industrial process of film production. The new sense of freedom and liberation to which this shift has given rise reframes film as a field of discovery, a photochemical playground that offers itself to the artist in the rawness and malleable nature of its physicality. It is this fascination with materials that increasingly characterizes celluloid film culture, particularly through engagements with the past as a means of reinvention and projection towards a potential future. (Esther Urlus)

The quest for an imaginary homeland, longing, memories and identity punctuate the stories of the ghost characters from this film. What kind of meaning and value in life can be derived from the connections of all things? (Lichun Tseng)

www.filmwerkplaats.org
www.nickaberson.nl
www.lichuntseng.com
www.estherurlus.hotglue.me
www.nanwang.org

Special thanks for support of this program is extended to SFDutch
www.sfdutch.com

www.sfcinematheque.org