In *Occupied*, Peter Downsibrough shoots *La Cité Administrative*, a Brussels administrative complex built in 1958. The framing emphasizes straight lines of the architectural rhythm and repetition, while slow travellings reveal a deserted place. Filming this pure architecture inhabited by ghosts provides strong experience of time and space.
Peter Downsbrough

*Occupied*

**About Occupied by Peter Downsbrough**

Peter Downsbrough’s work questions the conditions of public and private space today. His continuing interventions use language as a means of expression and relate the paradox of both dividing and assembling parts in each spatial experience. Translating facts, at each time linking fragments in a new and different way, time and again. Words express the communication system. Words become objects, get new meanings, become signs in the space. Accurate and exact divisions of lines, letters and words — a link with historic proportion systems is obvious — each time expose a new “sense”: the origin of each communication, or significance through the sign of the word.

This is the actuality/subject of Peter Downsbrough’s work: rooted in the history of our environment, he succeeds in transposing this communication system to this new world of the media. And the intention of the work is revealed precisely through using these new means: media as a means, communication as a goal. The work is carried by the simplicity of words and lines and the complexity of resulting meanings. Every “reader” (or spectator, or user, or in this case even “occupier”) places their own intonation, absorbs the work in their own way.

In addition to the private and semi-private space in which Peter Downsbrough’s work takes places, or in the context of galleries or museums, an evolution has been evidenced for several years. While today the field of Downsbrough’s work increasingly tends towards the public, the work stands up all the same and has related for over 30 years to the dialogue between this public aspect and the private character of consciousness. The work, specifically outlined as it is, opens itself through all kinds of interpretations of possibilities. In his publications, the artist notes the urban/industrial character of the living environment. Objects such as words, whether cut or not, are introduced within the simplicity of squares and rectangular frames which support the perspectivistic character of the work in a formal way, while questioning the immediate environment. This conceptual aggregate raises new views which one can no longer ignore.

And thus, more than ever, the place of occurrence translates about a non-place. Therefore, Peter Downsbrough’s work can be called atopic: it can be placed, yet not grasped in a well-defined fixed place, always relating to a specific architectural context and connected with the social conditions of the “place”, each time from a distance, as an act both away and dispersed, and close and brought together. Each place, wherever in the world, in one mutual contextual occurrence, in which the satisfaction of possession is manifested in the work itself through non-possession. Art as a sign of meaning.

An analysis of *OCCUPIED*, the title of the film that is presented here, is a first link to understanding the meaning of this work. Occupied can therefore be translated into three essential notions, such as «engaged», «a place being taken» and «inhabited». The plurality of this one word is carried further in different plans and thought levels to become, to some extent, an explanation of this film.

First, there is the direct meaning: the static formal character of the proximity, the frame in which the subject gives itself: entre parenthèses / SET. There is the second layer of the photographic/filmic aspect versus the mobility of the image. This movement manifests itself through a series of unfolding takes which in their movement undo this inherently static character: in addition to the symmetric plan — designated as the classic hold by architectural history —, and the vertical symmetry — which has been translated by exposures and made visible in reflecting images — the unfolding mainly occurs in depth. And here lies the essence of Downsbrough’s work: the direct distance between the very subject and the seeing of this subject: HERE, AND.

Yet it is especially the third meaning which moves as an underlying layer throughout the entire film: the reflective contextual character of the place of occurrence and the cognitive which can be observed and stored: TO CONTAIN / AS. And, no less than these three levels of readings, a role has been assigned to the texts, the three voices and the three visual rhythms which each coincide at specific moments, and which only then reveal the essential actual theme in this work, and that is that the meanings of the words still haven’t been assigned.

Considering all this, *OCCUPIED* deals with the ultimate of a neutral empty space, an urban non-place that is occupied by a significant massive emptiness, in which buildings, as witnesses of a modernity, form a reflective frame for a space which once formally occupied a part of the city, but that here has been transformed into a thought pattern which each user leaves behind as he/she confronts his/her own consciousness.

Christian Kickens
10.04.2000
Peter Downsbaugh

Occupied

Specifications

• 16 mm film blown up to 35 mm
• Time 18'37"
• B&W
• Dolby Stereo

• Camera............................................................Michel Houssiau S.B.C.
• Assistant Camera........................................Séverine Barde
• Editor .............................................................Rudi Maerten
• Sound and music.............................Jean-Philippe Duboscq
• Voices ..........................................................Karel Cusse-Downsbrough
• ........................................................................Brigitte De Wilde
• ........................................................................Christian Kieckens
• Mixing............................................................Jean-François Gosselin / R.T.B.F.
• ........................................................................Mathieu Cox / Cineberti
• Continuity ......................................................Catherine Tanitte
• Grip ...............................................................Pierre-François Laks
• Unit manager ................................................Mike Decaudin
• Production manager ......................Stéphane Faivre d’Arcier

• Film ...............................................................Kodak
• Film lab ..........................................................Dejonghe / Kortrijk, Belgium
• Editing studio ...........................................Le Fresnoy / Tourcoing, France
• Sound studio ................................................AD LIB / Bruxelles, Belgium
• Mixing studio ................................................R.T.B.F. / Bruxelles, Belgium
• ........................................................................Cineberti / Bruxelles, Belgium

Production

• Limited edition of 3 copies 35mm + 8 copies betacam SP or digital betacam

Produced and published in 2000 by Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (mfc-michèle didier) and Le Fresnoy, Studio National des Arts Contemporains, Le Fresnoy

*Obligatory mention: Christian Kickens