

Film & Video Panel,
A.C.G.B.,
105 Piccadilly, W1

Catherine Elwes
98 Southfield Road,
Oxford

Tel: 0865 242075

12th September 1984

Major Bursaries - VIDEO

Dear panel,

I am applying for a bursary of £2,360 to help sustain my work in 1985. My recent work is described below:

Last year I was pregnant. 'With Child' is the tape I made in response to that experience. The birth itself is, as yet, untranslatable into video. Perhaps next year. The first few months of my son's life have produced 'There is a Myth' and 'Sleep'. He and I remain the subject of my work.

Descriptions of works submitted in order of completion

There is a Myth 10 mins

The traditional icon of the mother and child is notably absent from this tape. Instead, the work centers on the image of a breast milking under the rough caress of an infant's hand. The uncompromisingly physical experience of maternal love is much in evidence. Fear of loss inspires gestural mourning and a sentimental song. Playfulness and devouring lust insist on a hearing and I am not above teasing Freudian castration anxieties.

Sleep 8 mins

An infant's face fills the screen. The baby is asleep. It breathes, sighs and periodically sucks on a dream breast. Waking, crying and yawning form dramatic high points in the tape. Poetic licence is freely used in this representation of a mother's timeless watching, of her wonderment and her desire.

With Child 18 mins

This tape involves nostalgia, waiting, pretend sex, sentiment, pretend attempted murder, a pretend baby and a real baby in utero.

Besides describing an experience of pregnancy, I was concerned to establish the camera's eye, the tape's point of view as mine and therefore female. My eyes look out from behind a pair of glasses and since men don't make passes the bespeckled artist is presented as 'de-sexed' opening up the possibility of active authorship and a redefinition of pleasure/sensuality from the 'other' p.o.v. My eyes move the story on, react to fix meaning, lose their specs and their objectivity, retrieve both and lay claim to that voluminous, voluptuous belly.

General comments

Whether constructed or genetically determined, women's social and biological experiences are substantially different from those of men. Pregnancy, childbirth and childcare revolving around breastfeeding remain exclusively female experiences in spite of medical interference. Cultural representations of motherhood are as false as those distorting female sexuality and feminist attention to this area has been understandably academic and/or slight. There is quite simply some wonderful material here that, in our flight from biological determinism we were forced to abandon. I am now ~~pl~~undering the gold-mine with a clear conscience.

In terms of form, my intention is to tether emotionally 'hot' material to careful compositions creating a degree of distanciation which, in my experience, facilitates rather than dilutes the power of the imagery. (Shock tactics are not often persuasive ^{only} and operate in the short term).

To sum up my current position:

1. I consider motherhood to be one of the few 'real' subjects worth pursuing in the face of post-everything pessimism.
2. In each work, I search out the mother's point of view as far as it can be reproduced and the child's point of view as far as it can be imagined.
3. I am working on formal skills that I should have acquired 10 years ago.
4. In spite of sleep deprivation, I am thoroughly enjoying myself - as a matter of principle.

My estimated costs over the next year are as follows:

| | £ |
|--|-------|
| Video tape stock | 1,040 |
| Photographic film & slides | 50 |
| Paper & chemicals | 20 |
| Props, backdrops, screens, paint etc. | 50 |
| Hire of additional equipment, redheads, sound mixer etc. | 400 |
| Post-production (L.V.A. effects dept.) | 800 |
| TOTAL | 2,360 |

I enclose an updated c.v. and two tapes: With Child and There is a Myth/Sleep (compilation).

Yours sincerely,



Catherine Elwes

CATHERINE ELWES

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Tel: 0865 242075

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

b. 1952. Art education: Slade School of Art, Royal College of Art. 1976-81 Member of Women Artists Collective. 1978-80 Co-organiser of 'Women's Images of Men' & 'About Time', I.C.A., London & touring. Critic and commentator on time-based art principally in Performance Magazine. Video tutor at Richmond College, London. Member of Council of Management, London Video Arts.

Recent Exhibitions

1983 Video Roma; Recent British Video, New York; Hong Kong Arts Centre; Rennes Semaine de Video, France; Women's Show Cologne; 1984 Berlin Film Festival; British Canadian Video Exchange, Toronto; 'Cross-Currents' Royal, College of Art, London; 1985 British Art Show, Australia;

Other Works

Kensington Gore, 15 mins, 1981. The story of an accident on a film set is read, mimed and ad-libbed while a throat is being carefully slit with knife, wax, paint and Kensington Gore (theatrical blood). The narrator is the make-up girl and her inability to separate reality from illusion is both a testament to her skill and a reflection of the media's power to simulate and stimulate violence,

Nostalgia, 15 mins, 1982. This tape explores and indulges a fantasy of the past - someone else's past. It fusses lovingly over details. Black lips, tight hair, a toy piano, an old tune and 'despair' scrawled across the screen in turquoise ink. The artist pretends to find refuge from an impossible present in an improbable past.

The Critic's Informed Viewing, 16 mins, 1982. The critic watches television with a pile of sandwiches and a well-trained resistance to the pernicious ideologies of mass entertainment. She is testing her immunity.