

ON A NIGHT WITH A BEAUTIFUL FULL MOON



Video, 15 min, 2007



Videostill

On a Night with a Beautiful Full Moon

a.k.a. *nozomi*

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Short synopsis:

A dream of Japan. A projection space. Longing and belonging. Filmsnippets are interwoven to reveal a subtle narrative searching its way through premeditated images and expectancies. Be taken on a surprising yet enchanting journey through colliding realities.

Description:

This musically oriented, dream-like video gently contemplates the nature of the space inbetween and the condition of longing and belonging. In an atmosphere that hovers between the deeply melancholic and the casually amusing the boundaries are probed between collective and individual, dream and reality, desire and fear, self and other, Japan and not Japan.

Freely juxtaposing different kinds of film material that were found on a journey through the internet in the quest for Japan as a utopian concept this video stands in the tradition of found footage film making. However, the emphasis is put less onto a structuralist use of the material but it is more the attempt to re-use key images with a metaphorical status .

Passages from an American WW2 anti-japanese propoganda film, archetypal parts from various animes as well as staged video footage showing two somewhat asian looking protagonists in various appearances are combined to reinvent and recreate an abstract narrative on loss, immobility and rediscovery of hope. As a result a prism is created that gives a flow and yet keeps the contradictions and unresolved opposites of paradoxical yearning.

The existence of hybrid states is taken as that of non-definition but also as that of full potentiality. The appropriation of the preexisting film material becomes the appropriation of an identity albeit fleeting and questionable.

Background:

For centuries Japan has served as a projection space par excellence. Often enough Japan has taken the function of providing a partly imaginary stage for what is alien or strange as such. With her peculiar semantic space, expressed in distinct iconography, rituals and habits it is not difficult to see why. However, the question "What is Japan? " remains not quite answered. It is a question that in the light of Japan 's post-war transformation has become even more complex, not only to non-Japanese but also to the Japanese themselves. The ubiquity of anime and manga in the everyday life of Japan is undisputed and not just a myth. So much so that in some parts of the western world anime and manga have become a synonym of and for Japan and at the same time the recent increase in the popularity of anime has led to the Japanese government capitalising on this by using Japanese pop culture as a "soft power " essentially selling a product and at the same time an image of Japan.

This forms the point of departure for this project. It is postulated that by looking at patterns that repeatedly crop up in anime TV series (e.g. in terms of characters, key imagery and plot lines) a) the world of anime can be viewed as a collective self description or that identification patterns can be identified and b) that anime itself is the result or articulation of a hybridisation even if anchored by a sense of "japaneseness ". In an abstracted replica of the country problems, traumas and desires are re-scripted to create a kind of collective alter ego of a nation.

Here I have concentrated mainly on those animation series that have an adolescent audience as their primary target even if reception may well extend beyond teenagers and that are set primarily in Japan (which the majority of series is). The action is set against exotic backgrounds from the view point of Japan, e.g. the romanticised scenery of Europe or the US, dystopian high-tech futures, current often rural Japan or appeal to "the old Japan " with medieval characteristics.

The resulting video emphasises more the dimension of sensing rather than analysis by emulating the story pattern of animation series (albeit in an abbreviated version). Thus the video is effectively retracing a scripted desire. The separation and intersection of dream and reality and the sometimes desperate search for an original identity, which is a recurrent theme in anime, can be applied both to the video and to its reference. Identity is always negotiated in pre-existing fragments of reality (or fiction).







