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Musique : du corps à l'objet

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Cinéma du réel, rétrospective

Shelly Silver

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rétrospective

SHELLY SILVER



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Cinéma du réel
Rétrospective Shelly Silver
du 19 au 29 mars

www.cinemadureel.org/fr

*37 Stories About
Leaving Home, 1996*

TROUBLE WITH THE GENRES

For nearly thirty years, Shelly Silver has been crafting cinematographic works at the crossroads of documentary fiction and video art. From these different approaches to the medium, she constructs films with political significance which describe intimacy within the public space and examine the connections between the individual and the collective.

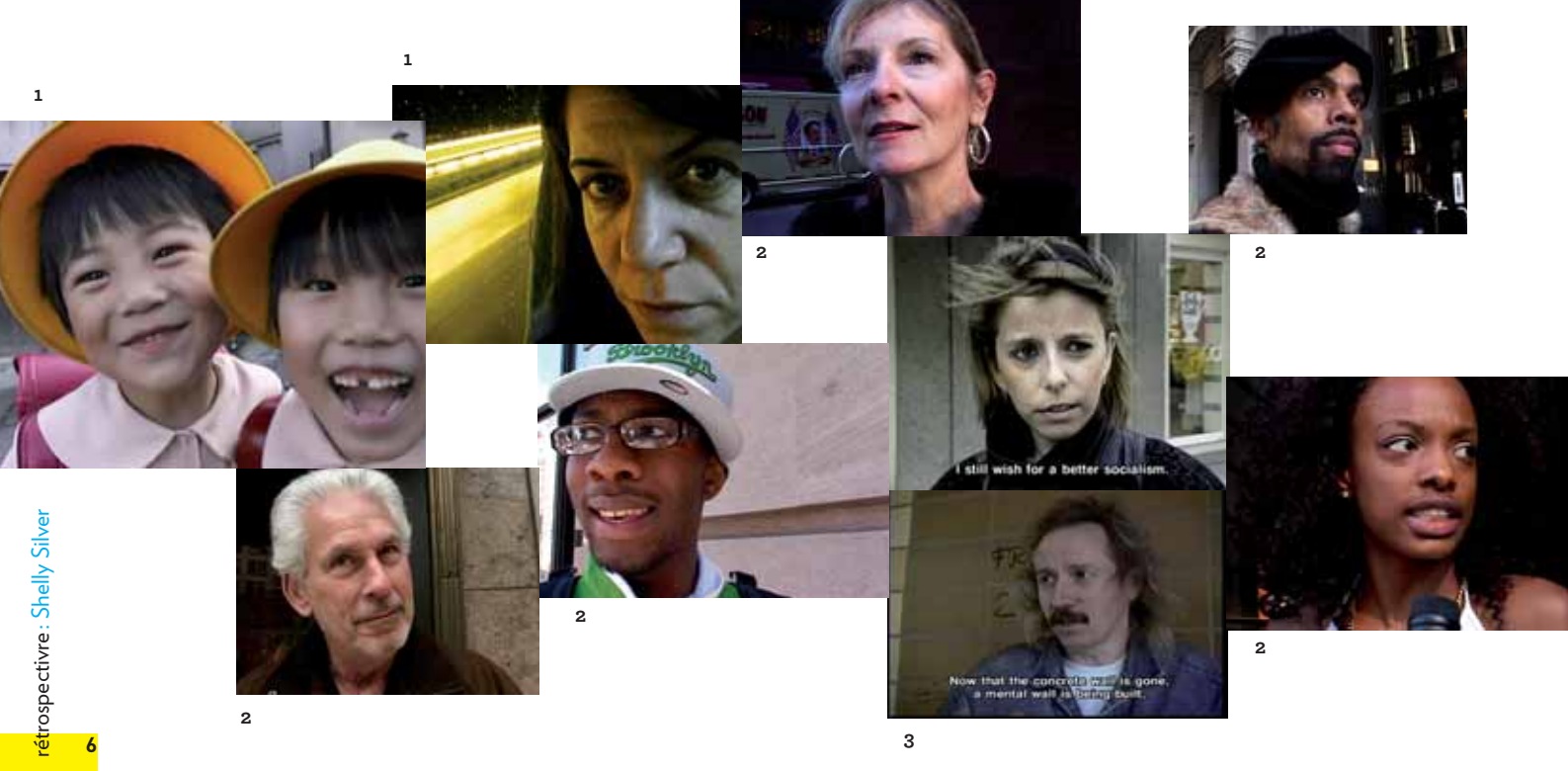
Her first production, *Meet the People* (1986), already contained the seeds of her future work. In this short film, a series of characters from different social backgrounds face the camera, confiding their aspirations and disillusionment. Many of her other films have, at heart, this same project, to represent the complexity of the social fabric and the diversity that can be found among those who live together. In *Former East/Former West* (1994), Shelly Silver sets out to meet Berliners two years after the fall of the Wall, collecting their definitions of certain words: freedom, capitalism, nationality...

Through this linguistic panorama, she tries to grasp what unites a society fractured by four decades of separation. Almost fifteen years later, in *in complete world* (2008), she questions residents of her own city, New York, on their impressions of their country at a time when the United States is mired in a war with Iraq. Seeking to know to what extent they feel implicated in their country's actions, Silver highlights the often paradoxical relationship existing in people's minds between individual action and collective responsibility. In the project of giving a voice to all, a question relating to the financial aspirations of these passers-by brutally tells of their heterogeneity. It's of course true that some voices are heard less than others. At a time when entering the army has become for some the only way to ward off a future of precarity, Shelly Silver reinvigorates democracy through cinema. By standing back in this process, she stages a dialogue of a people with themselves, to which the viewer cannot remain indifferent.

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rétrospective : Shelly Silver





Between fiction and documentary

These themes - the individual and the collective, the public space and the private sphere - run through all of Shelly Silver's filmography. She complicates them through utilizing forms that put into question the apparent evidence of the image: while in these three films, the person who questions passers-by is neither present in the sound nor image, other works are inhabited by narrators of uncertain identity. *Meet the People* already augured this disturbance by giving written and acted stories a documentary form. In *TOUCH* (2013), the man who confides his memories to us in a voice-over linked with images shot in Chinatown, turns out to be an invention formed from research, testimonies, and the imagination of the director. In *suicide* (2003), Silver accentuates the ambiguity while making it explicit, by turning her fictional protagonist into a neurotic filmmaker, to whom she lends her body and voice. In contrast, in *small lies, Big Truth* (1999), the spoken text is from an original document which is fictionalized and commented on through its filmic setting. The testimonies of Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton, compiled in the Starr report, are interpreted by four pairs of actors and juxtaposed with images filmed at a zoo, evoking the spectacle of bodies on the political stage.

Capture everything from those we encounter

Thus, Shelly Silver uses the ambiguity of representation, its always-dubious status, to expose what, too often, the image obscures: its inevitably political character. In a subtle way, all of her films help to deconstruct the representations that slyly maintain the established order, that is to say male, white, heterosexual domination. This is another aspect of the street that we thus discover: the place par excellence for living together is by the same token the arena of the gaze, whether it is desiring or excluding. Silver films these temptations that the street would like to arouse us with, through billboards, illuminated signs and shop windows. She amplifies the voices of female desire, whether in *37 Stories About Leaving Home* (1996), where Japanese women from different generations look back on lives often marked by violent social expectations, or in *suicide*, where men and women encountered in the street become objects of the heroine's fantasies. In *What I'm Looking For*, the narrator says she wants to capture everything from those she meets; she wants to keep everything. Animating still images, she tries to master this world that seems to offer itself up to her in its entirety, while recognizing that photography captures as many lies as it does truths. The street turns out to not only be a reservoir of possibilities, but also a place of denial: our gaze cannot encompass all these others who parade past us, nor remain alert in the face of the deceptive familiarity of its landscapes.

Olivia Cooper Hadjian