

Michel Auder's films and videos are recordings of his surroundings, his private life and the people around him. The French artist first began exploring video as an artistic medium in the late 1960s. Over the years he has shot thousands of hours of film, in the early days with Super 8, 16mm and 35mm cameras and subsequently embracing the latest video and digital media as they became available — right up to the camera in his mobile phone. Much of this footage was only edited by the artist many years after it was recorded, and turned into video works ranging from sequences lasting just few minutes to feature-length films.

Born in 1945 in Soissons, at the age of 17 Auder quit school and decided to go to the USA. He made his very first trip in 1962, taking a passage on a container ship, but returned to France already 12 months later. A few years later, after several spells in Paris and Rome, he settled permanently in New York, where he still lives and works today. The artist had already lived chiefly in hotels in Europe, and in New York, too, he moved into the then famous Chelsea Hotel, which was a meeting point for everyone on the art and theatre scene, and was well known for its extravagant parties and improvised happenings.

Auder began exploring and working with the medium of film from a very early stage. Influenced by French Nouvelle Vague cinema, with its zealous ambition to create a new form of film, implement new ideas and promote new filmmakers, Auder decided in his works against a conventional visual language and against established, narrative structures that he considered meaningless.

Auder's films are made in his immediate environment, collaging sequences he has shot himself and excerpts appropriated from TV. The works often include elaborate soundtracks composed by the artist himself, using found material and mixing classical and popular music with sound recorded on location. According to his friend Jonas Mekas, the Lithuanian-American director and pioneer of American avant-garde cinema, Auder really only chronicles what he wants to chronicle, and thereby juxtaposes things that occupy him, without educating, informing, banging any political drums or passing any specific social comment. He is someone who loves to watch, and to keep a record of what he has seen. It is impossible not to speak of an element of voyeurism in some of his pieces. But it is also important to clearly define where the boundary lies between voyeurism and unbiased observation of our surroundings, both things and people. Auder looks, and those viewing his films are compelled to look with him, fixing their gaze on the object of his interest and taking it as their own, becoming implicated. Between documenting reality and storytelling, Auder sets off to search for new narrative modes. Being fully aware of the normative order of existing genres and narrative strategies of film, Auder follows none of the sets of regulations that are firmly imposed on the visual field generated by the film industry, television and commerce — or at least, he does not

follow them slavishly, but asserts his freedom to remain idiosyncratic as he battles through streams of images. His decisions with regard to the treatment of the visual material are taken within a framework discreetly coloured by his personal experience while making the film.

The exhibition *Stories, Myths, Ironies, and Other Songs: Conceived, Directed, Edited, and Produced by M. Auder* borrows its name from the title and credit line of Auder's film *Stories, Myths, Ironies And Songs* (1983), which is being screened in Gallery 2. The show comprises altogether 13 video works made between 1971 and 2013.

The selection of works making up the exhibition *Stories, Myths, Ironies, and Other Songs: Conceived, Directed, Edited, and Produced by M. Auder* takes us on a journey through Auder's career as a filmmaker and captures the signature style of his oeuvre. Auder, who would describe himself as an untrained anthropologist, shows in his films both the beautiful and the terrifying sides of daily life, and looks at people coming together in situations ranging from the banal to the extreme, as painful and real as our own lives. The maker and the spectator join in the act of looking, negotiating what is there to be seen and how to look at it. It is above all when looking, and specifically when looking at other people and through someone else's eyes, that we suddenly realise the extent to which — in the familiar world that we know so well and look at every day — we have all become estranged.

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