

Interlude

Text by Claire Contamine, 2023

Night, lights, the city. The individuals lost in it. *Interlude* is like a mirage: images glimmer in the immensity of the urban desert. Are modern humans urban by nature? Has nature transformed itself to the point of becoming urban? Bertrand Cavalier's video invites us to observe our presence within defined and constructed universes. The organic and spontaneous amongst the order and discipline erected by Humans themselves. *Interlude* demonstrates the modern paradox that contemporary subjects wish to free themselves from.

The diptych depicting parallel—or complementary—scenes particularly embodies this tension. This pictorial confrontation questions the opposition between nature and culture: the megalopolis is shown in contrast to water, earth's most vital force.

In the midst of buildings, avenues, and asphalt—identifiable only in outline—the humans seem absorbed by their environment. Music drowns out any voice from being heard. A person appears on screen simply by formal presence and movement. A man's downward gaze reflects the flashing lights and digital screens flickering in the public space. In a mirror image, another protagonist observes urban spacetime from behind his sunglasses, seemingly detached from it all. The unpredictable city: it numbs, it subjugates.

Yet *Interlude*, if only by its title, invites us to see things differently. In its etymology, an interlude is defined as a diversionary lapse in time, or a short transition between two parts in a piece of music or performance. In Bertrand Cavalier's work, the subjective lightness of being reclaims space, if only for a moment. Bodies take full possession of the urban grid as a living environment in which to create and explore the in-between, resisting imposed limits. Its characters find margins of negotiation with the norm, like the young women smoking in a shot entirely framed on a ventilation grille, or another woman strolling in the middle of the night in the heart of the city. The fluidity of the human figures' movements contrasts with the inflexible verticals and horizontals of the city. They give the impression of having penetrated the matrix to better humanize it. Backgrounds are not always discernible. As the artist himself says, "I also wanted the architecture to be in motion. When filming the city, I sometimes lost my bearings in space. Sometimes I'd start filming in front of me and land on the floor or the ceiling, and elements would

become blurred, also because my camera wasn't always in focus.”¹ The technical tool used to make the film is itself subject to the vertigo it seeks to portray. Night, a deliberately chosen temporality, also contributes to these sensations. Aho Ssan's ambient soundtrack echoes the film's many perceptible yet indeterminate shots, with layers of sound superimposed, appearing, and disappearing in a floating manner. Like shadows in the night, they require precise attention to be perceived: the acute sensitivity of the sleepless.

¹ Interview with Bertrand Cavalier, Absys, October 2023