

CHRIS KRAUS

Films Before and After

10.09.2021
23.01.2022

Tabakalera
Lau Pareta

In Order to Pass, 1982
Terrorists in Love, 1983
The Golden Bowl, or Repression, 1984-88
Foolproof Illusion, 1986
Voyage to Rodez, 1986
How to Shoot a Crime, 1987
Travelling at Night, 1990
Sadness of Leaving, 1992
Gravity and Grace, 1995

Chris Kraus
Gravity and Grace
1995
Film still



The *Chris Kraus. Films before and after* exhibition is framed by Tabakalera's autumn exhibition series which addresses the relationship between cinema and other forms of creation.

In this case, the showing combines two aspects of importance to our centre, being audiovisual production and literary creation, with the latter focusing on both fiction as well as written critical texts. Both aspects are inseparable in the writer and filmmaker's work, many of whose films stem from theoretical texts and writings, while her texts use her films, images, and protagonists as a backdrop. One could say that, in the case of Kraus, film and text act as two faces of the same coin.

Thanks to collaboration with the INDEX Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, which organised the first edition of this showing in Stockholm, Tabakalera is honoured to present the work of Chris Kraus for the first time in Spain. Through the pieces included in the exhibition, Kraus speaks about the art system, the film world's upheld mechanisms of validation (or rejection), and where there is no lack of self-reference, personal notes, or direct allusions to the artistic sphere. All of this is strung together with a strong feminist point of view in which humour and irony are omnipresent. According to the exhibition's curator, Martí Manen, *Chris Kraus. Films before and after* is a project that presents Kraus transformed into a pop icon - something derived from the success of her novel and later television series *I Love Dick*.

As is becoming typical, a programme of activities has been organised to dive deeper into the exhibition's content, of particular note being the round table on art criticism as a literary genre, and a Carte Blanche to Chris Kraus that will be screened at Tabakalera's cinema. In addition, guided tours and the Arte-makina contemporary art course will be offered, which will take place in the exhibition hall itself.

Tabakalera

Donostia/San Sebastián

September 2021

CHRIS KRAUS

Films Before and After

Chris Kraus is a cultural icon. Writer, editor, and art critic Kraus has published novels that have become references on how to combine subjective experiences with theory and art. Her novels include art criticism, and her works of theory offer connections with everyday experiences. However, Chris Kraus is also a filmmaker that produced a series of films dismantling preconfigured formats and ways of understanding the emotional connection to the production of knowledge.

How to discover the limits? How to feel what we see? How to understand what we feel? Chris Kraus has been circulating around failure, desire, obsession, desperation, and self-construction using several formats and cultural practices. Though she is best known for her work as an acclaimed writer with the ability to merge fiction, theory, chronicle, philosophy and a political approach, this exhibition focuses on Chris Kraus' production of moving image during the 80s and 90s.

Being part of the 80s and 90s New York art and philosophical scene, Kraus produced a series of films with several layers and ambitions. Her films did not conform to a clear cinematic genre and did not attain the distribution Chris Kraus was aiming for. At the same time, other male colleagues had no problem getting recognition and visibility. This situation was considered a failure, but it became a trigger for her literature. In many of Chris Kraus' books we find direct references to her films and to what happened with them. As an example, we can follow the vicissitudes around the film *Gravity and Grace* (1996) as the main issues for her second novel *Aliens & Anorexia*. Throughout her literature the cross referencing of her films and moving

image pieces make appearances. In fact, Chris Kraus' writing is extremely close to the cinematic experience with characters referring to film and also "performing" film, with visually loaded descriptions and plots based on cinematic tradition. Is through the cinematic that the narrative is conformed, while it was the philosophic and the textual defining the starting point for Chris Kraus' films.

The exhibition *Chris Kraus. Films Before and After* presents the complete filmic production of Chris Kraus with films made between 1982 and 1995. The films are presented together with some examples of her crossovers between film and literature. Pages of novels such as *I Love Dick*, *Aliens & Anorexia*, *Torpor and Summer of Hate*, and theory books such as *Where Art Belongs* and *Video Green* are part of this exhibition that focuses on Kraus' ability to jump between film, literature, then return to film again while refereeing to artists, filmmakers, theorists and writers. We see books that embrace cinematographic structures and characters connecting fiction to reality. We observe films with literary structures and with references to Simone Weil and Antonin Artaud. The films of Chris Kraus can be seen at the exhibition, and they can also be felt through reading her novels and theoretical writings. Both options demand time, the time to get to know the writer and filmmaker who opens her life and experiences to become a mirror or a possibility, a set of words and feelings, a way to see and share the world.

The idea of the writer and the filmmaker, the artist that uses her production to be herself, connects the films and books by Chris Kraus to a feeling of personal truth. Kraus understands biographical information as potential material for fiction, she



Chris Kraus
Foolproof Illusion
1986
Film still



Chris Kraus
How to Shoot a Crime
1987
Film still

also brings fiction to reality, combining people and characters, humans, and personas. Bodies, gazes, and role-shifting create a filmic landscape of strange proximity and distance: we can see a fiction that is aware of the fictional, we can see performativity that sees acting itself.

For Chris Kraus, to perform (understanding writing or filming as almost a personal projection) is a way to channel intimate information whilst being aware that there is an audience to relate to. At the same time, Kraus understands the creative practice as a system to recognize the work of others: her films and books are universes of references, quotes and collective knowledge revealing the presence of other people.

The films at the exhibition offer a variety of encounters from experimental exercises with layers of texts to broken narrative structures, from performative situations to visual constructions, from amateurism to professional cinema, from theory to practice, from desire to frustration. The films of Chris Kraus are a condensed approach to multiple ideas coming from philosophy and the voracity of life. To look back at the films today, a few decades later, gives us the opportunity to think about historicity, distance, nostalgia, and reflections, while observing ideas and power-based relationships still dominant today. Kraus has the ability to bring reality into fiction and to use biographic material as narrative content, something that we can directly see in her filmic production. Certain characters that appear in her films are also a moment and place of history: Chris Kraus' films can be understood as memory vessels for an underground scene of philosophical thoughts and precarious practices.

Chris Kraus was already deeply engaged with text when she decided to make films. We find a good example in her first film —*In order to pass*— where Kraus asks a philosopher to write an essay specifically for the film about the difference between memory and reflection. The resulting text becomes the structure and it is embedded in the film. Text illustrates pictures and pictures illustrate text. We could say that the films by Chris Kraus are constructed with this relationship as a central question.

The exhibition *Chris Kraus. Films Before and After* presents the films of Chris Kraus in a situation in between the archive, the exhibitional and the cinematic. Visitors can watch the films on monitors or projected, and can read them when they are part of books. And books are also projected to become filmic material again. The films of Chris Kraus offer a kaleidoscopic perception of identity. We can see multiplicity; we can see a juxtaposition of languages and a desire to break definitions. But this almost punk attitude has on the other side – if it is another side – a complex system of philosophic references, literary quotes, and a network of political and identity-based action. This complexity in the hands of a woman in New York during the 80s and the 90s was one of the reasons for the failure of the distribution and presentation of the films of Chris Kraus: the films are complex and difficult to categorize. Their individuality and use of multiple languages offer us a voice that can't easily be defined. Many years later, the films by Chris Kraus interact with a landscape of fast image and changing identities, constructed social personas and multiple layers.

Marti Manen & Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris

List of films

Gravity and Grace, 1995

Película de 16 mm transferida a vídeo
89'

Sadness of Leaving, 1992

Super-8 transferido a vídeo ¾
26'54"

Travelling at night, 1990

Vídeo digital
11'54"

How to Shoot a Crime, 1987

Codirector: Sylvère Lotringer
Vídeo digital
28'50"

Foolproof Illusion, 1986

Vídeo digital
17'41"

The Golden Bowl, or Repression, 1984-88

Película de 16 mm transferida a vídeo ¾
12'23"

Terrorists in Love, 1983

Super-8 transferido a vídeo ¾
5'20"

In Order to Pass, 1982

Super-8 transferido a vídeo ¾
26'54"

Voyage to Rodez, 1986

Codirector: Sylvère Lotringer
Película de 16 mm transferida a vídeo
13'58"



Chris Kraus

*The Golden Bowl, or
Repression*
1984-88
Film still

Programme of activities

Kameleoiaak Gara!

Lau Pareta

Art in family

November 16 11:00 EU/ES

December 18 11:00 EU/ES

Arte-makina

Lau Pareta

An approach to contemporary art

November 11 18:00 Estibaliz Sádaba/ES

Visits in dialogue

Lau Pareta

November 18 18:00 ES

19:00 EU

December 23 18:00 ES

19:00 EU

Conference

Online

December 15 19:00 **Chris Kraus, Martí Manen**

Round table

Z Hall

January 14 18:00 *Criticism as a Literary Genre*

Carte blanche: Chris Kraus

Cinema

December 18 19:00 *Reportero*, **Bernardo Ruiz**
México, 2012, 71'



Chris Kraus
Terrorists in Love
1983
Film still

TABAKALERA



**INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE FOR
CONTEMPORARY
CULTURE**



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Exhibition Hall opening hours

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12:00 – 14:00 / 16:00 – 20:00

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Chris Kraus. Films Before and After is a coproduction
between Tabakalera and Index Foundation of Stockholm.

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