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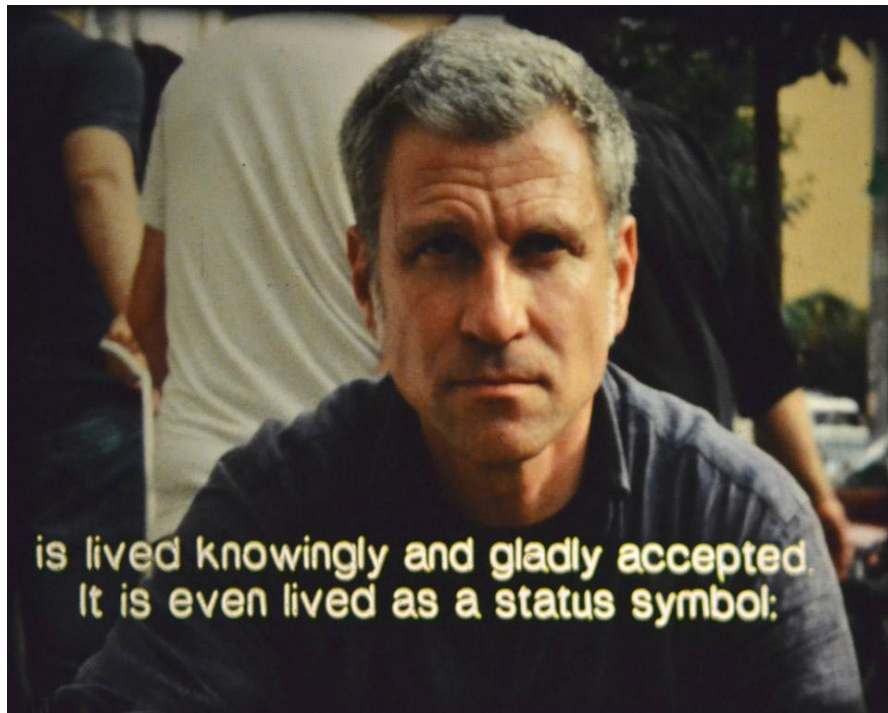
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The suburb could well be more of a Platonic object than a real place, especially when it is styled as "Pasolinian". We all know what to expect of this category and visualise or picture in our imaginations everything we need to know about it to justify our inherited sociological theories. Seeing it, exploring it or actually touching the empirical base of our predetermined conclusions may constitute unnecessary trouble, the needless repetition of a scientific experiment already conducted by others in different laboratories and with better instruments. This is, of course, not true.

Verification of Pier Paolo Pasolini's experiment is at the core of a new film by English artist Rosalind Nashashibi, *Carlo's Vision*; approximately 10 minutes of 16mm film in colour, presented almost simultaneously by the Nomads Foundation in Rome and Peep-Hole in Milan. The film picks up on an image in *Petrolia*, following a sort of procession through the streets of the Rome suburb of Torpignattara.

Three male figures, defined as "gods", arduously pull a cart that looks like a camera dolly; seated on it is a silent, pensive man with his back to them, facing a landscape that is withdrawing from him. He has strongly "Roman" features and his face bears the hint of a smile. Their journey alternates with views of a couple (is it a wedding procession?) walking slowly in the same direction, arm in arm. Between the two, the camera sometimes lingers on details in the streets they pass through, the faces of the passers-by and the cars. A coloured filter is used in some frames, with no seeming regularity, to suddenly add a strong hue.



As they progress, we hear what appear to be the thoughts of two of the "gods", interpreted by literary critic Andrea Cortellessa and political commentator Daniele Balicco. The gods comment on what they see, what they think they see and what they know about that theoretical suburban form they are passing through. The first speaks of the role played by sexuality and how sexuality is perceived in suburban life; the second talks about the history of Rome's suburbs in terms of urban politics—their detachment from the city centre and their chaotic planning. They discuss television and urban models and the history of morals and power. The pair's thoughts alternate as if in a dialogue between two deaf people or the clash between two people describing the same phenomenon seen through different eyes or with different obsessions. It is not clear how much of this filters through to Carlo, who is being pulled by the gods and whose smile seems, at times, to be a terse comment on what the viewer is hearing.



Like replicating an experiment when the surrounding conditions change, Nashashibi's work shows both the validity of the—sociological and political—theories behind them and the fundamental detachment, deafness almost, between the subject and the theory.



Although Cortellessa and Balicco's words (which although fragmentary are probing and curiously complementary in their provision of a socio-political phenomenology of the suburb) make no explicit references to the images they accompany, they sometimes create an unexpected contrast between what we are seeing and what we are hearing—they talk of general culpability and one group of passers-by looks straight at the camera, their eyes showing a mix of curiosity, shyness and defiance. We hear that the "common people" no longer exist and see three working-class men chatting and joking to pass time at the entrance to a shop. The gods' theories are sound, convincing and illuminating yet they fail to capture the essence of what we see. They do not really grasp the context; like the camera filters that change the colours, they light it up and make it surprising or splendid but they only seem to scratch the surface of what we see. There are the theories and then there is everything else.



The crucial point of *Carlo's Vision* lies in this contrast between the defining word and the hesitant gaze. There have, in recent times, been frequent attempts to find an at times unlikely application of Pasolini's analyses to the present day, celebrating their importance at the risk of distorting them to fit today's reality. Like replicating an experiment when the surrounding conditions change, Nashashibi's work shows both the validity of the—sociological and political—theories behind them and the fundamental detachment, deafness almost, between the subject and the theory. The "Pasolini" category proves fertile but also fragile and even so cumbersome that it obscures the most immediate and "human" essence of what it is seeking to grasp.



The gods pass through Torpignattara in their mysterious procession like explorers with the wrong map or just a partial map or like medieval scientists desperately trying to impose a theological and rational order to a nature that follows its own rules. The images that accompany them could be of any city; they are details of actions and shreds of landscape. What makes them and distinguishes them as suburban is not, perhaps, an intrinsic characteristic but their position compared with other places—the city centre—and the subordinate and detached relationship they have with them. The suburb is in the eyes of the beholder, of the gods and of Pasolini. And in Carlo's vision?

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