

SYNTAGMA

THE GRAVEL AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN IS BEATEN SORE BY YOUR SHADOW.
THE DESIRE OF MY MOUTH SHATTERS AGAINST THE REEFS OF ITS OPENING.

The 'body' and specifically the 'woman's body' is often used as a focus for questions of origin, subject-object relations, political resistance and sexuality. It may appear that this is also the central issue of SYNTAGMA, yet Valie Export's notion of 'body language' (Körpersprache) poses an ironic relation to these questions that actually acknowledges 'the end of the body' or at least the final break with the way in which we understand it to be a biological, existential, or metaphysical entity.

Export has broken away from any notion of unity — either of body, space, or time — into a fragmented world of doubling and difference that is caught in representation. Through a vision that is tactile without contact she depicts the non-coincidence of the present with itself — the schizophrenic breakdown of identity. The 'body' and its metaphors — mattresses, book-texts, printed photographic paper, t.v. monitors, etc — are all shown in the film as 'speaking'; however, 'body speech' does not issue from a place of cohesion, but as a selected movement, like circuitry within a system. Simply, the 'subject' of any given time or speech-act is a 'syntagma' in the sense of a piece of machine language in a computer. The beginning of the film's title shows the image of two strips of film leader. Slowly two hands are seen pushing their way into the space occupied by the strips of leader. The hands make room for themselves in the center of the image and spell out, letter by letter, 'SYNTAGMA' in sign language.

Export seems critical of the opposition between a metaphysics of the body, nostalgically and ceremonially retained in our age, and the body of the 21st century which is functionally the equivalent of a machine that produces meaning. As the speaker (nunciator) of the film she seems inbetween the opposition — at the wake of the organic body preceeding the creation of the completely intelligible body.

Valerie Mamenti, San Francisco

SYNTAGMA is like a gaze someone exchanges with himself/herself, as if he/she were two people, the gaze of the eyes at themselves and the gaze of the camera. Through these two eyes the gaze alone is perceived. Identity reflections, the mirror as what is impenetrable, like a disquising veil. The more the mirror reflects, the more it moves into oblivion as an impenetrable object, even if it is imprinting itself with images.

V. E.



Director:	Valie Export	Cast:	Irmilin Hofer
Script		Camera:	Fritz Köberl
Editor:	Valie Export	Music:	Hans Hartel

16 mm/color • magnetic sound • 18 min.

Distribution:

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