

Tracking Shots

The Films of Andrej Zdravic at Anthology

By **Aaron Hillis**

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With physical nature as his muse, Andrej Zdravic doesn't capture beauty in the mundane but in the microcosmic; for more than three decades, the Slovenian-born film and sound artist has proved that hypnotic elemental poetry can literally be found under a rock (or underwater, over the clouds, et al.). There aren't many human forms glimpsed in Anthology's four-program survey of Zdravic's career, but unlike the patient watch of a James Benning landscape, there's motion and energy and chaos to engage with in his impeccable framings. His deceptively organic soundscapes—pulsing ambient noises looped just within earshot—are perhaps even more evocative than his imagery; add a glockenspiel to the mix, and it might sound like a primal, post-rock band from Brooklyn. In *Riverglass*, Zdravic dips his camera into running streams and gently abstracts his findings, so that tranquil magic happens in the brief moment it takes to orient oneself—there's suddenly drama in the whooshing life of a bubble or a fish swimming backwards. (And why haven't we appreciated the underside of the water's surface before?) Zdravic is hardly precious with his moving photographs, each new texture lasting only a few seconds before cross-fading to the next, while tinkly chimes underscore a sonic crescendo from slow current to gushing tsunami. *Origin* transforms the gloopy lava of a volcanic eruption into an earthly gut wound, while shadowy ash rises like a golem crawling out of Hell. When pulled out of focus, the floating flock of Buddhist ceremonial candle lanterns in *Obon* look like the fireflies from the film's start—or were there ever fireflies? At its most challenging, the hour-long *Anastomosis* reduces mankind to its curious, fragile, imperfect hands—one moment rolling dough, the next being dissected and operated on by other hands in squeamish close-up. Like any quintessential Zdravic work, it's sophisticated enough to be a museum installation, clever enough for a Wholphin DVD menu, and rad enough for stoners in need of a new screensaver.

Details:

The Films of Andrej Zdravic

Anthology Film Archives, November 21–23