

Lars von Trier's 'Melancholia: The Diamond' at M HKA

8 February – 5 May 2019

Opening to the public on Thursday, 7 February

I want to supplement each film with a monument – a monument made out of diamonds! Indestructible. Or to put it another way, I want to add an extra 'C' to the universal grading system of Color, Cut, Clarity and Carat, namely Creativity.

– Lars von Trier

Lars von Trier is a voice that contemporary culture really listens to, with ever-apprehensive enjoyment. What might he say and do next? His unpredictability is a crucial part of our enjoyment. Now, for the first time in more than twenty years, he presents a new work conceived for an exhibition context.

The first documentary von Trier made at film school was about diamonds, and the fascination with these stones has stayed with him ever since. A few years ago, he launched the idea to 'execute re-workings of carefully selected diamonds that thematically each spring from one of my films'.

M HKA, the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, is delighted to present 'Melancholia: The Diamond' in collaboration with von Trier himself, with Marianne Slot and with Leonid Ogarev, who initiated and supported this exhibition project, which we daresay is something new – certainly for M HKA but also for von Trier. Both exhibition and event, both thought-image and self-professed monument, 'Melancholia: The Diamond' subverts and reformats our understanding of entertainment, interactivity, artistic experimentation and critical reflection – the stuff that museums of contemporary art are made of.

To rearticulate the hard core of his film *Melancholia*, released in 2011, von Trier had a rare twin diamond – two stones grown together hundreds of millions of years ago – cut in ambiguous ways: neither raw nor finished with all the polished surfaces required by the diamond industry. As far as we know, this is the only diamond of its caste (around 12 carats) to have been fashioned into a thought-form rather than a wearable work of art. It could not be mounted in a ring or brooch; it could only be held and turned by a viewer inspecting its carefully calibrated irregularities.

In *The Time-Image*, his second book on cinema, philosopher Gilles Deleuze coined the term 'crystal-image' to describe not only the complexities of mirroring but also how the flow of time can be contracted into an 'extreme point'. At M HKA, as if to illustrate this, von Trier's diamond is displayed in a large, high-ceilinged, pointedly triangular hall, in three different guises: as 'the thing-in-itself', as a wall text by von Trier himself and as a VR (Virtual Reality) experience to be enjoyed by one person at the time for no more than two minutes.

We daresay that this manipulable real-time simulation of the twin diamond – developed and produced by Leonid Ogarev in Moscow – is also something new in the worlds of contemporary art, VR and diamonds alike. It allows anyone to view the stone as if it were, indeed, the likely outcome of the film *Melancholia*: a dead twin planet twirling in black space. We can hold it, turn it around, push it back, dream about it and even penetrate its half-cut-half-uncut surface and roam an inner universe of light.

The diamond was cut by ANWERP CUT – Mike Akiki. The VR was produced by IP OGAREV Head of Digital Anastasiya Tarasova. The exhibition was coordinated by M HKA Senior Curator Anders Kreuger.

'Melancholia: The Diamond' is accompanied by a comprehensive screening programme at Cinema Zuid, the art-house cinema that is part of M HKA. All of Lars von Trier's films, including his latest

release *The House That Jack Built*, will be shown there in February, March and April 2019.

M HKA, Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp is an initiative of the Flemish Community and is supported by the City of Antwerp, Klara, H ART, De Standaard, De Olifant and Allen & Overy.

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