



IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE MICHAEL RABIGER CENTER FOR DOCUMENTARY FILM AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO

Reviews

In Order Not to Be Here (2002)

Written by Andrew Rosinski



In Order Not to Be Here is the inspired, award-winning vision from Chicago-based experimental filmmaker and artist Deborah Stratman. Rife with creepiness, *In Order* feels like a bad-dream—or a leaked surveillance video from a lurking shadow government—it's a dreamy, objectively-haunting, quasi-surveillance video. It's also a film that poses many questions, one being the inevitable query of categorization: docudrama or experimental narrative?

In Order opens with an aerial, infrared intelligence video of a k9-team, who is in the midst of a hunt; following radio command from an offscreen surveyor, the dog-team slogs through darkness to capture an unknown figure.

A more subdued middle-passage succeeds this gripping opening, shifting focus to an indexing of familiar suburban imagery (e.g. fast-food, fences, street-lights); alas, we confront the bleak reality of our consumer-driven milieu—and, yes, it's also a reminder that we know the characteristics of a McDonald's building far too well (!).

A memorable chase scene book-ends this and, again, Stratman experiments with the aerial point of view camera. In fact, Deborah employs a handful of experimental film techniques throughout, including modified usage of the *Kuleshov Effect*, which proves to be sharply effective in a small number of instances, the most notable being audio from a news report (or quasi-news report) detailing a fire, which plays over this concluding chase, and, in turn, bestowing new meaning upon the image—altering a unknown runner into a *fleeing arsonist*, adding a sense of suspense and story.

Subversive and soigne, subterranean and shadowy, *In Order Not to Be Here* is trenchant proof that Deborah Stratman is a trail-blazer clearing her way to the forefront of contemporary experimental film. ▲

Deborah will screen and discuss her newest work, an 55 minute experimental doc, O'er the Land (2008), on 4/15/09, part of Viva Documentary's Winter Film Series. Deborah's doc, The BLVD ('99), examines Chicago's the subterranean street-racing culture, and will screen at viva doc on 4/7/09).