

On *Rest* by Jacob Fabricius

“Do you ever feel like your own mind is like a room that you can’t get out of? No matter how many doors there are, you keep pacing in circles.” This sentence from Erdal Bilici’s new film for his exhibition *Rest* at 44Møen keeps getting stuck in my head.

It creates sparks, twinkles of thought, while Bilici’s film sequences flash in front of my eyes.

They remind me of a film I recently saw again, 25 years later. The flickering images, the dreamy narrative, the beauty, the uncanniness, the emotional rants, the fragmented horror and epic visions have stayed with me since then.

Over the years this film has come to me in flashes. A glimpse from the past. Isn’t it weird how certain things return to you, years after forgetting them?

Art, music, and films are embedded in the bones, like a tissue of invisible substance. Small scars of joy. All the unnecessary knowledge that the mind encapsulates and keeps in a kind of blind spot of the beholder.

I guess this invisibility of the body is what one might call memory. It makes me think of how we collect and assemble fragmented memories. Filmmakers project webs of hints that help us piece narratives together – to create a dreamy state of remembrance.

The theme of the cave is a recurring one in Bilici’s practice. Caves are natural voids under the Earth’s surface – scars in the landscape, hidden pockets of air formed by the weathering of rocks that sometimes extend deep underground. The cave is, in a sense, a transformer, because it carries time. It encapsulates time. Both human and non-human activity have taken place there. The traces of time have been well preserved in this environment – not only due to the cave’s hiddenness and accessibility, but also because of its climate.

In caves, time has an embedded slow-motion function that preserves it. Stalactites represent the slow 'dripping' of time, growing from ceiling to the floor, while stalagmites rise up from the ground. The myths around caves are significant and varied, but over time, caves have been used for escape, shelter, housing, and much more. In Erdal Bilici's work they represent a mental state – a safe space with no doors nor handles. A hollow space that should be guarded and protected as *cave canem*<sup>1</sup>!

The exhibition *Rest* presents a glimpse from the past. It includes two new works that both play with the idea of intensity, exhaustion, and entropy. It plays with flashes of memory. The video work unfolds in three key parts, with spaces of physical, metaphorical, and psychological invisible tissue.

We encounter various characters—engaged in jogging, walking, or doing push-ups — who share their anecdotes as the scenes gradually build. Whilst jogging, a character describes how material and information is stolen, found, and gathered to build, assemble, and make a new environment: a safe space, a cave, and potential paradise to enter. Another character describes the process of making a work (of art). During his meta-speech, he also tells the story of the studio, the artist, and the artist's way of making a room of one's own.

The narrative develops around three stories. The first sequence is an autobiographical account of searching for a tag in a cave.

We meet a character, in a dinner like setting, recounting his trip in search of a cave on the West coast of Turkey, in pursuit of a mark left by a 19th-century archaeologist. In a second sequence, there is a progressive close up of a clarinet player, filtered through quick flashes. an opaque, dreamy light, whilst the camera is panning and showing details of a dusty, spider web covered grand piano.

---

<sup>1</sup> This inscription, which in Latin means "Beware of the dog", was used to warn some ill-intentioned person or those about to enter the owner's dwelling that there was a vicious dog there. *Cave canem* was placed at the entrance to the houses of the ancient Romans. The most famous is the one found on a floor mosaic in the house of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii.

The third movement is a photo-flash sequence, showing a bridge and an urban, deteriorating landscape, serving both as a visual and psychological leitmotif, and as an uncanny blind spot of memory.

The three sequences subtly share the idea of the cave. They reference the sense of being enclosed, of being preserved in time, and represent relics of time.

Restlessness is the quality of being unwilling or unable to stay still, quiet, and calm. Rest, by contrast, is the opposite: to stop being activated, to be willing and able to relax - to recover.

The second part of the exhibition displays a photographic installation. Here, photographic flashes – only visible in short iterations – create a surprise to the eyes innermost, light-sensitive tissue: the retina. In a reflective box room – similar to the frame's inner mechanism itself – there hangs an image and a drawing of a resting hand wearing an ornamented gauntlet.

Installed in the hidden attic of PS44, a second photo depicts the outside of a cave - an image that reminds me of Casper David Friedrich's paintings. The image displays a dramatic and overpowering landscape, as if time were suspended, as if it were the calm before the storm, as if it were a black hole that overrules and swallows' humankind.

The exhibition *Rest* tries to ooze time. It makes us ponder, reminds us of our anxieties, and how we may have to let go. It makes us want to stay within that room and forget about doors and keys.