

## Salla Tykkä

Delfina Project Space,  
London

Not many art works make me want to cry. I can think of plenty of Hollywood films that have had that effect, but art is rarely so blatant. Artists who work with film often strip away the more novelistic concerns of conventional movie making, employing a Minimalist logic to explore the formal properties of the medium and so clear a space for both cerebral contemplation and analytical thought.

Tykkä's diminutive epic employs a narrative drive and restrained cinematography at odds with the soundtrack and magical lasso throwing.

Salla Tykkä's three-minute video projection *Lasso* (2000) is a meticulously structured investigation of the mechanics of cinematic production and performance. What is striking about the video, however, is its successful collision of 'high' art concerns with a more elliptical, romantic impulse.

*Lasso* opens with the shot of a teenage girl jogging through an

affluent Helsinki suburb. She turns into the driveway of a Modernist house, goes up to the door and rings the bell. No answer. Full of purpose and seemingly on familiar territory, she walks around the side of the house and peers through a large plate glass window. A haunting, eerie soundtrack starts up – Ennio Morricone's score from *Once Upon a Time in The West* (1969). The music builds. Cut to a shot through the window of a bare chested, young man frenetically twirling a lasso. The camera moves inside the house to record the man's performance in slow motion. He leaps in and out of the spinning lasso, working it faster and

faster, his face contorted by manic energy. The camera circles around him: he is framed by the edge of a piano, paintings, a plush white armchair, an ornate dining table and chairs. Like the girl outside, pressed against the window, you become transfixed by the vigour and dexterity of his performance, seduced by his will and absorption in the act itself. The tension is emphasized

by the schmaltzy music which reaches a hysterical crescendo as he suddenly whacks the lasso onto the ground with a terrible crack back into real time. Cutting to the girl's startled face you see her breath on the window pane; tears or sweat runs down her face. She steps away from the window and the camera pans out to focus on a patch of thawing ice.

Tykkä's diminutive epic possesses a deceptively simple narrative and utilises a restrained cinematography which is at odds with the overblown soundtrack, the magic of the spectacular lasso performance and the erotic charge of the voyeurism. The film's score, like the man's display, is faintly ridiculous and entirely seductive. You oscillate between being carried away by the visual pleasure generated by the spectacle to coolly observing the details of the bourgeois interior; from pondering the sociological and psychological implications of an uncanny display in the familial living room, to the detached consideration of his performance as a theatrical sculptural presence in a Modernist enclosure. You wonder at the reflection of the girl in the window outside, her engagement with the scene, her relationship to the man, your connection with the image; or the subtle shifts of drama and

suspense, the lingering shots, the swift edits, slow motion, 'real' time, filmic time, dream time. Occasionally the music is so sweeping and intense that it dominates the gallery space. The man's display of skill, speed and control is contrasted with the passive role of the female observer; he signals wildness yet appears as a dream-like vision, sealed inside the house like an alluring object for the more active gaze of the girl in the 'natural' environment.

I'm still left wondering about what it was that made me want to cry. In all the best tear jerkers you might think you identify with the hero or heroine but you're only ever really crying about yourself. There's a terrible politics at play here and it is difficult to unpack the many layers that Tykkä builds into her film. Suffice to say the shots you remember are of the man twirling the lasso and the woman's eyes watching his performance. I like the way that, although melancholy, the film also manages to induce a weird feeling of euphoria. Tykkä conflates Modernism and kitsch, the epic and the everyday, in a film which could be described as perfect academic Pop but which still conjures a space of wonder and delight.

Polly Staple

