

1,2,3, Once Again

Director Vasco Diogo

The film "1,2,3, Once Again" directed by Vasco Diogo is an experimental documentary work fixing therapeutic programs with people with Alzheimer. The film is shot in a minimalist manner: the same angles, the long shots, and a minimum of the close-ups. The film is missing the author as an active narrator – no narration, no explanation. The director of the film takes the position of an outside observer and simply captures what is happening.

This documentary has no clear structure and dramaturgy. We see the episodes filmed for some time in a psychiatric hospital. We see the same people teaching the same verses because they forget them. We can hardly remember the faces of these people after the end of the film, as if we were infected with Alzheimer's disease. There is no final to which the characters are moving. The director seems to give us the opportunity to peek into the keyhole and see life from the inside out.

The characters of the film are elderly people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The author manages to evoke empathy for these people, although we do not see them outside of group classes. The main director's achievement - he suggests a viewer to think about his own life.

The oldness is very fertile topic theme for documentary, as it able to raise the most profound spiritual experiences in the spectator. However, the director's position creates too long a distance between the viewer and the characters. The long shots do not allow the viewer to single out one character and to feel sympathy for him and follow his changes. We observe people in the group, but their interaction with each other does not reveal them. We see how they dance or play music, we hear their words, however they are not generated by their will, but by the demand of therapy. Thus, we observe the characters only in the process of treatment and do not see how they behave in a more natural environment. In this case by the same director's distance we could get more emotional movie with the disclosure of the characters. However, this is not happening.

Instead, we observe the characters in some artificial situation, where the main character is a psychologist, and they are the performers of his tasks. If the director wanted to show a series of group sessions with people suffering from Alzheimer's disease, he was quite successful. Despite the protracted and monotonous rhythm, the film gives the food for thought. The oldness with its diseases, the helplessness and loneliness are too sad but inevitable end of human life. Looking at these elderly people, we couldn't help but think of the transience of human life. Like children, these old people learn simple poems and songs. Only if children do it for development and for the future life, the elderly do it because they need to save the remnants of reason. The scenes where the old people learn the same poems day by day born the strongest metaphor of human existence. At the level of audience perception this is a film about the thirst for life, that is, how an attempt to overcome the disease becomes the meaning of life. Even if the disease is invincible, you can never give up. We have to fight again and again.