

Monika Oechsler *The Chase*

Jan Verwort

“*The Chase* shows a race between a woman and a man on a 400-meter track in a sports arena, they are wearing simple, black sports clothing, both have sporty and thin physiques, and they seem almost androgynous. The woman is slightly ahead at the beginning of the race, but her pursuer is immediately at her heels. She hurriedly looks about in agitation. He closes in and tries to pass her. He even pulls at her hair and her tricot for a moment in order to keep her from going farther. Yet she unflinchingly runs on. Her strained breathing and racing heartbeat can be heard. The man repeatedly attempts to overtake her, tries to make eye contact and gives her a combative smile. Their hectic running movements echo the dynamic camera work. The female runner seems to be just as much under the pressure of the camera as of her pursuer: extreme close-ups and over-the-shoulder shots from the perspective of the nearing pursuer create a feeling of oppressive physical closeness.”

“With *The Chase*, Oechsler succeeds in creating a feeling of threateningly intense psychological strain with simple means. The physical and nerve-racking tension of the female runner can be directly empathised. The interpretation of the racing situation, however, is left completely open. It is reminiscent of the archetypal nightmare of not being able to escape a pursuer because of not being able to move from the spot despite great effort. It can also be understood as a race between two people who are a couple; whose rivalry is that much more aggressive because of the intimacy of their relationship. The video consciously refuses to offer a deeper psychological analysis of the scene inasmuch as it does not offer any background information on the runners’ personalities.

In *The Chase* Oechsler isolates a feeling of psychological pressure and portrays it in its purest form. Her language of images is neither expressionist nor exaggerated with symbols in any way. Instead, it is extremely matter-of-fact. The race could have taken place at any sports arena, as Oechsler shows it. The presentation of the event is not overly dramatic. The tension between the figures does not climax. It remains unchangingly persistent. A liberating moment of catharsis does not occur. The images in *The Chase* then seem so threatening because the psychological strain is portrayed as the permanent condition of inter-human rivalry. The ‘chase’ continues on and on.”

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