

"Throng. Figure."

by Michael Szpakowski.

Doron Golan is a sorcerer. He has for 15 or more years generated magic in his moving image work but lately he does it in the most extraordinarily off-hand, effortless way, with the simplest of procedures and tools. He hovers calmly and mercilessly, like a bird of prey, waiting to find his subject. And nowadays it often is that – found. The thing he will witness and then testify to.

Rhetoric, verbal or visual, is foreign to him; judgement too. He witnesses, he records the things he witnesses and puts a twist or fold in them to enabling us to view them as if through a glass from some other world.

Also: he is incorruptible. He doesn't care for fashion, or for guessing what others might want to see. Simply this – he waits, he witnesses and he testifies.

There is something of that odd thing, the late style, to it. No blind following of precedent or rules, but neither simple defiance for the sake of it; no cuddling up to the viewer nor strutting about to show what a big and clever person he is.

He matches the simplest of technical moves (with the confidence born of long experience, like a seasoned old carpenter or midwife) precisely to need - the camera attached to a stick, held aloft for an hour and a half in 2011, witnessing the passing by of the march of the million in Tel Aviv, the footage subsequently subjected to an edge finding and threshold type filter. The filter both anonymises and particularises. Text (placards, Hebrew; T Shirts, English - "Fish & Chips" my favourite) emerges crystal clear, faces and bodies blur into types. Powerful waves of resultant rhythms, visual, aural or both together, break free periodically – the handclaps, the arms in the air, the chants. The strange fact of certain strikingly patterned *shirts* taking centre stage. The overall sense of this collective creature: the masses. And the intuition, despite some contingent

political facts, of how this crowd resembles other crowds of human beings – in London, Madrid, Cairo or Teheran. And of some utopia that this might suggest.

And *painterly*, a term often deployed carelessly in a moving image context, here does exactly the right work – there is a density and palpability to this work and a rich sense of texture. Furthermore, the self imposed limits under which Golan works demand a *painterly* sort of spectatorship in the viewer - really appreciating this work makes similar tough demands upon our looking and listening ( and imagination.)

The painting connection is quite explicit in the other two, looping pieces, sparked from an engagement with the work of Francis Bacon. The actor, Hezy, a striking looking older man, “acts” minimally and gracefully – he sits, he turns, he raises an arm, he casts a shadow. Golan forcefully reconfigures these universal gestures by *that particular face, that particular body*, with a filter that progressively skews the image in a kind of spiral, the more skewed the nearer we get to some origin or centre.

In the times in which we live such skewing might suggest the twisting of the body by age or illness, disaster or war. And that is a possibility. But so is calm at the centre of a storm and so is some hitherto unknown transport of ecstasy.

Michael Szpakowski is an artist, composer & writer based in the UK. He has written extensively on new media arts and is a joint editor of the online video resource DVblog.