

PLAYTIME

Les Inrockuptibles

Celebration - Olivier Meyrou

It took thirteen years for Pierre Bergé to accept the release of this documentary about Yves Saint Laurent's last years at his couture house. And so here it is at last: fascinating, beautiful and magical.

Celebration is a magnificent documentary, indissociable from the story behind its making. Between 1998 and 2001, Olivier Meyrou, with Pierre Bergé's approval, shot a film about daily life at Saint Laurent's couture house, then showed it to Bergé in 2002, the year the great couturier decided to retire from the world of haute couture. It broke Bergé's heart. Presumably because the documentary shows the physical decline of the man of his life, but also the end of a reign. He vetoed the film's release.

In 1998, Yves Saint Laurent is a thoroughly captivating character: at only 62 he is already a tired old man with dangling arms who seems to carry the weight of the world on his shoulders, yet also a stubborn schoolboy who hates being filmed and speaking in public. As Bergé explains in the documentary to his journalist friend, YSL is a sleepwalker: He mustn't be awakened. "My role is to make sure he doesn't slip off the roof." And indeed, as the documentary very well illustrates, Bergé constantly watches over "Yves" from the corner of his eye, asking the house's employees about his mood of the day and above all incessantly rolling up his sleeves to get down to work: he chooses the music for the fashion shows, gives his opinion on the dresses, scolds everyone, oversees the lists of guests or photographers, etc. Far more than a mere financial administrator, he's a one-man-band (he had, in fact, something of Luis de Funès about him).

In 2015, when Bergé saw the documentary again (YSL died in 2008), he ended up liking it and decided to help support its release in movie theaters. Thus here it is, and everything therein is surprising, faithful to the idea that one has of the studio of the last

PLAYTIME

great fashion designer and his eponymous house; true to the solitude of this manifestly ultra-anxious person. In the center of it all, the god; around him, the demigods, (like Loulou de la Falaise or Laetitia Casta), then the workshop supervisors, and behind, the silent “petites-mains” who attempt, from outside in the hallway, to see what is happening when the dress they’ve been working on is exposed to the extreme scrutiny of the god. In a corner of the room, his dog Moujik sits impassively, watching everything with a blasé eye, never uttering the slightest sound.

We also see YSL drawing, in close up – and it’s magical. Ashes from his cigarette falling on his sketches. Shot alternately in color or black and white, the documentary is essentially made up of extremely well-framed static shots that give the film a solid architecture, surrounding the mythical couple in a halo of glory. Celebration (because Yves Saint Laurent has attained the pinnacle of honors and glory, receiving a prize in New York in recognition of his life’s work) is brimming with images that we will undoubtedly see again in future documentaries made from archives.

Celebration a documentary film by Olivier Meyrou (76’, 2018)

Article written by Jean-Baptiste Morain (Nov. 9, 2018)

<https://www.lesinrocks.com/cinema/films-a-l-affiche/celebration/>

Translated from French by Playtime.