The Possibility of Spirits

Mattijs Van de Port

Abstract

What is it that you film when you film a spirit?

Shot in Bahia (Brazil), The Possibility of Spirits is an essay film that keeps the baffling mystery of spirit possession center stage.

In a poetic assemblage of images and words, it offers an alternative for the kind of documentary that either exoticizes spirit possession in spectacular imagery, or extinguishes the wonder of the phenomenon in explanatory prose.

Possession ceremonies are filmed in close up, but the images first and foremost reveal that we don't know what it is that we are looking at.

Words -- of the filmmaker, as well as of his interlocutors -- are allowed to drift out of meaning. Trying to grasp the phenomenon, they become silence, or laughter, or screaming.

Paying tribute to the extra-ordinariness of its subject matter, this film invites viewers to allow themselves to be confused and -- in that confusion -- consider the possibility of spirits.

Keywords

candomblé; essay film; spirits; Bahia; Brazil

Full Text: