

HAIKU

Directed by Martin Gerigk

Country: Germany

Year of production: 2020

Genre: Experimental



Synopsis

Brief lyrical reflexive comments intertwine with a series of picturesque natural landscapes into a poetic visual illustration of the art of *haiku* - the traditional form of Japanese poetry.

Idea

The idea is to visually transpose the essence and spirituality of haiku and help the viewer capture its emotion. This is nevertheless ambitious but it emerges as a perfect challenge for the art of cinema.

RATING: VERY GOOD +.

Script

Director **Martin Gerigk** follows his passion for haiku arisen during his youth - as he himself states - and sets off to explore its morphology in a visual *ars poetica*.

Conceptually, HAIKU is far from being a mainstream project. Its *apparent* speculative iconography and suggestive nature makes it highly empirical and it will rather show itself Hermetic to the ordinary viewer. A certain familiarity with the art of haiku and its 'defining key elements' is needed, to start with; such as: *kireji* - a 'cutting word' placed between two ideas or images, and *kigo* - a seasonal word of deep cultural saturation best understood as a metonymy¹.

Consequently, it is important to notice that **structurally** the film makes use of these elements and notions also assimilating the engineering peculiarity of haiku: 17 syllabus spread across 3 verses as 5, 7, 5 per verse - transposing it and adapting it on screen.

This makes it obvious the project is multilayered and addressing at its deepest core to the 'savvies', to say the least.

It's these mentioned idiosyncrasies that cast a powerful experimental flavour over **HAIKU**. And as an experimental, it may well be savoured by the fans of the genre but at a rather... 'surreal' level. One should not be deceived, though - the film is more spiritual rich than abstract abounding.

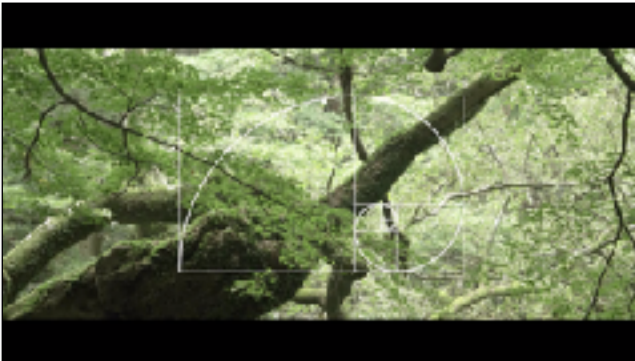
At a **narrative level** (in a rather **literary way** in this case) **Martin Gerigk's HAIKU** revolves around two Japanese performers and their recitals as symbols of the human factor, its place and role as a constitutive element of the art. A total selfless immersion of the creator in the act of creation arises as being the necessary condition to write haiku: the creator becomes one with their creation.

As a result, the script is a rather complex alchemy of structures, rhythms, lyric fragments and ideas and representations that converge towards an attempt to visually reproduce the morphology of haiku and they all root in the director's research and acquired knowledge about it. This is why the 'iconography' is not speculative (thus the word *apparent* used above) being an outcome of *a posteriori* knowledge.

It is this why, as we explained above, the experimental genre fans will find plenty to savour about the film's emergence, but the true rewards lie deep within its DNA to be harvested, at the first glance, only by the *connoisseurs*.

RATING: VERY GOOD +.

¹ best explained in this case as the replacement of a word or its common meaning with its metaphorical, adjacent or symbolical meaning, which generates a parallel between the physical reality and its sensory complementary load - e.g. *autumn* means the season, nevertheless autumn can be easily associated with a sorrowful mood or life stage



Cinematography & Editing

Cinematography is a joy to watch. Merging beautifully captured Japanese landscapes with mathematical physics calculations and graphical representations into carefully thought visuals, cinematography shows an astute care for aesthetics and significance at the same time. This is challenging visual language that repays the tenacious interpreter with the intuitive acquiring of the essence of haiku - a revelatory experience unlocked by sophisticated artisanship.

Editing is a loyal 'companion' putting everything in order at the right pace and uncovering a symphony of rhythms, symbols and calculations that knead the ineffable into a refined shape.

The visual preponderance and dominance of **HAIKU** is undoubtedly laudable for its coherent tread and elaborate architecture. Especially since film is a visual art this makes the method genuinely serve the purpose and the shape beautifully crown the substance.

CINEMATOGRAPHY.: EXCELLENT.

EDITING: EXCELLENT.



Acting

The two interpreters devote themselves to the sensorial experience behind **HAIKU** assuming their performances with gentleness and humbleness, in the same way as the creator of haiku plunges selflessly into his art aiming to remain objective.

The results are fascinating, retrieving a sensation of total coalescing of the human presence with the surrounding cosmos. The personal individuality only exists as a part of the universal integrity, and it is this wholeness that fulfils its sense.

RATING: VERY GOOD.

Production Design

One of the key roles in the film are played by the shooting locations. The natural landscapes intertwine with what appears to be 'studio' footage with simple yet meticulously arranged set up. It looks like the necessary resources have been rigorously assessed and produced to efficiently serve the vision. Everything which is unimportant is avoided or cut off by all means leading to a 'pure' unpolluted environment which reverberates over the cleanliness and symbolism of the framing.

RATING: EXCELLENT.

Dialogue

A series of lyric recitals - many of which are haiku - accompany the contemplative landscape or symbolic imagery stimulating one's pondering on the alchemy of the film and its meanings and engaging powerful suggestive mechanics that avoid any explanatory initiative, thus taking on a conservative visual demeanour.

RATING: EXCELLENT.

Music

Jingles and tingles, mild beats and vibrations fashion a spiritual ambience of almost mystical weigh, as if they were unlocking an unseen side of the 'visible'. Just as everything else in **Martin Gerigk's** project this is in perfect aligning and integration with the whole.

RATING: EXCELLENT.



Directing & Director's Vision

The unique sensation of elements that only make sense when united in the wholeness crystallises in a harmonious sentiment of precise coming together, conveying an emotion otherwise indescribable in words. This feels very much intentional and premeditated with rigorousness, leaving nothing to chance and evincing the clarity of the directorial vision.

RATING: EXCELLENT.

Film's Ending | Array of Meanings

The sensorial experience that **Martin Gerigk's HAIKU** is, resolves itself as already hinted: as a perfect balance between the creator and their creation. For art to be pure, tranquility is needed: a quality deeply rooted in the artist's humbleness, who understands and accepts his genius lies in the mirroring of the wonders of the cosmos, a genius nevertheless bigger than themselves (the creator) and the only force capable to create something from nothing.

An extraordinary idea and at the same time a grandiose lesson about one's necessity to be humble and aware of their true condition (and place) in order to fulfil their adopted mission.

RATING: EXCELLENT.

Final Conclusions

Authenticated by a rare clarity of vision, Martin Gerigk's **HAIKU** manages to



quantify the 'immeasurable', setting off to visually dissect the morphology of the Japanese art of haiku and make the viewer a partaker of its spiritual embedded fervour.

With only its personal flavour as an eclecticism that niches its viewers, rather than a flaw, and cinematographically mesmerising, lyrical and meditative, **HAIKU** is a spellbinding picturesque knead of the ethereal ineffable addressed to the connoisseur.

'A spellbinding picturesque knead of the ethereal ineffable of haiku.'

Reviewed by Vlad Dorofte



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