

**Text by Caterina Avataneo
about Charlotte Dalia's work
GENERATOR #7**



Charlotte Dalia, *Apocalypsing*, engraved agaves, poem, variable dimensions. Production GENERATOR, 40mcube/Self Signal. View of the exhibition *The fury of my own momentum*, Tatiss gallery, Lyon, January 2021.

Charlotte Dalia

“TRAILER” AND OTHER WORKS

Sticking out from the wall at a strange angle, a monitor screams for attention and lures the gaze towards Charlotte Dalia's latest short video *Trailer*. A series of messages appear in quick succession and in an eternal, quasi-hypnotic, loop on a deep black backdrop animated by scattered white star-dust flying and floating. The expressions - twisted catch-phrases collaged from English and French movie trailers but also songs, news channels and the street, among others - give a sense of impending time slippage: “not soon but after later”, “started tomorrow”, “then suddenly”... all pointing towards a near event about to happen and just missed at the same time. Interestingly, as Charlotte tells me during a studio visit, the term “trailer” dates back to the distribution of movies on reels of film. The reels were always distributed un-rewound, making the ending of the movie the most vulnerable part; and in order to avoid damaging this, a series of previews of upcoming movies were spliced to the main reel “trailing” the film. Only later the trailers began being screened before the beginning of the main movie. It is perhaps no coincidence that this alternating of beginnings and ends gives the title to Charlotte Dalia's “moving poem”. It is a matter of preview, that is before the beginning and after the end: the perfect Apocalypse. Technically too, the work presents an overlap of times and a potential for glitch, intended here as a slippage or a malfunction generated by clashing directions of time - start/end, past/future or before/after - and revealing deep truths. Throughout its duration in fact, the 30 seconds sequence of written texts includes a 14 seconds film of the white dust floating in blackness, repeating twice. There is thus a loop in the eternal loop, and at times the eye can catch an almost imperceptible, but very uncanny glitch. When this happens, a certain feeling of artificiality immediately infects the viewer drawing the attention back to the awkward and mechanical position of the monitor. The hypnotic magic ends as the viewer takes his eyes off the screen, and what's left is a deep sense of tension and anxiety; as if the artificiality of the video belonged to reality as a whole.

Feelings of uneasiness for an approaching end as well as the fictional character of reality and how these are to be found in apocalyptic cinematic scenarios, are recurrent interests in the practice of Charlotte Dalia. In 2019 she made *E,ND* an installation where an explosion of orange smoke and fire printed on fabric became the projection screen for a short video made of subtitles taken from multiple sources and depicting an impending but already happened end... “coming”, “see it?”, “it lasted more than I thought it would”... and then again, in a loop.

More recently a similar atmosphere re-appeared the installation *APOCALYPSING* (2021) where a bright orange light wrapped a group of agave leaves on top of which the artist engraved a poem generated by selecting and carefully re-composing formulas from common vocabulary, as it often happens with Charlotte Dalia's writing practice. “Apocalypsing” is in fact a very recent neologism, designating the fact of engaging quickly in a love relationship, treating it like it's the last. Both the toxic light and the poem revealed a sense of imminent end, and presented the tension of a love story becoming hyper-romantic too soon, while also being fundamental for survival. At the same time though, the ageing of the agave leaves slowly rotting, drying out and decomposing added a sense of cycle, and one wonders: is this a loop again?

With her work, Charlotte Dalia not only references cinema and its components, she creates cinematographic installations where images are set and scenes are built manipulating the cinematic vocabulary in order to expand upon an intuitive feeling of artificiality and shedding light upon the fictional dimension of daily life. Such a sense of fictitiousness is often made available through absence itself. In the installation *GHOSTLAND* (2018), for example, a solitary mattress floating in a deserted swimming pool, drifts and slips on the surface until it approaches the edges of the image. What appears to be missing in such an iconic setting for the history of cinema, as well as in the high-end life-style of movie-stars, is a character. And if one really thinks about it, a film too. It could be said that Dalia's works set the potential for a film without actually being one - situating themselves in between photography and moving image and capturing the essential void feeding L.A, Hollywood and the inevitable confrontation with anonymity and purposelessness.

Returning to *Trailer*, the white star dust in the backdrop might as well be playing with associations of the rise and fall of movie-stars or with a certain absence of everything related to presence. "(Ellipse)" is a word that catches the attention during the moving-poem, for its appearing in brackets. It is not a case that the etymology of the word means "falling short, deficit" as deficit is exactly what populates the after-human spotlight created within the artist's images. Toying with ideas of absence and ending - be this of History, Humanity or Cinema as we know it - feels relevant at a moment when to simply stick to the way we were accepting them to be has become paradoxical if not absurd. But the end itself is vulnerable as it discloses the potential of new beginnings, so perhaps Charlotte Dalia works are doing what the cinema industry did at the time of reels: taking care of the end.