



GUIDO VAN DER WERVE: A REQUIEM IN THREE PARTS

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Nummer veertien, home, 2012

4K video, 54 min 9 sec

Courtesy Luhning Augustine, New York

Dutch artist Guido van der Werve's 2012 film *Nummer Veertien, home*, a requiem in three parts, weaves together autobiography, history, music, and endurance sports. The tripartite framework simultaneously echoes the journeys of three "characters"—Frédéric Chopin, Alexander the Great, and van der Werve himself—and the structure of the triathlon. The decidedly cerebral but concise film (less than an hour long) is being shown for the first time in China at Beijing's M Woods. During his short visit to Beijing, LEAP got a chance to speak with van der Werve about his artistic philosophy, as well as his musical and athletic background.

I played a lot of piano when I was a kid, and then when I went to art school later, I ended up making films and needed a soundtrack. For the first five years I was just playing music I played when I was a kid—a lot of Romantic composers—and then in 2007, I decided to write my own music. I like film because it's such a rich medium, and I like to create this whole world, like a *gesamtkunstwerk*, in a way. I hesitate to even call myself a composer, really—I just like to do it for films, or art, or whatever. I think this kind of form that I've found also gives me a lot of freedom in a sense, because I'm not the best athlete, I'm not the best composer, I'm not the best filmmaker. I think if you go into the world of contemporary music, there are totally different rules and standards.

Because I had lived in so many countries, I started to feel a little bit homeless in a way, and around the time I turned 35 was probably the first time I started to look backwards. Mixed with this feeling of homelessness, I felt it was time to make more autobiographical work. It was a very intuitive process... I was also looking for something at the time—I wasn't sure exactly what—but I think these excessive sports were a quest to find something. I was also doing some mountaineering at the time, and it was partly because I thought I wanted to climb Mount Everest... But then I climbed another mountain as a test—about 7000 meters in Argentina—and it was one of the worst experiences of my life... I don't know what the hell I was looking for—maybe wisdom or something—but we just sat at the top of the mountain with a bunch of guys, and I thought it was the dumbest thing I'd ever done in my life. So after that, I decided not to climb mountains anymore, and I started looking for cultural experiences. I thought maybe I should write a requiem—which in a way is the same thing, it's also about reflection.

I realized that the requiem could be the structure of the film, and linked to a triathlon, which has swimming, biking, and running. Because it was an autobiographical work, I decided to take a few childhood memories that had stuck with me for whatever reason, and go back to my hometown—not as an actor, but more as a performance artist... As a kid, I was always obsessed with Chopin and Alexander the Great, and they both left their homes when they were 19 and never went back, so I felt they also belonged in the work. I also realized you could use sports as a more universal metaphor. Hiking and running are like meditation for active people. I believe in using your intuition as an artist, but I really think part of your job is to get on a higher level, so that you're sharp enough to recognize ideas immediately. The reason I started running was that I wanted to be able to concentrate more,

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and I think it's really good for the mind. But within the past few years, I've been doing a little too much, so I need to cut back a little bit. It's just too time-consuming, and it takes a lot of energy.



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My work is very personal, but I think it's more effective to show a small, blank figure in a big landscape, because people can relate to that a bit more easily. I use myself, but I try to be more of an archetypical human being... Growing up in music, you learn to take things that are close to you, like your own emotions, and you kind of abstract them through music in order to touch other people. My artistic way of working is the same—I tend to find things that are close to me and try to universalize and share them.

"Guido van der Werve: Nummer veertien, home" is at M Woods, Beijing, until June 20, 2015 (by appointment only)