

**Nadine Cueni – *des hirondelles*
2019**

des hirondelles ('Of the Swallows') is a film about the search for a place that no longer exists. A film about memories and narratives, a poetic approach to a tragic event, to people and their stories.

On 23 August 1986, lightning struck the farm of the Dafflon family in Neyruz, shortly after the summer hay harvest. In a total, devastating fire, the farmstead was destroyed and burned to the ground. One bull and seven calves died in the flames, the agricultural machinery and equipment were deformed and destroyed in the 'hellfire'. The tragic event changed the life of the Dafflon family forever and inspired Jean Tinguely, whose house and studio were located in the immediate vicinity and who was recovering from a severe heart operation, to create a late key work. In *Mengele-Dance of Death* (1986), he combined the sacred, the macabre, closeness to death and political commitment in one impressive installation.

'Il y a des séquences qui restent' ('There are sequences that remain'), explains Benoit Dafflon, the son of the farmer who was in the house at the time the lightning struck. Like him, Jean-Marie Mettraux, a villager from Neyruz and neighbour of Tinguely, also remembers. The men's narratives are fragmentary, at times detailed and then digressive. They live from brief anecdotes about Tinguely, about superstition in the village or about life and death. A popular belief says that nesting swallows bring luck. Did this tragic event take place because, only days before, the farmer Dafflon ordered his son Benoit to destroy the swallows' nests?

The artist Nadine Cueni (b. 1976, lives in Riehen) was invited by the museum to collect stories and impressions at the site of the events of 1986 in Neyruz. These recall the biography of the destroyed farm as an 'oral history', but also relate something specific about the place in the images of today, something which has changed its rhythm of life only slightly over the last thirty years. The images – searching, at times clear and then again blurred and unrecognisable – support the recordings and locate the story against a dreamlike backdrop, a forgotten place full of memories. A place of 'timeless' standstill, and at the same time a place of 'contemporary' movement. The presentation mode, with two parallel film sequences, occasionally allows the viewer sometimes to look forward and back at the same time. Mechanical sounds from Tinguely's *Mengele-Dance of Death* accompany the film acoustically.

Script: Nadine Cueni
Film/Editing: Marina Fehr, Nadine Cueni
Audio: Robin Michel, Nadine Cueni

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19'54 min., FHD-Video, 16:9, colored with sound, French with German subtitles
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