

Julian Rosefeldt *Manifesto*

London Film Festival/British Film Institute 6 October

This is the second coming of Julian Rosefeldt's *Manifesto*, a multiscreen installation featuring Cate Blanchett declaiming 50 artistic manifestos that premiered at Melbourne's Australian Centre for the Moving Image in 2016 and subsequently toured spaces such as the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and the Park Avenue Armory in New York. Now it has been edited into a 95-minute feature film, released theatrically in the UK at the end of 2017. Containing spoken texts ranging from Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 'The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism' (1909) to Jim Jarmusch's 'Golden Rules of Filmmaking' (2002), plus a prologue recitation of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' (1848), the work is a disorienting and thrilling ride through the past century of cultural history. Disorienting because the actor delivering the words is one of Hollywood's great shapeshifters, that talent on full display here, and thrilling because of what happens to the words in the process of their delivery.

Addressing twentieth-century movements in art, architecture and performance, the film is divided into 12 scenarios, each containing a selection of manifestos chosen to represent a given category, many of which are combined. André Breton and Lucio Fontana, for example,

are the authors of the three manifestos featured in 'Surrealism/Spatialism' (as the segment is titled in the end credits – no such guidance appears in the film itself), including an unnerving scene in which Blanchett plays a puppeteer holding a hand-and-rod miniature of herself while reciting Breton's 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism' (1929). Over the duration of the film, Blanchett inhabits 13 roles, each acrobatically different from the last. Her characters are more or less present-day: a homeless man slouches through an abandoned Cold War listening post while shouting the words of Constant and Guy Debord ('Situationism'), a layered and feathered anchorwoman delivers Sol LeWitt and Sturtevant to camera ('Conceptual Art/Minimalism'), a choreographer in the mould of Pina Bausch runs a dance rehearsal with guidance from George Maciunas and Kurt Schwitters ('Fluxus/Merz/Performance').

The time spent shooting all this was brief (11 days in total), which, given the high production values, complicated sets and numerous extras deployed, suggests a technique akin to single-take photography when it comes to Blanchett's delivery; there couldn't really have been time for more, and the director himself has described a sort of workshop environment

on the set. The manifestos, stripped of context and then given an accent, emphasis and tone that was presumably worked out between the director and actor on the fly, supply these statements with a fresh urgency. The viewer is simultaneously and continuously straining to make sense of what is being presented onscreen, such is the disjunction between words and actions – or unexpected affinity, as when Blanchett, playing a schoolteacher, walks through her class imparting quiet words from filmmakers Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg's 'Dogme 95' (1995). And the words themselves stand out for being delivered (mostly) by female characters (only four of the original manifestos were written by women: Yvonne Rainer, Mierle Laderman, Adrian Piper and Sturtevant). But something else happens: the words become part of the aesthetics of the film. What the viewer picks out are the cadences and forms of manifesto-writing rather than strictly its content: the boldness, full of claim-staking and revolution, anger, naivety and idealism that connects Guillaume Apollinaire to Debord, and Bruno Taut to Claes Oldenburg, bridging political, historical and cultural differences in the creation of what sound like new manifestos, all making a claim to the importance of art regardless of form. *David Terrien*



Manifesto (still), 2017, film, colour, sound, 95 min. © the artist