HOMO URBANUS
Bêka & Lemoine

10 films / 10 cities
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visual verso : HOMO URBANUS - RABATIUS © Bêka & Lemoine

HOMO URBANUS is a cinematic odyssey offering a vibrant tribute to what we have been most cruelly deprived of: namely, public space. After the trying constraints of lockdown and social distancing that brutally reduced urban space to its strict minimum, making it into a place where isolated individuals merely cohabit, HOMO URBANUS is a cinematic odyssey offering a vibrant tribute to what we have been most cruelly deprived of: namely, public space.

Taking the form of a free-wheeling journey around the world (10 films, 10 cities), the project invites us to observe in detail the multiple forms and complex interactions that exist every day between people and their urban environments. Somewhere between visual anthropology and observational cinema, these films put urban man under the microscope and encourage us to take a closer look at individual and collective behaviour, interpersonal dynamics, social tensions, and the economic and political forces that play out every day on the grand stage of the city streets.

Walking in an unfamiliar city and gathering impressions, sensing vibrations, collecting images glimpsed on a street, at a crossroad, on top of a building. Talking about a city in the present, about the simplicity of its day-to-day life. Listening to its hum, its inner sound.

Getting into step with it. Being alert, filled with constant amazement about the imaginative ways people find to live together. Wondering what makes a city, trying to understand its silent rules, its habits, its quirks, its difficulties, the unique ways in which it responds to the never-ending question: Where are we going?

Aimless navigation without a compass, without a map, in the territory of the city, seeking for snatches of daily life, gestures, places, scenes that make a city what it is. Visual notes on what we scarcely look at: our ordinary urban practices, customs and habits, our behaviour, everything that escapes us and speaks of us, the inhabitants of our cities.

HOMO URBANUS, but who are we in reality? What are we made of? What do we think about? How do we live? What kind of relationship to space have we developed? Space for one and space for all...but where is the frontier? What do we share? How do we relate to our peers? What forms does this take, where, and how? In the street, what do we allow others to see about ourselves and what do we seek to conceal? What is our relationship to time in a city? And how does that define us? What is our relationship not only with history and collective memory, but also with what is new? What meaning do we give to order, rules and standards? How is individual freedom constructed within them? What is the way we relate to others? What forms does this take, where, and how? In the street, what do we allow others to see about ourselves and what do we seek to conceal? What is our relationship to time in a city? And how does that define us? What is our relationship not only with history and collective memory, but also with what is new? What meaning do we give to order, rules and standards? How is individual freedom constructed within them? What is the way we relate to others? What forms does this take, where, and how?

These films explore our condition as a human animal and the way in which the city—this artificial environment that we build around us every day like an extension of our contemporary bodies—shapes and conditions us. Yaken on the fly, these visual notes look at urban man not only within his group but also in the depths of his solitude, redesigning the outlines of the city according to a kind of emotional geography. More than mapping out an area, the idea is to allow a city to speak through the ways in which it is used, in order to show the shifting nature of its human landscape and to understand what local singularities remain in the context of the wholesale globalisation of our urban lifestyles. By assembling these different films, this installation looks at cities as unique responses to the global challenge of living together.

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