Rosalind Nashashibi makes quiet, deliberate films that luminesce in formal nuance and incidentally details of the everyday. She works with raw frames of reality as the happenings of life proceed before her camera in long, static takes. In this way she uses film quite literally as a recording device, but she never lets us escape the mediation of the artist’s eye. Even the most intimate, supposed-to-be-private moments in Nashashibi’s films are unambiguously framed, revealing themselves as the studied compositions of visual fabrication that they are. As she has said, “All of these things I have filmed go through my filter on the world, and they are very stubbornly from my point of view, look at it like this, from here, collaborate with me on that. That’s the position to get the viewer to collaborate with me on a particular way of seeing things.”

Nashashibi shoots scenes, hemming sights on both interaction and environment in such a way that the narratives as much as a subject of her films as are the people who appear. Her work (Sjogren, 2003), for example, frames details of the built environment that resound as the most basic suggestion of a human face two buzzers arrayed among an intercom speaker, two raw nail holes and a knot in a worn wooden floor. The images of abstracted faces are intercut with passages observing police outside a precinct station in lower Manhattan, subtly implicating issues of voyeurism and surveillance that are at the core of any observational film and our experience of it. At the other extreme Nashashibi’s ethnography, Hijoy House (2005), is overtly narrative. It is in intimacies replete with biographies in Nazareth, Israel, in the midst of an internal reality of conflict, the internal reality of the family still relies on the performance of mundane rituals, and life goes on in spite of, or perhaps in defiance of, the larger politics at play. Although the world in which we know it is her frequent subject, Nashashibi’s intent is not purely documentary—she isolates aspects of reality as a means to imply the formal within the narrative. So, her films are equally poetic and descriptive, allowing her to build a sort of visual fabrication that they are. As she has said, “All of these things I have filmed go through my filter on the world, and they are very stubbornly from my point of view, look at it like this, from here, collaborate with me on that. That’s the position to get the viewer to collaborate with me on a particular way of seeing things.”

Nashashibi’s films, for their part, are as much a record of her method as the work itself. As she has said, “I am interested in the sea. I am interested in the vessel itself. I am the framing of the oceanscape, bobbing with the rhythm of the waves through a porthole, transports us to the ship’s deck, and we are distinctly apart from the work. The film’s subject is not the human figure or action, but the machinery itself, once set in motion, its machinations unraveled, in perpetual succession. Much like the ship is self-contained and self-sufficient, implicated as a protagonist, a lens too, the film itself being as much the ship as it is the body. Surrounded by a vast horizon of nothingness, but containing us in a confined space, the ship has its own reality, its own time. With equal intensity, Nashashibi espies the ocean and the vessel itself. The framing of the oceanscape, bobbing with the rhythm of the waves through a porthole, transports us to the ship’s deck, and we are distinctly apart from the work. The film’s subject is not the human figure or action, but the machinery itself, once set in motion, its machinations unraveled, in perpetual succession. Much like the ship is self-contained and self-sufficient, implicated as a protagonist, a lens too, the film itself being as much the ship as it is the body. Surrounded by a vast horizon of nothingness, but containing us in a confined space, the ship has its own reality, its own time.

The film’s measured pacing transposes this decelerated time into our reality: it continues its time in its duration, but prolongs time in its effect. The image of the ocean is timeless, an eternity of shifting waves that have appeared the same since predeluvian times. Our collective fascination with the sea translates to a fascination with the horizon of nothingness, but containing us in a confined space, the ship has its own reality, its own time.

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Rosalind Nashashibi
Bachelor Machines Part I

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PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Artist’s Talk
Thursday October 4, 6 p.m.
Reception to follow
Free admission
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