

Luybov's Eye

Georgia Korossi

The eye, in art writing, evokes countless references. For instance, Bataille's 1928 novella, *Story of the Eye*, echoes insights in our surrealist selves. Likewise, John Peter Askew's short film *Luybov's Eye* reflects on details that are constantly transforming.

Shot on film back in 1997, while Askew was on a residency in Russia beginning his maverick photographic work *We*, it was only in 2012 that *Luybov's Eye* was shown to a few individuals. The film starts with the artist saying, "I'm turning on the camera now" and we see a close-up of Luybov's left eye, her head covered with a knitted hat, and a snow crystal falling. Behind her, a blurred field covered in thick snow. In this vast white landscape there are six poles, which signal a pathway.

As Luybov is looking straight into the camera, the film's organic way of shooting allows all surrounding sounds to become part of the scene. A raven soon calls but there's no sight of it. The sound of the wind is strong, almost unbearable but Luybov's look is persistent with rare blinks. At times she's distracted and her gaze turns left but we don't know what causes it. The film's single shot that runs over twenty-seven minutes soon becomes eerie.

One has to admire the bravery of the film's single character, Luybov, who remains almost entirely motionless in the cold throughout the film. For us, quietly watching *Luybov's Eye*, it is an intuition of time experienced through the persisting natural conditions and the character's gaze straight at the camera. A Bergsonian *élan vital* cherished by a tireless photographer of life's details we usually pass unnoticed.

Georgia Korossi is a film writer and filmmaker based in London and Athens. Her writings on film and artists' moving image are published by BFI News, IDA, Sight & Sound, LUX – Artists' Moving Image and Little White Lies. She also collaborates on projects as independent curator and producer. She blogs at 11polaroids.