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Rotterdam-Europoort

By Gerrit Kouwenaar

Rotterdam
Port of Europe
Directed by
Joris Ivens

Commentary:

Gerrit Kouwenaar

Photography:

Eduard van der Enden - Etienne Becker

Sound:

Tom Tholen - Jean Claude Laureux

Film editing:

C. Dourgnan-G. Louveau-A. Choty

A man is looking for
his way towards the shore...
...his way back towards the shore...
...from which he ventured
out to sea 300 years ago.
Do not ask how it is possible...
...miracles do not occur, but...
...the miracle of radar detects him.
For a moment yards creak.
For a moment sails flutter-gone.
City on the river Maas,
at the edge of Europe.
Where Europe ends...
...where Europe begins.
Oil and grain...
...and people...
...and oil...
...and people.
Life is good here, or bad,
but anyway, life is here.
I'm partial, by the way, fond of revues.
Things people go through.
For example, yesterday at Katendrecht...
...I saw a very peculiar old-fashioned sailor.
As though he were already dead.
Old age is a disease...
...from which only the neighbor suffers.
Youth kills time.

The world is lying at her feet.
City on the river Maas,
at the edge of Europe.
Where Europe ends.
Where Europe begins.
Office, dinner table,
living room, kitchen.
For a family that together
writes the number 800,000.
Well-oiled machine...
...hand skilled in thinking.
My floor is your rooftop.

At 9:

out in uniform laughter.
Your floor is my sky.
Every person lives in his own skin...
...and a kiss replaces words...
...and love exists.
Sometimes, briefly, life is clothed in white.
There is sun, there is rain...
...there is a lot of night.
All the people live in the same world.
Every person has his own home.
No two hands are alike.
No port like this one.
I'm young and in love.
I'm old and must die.
Things people go through.
Yesterday in Delftshaven...
...I saw a very peculiar old fashioned sailor...
...who looked as though he were already dead.
What does a man think about
when he's working?
Another man's money?
Freedom? Of nothing at all? Of himself?
Of his son? A Sunday morning?
Of his working hand...
...that does, and by doing, changes?
No matter how far the ships travel...
...the world stays the same.
Even if the mirrors that mirror the world break.
Heroes, pirates, tall doers of tall deeds...
...turned in stone, but ended except the one.

Come on, I'll kill you,
I'll blow you apart, dead.
No, no, that's not possible.
Yes, out you go. You cheat!
The past is beautiful but the present is alive.
Bliss is a word,
but a city is a tool.
This city I saw burning.
This city I saw building.
A past weighs on,
but the present is of greater weight.
One city, but how many faces?
Bronze and lofty, the face of wisdom.
Sweaty, the face of toil.
Painted, the face of goodness
that once a year cherishes the children.
Masked the face of the opera hero...
...who between decor enchants daylight...
...warming his coldness in a fire of approval.
Realities that push one another aside.
Regard, strike and reveal one another.
Sir, what are you doing here?
How did you get in here?
Through the hall, across the stage and,
eh, up the stairs.
Don't you know that it is forbidden
to come in here?
Forbidden, forbidden?
Everything is always forbidden around here!
He is your singing double. And I, I am Senta.
I'm supposed to be in love with you.
Sit down, Captain.
Thank you. How do I get out of here?
I'll escort you.
This is also a reality, but invalid.
No longer exchangeable with a handshake.
Who moves in here,
circles in standstill.
Who moves from here,
is a puppet in the footlights.
The opera ends.
Nature breathes once more.
Night is square and awake.
Last night, on the Lijnbaan...

...I saw a very peculiar old-fashioned sailor,
as if looking for something...
...as if being looked for.
It is today, I'm tired.
The city flows right through me.
It is today, and I'm alive.
The city is a great peaceful number...
...of people, of cubic meters,
of distances, heights and widths.
Of ships, tons and profits of cars,
courses and deaths...
...in one hour hundreds of deaths.
The city is a great peaceful number.
This city I saw burning.
This city I saw building.
Bliss is a word,
but a city is a tool.
Say Weena, say Spangen.
Say Kralingen, Crooswijk.
Say Feyenoord, Dijkzicht.
Say Oud Mathenesse.
Say hundreds of names.
Say city on the river Maas.
Say port of Europe.

END: