

## ***A Review of Kye Wilson's, 'Angel:legnA'***

Written by Charlotte Bradley

*"Show them life, and they'll find within themselves the means to assess and appreciate it."*

— Andrei Tarkovsky

*Angel:legnA* is the next defining chapter of artist and filmmaker, Kye Wilson's practice. His past works have often formed conversations around themes of the real versus simulated, embodiment, and more recently have focused on unifying art and education to bring about new platforms for creativity and an exchange of knowledge. *Angel:legnA* furthers this discussion as Wilson aims to introduce us to the idea of a collective human experience. The artist compares Tarkovsky's metaphysical exploration of the human condition, to his own research into the way in which disabled people perceive life. But he also brings a whole other dimension into the equation: You. Our understanding and ability to empathize with this fragmented dreamscape is key to engaging with the work, and encouraging a greater awareness of various human experiences outside of our own. We thus enter into *Angel:legnA*: a dreamscape of perceptions and embodiments, not least a mirror reflecting moments of your/my/our existence, past, present and future.

*Angel:legnA* is Wilson's cinematic weaving of memories and dreams from adults with learning disabilities and creative practitioners (film-makers, artists, writers, poets and musicians); successfully offering both spectator and spectated an existential experience through film. In his desire to "reimagine notions of the self" the artist's intention is "to demonstrate everyone can engage with quality art". We see these 'notions of the self' poetically presented to us through metaphors; the man and the woman embody humankind, and arguably even the personification of the camera is comparable to a pair of eyes obediently following the two through a metaphysical journey. We become the camera lens and thus, Wilson allows us into the dream. The metaphorical element deepens as we watch a woman walk through tunnels, across bridges, and hold her pregnant belly as she emerges from the bed; constant references to birth, beginnings, and renewal. These shots are poised beside death: a man disappears in the mirror, the game of cards he plays marks the bounds of time, and he exits the scene through the same tunnel his female counterpart came in through. We see these methods as Wilson's intent to create a "collective human experience", moments relatable to all. And what of it? Arguably the artist marks the truly transient nature of life; systematically tearing it apart and sewing it together again in a blanket of memories. As Tarkovsky addressed in his own film work, "Show them life, and they'll find it within themselves the means to assess and

appreciate it" (Tarkovsky, n.d.). *Angel:legnA* achieves this exactly: mirroring reality, leading us through a dreamscape, and allowing us to pause on these moments of existence. Wilson shows us moments we have lived, we are living, and will live through, encouraging us to look at ourselves from outside of our own body. Albeit not engagement art of a physical kind, the work requires us to engage on a psychological and metaphysical level.

On a technical scale, Wilson successfully reinterprets Tarkovsky's methods and practices to form his own cinematic format; interlacing his own with those of the Soviet filmmaker's to formulate a contemporary, moving-image 'sculpture' of time. The camera shots are long, graceful, and immersive; days, months, and years are turned into seconds. Through this structural technique, we are forced perceive each action and consider it for what it signifies in each stage of life. Does this lead to a greater corporeal understanding? The answer lies in the receptivity of the viewer. We continue to flow from scene to scene in both colour and sporadic black and white shots. In Victor Fleming's film, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), a similar tactic was used to convey darker states of mind and a monotonous world, yet the black and white scenes here seem to take on a more existential purpose. These shots allow us to experience the often black and white perceptivity of differently-abled minds. Once again, Wilson empathises on multiple levels. It is notable that these monochromatic shots also frame particularly vulnerable moments, including when both the male and female have with their back to the camera (us), and a later shot of the female praying in front of mirror. Could these black and white disturbances also signify moments of contemplation, or indeed moments of reflection? This ambiguity seems to be part of *Angel:legnA*'s filmic charm, again rendering us helpless in relying on our senses to comprehend not only the dream world, but the inevitabilities of life's journey itself.

## **Bibliography**

Tarkovsky, A. (1986). *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*. 1st ed. London: Bodley Head Ltd., p.107.