

DOUBLE VISION

MARGUERITE DURAS TURNED THE NOVEL INSIDE OUT. NOW THE GRAPHIC DESIGN DUO M/M (PARIS) CHANNELS HER ENERGY INTO A FILM ABOUT LIFE, DEATH, AND EROTICISM

The scene opens with a face—but not a real face. It is a graphic representation of a face on the back of a jacket, worn by a woman who is sitting casually on the floor. She recites lines from Marguerite Duras's text *La Pluie d'Été*. The words seem detached, hanging in the air like small balloons. The woman spins around and faces the audience. You see her face; she repeats the lines, unimportant questions that reflect a world dominated by ennui.

Pluie d'Été à Hiroshima, a nineteen-minute film by graphic design duo M/M (Paris) and production company Première Heure, extracts pieces of text from Duras's *La Pluie d'Été* and *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and magnifies them via the mediums of film and theater, signs and music.

Mathias Augustyniak and Michael Amzalag, the duo behind M/M (Paris), are known for a complex visual language that has widely influenced the fields of art, fashion, and music. Intricate typefaces and unique embellishments—hand-drawn illustrations scrawled on photographs, torn pages, and scrapbook-style clumsiness—define their signature style, and leave the impression that the work is improvisational, while in fact each graphic tic or slouch is carefully considered.

Applying this distinct language of text and signs throughout *Pluie d'Été à Hiroshima*, M/M (Paris) takes the viewer on a journey through the writing of Marguerite Duras. Full of



intense emotions and internal experiences, they delicately and simply explore the complexity of the human being facing love, death, and eroticism.

Between the story of the genius child, Ernesto, who begins learning by osmosis and refuses to go to school, and a French woman who goes to Hiroshima after World War II, these texts are some of the most beautiful that Duras has written, and they relate to each other like two parts of one fluid work. The film is built around intimacy, exposed and transposed by Duras. M/M's minimal scenery takes viewers to a place beyond the two-dimensional stage and theater. "The idea is that because you see the actors from each side, the actors themselves become signs—they're not real people anymore," explains Augustyniak. The actors are not playing a role but relaying the text. They reveal Duras's characters through

what they say and what they do not say. The intended ambiguity of Duras's words translates to a film defined by multiple perspectives, as each viewer inserts his or her own meaning and memories into the gaps left by the filmmakers.

"Because everything is so stripped down, somehow it's a very unspectacular movie. But the more you watch it, the more it becomes spectacular," says Augustyniak. It is the same with Marguerite Duras's writing. At the end, we give [Duras's texts] to the world to read." **Marina Cashdan**

Stills courtesy M/M (Paris) © Première Heure/
CDDB-Théâtre de Lorient

Pluie d'Été à Hiroshima is currently showing at MARS
Istanbul. www.marsistanbul.com; www.mmparis.com