

VISIONS DU REEL 2018

**Review: *A Bright Light - Karen and the Process***

by MURIEL DEL DON

19/04/2018 - Emmanuelle Antille presents her latest project – a portrait of one of the most iconic (and private) artists in the history of music - at the Visions du Réel Film Festival



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*A Bright Light - Karen Dalton and The Process* [+] by the Swiss artist **Emmanuelle Antille**, screened for the very first time at the Visions du Réel Film Festival, within the Burning Lights selection, is a mysterious and touching portrait of one of the most iconic (and private) artists in the history of music. Emmanuelle Antille retraces the steps taken by **Karen Dalton**, she studies with reverence the venues where Dalton sang, she imbibes their atmospheres and she reproduces the mood based on testimonials from her nearest and dearest.

*A Bright Light-Karen Dalton and The Process* doesn't look to provide a chronological reconstruction of the life of this musician, destined for tragedy, but rather to communicate essence through the magical medium of film. Emmanuelle Antille uses images as if fleeting traces of an uncertain past: she twists, transforms and questions them in the hope of extrapolating truth. Karen Dalton lived a life delicately balanced between reality and oblivion, between time spent on stage and in a semi-hermitic status, constantly in search of an impossible internal peace. Antille's film feeds off of this ambiguity, puts it centre stage, and renders it sublime through the bias of film.

Karen Dalton is an iconic but sadly unknown figure in American folk music. Despite a short-lived spell of success within the Greenwich Village music scene in New York and the admiration she enjoyed from artists such as Bob Dylan and her friend and musical partner Tim Hardin, Karen simply wasn't cut out for the cold, hard reality of life in the music industry.

A formidable musician with a stand-out voice and an unprecedented ear for a melody, Karen Dalton was first and foremost a free woman in charge of her own destiny. This pushed her to live on the margins of society, an American Nico in some respects, shrouded in a cloak of deep sadness, worn out of loneliness and abandonment. Music allowed her to express her innermost feelings, it embodied her torments and gave shape to her disappointments. Emmanuelle Antille provides a visual recreation of a world that is joyous but primarily quite painful, of moments of hope but mainly of uncertainty.

Using excerpts Dalton wrote in her private journal to complement the traditional biographical filmmaking process, the Swiss artist sets out on a long journey to find Karen, to find the traces of an existence that is slowly fading into oblivion. Reality and dream-like images are interwoven with style, as if wanting to remind us that Karen Dalton's creative process was but a constant to-ing and fro-ing between these two states. Her existence, tragic and troubled, was the inspiration for her music, a proverbial vampire that is both awe-inspiring and terrifying. Where lies the boundary between life and art? Can these two realities co-habit without one destroying the other? Antille appears to give new form to the ghost of Dalton, a ghost that at times shines bright and at others is obscured in shadow; she sometimes embodies Dalton personally (Antille herself features heavily in the film), but it is mostly through images that the musician is captured, her glory restored - a strong woman who is on the verge of disappearance. Karen is reborn through Antille's artistic world, proving to us that only art and art alone can look for light among the shadows.

*A Bright Light-Karen Dalton and The Process* is produced by Rubis Films and Intermezzo Films who are also handling international sales.

(Translated from Italian)

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[A Bright Light – Karen and the Process \[CH\] \(2018\): film profile, film review, trailer](#)

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