

# Strange Apparitions

**DVD BOOKLET**

Vodit  
dišfodit  
'dišprikfot'  
divotšteletit,  
divodetit.\*

\*This is where the meaning of  
'Disfodish' is truly defined.



# Strange Apparitions



queer music-theatre films  
by Zachar Laskewicz

## PROGRAM

- 1 - STRANGE APPARITIONS : *introductory film*
- 2 - BLATFUGETIT [ 'page-turning' ]
- 3 - THE CORRUPTED ENDEAVOUR
- 4 - VUKMAGIT [ 'forcing' ]
- 5 - VUTKLIDAS DRÄŠLIPIT [ 'well-dressed trio' ]
- 6 - ZACHAR PLAYS GLASS : *metamorphosis one*
- 7 - ZIZBILIT [ 'Do you like to play?' ]
- 8 - ZVOTŠLIPAS UMATŠLIPIT  
[ 'the painstaking cycle' ]

*These films are a set of 'strange apparitions' united primarily by their adoption of the truly unusual language 'Disfodish'. They deliberately shift the frames of reference and desire connecting images, sounds, words acts and gestures to obfuscate clear definition. They are truly queer music-theatre films that can be both frighteningly amusing and distantly sensual. Functioning to question the sign systems that are traditionally seen as secure, they are presented on an axis which reveals them as unsettlingly vague or lacking in sense; physical acts, sounds, desires and urges are distanced from the subjects performing them by deliberately estranging them within frames; from language lessons to erotica & from silent films to pornography. Such frames, however, are merely tools used to assist the major alienating metaphor around which this set of films is based: language and the illusion of truth it creates (an illusion that queerness tends to question or destroy). When the languages you use to piece together some sense of meaning are rendered ambiguous, just as the narrative forms that tend to follow an order are disobeyed, inverted and abused, no one would blame you for feeling a bit queer...*

## ? VELIT DIŠFODETÌT 'DIŠPRIKFOT', DIRUVETÌT.\*

### \*what does 'Disfodish' actually mean?

Most of these films are based on or structured around the language which recognizes as its native spelling *Dš prikfot*. In English, the term *Disfodish* is most often used to refer to this unique communication system, although it is sometimes abbreviated to simply *Fodish*. Like every language, *Disfodish* is made unique by a number of characteristics it shares with no other languages. Some of the most striking include the way sentences begin with a mood marker that sets the tone for the coming phrase; *ZÄTIT*, for example, announces a declarative statement; it says literally 'it is so (that)...'. *?VELIT* in comparison, announces an interrogative sentence and can be translated literally as 'it is questioned (that)...'. For example, *?VELIT DOMAGETÛT* literally translates as 'it is questioned (if) you are doing it', although what is actually being asked is 'are you doing it?'. In addition, this unusual language has the habit of bracketing away both the subject and the object of any given sentence; the pronoun when it is used as the subject of any given sentence, like in many Romance pro-drop languages, is rendered unnecessary because it is implied by the conjugation of the verb. The object of the sentence, by contrast, is far more likely to be either hidden in a dative construction or implied by its adoption of a reflexive verbal structure. For example, one tends to never 'do' anything; it is done (by someone); one never desires anything, it (literally) desires itself (to someone). While speaking *Disfodish*, one could get the impression that we exist in an estranged world where one spends most of one's time trying to remove oneself or the objects one acts upon from one's utterances entirely!

So, who speaks this complex set of rules, habits, phonetic sounds and meanings, that are entirely logical and consequent, but that also recognize quandaries and illogicisms like any other language? Nobody does. Although it has a grammar and a set of words which have their epistemological roots deeply embedded in the culture of the people who speak it, this culture is revealed to be entirely imaginary. Votland, where most of the films are set, does not appear on any map and as real as the language may seem if examined linguistically, it is entirely fictive. *Disfodish*, then, becomes one of the primary metaphors around which the very notion of 'queerness' is defined in this set of rather unusual films.



**! RUVIT DIŠFODIT 'NAXTŠKIMIS' ENTFODASOT. \***

**\*the meaning of 'nightshades' is significant.**

**NAXTŠKIMIS VILMIT** is the *Disfodish* title of a film company. The accented 'S' [Š], resulting usually from the elision of Z and another voiced consonant, is pronounced 'sh'. The first word is taken from the compound noun **NAXTŠKIMIT** which is formed from two word stems, **NAXT-** and **ZGIM-** respectively; such stems can form nouns verbs and adjectives. **ZGIMET**, for example, is the infinitive form of a verb which translates as 'to shift/slide uneasily' or 'to be neither true nor false'. **NAXTAS** is an adjective which translates as 'nocturnal' or 'queer'. **NAXTŠKIMIT** can therefore translate as a 'queer presence' or a 'strange apparition'; one that refuses clear definition or that evades clear comprehension.

**zgimet** (intransitive verb)

- [1] *to shift, to scim, to slide uneasily*
- [2] *to be unsure or insecure, to feel uneasy*
- [3] *to have no definite signification*


**naxtas** (adjective)

- [1] *nocturnal*
- [2] *strangely vague*
- [3] *queer*

**naxtškimit** (compound noun)

- [1] *an unsettling apparition*
- [2] *a blurred or shifting frame*
- [3] *a queer presence*

# Strange Apparitions queer music-theatre films by Zachàr Laskewicz



STRANGE APPARITIONS is a set of films united by their use of language as a metaphor and the control it has over defining who we are. In each film a different set of words, connotations, gestures and definitions form a basis for questioning the way we use language to perpetuate reality and provide our lives with meaning. They shift, however, on a different axis to normal narratives; rather than using a language to provide the background to a story, the language itself becomes the means to question the frames we are complicit in constructing as we attempt to make sense of our world and communicate with others. In a number of the films, the characters within them become helpless victims of the discourse over which they ultimately lose control. Try as they might to form meaning from the tools they are provided with, they shift uneasily within its constrictions and are ultimately consumed.

These films are indeed strangely queer; they are based on meaning and use the frames of narrative but deliberately bend the rules by allowing other forces, particularly musical structure, to define their development. Frames that are recognizable and comprehensible in a normal context are revealed to be empty vessels of signification. Language lessons transform gradually into silent films; silent films into erotica; piano performance into dance. Camp is often used to hide disturbing truths about reality and the role 'queer' people are forced to play in a society which creates structures of meaning which struggles to include them in it. Each of the films, even those that seem amusing, are tinged with the presence of pain, insanity and death. At the same time, just like camp performance, these music-theatre films are aware of the extreme irony of their intention: they are aware of the incredible pretence necessary to accept that a story can be told by creating and deconstructing a language. But the films are ultimately about pretence; and if they manage, in spite of the self-imposed restrictions, to communicate something about the danger of trying to force oneself into a frame that doesn't appear to fit, they've been successful in reaching their goal: using the whole notion that artificial structures like language are just that, artificial, and that the confrontation between normality and queerness becomes the uneasy, shifting planes of signification around which this set of 'strange apparitions' are structured.

# Strange Apparitions



queer music-theatre films  
by Zachàr Laskewicz

## 1 - STRANGE APPARITIONS : introductory film



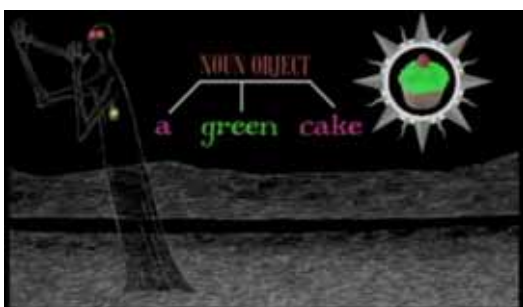
*Where some of the essential terminology of the film is revealed; frames are formed and dissolve and images which evoke on the one hand sensuality and sexuality and on the other linguistic structure and distance, are presented consecutively, dissolving in and out of one another, as a text providing the background to the film gradually slides up the screen on the left.*

## 2 - BLATFUGETIT [ 'page-turning' ]



*BLATFUGETIT is a Disfodish noun which refers generally to the act of page-turning. It appears to be a silent film accompanied by suitable piano music; but as alternative meanings to the title are revealed and the film transforms into out-and-out pornography which deliberately defies its frame, this film begins to reveal its true message, that sex reminds us just fleetingly that we are not dead (yet)...*

## 3 - THE CORRUPTED ENDEAVOUR



*In this film, a story-teller uses all types of communicative means available to him to communicate a narrative that seems to make sense but is revealed to be an empty set of signifiers that use cohesive markers to create the illusion of coherence. Despite the havoc which is wreaked on his text, he goes on with his ridiculous story until finally the menacing musical structure takes over and provides its own coherence. This film uses images & texts by Edward Gorey.*

## 4 - VUKMAGIT [ 'forcing' ]



*During the realization of this very sensual piece of pornography, a linguistic lesson is given in basic Disfodish including some grammatical concepts relating to how the title is formed, different nouns and verbs which are constructed from the word stems it consists of and ultimately all of the meanings of the title itself. Although you'd think the language is abstracted from the sensual narrative, a final connection is revealed as the film reaches its climax.*



# Strange Apparitions



queer music-theatre films  
by Zachar Laskewicz

## 5 - VUTKLIDAS DRÄŠLIPIT [ 'well-dressed trio' ]



*Distanced by frames within frames, allusions to silent films and the use of original piano music, what is essentially an extended session of erotica becomes impossible to define as 'pornographic'; it breaks all the rules and expectations of the genre and reveals itself as a piece of intricate beauty.*

## 6 - ZACHAR PLAYS GLASS : metamorphosis one



*This film revolves between two essential concepts: although time passes inevitably, music can change the way we perceive it. The piano player is intimately bonded to the music; people don't expect him to reflect the structure of the music in an intricately stylized set of movements, and it makes some people feel genuinely uneasy; at the same time it is an essential part of this film's experience and is influenced by Javanese dance.*

## 7 - ZIZBILIT [ 'Do you like to play?' ]



*This film is essentially a stylized lesson in Disfodish, revealing important verbal structures and the similarity of two verbs which refer to contrasting aspects of the function being presented in the film: piano playing and pleasure. 'ZIZBILET' is a reflexive verb which can be used to refer to the playing of instruments; ZIBLIZIT, in comparison, is a noun which refers to 'self-pleasure' or 'masturbation'.*

## 8 - ZVOTŠLIPAS UMATŠLIPIT [ 'the painstaking cycle' ]



*An advanced lesson in Disfodish begins by defining concepts that are revealed during the language lesson to explain the tragic death in the silent film which grows organically at the lesson's conclusion. The lesson's contents are gradually translated and the protagonist is revealed to be typing a suicide letter; he longs to escape from a world dictated by word stems which force upon him the constant, painful and unstoppable cycles which go on without end or reason.*

- 1 - STRANGE APPARITIONS :  
*introductory film*
- 2 - BLATFUGETIT [ 'page-turning' ]
- 3 - THE CORRUPTED ENDEAVOUR
- 4 - VUKMAGIT [ 'forcing' ]
- 5 - VUTKLIDAS DRÄŠLIPIT  
[ 'well-dressed trio' ]
- 6 - ZACHAR PLAYS GLASS :  
*metamorphosis one*
- 7 - ZIZBILIT [ 'Do you like to play?' ]
- 8 - ZVOTŠLIPAS UMATŠLIPIT  
[ 'the painstaking cycle' ]

## BONUS MATERIAL

### 2 Slideshows

SLIDESHOW ONE  
Nightshades Publicity

SLIDESHOW TWO  
Erotic Art



## DR ZACHAR ALEXANDER LASKEWICZ

Zachar Laskewicz was born in Western Australia in 1971. After studying extensively in music, theatre, linguistics and multimedia performance, he attained his doctorate in theatre studies at the University of Ghent in Belgium. His studies were completed by a post-doctoral *Masters of Letters* specializing in Gender Studies and Queer theory.

He has worked as a professor of music, literature and performance at universities in both Taiwan and mainland China, started a Balinese gamelan in Brussels, performed and lectured around Europe and in places as diverse as Finland, Denmark and Lithuania, among many other activities which have kept him busy.

Currently he works primarily as an independent creative artist, composer and filmmaker in the city of Ghent, Belgium, where he presently resides.

