



Review: Dissolution

January 19, 2011

RECOMMENDED



From the dreamy raptures of the California-set “Phantom Love,” Nina Menkes moves on to a drama drawn from Dostoevsky’s “Crime and Punishment,” set in the largely Arab Yafo neighborhood of Tel Aviv. While the gorgeously realized “Dissolution” (Hitparkut) is shot in high definition in a compelling range of blacks and whites, the story of a depressed, alcoholic Israeli Jew who must atone for a crime is anything but black-and-white. Highly stylized yet tremendously affecting, Menkes, whose earlier work often focuses on the inner lives of women, takes an equally intent view of a troubled male character. Violence is always implicit, awaiting. Menkes is fond of slow, steady zooms but her attention to the psychological possibilities of sound may be the more affecting characteristic. A typical passage, finding her glum protagonist sharpening a knife, *clank-whissh, clank-whissh* to the beat of a metronome, followed by the gratified intake of a cigarette’s smoke, is highly stylized but a keen indicator of the terrible act he intends to commit. An attention to the weight of characters’ gazes is also provocation, especially in the case of women who turn to the camera and challenge it/us with their stare. References to the work of Béla Tarr are both warranted and earned. With Didi Fire as the sad man for whom there may still be hope. In Hebrew with subtitles. 88m. DigiBeta. (Ray Pride)

“Dissolution” opens Friday at Facets.