

DAVID FINKELSTEIN

« Resonances »

*Fil threat, 2009*

In “Resonances,” a gorgeous short film by Ismaïl Bahri, water drips very slowly into a white bathtub, which is slowly draining. The beautiful photography emphasizes the textures of cracked tile and ceramic and water, while the sound mix captures the swirl of water down the drain. Words in black Arabic script appear written on the sides of the tub, which are translated in the subtitles into such phrases as “shadow” and “night’s skin,” as we hear the sound of crickets.

Black dots appear on the tub, and these dots are connected by lines, as if the curved surface of the tub represented the night sky and we were looking at a chart of constellations. Finally, we see the tub filled with slowly swirling water, which gradually washes off the ink. The swirls of ink in the water look like the forms of the Arabic script, while the undulations of the surface have the same rhythm as the cricket sounds.

“Resonances” is a significant advance over Bahri’s earlier process-oriented films about fluids and fluidity. He has elevated his ideas to a new poetic level, where they are indeed filled with the resonances of multiple meanings and associations, bringing together images of stars, nighttime, hiddenness, erosion, and many other things. The beautifully crafted images and sound design, along with the simplicity of presentation, make this a haunting and evocative film.