

True/False Film Review: So Late So Soon

By Ivy Hettinger-Roberts

“I want to see how long I can go without talking. Probably forever,” Jackie Seiden, one of the two subjects of director Daniel Hymanson’s film *So Late So Soon*, says to her husband, Don. Less than a minute later, she breaks her vow of silence to ask him if he wants dessert. She herself had ice cream and hot fudge for breakfast.

It’s moments like these in *So Late So Soon*, which premiered for the first time at True/False, that help make this documentary feel as intimate as it is. The pair of artists have been married for half a century, and the film follows them for four months as they navigate life and art while growing old together. The film is almost entirely set in the Seidens’ home, interspersed with footage of the artists in their younger years, when Don sculpted and Jackie worked as an art teacher.

The backdrop of most of the film, the Seiden’s large, pastel house with winding stairs and clutter everywhere — clutter like a group of Furbies, a ceramic cat, a plastic cow tied to a cabinet with tooth floss — provides an intimate and sometimes suffocating setting for the film. The house, which is basically its own character, has deteriorated over the years, but looks well-lived in and filled with life. This setting reveals the major theme of the film: the Seidens have grown older over the years, too, and are now dealing with the pains that age has brought.

The subjects use art to explain and understand how they’ve grown older over the years. Jackie says at one point that she was an “artist of disintegration” and now must watch it happen to her. In one wonderfully nostalgic scene, she visits a roller rink where she used to skate. She can’t anymore at 78, but she watches from the benches and still dances along to the music. Much of the film is bittersweet like this and often juxtaposes either the artists with clips of their younger selves or the artists and their home, both needing repairs.

In a post-screening Q&A, Hymanson, a first-time director, explained that he was one of Jackie’s students at the age of 3 or 4 and had known the family for a long time before filming the documentary in 2017. Hymanson reflects emotionally on the film, which he describes as a “collaborative” effort. He choked up when talking about Don’s passing in 2019.

Knowing this history, it’s no wonder that Hymanson was able to take a subject that many viewers may not be able to relate to — the hardships of growing old — and make it into a deeply touching and engaging film. *So Late So Soon* is all about intimacy: whether it be between the director and the couple, between Jackie and Don or between the viewer and the home they’ve been invited into.

Link to the review on Vox’s website:

https://www.voxmagazine.com/arts/movies/so-late-so-soon-welcomes-viewers-into-the-home-and/article_746f3d52-5f64-11ea-a397-4b877932c0ed.html#disqus_thread