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Valerie Snobeck Go Soft

2014
60 minutes
HD film

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There's a monochromatic green filling up the frame. We hear the sound of footsteps approaching. A hand lays down a non-running mechanical pocket watch, and sets up tools nearby. Over the next hour, we see the horologist's hands filmed from above, meticulously take apart, clean up and maintain the watch mechanism before putting it back together. The video unwinds a continuous cycle of removal, resuscitation, and delay.

Valerie Snobeck's video, "Go Soft" uses formal constraints similar to those within the Structural film tradition. Throughout the video the watch does not give us the time, at least not a regimented time of notched minutes. Dismantled, the watch becomes an object to watch. Many objects, gears unlatched from one another, and unlatched from chronology, move in and out of the frame.

Engraved on one of the gears are the letters S H E L L. This watch was originally lubricated with Shell oil. In the 1940s the watch was a promotional item, a way of lubricating the public's opinion into positive thoughts about the oceans, the future and our control of it.