

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Hainley, Bruce, "Shooting Hoops," *ArtForum*, May 1998

## SHOOTING HOOPS

**SHARON LOCKHART'S** *Goshogaoka* (1997) provides a much-needed slap on the wrist to the frequently tedious, self-involved goings-on of much American "independent" movie-making, by showing how a few simple and surprising elements—a single camera angle, six ten-minute sequences, a Japanese junior high girl's basketball team—are all it takes to charm the eye and mind. We hear an extended bell tone, like a sound that might summon initiates to prayer; we see the polished sheen of a basketball-court floor in a gymnasium-cum-auditorium (whose stage and red curtain center the frame); we hear the rumble of what we



recognize as the rhythmic running of twenty-four teenage girls in T-shirts, black short-shorts, workout socks, and sneakers but only when they have run past the camera and disappeared. The squad stretch their muscles in unison to the call of a team leader; they run, hop, and walk to warm up (causing the red curtain to undulate slowly); while they perform sprint drills, balls arc overhead. At one point, the girls remove their sneakers and massage each other's feet, backs, and legs. In the final sequence, they chant their school song quietly. Otherwise, the only sound in this film is breathing, shoes pounding and squeaking on the court, uniforms rustling, and balls bouncing. There is no scrimmage. No baskets are shot. We never even see a basketball net.

This economy of matter and means frees Lockhart to display the green, awkward beauty of adolescence. The poised rigor of her photography (shown recently in New York, Los Angeles, and Europe) is here warmed with an elusive erotic energy. Although her aesthetic recalls the bare formality and staring of Andy Warhol, Jon Jost, and Chantal Ackerman, what makes this movie both moving and winsome is its debt to the loopy choreography of Busby Berkeley. Lockhart's staging of the Goshogaoka team is just close enough to what one imagines Japanese athletic drills to be like that we at first mistake the artfulness of the exercises for the way Japanese things simply are. It soon becomes clear, however, that something stranger and more premeditated is going on.

With calm, unerring insistence, Lockhart proves that the most exciting game around is non-narrative, and played by girls.

—Bruce Hainley