

# **Introduction to Film Art**

*Collection of lectures for Erasmus+ students*

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## **Introduction to the Textbook Erasmus+ FFT (Film and Television Faculty), VŠMU (Academy of Performing Arts)**

A textbook we issue electronically in both Slovak and English languages is intended for those interested in the Erasmus+ study program at the Film and Television Faculty. It serves as a complement to the 2018 syllabi, focusing on carefully selected subjects designed to guide students through the world of film art, exploring the most interesting and contemporary aspects. In addition to traditional film disciplines such as animation, documentary, sound, and film editing, it also includes the History of Slovak Film, a unique offering taught in English only within our country. Within the Erasmus+ program, we also have a Game Design tutor, as the FTF of VŠMU takes pride in being one of the few in Europe to incorporate this program into film school curriculum. The textbook presents information on subjects in a practical and easily understandable language.

Quality enhancement, internationalization, accreditation, evaluation, feedback, communication, credits, sustainability, the integration of the latest knowledge, and many other significant concepts and indicators have become central to education in Slovak universities in recent years. From practical experience, we all understand that a quality educational program must involve individual support, the enjoyment of learning experience, recognition of a new environment and new people, encourage dignified communication, foster an inspiring environment, and promote an appreciation of culture and life in the city or country. Art school, compared to other schools, has fewer students with diverse artistic backgrounds, imagination, coming from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, and they bring with them subjective, creative, and artistic experiences, expectations, and notions.

Our aim was to create a long-term, engaging program that addresses all official and mandatory requirements while also providing space for less measurable but essential informal aspects, particularly for young people navigating an unfamiliar environment. To achieve this, our faculty collectively embarked on a journey to find inspiration within ourselves, built upon our successful courses, and explored ways to create an environment that would inspire and attract foreign students. Our priorities included program originality, involvement of prominent figures from the film industry, and the geographical flexibility it offers to students who desire both learning and travel opportunities. It's worth noting that unlike FAMU, the name of VŠMU is not widely recognized worldwide. Many of the contracted cooperative partnership

schools specialize in film, however, with a particular focus on multimedia, communication areas, film science, and theory, and numerous film faculties have different structures. Newcoming students arrive with varying academic backgrounds, knowledge levels, needs, even expectations.

For this reason, we realized that whatever we establish, and offer must allow for flexibility and responsiveness to students' and pedagogical feedback. The program has evolved since 2018, with some tutors being replaced. In the winter term of 2022/2023, Marek Šulík replaced Peter Kerekes, and Nikola Kišová replaced Saša Jonášová. In addition to tuition, each semester includes opportunities for participation in school events and activities. During the winter semester, students can participate in the Áčko film festival (<https://festivalacko.sk/>), and in the summer semester, they have the chance to join the Visegrád Film Forum (<https://www.visegradfilmforum.com/>). Foreign students have increasingly become active participants in our international workshops and masterclasses, and have the opportunity to contribute to student film projects and become part of film production teams.

The Erasmus+ semester for students coincides with the schedule of Slovak students and spans 12 weeks. Following tuition, there is an examination period, during which students submit their work to their tutors, often without the need for physical presence at the Faculty. Tuition is conducted four days a week, with Fridays allocated for homework, preparation, and getting acquainted with the surroundings and local facts.

After several years of experience in delivering courses and refining their content, we are pleased to present this expert text primarily tailored for foreign Erasmus+ students. However, it's important to note that our own students, experts, and tutors can also find valuable insights and inspiration within this textbook. Its main advantage lies in its focus on quality, practicality, and its comprehensive coverage of film and film art. As we emphasize specific film professions, the textbook may also be of interest to prospective students, summer school participants, secondary school students, and students from other art colleges. Initially, we considered an English version as a supplement to the syllabi, but after reviewing the text, we unequivocally decided to publish a bilingual version. Film is an inherently communicative and open medium, much like our Faculty. It brims with innovation, life, and ideas. Every place has its own charm and energy, where professional expertise is complemented by the quality of education and a welcoming, open atmosphere.

Our program has attracted students from across Europe who have forged enduring and personal connections with our school. We believe that Slovakia,

Bratislava, and the unique experiences offered at VŠMU will inspire them in their future endeavors.

The team of authors of this publication remains open to modifications and changes in the electronic textbook. It is not a final text; rather, it will continue to evolve and progress. Therefore, we encourage you to reach out with questions, comments, and opinions. To inspire you further, we have included reviews from our former students and invite you to consider studying in Bratislava.

Jana Keeble

Liviu Rotaru:

*I hope you continue to inspire young filmmakers as you once inspired me!*

# CRASH COURSE OF SCREENWRITING

Dagmar Ditrichová

## *I. A COUPLE OF INTRODUCTORY RECOMMENDATIONS ...*

The ambition of a one-semester study subject, “CRASH COURSE OF SCREENWRITING”, is to offer students **inspirational space for their own creation and common discussions**. Participants will create five short stories that will help them verify the specifics of writing for audiovisual work enabling them to realize the differences from the literal way of writing. They will try to write etudes within the content of 2 to 3 pages for two-to-three-minute films based on a simple **dramatic situation and relationships among characters, which form the basic “foundation” of screenwriting work**. Simultaneously, they will analyze and evaluate each other’s work, aiming to perfect their **dramaturgical skills**. Both film professions – screenwriting and dramaturgy – are closely linked and represent *“two sides of the same coin”*.

Students will receive detailed explanations of exercise tasks – their effects, specifics and risks, during six seminars. They will have complete thematic and genre freedom in writing, as their own creativity and life experiences matter.

**It is essential to write about what an author / authoress is very familiar with!!**

This story or character is written more easily and will gain higher convincingness and originality. However, if they wish to write about a theme or surroundings they are unfamiliar with, it is essential to conduct a **detailed material collection**. Ignorance will result in the poor quality – superficial, familiar and repetitive story and character processing.

**A screenwriter must recognize life and human nature** in their manifold forms, including their own ones. They must have **watched films, read fiction and specialized literature**. Mastering screenwriting is usually the simplest work. Persistence and inner motivation to write, in the spirit of legendary saying by the writer A.P. Čechov: “Talent is working on talent”.

The knowledge of life reality and the inspiration from real stories are very



helpful, though they cannot stand alone, because creativity supports fantasy, imagination and fiction, which may sometimes be truer than reality itself. Combining both approaches usually brings the best results.

**The moral ethos and the impact of a screenwriter's and dramatist's work lie in finding the truth**, even if it sounds pathetic. Filmmakers bear the responsibility of refining their ability to understand the world and providing audiences with insightful reflections of it. To reveal how it works, what is happening inside and around us? And without commands, moralizing, or presenting simple solutions – nobody possesses universal truth that can be imposed on others. Asking questions is more important than giving complete answers.

Drama, epic, screenwriting, prose and sujet are linked, especially by stories which have been fascinating people from time immemorial, but they are distinctive in the author's way of work. **The epic tells stories, drama performs / stages them**. A prosaist uses various means of expressing in a short story or novel, including descriptions, reflections, the beauty of literary language, its possibilities to associate, bring paradoxes, unusual word connections, rich and impressive vocabulary, etc. **A screenwriter, however, only writes about what is seen and heard**. They prepare an audiovisual version **so that the artwork is transformed into audiovisual piece of work** using concise, colourful and, most importantly, brief speech without excessive use of language ornaments. That is why it is not by chance that the most frequently used parts of speech in scripts are nouns and verbs – somebody / something does something. On the contrary, in fiction adjectives, adverbs, particles and even interjections abundantly occur. The translation of the original Greek word “dramaturgy” means dramein – to do, to act and turgein – to urge, to spur forward. In the transferred sense of the word, the translation of this word implies that dramatic / audiovisual work captures mainly acting people.

So as not to have it so simple we add that a **film author writes not only what is seen and heard, but, paradoxically, also what is not seen and heard**. This seeming contradiction will be explained in detail later, in parts about character and situation.

Finally, I would like to stress that **everything is possible in drama**. There are no thematic, formal or genre taboos. Freedom in creation is, in this view, absolute. There is **only one condition – to be able to write it!**

We will try to approach this aim ...

The following etudes of 2-3 pages and 1 short literary story may be helpful:

1. **Situational etude without using dialogues, monologues, comments**
2. **Dialogical etude without using picture**
3. **Dramatic encounter of a threesome with a surprising point – processing the same story in the form of literary short story and a script**
4. **Etude with an emphasis on picturing a distinctive atmosphere – the arrival of a character in new surroundings / or their return to familiar surroundings**
5. **Exposure to a feature film**

### **HOW TO START? CREATING A CHARACTER ...**

To write persuasively about the nature of characters, mainly the protagonist, so that the spectator understands them, believes in them, and identifies with them, which is the foundation of writing. If a candidate for screenwriting cannot truly create a character, they do not know anything. An author has to **know their hero perfectly**, even better than themselves, which means they have to master the hero's qualities, virtues and vices, family, personal and social prehistory, they have to understand their motivation – open, hidden, or subconscious.

That is why it's important to **depict your characters based on specific people from your close surroundings** – family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, schoolmates – their portraits will ring true. Observe their lives and precisely name the **basic attributes of their characters – the summary of the most striking qualities and motivations.**

Do not forget that “drama is specific” – i.e. individualized – we are interested in a hero / heroine of a specific age, a specific region, profession, family background, distinctive qualities and specific desires. Spectators will infer valid generalizations based on these specific details.

However, only a small portion of an etude is available to you – 2-3 pages for the depiction of a character's nature, that is why you should logically consider their **number** and provide a **brief** but clearly memorable **character sketch**. I recommend choosing 2-3 characters that are **strikingly different, even contrasting** – e.g., a thief and policeman, a sexy teenage girl and a shy, timid introvert, etc.

At the same time, such a contrast creates conditions for **conflict** – the inevitable spiritus movens, i.e. **the driving force of every drama. The conflict of interests among various characters** will not only add necessary tension, energy and flair to a story, but it will also help formulate the main **theme** of an etude, its impact, and its purpose for a spectator. A theme is also a thought navigation, a compass that will guide you safely in writing – it will imply the choice and hierarchy of characters and situations as well as genre orientation. **Gradation** is a universal construction principle, and its opposite is boredom – an unforgivable killer of any narration.

While **it is sufficient for a literary story to describe characters' qualities, in a script, you have to show them** – mainly through the picture – the most effectively in a situation, eventually to imply them in dialogues. In prose, the narrator can simply state that a neighbour is mean, however, in film you have to portray the character's quality in a **situation** that confirms it. Do not forget the power of other visual elements that clearly depict a character – **the choice of surroundings, costumes, masks, props**. These may boldly shape a character and together with dialogue, inner monologue, comment or music, they will leave room for the spectator to contemplate relationships and character associations. People are social creatures and they could hardly survive in total isolation. That is why the **network of the most various relationships** becomes the subject of filmmakers' research. Its changeable dynamics helps in story gradation. If they are truly captured, they will strongly resonate with the audience.

**A character is displayed in a situation** – without it, they do not exist in drama – **an action does not exist without characters**, although, except for people, they may also represent animals, things, fantastic, devised beings. It remodels characters and their verbal performance, which we will discuss more in task 2 of the Dialogical etude. As mentioned earlier, a screenwriter also writes what is not seen or heard. You should not forget that characters live within pictures, they age, grow, have their secrets.... It is necessary to complexly figure out their fate before starting a film, and also beyond it – we can deduce what has not been explicitly shown from the indicated issues.

## **HOW TO CONTINUE? INVENTING RESOURCEFUL SITUATIONS**

Observing unusual life situations or making them up creates the basis for audiovisual narrating. An artist watches colours, lines, light ... a musician

hears the voices of nature, rhythm .... and a filmmaker observes situations! We commonly encounter situations in real life, either as actors or observers. However, what does a situation actually mean? Why is it so important for a story?

**A situation or event depicts the circumstances that force a character to act.**

It is an obstacle placed in their path that must be overcome. Through the way a hero handles it, he reveals himself to us. When he reveals himself, we have a chance to understand him. If we understand him, we identify with him.

When we identify with him, we experience his fate as if it was our own, and we usually reach **catharsis** (purification). A famous notion from Aristoteles' Poetics describes a strong spectator's experience in which we gain knowledge through an aesthetic lens (we rediscover life values) and deep emotions.

**Situations create characters, their nature and a conflict among them, they shape relationships, momentary psychological states and surroundings.**

Characters and situations are inseparable, and you will use them in writing each of five etudes.

**The sequence of situations / events that are causally and chronologically connected, creates a story / action / plot.** Aristotle already wrote that a story has its **onset, midpoint and ending**. This idea has been valid up to now and is still embraced by most of dramatic creation. However, in the 20th century, it was quite common to disrupt the time sequence and causality – the traditional order was changed (e.g. they could begin with the ending using retrospectives, combining various time levels, revealing motivations at the end, after disclosing consequences, etc.).

Write all assigned etudes as **closed, finished stories whose dramatic arc will start, climax and untangle in the end.** This, of course, does not apply to task 5 – the **exposure** to a feature film, which only **opens** the narration. It offers spectators basic information to capture their attention and convince them to watch further development in tension.

To invent a unique, original plot that has never been narrated to anyone is almost impossible, so you should not worry about it. Plots have been repeated or varied for centuries. You can make them more extraordinary by choosing specific surroundings, era context, distinctive characters and genre tuning. Take love triangles, stories plotted as a way and revenge ... How many versions have you seen or read? If creators find an innovative angle, updated old narrative schemes may capture spectators' attention even today.

**Cliché as "hackneyed, excessively used, set phrase, metaphor"** 1. /, or trite

situation, characters, relation or dialogue, are part of real, common everyday life, and that is why they enter its artistic portrayal. It is important, however, to either avoid clichés as much as possible, or **present them in a non-cliché way**, in the spirit of Hitchcock's saying: "It is better to proceed from cliché than get to it." 2./

Chance sometimes interferes in our lives, but how to work with this in audiovisual work? You can comfortably use it to open your narration with. **A lot of stories begin by chance** – for instance meeting of couples, unexpected lottery win, car accident or hostage drama .... etc., however, **they should not end by chance**. Optimal untangling should **naturally, logically result from the preceding story, acted relationships and characters' nature, and surprise us at the same time**.

When finding themes of etudes, it is necessary to respect their small volume – 2 to 3 pages (1 page of a script usually lasts approx. 1 minute). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the **bearing capacity of conflict** (if you find the right conflict, you have also found the right theme and they are interrelated). Logically, overly complicated plot and intricate themes are not possible to deeply develop within a small space. Thus, you should knowingly choose simple stories – e.g. based on the structure of an **anecdote** which through their unexpected untangling and clear, powerful message, may often very precisely address even serious human or social issues.

**The atmosphere of the space and events** also plays a role, therefore, you should enrich emotional sound of your stories by observing visual and auditory life moments, e.g. arid lawns and cracked land in the summer heat with the buzzing of insects, forests illuminated by the full moon, owl sound, mess in squares on the morning of January 1st after New Year's Eve celebrations, and strong wind rolling plastic litter ...

Last but not least – the ability to notice the details around us that suitably specify, animate, and make various life displays authentic – they characterize characters, including their way of speaking, clothing, appearance, the surroundings in which they move around.... because **detail brings strong meaning in a small area**. It is important, however, to handle it very thoughtfully, because an excessive number of details can diminish their intensity and weaken the dramatic impact of the narrative.

If you manage to write resourceful, thematically, and characteristically convincing situations with an impressive atmosphere, colloquial dialogues and a sense of details, it is possible to state that you have mastered the basic

fingering of a screenwriting job. Then, you can just develop your talent and deepen it through further writing.

I wish you a lot of pleasure in discovering your own creativity, recognizing the world and human nature. I simply wish you to enjoy writing!

## **FORMAL ARRANGEMENT OF ETUDES (ALSO SCRIPTS)**

To make reading and mutual communication with the director, producers and dramaturgists easier, it is good to use a standard, customary, formal arrangement of a script – writing in pictures. **A picture is the basic construction unit that captures the action taking place in the same time and space.** Every picture is named; for better orientation – in the 1st line the **number** is given, along with whether it is in the **exterior** (EXT) or **interior** (INT), **the place of action, time data** (day, night). I advise to mention whether it is a **retrospective, dream or vision**. With a change of surroundings there is also a change of picture – its number and name.

Etudes are written in the present tense, in the third person. The action description – i.e., the pictorial part of the situation should be written in the whole line; dialogues, inner monologues, comments are presented in the middle of the page in narrower lines – columns, like “verses in poems“, one below the other, so that the balance between the visual and verbal component is instantly clear. A dialogue is introduced with the name of the speaking character in capital letters for better distinguishing the text. Diacritics are not used (like in the direct speech); quotation marks and colons are used instead. With the first introduction of a character into the actions, capitalize the first letter of their name, and write their age in brackets, after the name.

An American producer once advised the famous writer F.S. Fitzgerald on how to write for film:

*“Write in the present tense, avoid adjectives and think in pictures!”*

He was absolutely right. The description of action, surroundings, hero’s clothing, their shapes, props are mentioned in brief, simple but striking language in the script, so that the text is suitable for filming. Useless details and verbal ornaments should not make reading more difficult; that is why we always characterize the **role of surroundings, costumes, masks and actions** in regard to the main theme and nature of characters, **not a melancholic, outer**

**description** (e.g. a film architect and a prop worker know how typical high-rise kitchen in 1980s looked like; there is no need to write what there was, but how the kitchen relates to the story, era and hero). However, do not give up using colourful variety and precision in specific expressions, do not just write in a neutral way – “*an old man is going*”; find the most precise expression for the type of walk that characterizes the old man: e.g. *shuffling around, shambling, stumbling, rushing, leaning on a stick ...*

Definitely avoid the description of how the camera should shoot the story; expressions like – drive away, move a camera, get closer .... A screenwriter should not impose their picture vision on cameramen. A cameraman himself will create shots after coordinating with the director when writing the technical script; and we do not constantly want to read what the camera is doing; we are more interested in what the characters are doing.

The tuition will be run in a so-called block form, i.e. every two weeks. We will meet six times in one semester. In each meeting we will explain the aim and effect of the task. Students will have approximately 10 days to write an etude. They will send their text to everybody three days earlier so that everybody can read and evaluate them mutually, and prepare some notes for the collective discussion in seminars. There we will clarify what an author has mastered, what works more and what works less.

With **dramaturgic analysis**, I recommend reading stories at least twice. In the discussion, first name the main theme – idea, and then determine whether the creative intention has been mastered. Do not forget to praise what an author has written convincingly, and then specify what does not work, and suggest some solutions.

It is sometimes said that dramaturgy is the collection of rules on dramatic work. In relation to creation, we cannot speak about rules. They are not like traffic rules ... I suggest understanding dramaturgy much more freely – as a **file of knowledge verified in practice, as experience collected by our predecessors and contemporaries**, so that debut authors will not have to “*discover America*” forever. This knowledge will help upgrade scripts, though it is not universally valid nor self-saving; it also undergoes changes and development with the change of the whole society. It is good to know the knowledge, though even better to be able to break it meaningfully...

## II. TASKS TO PARTICULAR ETUDES

### **1. Situational etude without using dialogues, monologues, comments**

The aim of the task for Etude 1 is to realize the **expressiveness, power and strength of picture narration**, which is the alpha and omega of film narration. Students will try to clearly and impressively narrate a story **without using the verbal part – i.e. without dialogues, monologues, inner monologues and comments** – as if they were writing the script for a silent film. Writing without verbal parts may feel like writing without a hand ... They have to rely on their own fantasy to clearly describe a **closed situation with only the help of characters' actions in a conflict**. They may also use **bustle and music**, which are also conveyors of dramatic meanings and specific atmosphere, e.g. a gunshot, footsteps behind the door of an abandoned house, the noise of a snowstorm during a mountain hike, Christmas Carols, etc. These elements give us direction in time and space, like the composition *Gaudeamus Igitur*, or the song *Škoda lásky* – which evokes the end of World War II, etc.

Screenwriters – beginners are more used to relying on dialogue, often overestimating its ability to directly convey essential information. They let their characters “*report*” their fates and attitudes in a long, literary way, using little dialect, which increases the threat of boredom on the film screen. Eye-catching pictures are replaced by talking heads with their word fall.

A task for the situational etude thus emphasizes the **importance of action – it is necessary to show what your hero is doing**, how he deals with obstacles. Do not forget, however, to use other **visual means of expression**, because each of them carries its own meaningful value. It is important how your hero looks like (mask), what he is wearing (costume), what he is carrying in his hands or what he is surrounded by (props), what his behaviour is (body language), in what environment his mini story takes place. It is not by chance whether he wears dreadlocks or has a scar on his cheek, whether he is wearing a priest soutane, police uniform or swimming costume, whether holding a fishing rod or a ladder, whether being in the Roma settlement or governmental office ...

I recommend choosing only one protagonist and initiating their struggle with the environment, an object, an animal, a mute man or a baby to avoid the risk of unnatural “*shifting*” among characters in an attempt not to use any dialogues. If you inevitably need more characters, place them in a distant, bustling street or behind the shop window, where we cannot hear their com-



munication; however, with regard to the context and according to the hero's gestures and appearance, we can roughly guess what the communication is about.

As I have already mentioned, students have full freedom in choosing themes and genres, while strictly adhering to clear picture narration, using only bustle and music, and maintaining an onset, midpoint and ending. The small volume of an etude is mainly suitable for **situational humour, gag** based on surprise, where we create certain spectators' expectations, and immediately offer an unexpected untangling which brings the recognition of the true state. It is good to use various embarrassing life failures that accompany us, and nobody wants to experience them firsthand, but loves to entertain others with them.

## 2. Dialogical etude without using picture

The second etude is aimed at **purely verbal side of storytelling without using the pictorial component.** A complex world picture is created in listeners' mind, only **through speech, bustle and music, much like in a radio play.** An etude should be written so that we can visualize what we hear at the same time. When writing an etude, you will feel like without a hand ... but it is important to try what a dialogue, monologue and inner monologue, comment can express, without the support of the visual part.

I again recommend – considering the limited space – choosing a smaller number of strikingly distinctive characters who will get into peak situations due to a conflict. The surprising ending of mini-story also precises the chosen theme. Characters and relationships are best revealed in this way. Bustle and rush will help you create the atmosphere of surroundings, and also “*visualize*” the action; music will support emotions and significant accents. Within sound means, the most important is a **dialogue as the main describing tool for character distinction.**

Every hero should speak his own, specific language, so that we can distinguish him based on listening only. **The manner of speech and choice of words** imply the age, sex, educational level, profession, nature, momentary psychological state, sense of humour, the region which a hero comes from ...The same applies to inspiration from real life, which is very valuable, that is why it is **necessary to listen to people talking** – in streets, pubs, public transport, shops, work, etc., and to develop a sense of when to use slang, dialect, vulgar words, phrases, Bohemisms, English words, and when to let your character lisp or misarticulate (e.g. the sound r), speak too fast or too loudly.

A convincing dialogue must sound **natural, colloquial, authentic**. It should be economical; work with a hint so that a listener / spectator can guess from the context and subtext what has not been told, because the right meaning is usually hidden between lines. **What is left unsaid appears to be more essential.** Silence also holds its expressive value. It is, however, necessary to know what to be silent about. There is a famous aphorism: *“Ancient Greeks had their culture, but no petrol. We have petrol ...”*

It is generally applicable that out of all dramatic arts – in comparison to the theatre, radio play and television series – film mostly uses visual narration with the briefest and most colloquial verbal expressions. The picture mostly carries the axis of meanings and emotions, although there are also remarkable audiovisual pieces of work based on dialogues. Unlike older fiction in which the dialogues of characters are pathetic, lengthy, complicated and acceptable, in their film adaptation and with mechanic transcription they could sound unnatural, even funny, like *“paper rustling”*.

In **Dialogical etude without using picture**, I recommend using shorter, simple sentences more than long, explanatory compound sentences, suitably – according to the nature and origin of the character – combining standard and nonstandard language, dialect, garbled words, diminutives, swear words, so that the word expression has its specific *“juice”*. And the right rhythm! Excessive words threaten the dramatic drive of the story, also the flow of a dialogue. In that case it will be necessary to mercilessly trim them down. Verbosity is detrimental to film ...

There is no universal *“rule”* (I do not like to use this term in connection with dramaturgy as I explained in the part on Formal arrangement) that could designate an optimal **length of dialogues**. Every story, genre, also creator will generate their own version of the pictorial and verbal parts. There is a general rule, however, that a **dialogue is long if it is boring**. And it will not bring anything new to deepen the theme, plots, emotions, characters and their relationships.

On the other hand, however, especially in feature film scripts, you do not have to worry to develop dialogues if this is required by psychological character portrayal, to enhance meanings, or to achieve emotional impact on spectators. The ability to distinguish when to shorten or suitably extend a dialogue is very specific and individual, given by author’s intention, talent, sense of proportion, life and authorial experience.

With writing **Dialogical etude** you should avoid the temptation to simply set

your characters in a café, kitchen, park, etc. and let them “*speak – report*” their life or a problem they are dealing with. This solution is usually first planning and conventional; and is unlikely to capture the audience’s attention. We said “*drama depicts acting people*”, so place your hero in the center of a situation in which he has to actively display himself, e.g. expose him to a theft case, an arrest, a car crash, when he hears a declaration of love, has just got work promotion, won a talent competition, ... and find a way to convey these events only through sound means. in specific surroundings and in specific time, with respect to obligatory requirement for your story to have its own “*onset, midpoint and ending*”.

The purpose of the first two etudes’ tasks is to help you, young authors, realize the deeper specifics, differences, the range and possibilities of pictorial and verbal narration. In everyday life and also in screenwriting creation, audio-visual division is principally unnatural, but I believe that with its complexity it can become a useful and thought-provoking challenge for you.

### **3. Dramatic encounter of a threesome with a surprising point – processing the same story in the form of a literary short story and a script**

The third etude will bring you the feeling of relaxation, as you will be able to lean on complete audiovisual narration, i.e. picture and sound together, but also on a literary form of short story which you have obviously worked on earlier, before enrolling for your admission interview. You will be writing utterly normally at last! You will activate a narrator who will approach all important events and inner thoughts of characters to readers; you will describe social situation and period habits; you can conjure with language, captivate with impressive descriptions and philosophical reflection, entertain with acumen and verbal humour ...

Devise **a short story of a threesome with a surprising twist, which you will write in two different ways – firstly as a literary short story, and secondly as an etude in the form of a script.** The purpose of this task is obvious – to realize the differences between prose, which narrates the story, and the dramatic form, which performs / stages it. At the same time, as authors – beginners, you will verify your ability to **create film adaptation based on your own novel.** Whereas an obvious obligation of “*transferring the piece of work from literary language into audiovisual is to accomplish it the way so that it could be filmed, and at the same time to preserve or increase the quality of the former original*”.

First of all, it is necessary to find an interpretive key for such a description, to

decide what type of dramatization to choose – relatively true to the original novel, *free adaptation or adaptation of motifs* that allow for more deviation from the prose with the right to their own interpretation and transformation of the novel. Overly true dramatization, offering only mechanical, literal and consequently non-creative attitude, leads to a dead end.

The ability to adapt literary novel into the script form belongs to the basic professional competence of a film author. There also exist the opposite adaptations, although much rarer – when an author transcribes their script into a prosaic form of a story or novel. They usually do this when the script realization has failed or, vice versa, when there is an attempt to increase a film success by its book form.

Choosing a threesome of characters is generally quite a suitable choice for short stories in regard with natural conflicts of various relational triangles. A surprising point is a nice revelation of unsuspected connections which deepen a main theme and clearly terminate an action. It usually works when spectators' expectations are met in an unexpected way.

With writing dialogue in this etude, unlike the second exercise like a radio play, you should be aware of the meaningful power of picture, including actor's action. That is why, it is necessary **to avoid the duplicity of picture and dialogue**; simply said – *in a film do not tell the character to take an umbrella if they, as well as spectators, see it is raining. Just hand the umbrella, without any words*. Verified dramaturgical experience encourages to use a dialogue only after you exhaust all other possibilities of visual narration.

#### **4. Etude with the emphasis on picturing distinctive atmosphere – arrival of character in new surroundings / or their return to familiar surroundings**

The aim of the first three etudes was to create a simple situation in a small area, a character and a conflicting relationship. Now we will try to enrich a mini story with an impressive **atmosphere** that will add some "juice". It depends on your choice – a melancholic atmosphere, poetic, tragicomic, embarrassing, thrilling, mysterious, frightening, or any other ...

We can affect the atmosphere in various ways – e.g. by suitably chosen surroundings, the season of the year, weather, choosing specific props, using details, creating a specific rush, music, ... etc. all without interfering in the competence of other important film professions participating in the creation of the right atmosphere. We will offer the basic impulse to a cameraman,

architect, costume designer, sound master – instead of a conventional kitchen, we situate characters' actions in the attic of a house filled with ancient objects referring to heroes' past, while a sunbeam reveals flying dust, or the sound of rain beating against the roof is heard; instead of a park, we can choose a graveyard emerging from autumn fog due to the number of lighted grave lanterns and dark crosses... At the same time we watch the meaning of the theme, the logic of the story and the nature of the characters. Let us not give up the possibility to create the nature of a hero using costume and mask, e.g. a lady wearing an elegant dress, walking in stilettos at dawn along the highway; a presidential candidate with a face covered in tattoos ... Through atmosphere, we intensify the emotional and aesthetic impact on spectators; we specify, metaphorize, through genres we specify or poeticize narration; we can specify narration in reality by incorporating elements of absurdity, irony, bizarre, even black humour, etc.

In the fourth etude – as the only one – the thematic intention is given – **the arrival of a character in new surroundings or a return to familiar surroundings**. Both tasks naturally bear the possibility of open or hidden conflicting tension; for the heroes they mean a challenge of how to cope with the change, different conditions, or memories of the past. Just imagine what refugees experience when coming to a foreign country, after escaping from their homes in a war conflict. Almost everybody has the experience of coming to unfamiliar surroundings – e.g. new work, a new school, the family of their partner, a hospital, a prison, a senior house, or returning to places where they spent their childhood, youth – cheerful or traumatized, to birthplace, children's house, concentration camp, etc.

In this or in the last etude, I offer you the possibility to use – by your own consideration and chosen theme – **a conflict between what a character will do, what they will say aloud and what they really think in their mind**. Although in real life there is harmony between these three displays, which confirms the moral strength of a settled man, the conflict between them in drama is very useful. It allows to reveal what is hidden below the surface and in the small area, and thus to look in hero's intimacy if the author based his story on the inner conflict. **The combination of action, dialogue and monologue** is a multilayered space for associative playing with meanings. It is important to decide right which piece of information or nature trait we will reveal to spectators, and how we will do it. Will the hero be betrayed by his actions, expressed sentences or secret thoughts? We know that dialogue must not be duplicative of the picture; it should be colloquial and brief; the work with hints is preferred more than telling all details; and the same goes for the in-

ner monologue.

**Inner monologue** is the most direct and the most subjective means, by which we can delve deep into a character's soul. It enables us to reveal thoughts, emotions, desires, secrets, plans, protagonist's memories that they cannot disclose at the specific moment. That is why it is necessary to think twice which pieces of information, when, to whom, under what circumstances and how they will be said aloud. The hero usually expresses himself in his mind very instantly, in shortcuts, using mostly direct, almost password-like language, when speaking to himself, unlike more formalized language used when communicating with their surroundings. Inner monologue is used frequently in prose adaptations written in the subjective "*their form*", i.e. in the 1st person. It is also necessary to work with it very sparingly so that they will not become dominant over visual narration which could thus change into mere illustration of what was said. Inner monologue in a script is marked by *i.m.* after the name, e.g. *PETER (i.m.)*.

Screenwriters sometimes decide to associatively link events, characters and meanings in a story together with **comments** of either author, protagonist or a supporting character. Unlike inner monologue, a comment brings a **time shift from the displayed situations**, enabling to say the rest of heroes' fates after finishing the story, and to qualitatively evaluate experienced events as the passing time has also changed actors themselves. Comments provide viewers with a so-called "double" narrative perspective. However, it's advisable to avoid using comments when writing short etudes.

## 5. Exposure to a feature film

**Exposure**, as an introductory part of the traditional five-degree dramatic scheme (exposure, collision, crisis, mischance, catastrophe) opens a story. It will provide spectators with the most inevitable information on the place, time of action and on period context, it will introduce characters, imply a conflict and a genre. It is essential, however, to make it as engaging as possible!

**Exposure must engage!** So that a spectator simply wants to continue watching the film. Again, suitably, even provocatively chosen hint of conflict works here, a conflicting situation, unexpected and often seemingly illogical actions of significant characters that provoke curiosity, or questions such as: How can this continue? Why is it happening like this? Moreover, the demands for the pace of the exposure are increasing – especially in the dynamic action genre creation. We enter the story in medias res.

In brief – there are more types of exposures. The most common is the direct

one – it introduces a protagonist direct into the action in surprising relations, and the indirect one – the main hero does not enter the scene until a collision happens, false – misleading, other characters will introduce him in a different light, than how he will later present himself. Synchronic exposure will simultaneously present more motifs and will introduce more characters who initially don't seem related to each other, so that their fates can connect later.

In the last, fifth etude, I recommend choosing the simplest exposure – the direct one, whereas you should concentrate on resolute and clear setting of a basic conflict situation. Its actors, by their hints of acting, their motivations and nature, surprise us the way that we understand that their problem's solution will require the length of a feature film. And we desire to know how this will continue! Of all the etudes you have written throughout this semester, only this last one, for logical reasons, remains open-ended, concluding with a provocative question.

### **III. A COUPLE OF FINAL WORDS**

The aim of one-semester CRASH COURSE OF SCREENWRITING was to familiarize you with specific requirements and demands on writing for film. You have tried some procedures, and in common discussions you solved the problems you had run into. And this brief manual is to make the process of basic skills acquisition easier for you.

I would be glad if our debates could make you, as young creators, continue in writing, and thus develop your observation skills, fantasy and originality in narrating stories about human soul and society. Professional authors mostly stay at the back, but in spite of this, they are irreplaceable – without scripts no audiovisual work would originate. That is the first assumption of successful realization. Screenwriters are the Creators in the best sense of the word, because they can create something out of nothing – the whole world in its complexity – the story with a theme, space and time, characters and relationships, social relations, period context, atmosphere, details, philosophy, recognition and emotions. They reveal us the world and us ourselves, the way we exist here, whereas they also entertain us ...

Finally, I would like to cite the words of the world-famous director Miloš Forman, who defined screenwriting:

*“Script is yet the backbone of every film, and the art to write scripts requires*

*the exceptional talent. And the talent is not simple. It contains the sense of drama riddled of theatricality. It requires the power of personality that is not afraid of serving. It assumes the sense of vivid street or Bible dialogue. It is equally able to sharply see and hear. It can feel if the picture can express a thought more effectively than a spoken word, and the last but not least, a screenwriter must be a philosopher who knows why and what he is speaking about.” 3./*

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# History of Slovak Cinema

Monika Mikušová, Eva Sošková

## 1. Development of Slovak Cinema in the First Half of the 20th Century

The first film screenings on the territory of today's Slovakia, which at that time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, took place approximately one year after the first paid public film screening in Paris – on December 19, 1896, in Košice and on December 25, 1896 in Bratislava. After the initial period, during which the film on the territory of today's Slovakia, like in other countries, had the form of a travelling fair attraction, permanent cinemas were gradually established, and interest in the new medium increased.

The founding of Czechoslovakia on October 28, 1918 marked significant changes in the further development of cinematography in the territory of today's Slovakia. Ownership relations and the language of emerging films changed, but the financial situation in the country still did not favour the creation of feature-length fiction films. In 1920, a group of American Slovaks founded Tatra Film Corporation in Chicago. In the following year, the brothers Daniel and Jaroslav Siakel' travelled to Czechoslovakia to shoot the first Slovak feature-length fiction film *Jánošík* (1921), the story of a legendary bandit, which, despite the purely Slovak theme, was very strongly inspired by the form of contemporary American films. However, the production of domestic feature films was not profitable, and so, with the exception of a few attempts that have not survived to this day, the Siakel' brothers had no followers for more than two decades.

The situation was more favourable in the field of non-fiction, where the Czech ethnographer and photographer Karel Plicka worked in the 1920s. His most important film, *The Land Sings* (*Zem spieva*, 1933), also became the biggest international success of Slovak cinema in the first half of the 20th century. Plicka, surrounded by an experienced Czech crew, created a work that combined the influences of ethnographic photography, literary naturism and contemporary film avant-gardes. However, due to insufficient financial, technical and personnel conditions, even Plicka's work, like the work of the Siakel' brothers, did not find any followers, despite the fact that it was Plicka himself,

who tried to educate the new generation of filmmakers within the so-called course for kinetic photography and cinematography. He established the course in 1938 at the Bratislava School of Arts and Crafts, which was founded 10 years earlier following the model of the German Bauhaus. Unfortunately, the course did not last long, as the school was closed for political reasons like its German predecessor. During the Second World War, feature films were not produced in our country. The first post-war feature film was *Beware...!* (*Varuj...!*, 1946) by the Czech director Martin Frič. However, the first film that really reflected the new post-war situation was *Wolves' Lairs* (*Vlčie diery*, 1948), an epic saga about the life of a Slovak family during the Slovak National Uprising, directed by Paľo Bielik – the founding personality of Slovak post-war cinema.

## **2. Socialist Realism in the Years 1949 – 1955**

After the change of the political system in February 1948, the state company Czechoslovak State Film was founded, which had a monopoly on film production, distribution, and import of foreign films. In addition to the film studios in Prague, which already operated in the pre-war period, in 1949 the construction of film studios in Bratislava Koliba began, the first stage of which was completed in 1953. Film education was concentrated in the Czech part of the country, and since the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, founded in 1949, had only theatre and music departments, those interested in studying film had to study at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

Most of the feature films produced during this period were made according to the aesthetic standards of socialist realism and its main preferred themes, which were the building of socialism, the fight against reactionaries, and the struggle for peace. Fear of accusations of formalism led the directors to adopt a realistic approach without significant stylistic breakthroughs. Popular comedies such as *Devil's Wall* (*Čertova stena*, 1948) directed by Václav Wasserman, or *Katka* (1950) directed by the future Oscar-winning director Ján Kadár, which, however, did not lack a significant propaganda element, fulfilled the intention of reaching the widest possible audience. The most popular film of this period was the folk musical *The Native Country* (*Rodná zem*, 1953) by the Czech director Josef Mach, combining folk culture with builder's enthusiasm. While ideology was mostly present in a moderate form in the comedy genre, the concept of class struggle was more prominent in the dramas, and many

of them slipped towards schematism. Even Paľo Bielik did not avoid it in his builder's film *The Dam* (*Priehrada*, 1950), which was a prime example of a contemporary portrayal of the struggle between the old and the new.

### **3. The Development of Fiction Film in the Years 1956-1962 in the Context of Socio-political Changes and Contemporary Trends**

After the death of Stalin and shortly after that of the first communist Czechoslovak president, Klement Gottwald, a period of certain liberalization began in Czechoslovakia, which was also reflected in cultural policies. This trend further accelerated after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR in 1956, and despite several efforts to reverse it, at the end of the 1950s, it also began to manifest itself in changes within Slovak film production. In this period, Paľo Bielik continued to be its most prominent director with his films *Forty-Four* (*Štyridsaťštyri*, 1957) set in the period of the First World War and *Captain Dabač* (*Kapitán Dabač*, 1959) set in the time of the Slovak National Uprising. At the beginning of the sixties, Bielik managed to realize the long-prepared and extremely ambitious two-part project *Jánošík* (1962, 1963). The first Slovak wide-screen film became the most spectacular as well as most popular Slovak film of its time. This definitively confirmed the change in the perception of cinema, which, unlike the previous period, already quite openly fulfilled an entertainment and commercial function, corresponding to the emergence of new genres such as adventure film, a detective story, or a film for children. However, the style of Bielik's films could not reflect the rapidly changing trends and fulfill the need for a new, modern poetics, which the emerging directors were calling for. After a gradual onset, their contribution fully manifested itself in 1962, when three distinctive films were created, which fully reflected the ongoing changes in all aspects. *Crows Fly Over* (*Havrana cesta*, 1962) by Martin Hollý brought a new touch of authenticity and social criticism into the environment of the workers' collective, *Boxer and Death* (*Boxer a smrť*, 1962) by Peter Solan was a Slovak contribution to the just-starting trend of cinematographic reflection of the Holocaust, and *Sun in a Net* (*Slnko v sieti*, 1962) by Štefan Uher was a film that started the Czechoslovak new wave.

#### 4. 1960s – Changes of Film Poetics

The Slovak politics was linked to Moscow during the era of the Soviet block. The extent of freedom was unstable in our country, which depended on Moscow attitudes. The 22nd Soviet Union Communist Party Congress held in 1961 continued in the criticism of Stalinism. Based on the criticism, the country's democratization process within the limits of socialism was under way in our country. The so called Pražská jar (the Prague Spring) became the acme of the liberalization process in 1968. It was the period of Alexander Dubček's executive function in the post of the first Czechoslovak Communist Party Secretary, who introduced the freedom of press, speech, movement and the possibility of establishing the parliament consisting of more political parties.

The political easing in 1960s led to a larger extent of freedom in artistic creation (the censorship was repealed in 1968) and the only permitted Socialist Realism was complemented with other styles.

Although the change of film poetics is possible to see at the turn of 1950s and 1960s, the most remarkable move is seen in the production of 1962 under the direction of the first Slovak graduates of the FAMU (Film Academy of Performing Arts in Prague). *The Crows Fly Over* (M. Holý) brings more authentic characters of working people. *The Boxer and Death* (P. Solan) is an existentialist view of life in concentration camp surroundings. The impulse for the formation of the Czechoslovak New Wave is the film *The Sun in the Net* (Š. Uher) that renounces the classical film narration even through the associative installation besides others.

From the view of film poetics, a creative group of great importance within a film company structure led by a surrealist A. Marenčin, who provided the space for external writers, except for other film company employees, and under his leadership non-conformal and experimental films were made. Traditional, genre films and the films for children and youth were further made by other creative groups.

The novelties in film creation were higher level of authenticity, the image of banal, daily reality in documentary stylization (so called civility), a weaker emphasis on the plot, existentialism in war films, the revision of history after its tendentious distortion by communists, engaging non-actors, experimental music, improvisation ...

## 5. Slovak New Wave

Political easing in Czechoslovakia and the influence of authorial films and film movements abroad instigated the formation of the Czechoslovak New Wave. The Czech films dominate the New Wave, the Slovak films take a smaller part. In the Slovak film context, the concept of the New Wave is used in a broader sense to describe the non-conformal and experimental creation of 1960s in Slovakia. In the narrower sense, it represents only the creation of the FAMU second generation graduates creating in the second half of 1960s – Juraj Jakubisko, Ello Havetta, Dušan Hanák. The end of the Czechoslovak New Wave came as a result of suppressing liberalization process. On 21 August 1968, the troops of the Warsaw Pact (the military organization of the Soviet block countries) annexed Czechoslovakia to stop ongoing reforms.

The films by Jakubisko and Havetta are linked with the play element which is the reaction to the world seriousness. It is a rebel revolt against the authoritarian regime and the authoritarian canon of film creation. In both authors' films there is the essential influence of rural surroundings – the magic of nature and folklore. The rational structure budes on spontaneity and intuition, unrestrainedness of surrealism, dadaism and lyricism. Social reality is only a nebulous background. The inner world of characters, their passion, desire, grief, fate, fight but also death are more essential.

Havetta's film *The Celebration in the Botanical Garden* (1969) tells of a simple story in a complicated form. Pierre, who promises to do miracles, comes to a town that is engaged in man-woman relationships. The fragmentary narration chaotically presents various townspeople, a banal reality is mixed with miracles and grotesqueness. After initial spectators' and critics' confusion, in 1980s, the critics came with the interpretation key according to which all film elements of the Slovak historical identity – pagan, Christian, medieval, baroque identity – are linked by the phenomenon of a carnival. As all New Wave films, even this one is distinctively self-reflective, that is why it is possible to think that the miracle promised by Pierre is the film medium itself which he brings.

Jakubisko's films are also a formal film play in which he does not even present national symbols seriously. The bizarre characters behave like fools who are free in their foolishness. However, it is balancing over an abyss. Human cruelty and aggression is the integral part of Jakubisko's films, which is felt mainly in the film *Zbehovia a pútnici (The Deserters and Pilgrims)*, (1968) as a reac-

tion to the aggressive attack of the Warsaw Pact troops to Czechoslovakia.

Jakubisko's and Havetta's films from 1960s were forbidden to be projected due to the extent of aggression, weak communication of narration typical for intellectual audience and due to nihilism.

## 6. Civilism and Dušan Hanák

Already at the end of the 1950s, Ján Lacko showed a strong sense of contemporary urban poetics in his comedies *Luck Comes on Sunday* (*Šťastie pride v nedeľu*, 1958) or *Football Fans* (*Skalní v ofsajde*, 1960). However, he was not able to combine a well-mastered form with content of comparable quality. It was Štefan Uher's *Sun in a Net* (*Slnko v sieti*, 1962) that became a truly comprehensive expression of the striving for a new poetics, which is also considered the film that was at the birth of the Czechoslovak new wave.

In this period, several authors explored the boundaries between fiction and documentary film in accordance with contemporary world trends, and Otakar Krivánek crossed them most significantly in both directions in his experiment *Our Daily Life* (*Deň náš každodenný*, 1969), where a real family becomes the focus of a film about the generation gap that separates parents and their children.

Among the three most prominent representatives of the Slovak new wave, Dušan Hanák was closest to the poetics of civilism, also because, unlike his companions in the new wave, Juraj Jakubisko and Elo Havetta, he had a much more significant experience with documentary film. In his feature-length feature debut *322* (1969), against the background of the story of cook Lauko, a former communist functionary who is going through a personal crisis, he opens up questions of values, morality and the inner and outer freedom of the individual. These topics remain at the centre of Hanák's interest throughout his subsequent work, despite the onset of normalization. The documentary film *Pictures of the Old World* (*Obrazy starého sveta*, 1972) about peculiar old people, who, despite the circumstances, preserved their inner freedom, was followed by two films about ordinary, simple people from the periphery, *Pink Dreams* (*Ružové sny*, 1976) and *I Love, You Love* (*Ja milujem, ty miluješ*, 1980). The lyrical tragicomedy *Pink Dreams* about the relationship between the postman Jakub and the Roma woman Jolanka eventually became Hanák's most successful film in terms of audiences.

## 7. 1970s – Normalization

The concept of normalization expresses the process returning the politics and the extent of freedom in Czechoslovakia back to the period before the reforming years 1960s, after the Warsaw Pact troops' invasion. This period is called "Husakism" by a new leader of the Communist Party Gustáv Husák, who replaced Alexander Dubček. Having removed the reformers, the Party was "cleared", a lot of people had to leave the public life, a lot of film makers were forbidden to shoot films or they were moved to other departments, and some emigrated. Although the censorship was renewed in the form of a new institution, film makers' self-censorship, who worried about themselves and their relatives, had a stronger impact on their creation.

The group of experimenting film makers surrounding a surrealist Albert Marenčin was dissolved. The new tradition of experimental creation was replaced by ornamental mannerism in which the film form of apolitical allegories did not correspond to the chosen theme. The film tradition about a working staff in style of Socialist Realism returned, war films again demonstrated the Czechoslovak subordination to the Soviet Union. These films were, however, enhanced with lighter genres – adventurous, spy films and caricature (comedy). Unlike 1950s, there was a change towards a stronger female heroine in the period detective films. Film industry started to support lighter genres of spectator films, because due to intellectually demanding creation of 1960s and having more TV sets at home, the attendance of cinemas declined and the return of Socialist Realism at the beginning of 1970s even worsened this situation.

The creation of Martin Hollý, who was a good film narrator surrounded by high-quality actors mostly acting in adventurous films with melodramatical elements of harsh men, belongs to good-quality genres. He also enriched the basic adventurous structure with the elements of horror, thriller and ballade. His most famous film is *The Cooper Tower* (1970). The story from those days takes place in the untouched, harsh nature of the High Tatras, by which it is free from social-political reality of normalization era.

## 8. Postcivilism and magical realism. Slovak Cinema of the 1980s

In the 1980s, several young directors tried to maintain programmatic conti-

nity with the poetics of civilism of the 1960s. They filmed in authentic settings, with non-professional actors, and created stories with internal dramatic conflicts in which they explored the borders between reality and fiction. This was also the main theme of Vlado Balco's feature debut, *Point of View* (*Uhol pohľadu*, 1984), a partially autobiographical story of a young documentary film student who, in confrontation with official art, asks himself questions about the nature of the film medium and its relationship to truth.

The opposition to this trend consisted of films with significant mysterious or surreal elements. Since the poetics of the Slovak literary works, which have inspired these films referred to the works of Latin American writers of magical realism, the same name was also used for this trend in Slovak cinema of the eighties. It was started by Juraj Jakubisko with his ambitious epic *The Millennium Bee* (*Tisícročná včela*, 1983), broadly outlining the fates of members of a Slovak family over the course of several decades at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

Dušan Trančík was close to the Polish cinema of moral concern with his author's program, focusing on the fate of an individual in a corrupt environment and his quest for an ethical stance. The result was model dramas, based on high quality scripts, but using film language inspired by documentary film. In the 1980s, Trančík followed up the significant character study of two diametrically different approaches to life in the film *The Winner* (*Vítaz*, 1978) with several films. The most important of them was *Another Love* (*Iná láska*, 1985), a drama about the personal defiance and compromise of an aspiring doctor who finds himself in a bleak and morally declining environment of a Slovak village.

## **9. 1990s – Transformation of the Cinema**

The *Perestrojka* (The Reconstruction) – a political movement in the Soviet Union represented by Mikhail Gorbachev – caused political easing and the subsequent revolution in the Soviet Block. On 17 November 1989, the revolution in Czechoslovakia started and led to the failure of totalitarian regime represented by the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and to the establishment of parliamentary democracy. In 1993, Czechoslovakia peacefully split into two independent countries, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

After the revolution, the state controlled economy changed to the market



controlled economy. The first private film companies appeared. The Slovak film creation (producer) was privatized by people close to the autocratic prime minister Vladimír Mečiar in the way which destroyed the Koliba ateliers, which resulted in their ceasing to make films. The functional film industry was degraded. In the new economic conditions the new functioning way of film financing did not exist for a long time as films could not make money for themselves in the small Slovak market.

While in 1980s 10 – 12 feature films were made yearly, in 1990s the number reached only 1 – 3 films. Some directors were not able to adapt to new market conditions, some left for the Czech Republic, where the privatization was more successful. Directors debuting in 1990s did not belong to the creative generation, they made one film at the most in this decade. The only director who systematically shot films in his own authorial style even during 1990s was Martin Šulík.

Actors' films by Martin Šulík are characterized by episodic narration, magic realism, introspection into characters' soul, minimalistic music, slow pace or repetitive theme of father-son relationships. He most often adapts the history of Czech-Slovak cinematography in documentary films.

## **10. Contemporary Slovak Cinema – New Millennium**

After 2004, the cinematography revitalization started as a result of implementing a systematic financial support. The grant system AudioVision under the Ministry of Culture (2004) was replaced by the public institution Audio-visual Fund (2009), and due to the contract between the public television and the state (2009), the television started to be financially involved in film creation. In 2009, 10 utterly Slovak or mostly Slovak feature films were made, in 2012, 15 of these films were made, and in 2019, the number of the films reached 24. The following Covid pandemic caused a remarkable decrease.

With the higher number of films, cinematography was again stratified by genres. The film revitalization initially started in the area of authorial films. The establishment of the Film and Television Faculty in the Academy of Performing Arts (1990) was significant for forming a strong generation of documentary and animated film creators. Authors gradually started to found their own production companies and a documentary film in the form of feature films was again on in the new millennium cinemas. Several documentarists

began to work on actor's films later, so hybrid films – on the edge of a documentary and actor's film – appeared, mainly in the genre classification of social drama which is successful in foreign art festivals. The central creative person of the genre is a scriptwriter Marek Leščák.

Historical films, tales, comedies, melodramas and romantic films, thrillers, horrors and sci-fi films belong to commercially successful genres.

Although animated feature films for families are the most attended movies in Slovakia, so far only one film of this kind has been made in the Slovak production – *The Journey to Yourland* (2022), and two other animated feature films for adult audience. The production of animated films will focus on the less demanding, short format of authorial festival films and television series.

## **11. Martin Slivka and Slovak Non-fiction Cinema**

Similar to the fiction film, the relative liberalization of the 1960s brought opportunities also in the field of non-fiction film. The young generation of directors was able to use new stylistic methods, react to contemporary world trends, especially in French and American documentary film, and at the same time connect in an original way with domestic sources of inspiration, based primarily on the ethnographic tradition, at the beginning of which stood Karel Plicka. His natural follower was the ethnographer and director Martin Slivka, who in his film debut, *Water and Labour* (*Voda a práca*, 1963), created an almost abstract composition through montage of footage of old, water-powered wooden machines, complemented by experimental music by Ilja Zeljenka. In Bulgaria, Slivka shot the film *A Man Is Leaving* (*Odchádza človek*, 1968), in which he managed to elevate the ethnographic material about Bulgarian funeral customs, traditions and mourning songs to a meditation on life and death, but also on religion and faith and their place in a person's life. This topic was also addressed by Dušan Hanák in his documentary *Mass* (*Omša*, 1967), capturing the celebration of mass in a transitional way that is no longer used today. The slowly disappearing world of old people, living a very authentic way of life, also became the main subject of Hanák's feature-length documentary *Pictures of the Old World* (*Obrazy starého sveta*, 1972). His heroes, despite the often tragic circumstances of their difficult lives, are still internally free, as they are still true to their own deeply rooted values. When portraying them, Hanák combined the approach, based on the original photographic cycles that were his primary source of inspiration, with staging, and even a

form of a poll, which was very popular at that time. The music track is equally eclectic, mixing authentic folk songs with classical and modernist concrete music.

## **12. Animation Cinema**

While the first short, Czech animated films started to appear in 1920s, the first Slovak animated film was made as late as in 1944, in the free time of the most productive Slovak animator in history ever, Viktor Kubal. After World War II, two big film studios in Prague and Zlin, the Czech Republic, were nationalized, but in Slovakia, the first state film studio originated as late as in 1965. By then, there had not been enough of those interested in animated film creation, nor a willingness of film company leaders to found another studio, because the successful animation had existed in Czechoslovakia – the Czech.

Short films made for cinemas as pre-films and television series for children were the dominant production. From the view of genres it was tales, films for children, grotesques for children and the adults, also social-critical films for the adults which related to citizens' behaviour, working people, and partners in relationships.

The Czech animation reached the world reputation due to the puppet technique, and the first puppet film was made in Slovakia as late as in 1979. By then, specifically animated and flat movies ( cut-out animation) had been made.

Viktor Kubal is the author of the only two Slovak animated feature films which were made during the socialism era. It was specifically drawn animation. He first imitated American drawn grotesque through figure design and moves, later, after a few years' practice in the paper, he created his own style – simple lines and shapes, narrating shortcuts, playful gags and a surprising point representing tiny, human imperfections, but also immoral peccadillos.

The ineffective privatization of the Slovak film creation, disappearing orders from television and short films from the cinemas caused the termination of traditionally comprehended animation. The authors of the Slovak film creation ceased to create films, and they became teachers in the Department of Animated Creation of the FTF VŠMU (Film and Television Faculty in the Academy of Performing Arts), where the new generations of animators reaching

success in international festivals grew up.

### **Recommended Literature in English**

1. Alphabet of Slovak Cinema 1921 – 2021 , ed. Martin Kaňuch, Jelena Paštéková and Rastislav Steranka, Slovak Film Institute, 2022, ISBN 9788085187953
2. Czech and Slovak Cinema, Peter Hames, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, ISBN 9780748620821
3. Avant-garde to New Wave: Czechoslovak Cinema, Surrealism and the Sixties, Jonathan L. Owen, Berghahn Books, 2013, ISBN 9780857459015

## BASICS OF ANIMATION – WINTER

### 2D ANIMATION – DEFINITION OF ANIMATION, TYPES OF ANIMATION

Martina Frajšťáková

One of the key aspects of animation is, that it's shot one frame at a time! In animation, no initial movement occurs, everything is moved by the animator and shot/drawn/moved/hand painted frame by frame.

It's an illusion of motion, that can exist thanks to the **persistence of vision** – when a sequence of pictures is shown at high speed (24 fps), our brain perceives the sequence as one fluid string of movements. The illusion of motion is located inside the viewer's mind, not in the outside reality (read more in *Animasophy* from Ůlo Pikkov).

It is as important what is between the frames, as what is on the frames – meaning: each frame needs to be drawn/created depicting that specific pose or position of the fictional or real object in such a manner that the sequence as a whole will make sense, work out as a sequence – each frame depending on the previous and next.

There's speculation on the types and categories of animation, for instance, animation done in flat 2D space, such as cutout animation, can be categorized as both – a 2D technique and stop-motion.

**Rotoscoping** might not be considered animation at all, since it's traced live-action footage. But most festivals and animators do call it “animation” and allow admissions of rotoscoped films.

**Frame dropping** (a technique that leaves out frames according to a specific rhythm from actual done footage – live action or animated one) can make live action footage look like pixilation, while it never was shot frame by frame. As such, it probably cannot be considered *animation in a real sense*.

**Depending on the chosen technique, we can divide animation into:**

#### **1. HAND-DRAWN ANIMATION: everything drawn by hand**

Depending on the medium used:

a) TRADITIONAL ON PAPER/CLASSICAL ANIMATION

b) DIGITAL DONE ON A TABLET/IN SOFTWARE

Depending on other aspects:

A) FULLFRAME

B) LIMITED

C) ROTOSCOPING

D) LIVE-ACTIONxANIMATION

**2. STOPMOTION: everything shot frame by frame, can be done traditionally or digitally**

a) PUPPET ANIMATION

b) PUPPET-TOON

c) CLAYMATION (with or without an armature, clay painting, stratacut)

d) CUTOUT ANIMATION (traditional, digital)

e) OBJECT ANIMATION

f) PIXILATION

**3. COMPUTER ANIMATION: done entirely in 3D software, uses a digital 3D model/puppet and rendering**

a) MOTION CAPTURE/MO-CAP

b) 2D inside 3D space – vector, flash..

c) 3D rigged models/puppets

**4. ALTERNATIVE TECHNIQUES: everything else that doesn't quite fit into the previous categories**

a) Drawing or scratching on film

b) Painting on glass

c) Erased animation

d) Pinscreen animation

e) Sand-animation and powdery materials

f) Flipbook

g) ... and more.

**Today, techniques that combine various types and approached emerge, usually called mixed media or hybrid animation**, or not even having a name and simply being a mixture of various approaches. The results can be stunning, interesting, trippy and the reason for mixing techniques isn't just trying to be artsy or creating beauty. Reasons are often time and budget constraints or searching for specific animation for specific mood or thing to convey within a story.

**The evolution of AI art software**, such as *Midjourney*, has the animation and art industry in quite a stir as well – the AI can be fed with an infinite amount of artwork to make it learn and then produce pictures and even animation. But the topic is currently very controversial (as of 2023), because most of the developers fed the AI illegally through internet galleries, with no refunds or monetary gain for the copyright holders of the images used for machine learning.

**It is questionable, where the moral line should be drawn to not make artists or animators feel replaced or used, or reducing the media to some kind of shallow spectacle or play that „anyone can make“ as long as they feed the AI with the correct source material. The creative aspect of such use of AI is also up for debate – does it make you an artist or animator, if you just „use the right words“ or „use the right source“.**

Nevertheless, we can already see some results with the short film *ANIME ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS* by Corridor or music videos *Lost* (Linkin Park) and *Age of illusion* (Die Antwoord).

## **ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – I. BRIEF HISTORY OF ANIMATION, OPTICAL ILLUSIONS**

Animals and people, gods and goddesses, mythical beings, demons, and fictional heroes have been depicted all over the world throughout human history. Some depictions are as old as 14 000 years – specifically, the drawings in the caves of Spain and France – **Lascaux and Altamira**. Both caves have numerous depictions of animals, hunting scenes and people in dynamic poses that evoke life. It is proof that even people thousands of years ago had a very keen eye and memory of motion and were fascinated by it. In China, Japan, and Asia we can find gigantic scrolls with depictions of animals in motion or scrolls telling myths through lively artwork. In ancient Greece, pottery

and vases are decorated with athletic heroes performing jumps and fights. In Egypt, the oval dome of the goddess Isis consists of 110 pillars, with the goddess being in a different pose on each of the pillars. When passing by the pillars at high speed, an optical illusion (similar to frames of an animation) can be perceived, while looking at the pillars. The goddess becomes “alive” – and this is the core of what animation is – giving inanimate objects “life” through the illusion of movement. Or giving nonliving drawings “a soul” (Lat. *anima* = soul).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, optical illusions and optical toys were on the rise. **Toys such as the zoetrope, daedaelum, praxinoscope, thaumatrope, phenakistoscope or lanterna magica** gave the impression of drawings becoming alive when the toy was spun, set in motion, or otherwise used. The illusions were very simple and to this day, people continue to create them (such as flipbooks – small notebooks with an altered drawing on each page, creating a fluid movement when flipped with the thumb).

*“ANIMATION IS AN ILLUSION OF MOVEMENT, WHAT’S BETWEEN THE FRAMES IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT’S ON THEM.”* (Norman McLaren)

None of the optical toys or animation would work, though, if not for a phenomenon called **PERSISTENCE OF VISION or RETINAL PERSISTENCE**. Discovered in 1824 by **PETER MARK ROGET**. This illusion occurs when the visual perception of an object lasts for some time inside the mind of the viewer, despite the object already changing position or vanishing. Your eyes are basically photographing everything in front of them and it takes the brain time to perceive each picture, consume it and save it into the memory. If these objects or still images are shown at a specific speed, the brain will perceive them as fluid motion. The specific speed we are talking about is exactly 24 frames/images per second! Meaning that anything below this speed might break the illusion and everything above might make you motion sick.

The distinctive characteristic of animated film is that **EVERYTHING IS SHOT ONE FRAME AT A TIME. Animation is always short frame by frame, while live-action film is shot on film in real time.** In animation, **NO INITIAL MOVEMENT OCCURS** – the animator is creating the frames for the movement in sequence (as pictures or photographs) and once they are in order and screened at 24 fps, we can perceive them as fluid movement.

First attempts at animation were heavily inspired by tricks of **Georges MELIÉS**, and the people attempting them were mostly involved with illustration for newspaper, magazines, creating comic strips and discovering the po-



tential of frame-by-frame shots.

The invention of photography, color photos and film materials, and **Edward Muybridge's** photo studies of frame-by-frame movement, heavily influenced the progression of creative experiments with capturing and emulating motion.

**In 1892, in Paris, at the Musée Grévin – Charles Émile Reynald** presented his **Theatre Optique**. An optical theatre that resembled animation, handcrafted by himself. Reynald hand painted kilometers-long strips of paper and constructed the praxinoscope to be able to screen these drawings in theatres. He was able to even divide the background and foreground (the moving strips being projected on the background) and add sound and foley, precisely timed. Reynald was not yet creating animation as we know it today, but he is still considered the father of animation in a sense. Because he attempted to create the illusion of moving images. Unfortunately, his hard work was a sensation only till the Brothers Lumière came into the picture in 1895. With their live-action film, they quickly overshadowed the Optical Theatre and the heartbroken Reynald decided to destroy most of his work. There are only a few pieces of his artwork left.

Later, pioneers like **Norman Mc Laren** or **Stuart Blackton** experimented with the possibilities of frame-by-frame shooting on a camera. Animations were first used as experiments with moving objects, and shooting them frame by frame as part of live-action films. Later, **Oskar Fishinger** created animations specifically tailored for classical music. Stuart Blackton created probably the first hand-drawn animation *“Humorous phases of funny faces”* (1906).

**Winsor Mc Cay** with his *“Gertie the Dinosaur”* (1914), the **Fleischer brothers** with iconic characters for adults such as Popeye or Betty Boop or **Osamu Tezuka** with his TV show *Astro Boy*, paved the way for animation to be acknowledged not just by children as a phenomenon, but by adults as a form of entertainment and even art.

**In 1930's, when Disney** arrived on the stage with his feature and short films, animation started to blossom into an actual industry. Many animators, including Mc Laren or Mc Cay, expressed worries and almost sadness toward this development, because they viewed animation as having the potential to become something more than mere industry for making money. Disney created an array of characters and adapted fairytales to ultimately become one of the monopoly-holders inside the industry itself. While the development could be viewed as having a bitter aftertaste, it won't erase the fact that, thanks to

Disney, animators started to get more organized and skilled in their craft, up to a point of complete mastery of movement.

Though the year **1937** is marked as the year when the **first 2D feature animation** was born – “*Snow white and the seven dwarves*” ... the title of the **first animated feature in the world** belongs to “*The adventures of prince Achmed*”, a cutout feature created in 1926 by a female German animator, **Lotte Reiniger**.

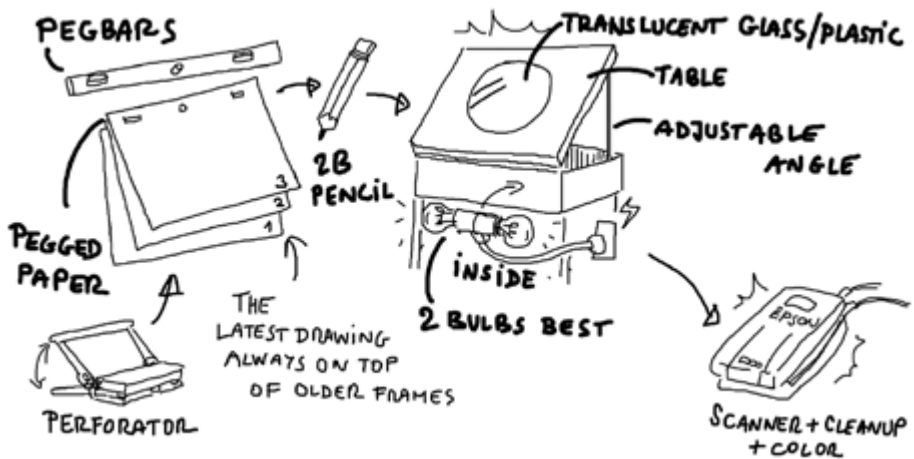
The 1981 book written by some of Disney’s most skilled animators and veterans (nicknamed the Nine old men) – “*The Illusion of life*” – is a resource for studying animated movement and the craft of animation up to this day. It also established **Disney’s twelve animation principles** that create a very effective and insightful guide for drawing and creating movement in the most effective and aesthetic way, while keeping the animation consistent. No matter how many people work at a single project.

## **ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – II. INTRODUCTION TO 2D ANIMATION: tools, keyframes, in-betweens**

2D animation employs 2D techniques, either traditional or digital. Traditional or **classical animation** uses **paper and pencil, a light-table, peg bars and a perforator**. The images are scanned and cleaned, then they are colored digitally or traditionally. In the past, after making pencil animation on paper, the images were transferred to transparent **celluloid**, the ink lines were drawn and the cells were colored by hand from the other side, where there was no inking. Then, the images would be photographed under the camera, while precisely following instructions from the animation director. These instructions are documented on an **x-sheet/dope-sheet**. This sheet contains vital information frame-by-frame on how and when the camera will move, zoom, where which layer of celluloid or paper is supposed to go and on which frame, vital information on lip-synch and sound and all other technical information necessary to shoot and time the materials correctly.

In modern days, the X-sheet is still used, in traditional or digital form. Many animation studios in Asia are still doing 2D animation in the traditional way – with pencil on paper, but the coloring and cleanup are done digitally. Software like **Toon Boom, Tv Paint or Anime Studio** are on the rise though, making use of digital tablets and skipping many steps that would slow the process

down – such as scanning or cleanup work. Animation can be done, cleaned, timed, colored, and exported all within the software. Later, it is post-produced and the elements are being brought together in editing software.

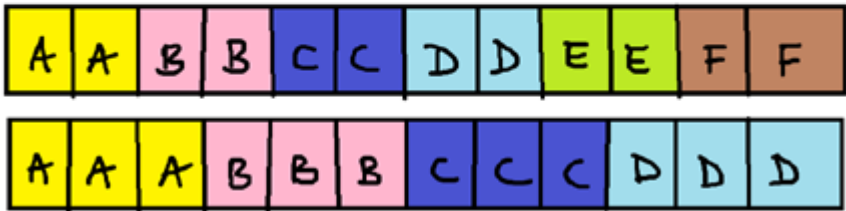


2D animation can be divided into FULL-FRAME animation and LIMITED animation. Full-frame animation is rare, very time-consuming and expensive. It uses 24 different images for 24 frames on film material or digital timeline. In contrast, Limited animation only requires half of the drawings, which are shot twice to fill in the 24 frames. This means it can either be 12 images, shot twice (animation on twos). Or 8 images shot thrice (animation on threes). Using 6 images on four frames each is very risky and breaks the illusion of fluid movement, making the animation appear choppy. Limited animation is not inferior to full-frame one, the quality of animation lies in the skill of the animator to convey motion in sequence. Animation is not copying reality; it is stylized movements based on real-life physics while striving to make the movements of the animated character believable to the eye of the viewer. Stylized and expressive or exaggerated movements work much better in an animated world than realistic movements, which might appear unsettling or result in the uncanny valley effect.

## 2D animation - fullframe



limited | on twos/on threes/on fours |



### There are 3 types of frames in animation:

**KEYFRAMES** – the backbone of the sequence, done by the key animator. The most extreme and exaggerated drawings that define the entire movement. Require a type of mastery or level of skill.

**BREAKDOWNS**- keyframes that break down the existing keys into further, more defined portions of movement. By doing them, the animator has more control over the movement.

**INBETWEENS**- fill in the gaps between keyframes, the number of them depends on what the main animator wants to achieve: more inbetweens mean more fluent and slower movement. Usually, they are concentrated around the keyframes – when action needs to be slowed in or eased out. They make the movement around the keyframes appear softer, smoother, cushioned.

## **ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – III. INTRODUCTION TO 2D ANIMATION: ways to animate, penciltest, storyboard, animatic**

### **There are 3 ways to approach 2D animation:**

1. **STRAIGHT AHEAD PRINCIPLE** – animating without defining the key-frames, animating literally straight ahead – sheet by sheet. Perfect for unrestricted movements, metamorphosis, complicated sequences. Hard to control the shapes and mass of characters and objects, can get out of control in number of frames and in deformation of the drawings. Not suited for teamwork. Can drag out the worktime and budget can suffer.
2. **POSE TO POSE PRINCIPLE** – uses keyframes to first define the most extreme parts and poses of the movement – the backbone of the sequence, choreography, then going back to add the in-betweens. It is a very controlled way to animate, with precise results and control over the number of frames. Perfect for dividing the work into key animator work and inbetweeners/teamwork. Standard for the industry. Budget does not go out of hand with this one.
3. **COMBINATION OF BOTH** – the best approach, combining both approaches at different stages of the movement or using the best method for specific movement. Also used overall in student work and industry.

**PENCILTEST/LINETEST:** the entire film or parts of the film done in pencil on paper. Used to check for animation or timing mistakes, to adjust the timing, to check the movements before doing the cleanup on the frames. The software used to do the linetest have a dope-sheet in a digital form.

**STORYBOARD:** a visual representation of the written script, shot by shot. There are various types of storyboards – the amount of detail, length and amount of information depends on the use of the storyboard (commercial storyboards are usually colored and more detailed, storyboards for TV series or feature films need to be more versatile and with less detailed art, so the adjustments can be done quicker).

The usual information in a storyboard is: layout of the shot, number of shot, camera movements, dialogue and sound, brief explanation of the action. The origin of storyboards is from the Walt Disney company and the first one to ever use them was Ub Iwerks. Storyboards are used also in live action, especially for complicated action sequences. Planning the film out in storyboard form saves time and money and reduces problems such as need to shoot

additional things or animate additional scenes— because there's less chance of making mistakes or adding unnecessary shots/forgetting shots during the moviemaking.

**ANIMATIC:** basically the storyboard stretched out in time – the entire story and sketches from the storyboard put together in an editing software and timed precisely. With added music and sound, dialogues. The final animatic is a template for the final film, shot by shot, to be put together once the entire animation is finished. The sketches inside the animatic are then replaced by the finished animation.

Some animatics can include keyframes from the start. All must include camera movements, the layout of each shot, the transitions between shots, basic movements of the characters or objects (if the character is moving from A to B, the animatic needs to show at least point A and point B and how they will be shown in time).

## **ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2 D ANIMATION – IV. INTRODUCTION TO 2D ANIMATION: Disney's 12 animation principles**

When animation was just at its starting point and more of a phenomenon than an industry, people were focused on discovering its possibilities. Little did they know that the possibilities are almost endless, as animation as industry evolves alongside technologies and software. Some animators are even returning to the basics and traditional roots, trying to rekindle interest in classical principles. Others are trying to combine various techniques and finding new solutions to old and new challenges, pioneering new ways, adjusting proper software, making it sometimes almost impossible to even guess, how the animated work was done. New hybrid animations are being created (such as 2.5D animation seen in *Wolfwalkers* or 2D animation that imitates 3D shading – as seen in the film *Klaus*).

Animation is more than ever a work of a big or small team of specialists, rather than the work of one sole author. For that, principles and way of work needed to become more efficient and effective. Since every artist has their own style, Disney needed to unify the quality and style across many different people working on a single project. Back in the days, it was usual that one animator got one cut to work on, or even one sequence of cuts – making the old black and white films a bit of a mess in both, animation, and dramaturgy.

So, Disney's veterans devised a study guide for the younger animators, based on their extensive experience working at the company.

The origin of these principles is the 1981 book titled "*The illusion of life – Disney animation*".

The principles explain exactly what needs to be done and why, to make a drawing look attractive and physics believable and how to successfully implement these rules. The principles are effective not only for 2D, but they also work just fine in any technique, even 3D animation or cut-out animation! And they are being used until today, *The illusion of life* being still a good guide for animation students worldwide.

The techniques teach an approach to animation that allows for flexible and lively artwork, creates dynamic poses, makes characters and scenes with appeal and stirs up emotions in the viewers.

**The Disney's 12 principles are:**

1. SQUASH AND STRETCH
2. ANTICIPATION
3. STAGING
4. STRAIGHT AHEAD AND POSE TO POSE ANIMATION
5. FOLLOWTHROUGH AND OVERLAP
6. SLOW IN AND SLOW OUT
7. ARCS
8. SECONDARY ACTION
9. TIMING
10. EXAGGERATION
11. SOLID DRAWING
12. APPEAL

**You can find a brilliant show and tell video from Allan Becker for all the principles here:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDqjld14bF4>**

## ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – V. INTRODUCTION TO 2D ANIMATION: silhouette principle, line of action, solid drawing, character sheet, influencing factors

In 2D animation, various animators can specialize in specific subjects of depiction: **character animators** for the performance of the drawn actors and their emotions, **effect animators** for creating elements such as energy, mist or rain. Animators who can be experts at animating explosions, female characters, fight scenes and the like. The work can be divided among them not only based on skill level but also on their specialized animation traits or fields of expertise.

In general, all animators must be keen observers of real life and have a good sense of rhythm and motion. They need to create compelling physics inside a world that doesn't yet exist – on a blank sheet of paper, frame by frame. Thus, they need to keep in mind the factors that can influence physics of the created world. **The fictional physics might copy reality or can be completely made up or turned 180 degrees in logic for a gag effect or shock value** (such as heavy objects suddenly becoming light, or something that is supposed to shatter suddenly shattering the opponent – fragile things can become super-hard, characters with a solid body suddenly stretch out or roll like rollcake ...).

The influencing factors usually are:

1. Internal and external forces: gravity, muscles, magnetic force...
2. Weight of the object and mass: material, shape, momentum, liquidity...
3. Surroundings: friction, pressure, wind, thickness of the air or water pressure...

All of these factors together, but not in the same amount/way influence and/or dictate DIRECTION, TRAJECTORY, SPEED, MOMENTUM OF MOVEMENT.

Movements can be divided into BASIC (one motion), STRUCTURED (combined movements, more than one).

**A movement chart/graph** can be used to decide on how the keyframes, and in-betweens will work out for a specific motion – the density of in-betweens and keyframes, their number, how close they will be together, what the trajectory will be, the number of frames. Some animators do not use these charts at all, but they are very handy for planning out the sequence and are a great sidenote for assistants and in-betweeners from the lead animator. It is a



rule that the keyframes are always circled.

### **SILHOUETTE PRINCIPLE:**

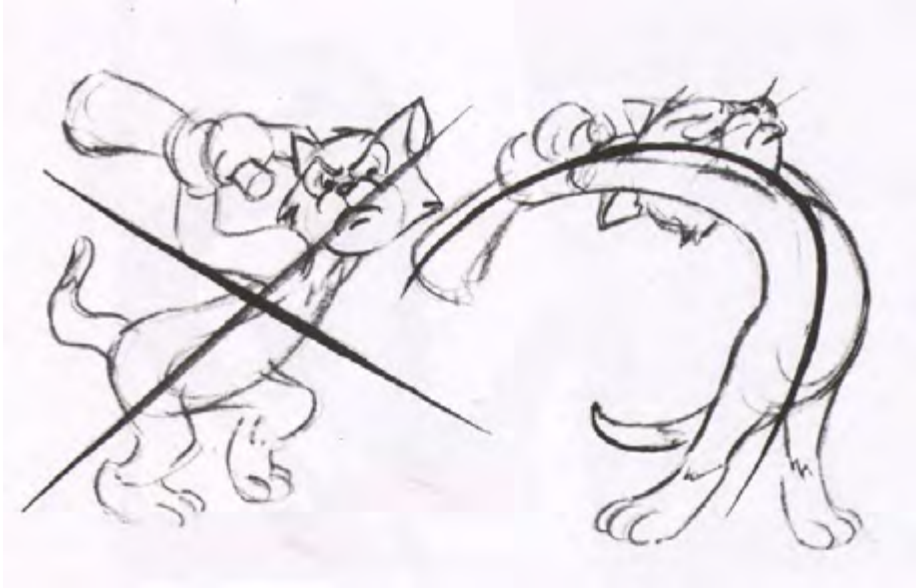
A character should always be shown at an angle and such a dynamic pose that the viewer can recognize the character and the specific movement just by seeing the silhouette. This is a very important rule in general that creates a readable dynamic posture filled with energy to be released in a movement. It is easy to recognize the action itself and it's also applied for showing emotion of the character (crouched back = tired, sloppy walk and hanged shoulders with a hanged head = sadness, nose pointing to the sky with a firm straightened posture and dynamic limbs = confidence...etc.). The rule also is to not make hands and their important gestures be overlapped with the body or creating weird compositions with the background, where the background elements could overshadow or disturb the silhouette of the character.



Picture source: <https://twitter.com/bobjinx/status/962718064675577857>

### **LINE OF ACTION:**

Is an imaginary or sketched-out line that tries to express the entire posture into one dynamic line. This line is drawn first and then the figure itself is added. The line should fill the posture with energy and is usually C or S shaped. Example below:



Picture source: *Advanced animation*, Preston Blair

### **SOLID DRAWING:**

Usually, when building a character, animators first use generic geometrical shapes, such as rectangles and ovals to build the general shape of the body. Then, once the geometry defines the character in the desired manner, they add details and more shapes. This way we can create interesting characters with variety of body shapes and sizes that often reflect their personality or are in an interesting contrast to it.

Geometric shapes also ensure that while animating, the mass of the character and the volume stays intact while creating each frame. It is much easier to focus on these shapes than making a very detailed sketch and having to recreate it each time with all its details. To ensure that the character does not deform over time while drawing, these generic shapes are used to sketch out the keyframes and in-betweens, then they are checked in a penciltest and then the details are added. Some shapes also evoke good or bad feelings and can have great impact on the viewer's feelings when watching the character (oval shapes are pleasant, while sharp ones evoke danger or aggression etc.).

## **CHARACTER SHEET:**

For each important character, a sheet that depicts them from most important angles and in most important emotions exists. They are reserved for the main cast or characters that appear more often. These sheets show the character with all its details in a frontal, side, behind and ¾ view.

The emotions shown are anger, sadness, joy, surprise etc. These sheets also include a color palette and showcase all important details of the character (such as the placement of ornaments, weapons, accessories, scars, or freckles, etc.).

A height chart is also created for the entire cast, so the animators know the height differences between the characters when placing them in one shot together.



Picture source: Wikipedia

## **ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – VI. INTRODUCTION TO 2D ANIMATION: beginner mistakes, inbetweening, metamorphosis**

**The telephone game:** This mistake is quite common especially when using the straight-ahead technique for animating 2D. The mistake works the same way as the telephone game from your childhood: the first person whispers a word to the second person, the second person whispers to the third... and so on...until the last person says the word out loud. The result usually is

completely different from the word that was the initial input – the whispers and the sheer number of people in between corrupted the word by hearing incorrectly or misinterpreting what they heard from the person sitting next to them. In animation, the very first frame of a starting animator can be very different from the last one in the sequence: the character shrinks or gets bigger, details change, eyes widen or travel across the face... Thus, it is advised to always check regularly, how different the current frame from the first one is and redraw it properly. It also helps to remove the excess drawings from the pegbar and just leave those that are currently necessary to be viewed.

### **Too many/too few frames:**

The general rule is that if we want things to be smoother, we need more frames concentrated around the keyframes. With physics, where movement needs to ease in/out, you need to add extra frames to slow down the motion – or add fewer frames over time, as things speed up.

Excess drawings can make the overall motion appear very heavy, lifeless or slowed down – gigantic characters do need to appear “slower” because of their mass and size (in this case, it is advised to use more in-betweens). Rapid or very fast movements rather need a clever way in which the keyframes are drawn, rather than a large number of in-betweens. Things animated on twos or threes can appear very dynamic and lively and might not need an in-between treatment in many cases. Recently, there has been a trend in 3D animation to even drop frames to make the animation more choppy.

### **Weirdly timed or incorrectly depicted in-betweens:**

You need to understand the logic of the in-betweens, that can be very specific in specific cases. An in-between does not automatically mean “the middle drawing between two drawings” – this means you must always take into account things like correct timing, anatomy, movement/placement/restriction of joints, action – reaction etc. A cake splatters after it has hit the ground, not halfway through the fall (even if it is “the middle” of the sequence). The nail is bent after the hammer hits its head (not when the hammer is still approaching).

Arcs: most living things move on arcs, the trajectory of thrown things, joints, limbs does not move on a straight path (straight paths are reserved for machines and mechanical objects, but even there, caution is needed – as some parts of the machine can still operate not on a straight line). Keep this in mind, especially when animating characters – if you can keep the arcs where they belong, you won't make the mistake of incorrectly shortening or

stretching body parts throughout movements. You can always sketch out the trajectory on paper before drawing an in-between and plan the movement sequence in small sketches and thumbnails beforehand. An animator must always visualize the desired sequence/choreography in their mind's eye before using the pencil. Things do not "just happen" on the paper – they all have logic, meaning and a previous and next frame to transition from and into in a meaningful, clear way.

### **METAMORPHOSIS:**

Usually, the straight-ahead principle is a good way to animate any type of natural elements (rain, water, fire...) or energy (electricity, plasma, supernatural things...) – for it gives the movement a very organic feel. Metamorphosis means that one object morphs into a completely different one. The source object A is the first keyframe, the second object is B as the second keyframe – the in-betweens between A and B become gradually less like object A and more like object B until they reach their final B form. You can either deform object A throughout the in-betweens until they form object B, or you can literally break the object A into smaller parts that travel through the paper, until they reassemble themselves into B form. A and B can either be placed on the same spot and be same size, or they can be on completely different spots on the layout, in different sizes.

The easiest way to do morphing is from objects of the same size that are placed in the same spot and do not move or turn. The best result is with objects A and B that are very different in their silhouettes.

The morphing can also tell a story, by making the objects be somehow related by a theme.

The morphing does not have to stop just with two objects, you can apply the same principle to continue the animation that morphs into objects C, D, E, F... and so on. How you scatter them through the layout, whether the camera moves, or the objects rotate or not...it all depends on your drawing skill level, imagination, and playfulness. Nothing is impossible, as long as you can draw it yourself!

## ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – VII. ROTOSCOPING, TOTAL ANIMATION, SAKUGA

**ROSCOPING:** is the art of tracing live-action footage, frame by frame, to produce very realistic movements – the downside is that the result might actually lose its liveliness. The heavy usage of the technique is clearly visible in the early Disney works and Russian fairytales. In modern day, the technique is often used in combination with documentary film.

The technique was created by Max Fleischer, who used it for short series of *Koko the Clown – Out of the inkwell* series where the animation was combined with a live action. The footage of the actors was projected on a glass plane and traced on paper.

The technique was also used in Popeye and Betty Boop series later on. Since Fleischer's patent expired in 1931, people could use the technique for their own projects, and it spread into films that were mostly adult-oriented. Maybe the creators had a feeling that the realism might pull in an adult audience for cartoon films with mature themes. Films like *The Yellow Submarine*, *Fire and Ice*, *Heavy Metal*, *American Pop* followed... The most infamous of all is the 1978 adaptation of *Lord of the Rings*, which was a complete flop and the rotoscoping worked against the seriousness of the film.

It is up for deep discussion, whether rotoscoping can be considered animation at all – the opinions vary. Since it does require a basic understanding of animation and the traced objects or people, lighting, shadows, anatomy... but does not really require any input from the animator in terms of having to agonize over timing, perspective, keyframes, character animation etc. Regardless though, rotoscoped films do enter animation festivals.

Modern day examples of using the technique are the highly awarded *Waltz with Bashir*, *Waking Life*, *Chico and Rita*, Japanese anime series *Flowers of Evil*, Czech adaptation of a comic book of the same name – *Alois Nebel* and most recently, the awarded *Loving Vincent*, which took rotoscoping to a new extreme – by hand-painting each frame with expensive oil paints, imitating Vang Gogh's style. The result is something that cannot be replicated by a computer.

The technique is suited for those who do not have confidence in their drawing skills but are patient enough and have the technical equipment to progress with it.

**TOTAL ANIMATION:** a way to animate the entire shot with everything that it includes, by hand, without cutting the shot to the next one or without transitions – the animation is imitating a moving camera through a landscape or situation. The results are usually very impressive, but it's also a technique that requires a very skilled hand, being very observant and mastering dimensions of objects and environments. Famous example of using this technique is Frederic Back's *The man who planted trees* (famous for the poetic atmosphere and the animated camera moving through the mountains) or Osamu Tezuka's *Jumping* (which was a 6 minute POV film about the viewer jumping higher and higher), or Hungarian film *The Fly* (told from the perspective of a chased fly through a noble household, all done in one shot animated by hand).

**2.5D TECHNIQUE:** is a newly invented way of working with a 3D environment that is traced through a 2D technique. Used in the film *Wolfwalkers*, it used thousands of traced drawings of a moving 3D camera inside a modelled 3D environment.

**SAKUGA:** also known as the “money shot” or “blooming picture”, is a sequence inside an episode or film that very obviously has the best animation or highest investment/budget in comparison to the rest of the film. It's usually a high action sequence, chase or fight sequence, or an emotional peak of the film that needs to be beautiful and tries to engross the viewer. These are usual for Japanese anime series or films but are common also in the Western cartoons in modern animated culture. These are the climax of animation, a showcase of mastery by veteran animators or young dazzling talents inside the industry. It is common that the entire sequences are keyframed by one person. Many examples of Sakuga can be found on Youtube.

## **ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – VIII. STORY-TELLING IN ANIMATION, STORYBOARDING**

When film was just at a starting point, no storyboards were needed – the movie camera was placed in a single position, life was shot as it is, and the screening was still a spectacle for the audience. Once movies became art and not just a spectacle, elaborate ways to connect the sequences emerged. Ever since Eisenstein discovered film language and montage, a lot has changed and film became an opportunity to tell beautifully crafted, clever, heart wrenching stories.

Film needs a heavy emotional investment from the audience in order to be effective and offer an experience. The viewer needs to get immersed and believe a lie (that what he/she sees is a “reality”) and for that, the shots need to be carefully timed, composed, colored and lit. In animation, the characters need compelling visuals and movements. The characters overall need to be characters we can identify and empathize with or feel resentment toward – they need to induce an emotional response for the viewer. For that to happen, the story also needs to be compelling, having a structure that keeps us entertained and intrigued, in a rhythm that builds up tension and then releases it multiple times. When no words are exchanged, it is important to be able to choose such visuals and character motivations that will keep the audience invested.

Animation as a medium often creates stories told in a wordless fashion, just through the visuals and character’s acting. **Thus, a storyboard is an essential step in the creation of an animated film, because it is the first time we can translate words into a specific visual.** Storyboards started out with Ub Iwerks working for Disney and making notes and small thumbnails for the production on paper before the team started animating *Plane Crazy* in 1933.

Gradually, these thumbnails and notes became more elaborate, and a traditional storyboard emerged at Disney studios: a huge board, covering walls, with small pictures representing each shot, carefully pinned in a sequence. Pinning the pictures made sure that the shots could be moved, reassembled in a different way, and replaced at will by the team, deciding on crucial things like camera position, layout and story before the animation starts. Today, software for storyboarding exists, but many students and filmmakers keep creating them on paper, in notebooks, through collage or photos etc.

**1 panel of a storyboard equals one final shot of the film!** What always needs to be taken into consideration while doing each panel:

- why things happen – the point of each shot,
- emotional feedback of the viewer – make people feel something by seeing the shot
- visual appeal – beautiful shots, neutral shots, well established shots
- composition, focus point – the eyes need to follow the most important information, once knowing the focus point of the shot, you can build up a composition that will be of benefit to the focus point and minimize distractions



**Focus point/focal point** – is the most important element inside the shot, that needs the most attention from the viewer, because it holds crucial information or is the most important character inside the shot at the moment. There is always ONE primary focus point (the most important thing/person/object/situation in the shot), accompanied by a secondary and sometimes tertiary focus point (side characters, added situations, objects..). There can be MORE THAN ONE secondary and tertiary focus points.

**Storyboard artists have very good observation skills and are fast and versatile artists, who are prepared to redraw and revise the storyboard.** By the end of the work, they might draw thousands of pictures and redraw shots and sequences by the will of the director dozens or even hundreds of times, if necessary.

The artists developed techniques that make storyboarding faster, easier to repair mistakes, yet, having an impact on each shot. For instance, faking perspective or helping out the shot with drawing a fake grid that evokes perspective.

The use of golden ratio is a helpful tool for creating pleasing compositions!

Tilted compositions, build up in a diagonal manner can evoke movement and energy. Central compositions feel very stoic and strong. Horizontal compositions slow things down, vertical build ups create feeling of energy.

The characters are simplified for the purpose of quick artwork, but they need to be distinguishable on first look. This rule is especially important with project that outsource the work (so each storyboarding team can recognize the particular character from a sketch of a different team). The characters should be precisely on model for such productions – this means, following the character sheets made for each important character as a guide for drawing them.

### **Types of storyboard:**

1. Beat boards
2. Continuity boards/shooting boards
3. Live action boards
4. Feature animation boards
5. Commercial/pitch boards
6. TV animation boards

7. Videogame storyboards
8. Previs/previsualisation boards

## **ERASMUS ANIMATION BASICS – WINTER – 2D ANIMATION – VIII. STORY-TELLING IN ANIMATION, STORYBUILDING**

*The Hero's journey* is a notoriously known cycle of the progression of a story or the journey of a character – it has a starting point where the hero discovers something crucial and gathers motivation to set out on a journey of struggles and overcoming obstacles, which comes to a climactic point and a resolution, for the loose ends to be tied, and the hero gains comrades, love, or reaches his goal. The hero undergoes change and growth, and this **change is CRUCIAL for telling a compelling story.**

**A story can be seen as a progression from point A to point B, with significant changes happening to the hero in between this journey.** For this change to occur, the hero needs a counterforce: obstacles, a rival, antagonist.

He also needs **strong enough motivation** to even start the journey to point B (an emotional point or an actual place to journey to, or both). The hero should also be able to make a **big sacrifice** along the way – because growth is usually accompanied by significant loss or pain.

This structure copies real life, where we all set out on a journey to adulthood, searching for love and a place of our own, chasing goals and dreams, winning, and losing battles, gaining friendships and losing them, and facing loss.

**If a hero is too perfect or too tragic, the audience won't be able to empathize. Balancing his good points and flaws, with a compelling backstory, is the way to go.**

The hero also needs a **supporting cast**, although stories with just one or two protagonists can exist and be still compelling. A supporting cast adds a more colorful aspect to the plot and expands the emotional engagement of the audience.

**Villains and antagonists need to be the embodiment of a force to reckon with**, while being appealing or interesting in some shape or form, having a backstory, intelligent motivation for their goals, but being a moral contrast to the hero. Many well written villains hit the gray area, where they almost

become antiheroes, or their motivations end up being somewhat understandable. The point still is to make clear, who we should empathize with and to distinguish between good and evil at the very end. **The audience needs someone to root for to reach their goal** and the **satisfaction of defeating the villain or antagonist** is always a very rewarding experience, no matter how appealing the villain is.

Most of the stories have a **3-tact structure**, adapted from the theatre: **beginning, core, end**. With a significant **climax** near the end or having **more smaller climaxes** throughout, before reaching the final one. A plot-twist can expand the story in a more interesting way, if it happens in harmony with the character's motivations and/or makes the journey more difficult for the hero – so the viewers can enjoy it and anticipate more from the story. Forced drama and plot-twists are not advised.

**Many animated short films use a wordless way of telling stories** – through actions and choices of the characters, condensing the narrative to the clearest and most interesting happenings. Wordless stories are more universal, they do not need any subtitles and translations and are more dynamic – since the animator must allow the character to communicate solely through body language and acting. And the story is forced to move forward, with no dialogue to spend the time on. Information needs to be served in a much clearer way than by words. It is a challenge but can bring out truly the best from an idea. **The wordless approach is almost never seen in feature animation** – with just a few exceptions in recent years that either use no dialogue or just very little of it (such as *Red turtle* or *Boy and the world*, *The Illusionist...*).

Wikipedia, *Boy and the World*:

*„The entire film is told with very little dialogue. The gibberish spoken by the characters is Brazilian Portuguese spoken backwards. In addition, text shown onscreen is also Brazilian Portuguese that has been written backwards and mirrored upside-down.“*

**In comparison though – animated film can work masterfully with full dialogue and narration as well:** as seen in the recent *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* . Or the Japanese anime *film The silent voice* that implemented not just dialogue, but fully working sign language into its animation, dealing with heavy topics of bullying and having impaired hearing sense. Leaving the main two characters to be able to communicate mostly only through hand gestures or their action.

Animating lip synchronization is always very demanding in 2D animation,

while many other techniques allow for the creation of libraries within software, making the lip-sync animation considerably easier to create.

**Usually, narration and dialogues are recorded before the animation work starts** – requiring animators to synchronize and precisely time their drawings of lips and body language to match the audio. **In Eastern animation, the approach is different** – audio is recorded after the animation is completed, allowing talented voice actors to better match their animated counterparts with their voices. That is why the mouth flapping in anime looks so sloppy – so the voice actors would have a better chance to act out the voices without having to match the words syllable by syllable.

## ANIMATION BASICS – SUMMER

### ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – BRIEF HISTORY OF ANIMATION, OPTICAL ILLUSIONS

**Martina Frajšťáková**

Animals and people, gods and goddesses, mythical beings, demons, and fictional heroes have been depicted all over the world throughout human history. Some depictions are as old as 14 000 years – specifically the drawings in the caves of Spain and France – **Lascaux and Altamira**. Both caves have numerous depictions of animals, hunting scenes and people in dynamic poses that evoke life. It is proof that even people thousands of years ago had a very keen eye and memory of motion and were fascinated by it. In China, Japan, and Asia we can find gigantic scrolls with depictions of animals in motion or scrolls telling myths through lively artwork. In ancient Greece, pottery and vases are decorated with athletic heroes performing jumps and fights. In Egypt, the oval dome of the goddess Isis consists of 110 pillars, with the goddess being in a different pose on each of the pillars. When passing by the pillars at high speed, an optical illusion (similar to frames of an animation) can be perceived, while looking at the pillars. The goddess becomes “alive” – and this is the core of what animation is – giving inanimate objects “life” through the illusion of movement. Or giving nonliving drawings “a soul” (Lat. *anima* = soul).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, optical illusions and optical toys were on the rise. **Toys such as the zoetrope, daedaelum, praxinoscope, thaumatrope, phenakistoscope or lanterna magica** gave the impression of drawings becoming alive when the toy was spun, set in motion, or otherwise used. The illusions were very simple and to this day, people continue to create them (such as flipbooks – small notebooks with an altered drawing on each page, creating a fluid movement when flipped with the thumb).

*“ANIMATION IS AN ILLUSION OF MOVEMENT, WHAT’S BETWEEN THE FRAMES IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT’S ON THEM.”* (Norman McLaren)

None of the optical toys or animation would work though, if not for a phenomenon called **PERSISTENCE OF VISION or RETINAL PERSISTENCE**. Discovered in 1824 by **PETER MARK ROGET**. This illusion occurs when the visual per-

ception of an object lasts for some time inside the mind of the viewer, despite the object already changing position or vanishing. Your eyes are basically photographing everything in front of them and it takes the brain time to perceive each picture, consume it and save it into the memory. If these objects or still images are shown at a specific speed, the brain will perceive them as fluid motion. The specific speed we are talking about is exactly 24 frames/images per second! Meaning that anything below this speed might break the illusion and everything above might make you motion sick.

The distinctive characteristic of animated film is, that **EVERYTHING IS SHOT ONE FRAME AT A TIME. Animation is always short frame by frame, while live action film is shot on film in real time.** In animation, NO INITIAL MOVEMENT OCCURS – the animator is creating the frames for the movement in sequence (as pictures or photographs) and once they are in order and screened at 24 fps, we can perceive them as fluid movement.

First attempts at animation were heavily inspired by tricks of **Georges MELIÉS** and the people attempting them were mostly involved with illustration for newspaper, magazines, creating comic strips and discovering the potential of frame-by-frame shots.

The invention of photography, color photos and film materials and **Edward Muybridge's** photo studies of frame-by-frame movement heavily influenced the progression of creative experiments with capturing and emulating motion.

**In 1892, in Paris, at the Musée Grévin – Charles Émile Reynald** presented his **Theatre Optique**. An optical theatre that resembled animation, handcrafted by himself. Reynald hand painted kilometers long strips of paper and constructed the praxinoscope to be able to screen these drawings in theatres. He was able to even divide the background and foreground (the moving strips being projected on the background) and add sound and foley, precisely timed. Reynald was not yet creating animation as we know it today, but he is still considered the father of animation in a sense. Because he attempted to create the illusion of moving images. Unfortunately, his hard work was a sensation only till the Brothers Lumière came into the picture in 1895. With their live action film, they quickly overshadowed the Optical Theatre and the heartbroken Reynald decided to destroy most of his work. There are only a few pieces of his artwork left.

Later, pioneers like **Norman Mc Laren** or **Stuart Blackton** experimented with the possibilities of frame by frame shooting on a camera. Animations were

first used as experiments with moving objects and shooting them frame by frame as part of live action films. Later, **Oskar Fischinger** created animations specifically tailored for classical music. Stuart Blackton created probably the first hand-drawn animation “*Humorous phases of funny faces*” (1906).

**Winsor Mc Cay** with his “*Gertie the Dinosaur*” (1914), the **Fleischer brothers** with iconic characters for adults such as Popeye or Betty Boop or **Osamu Tezuka** with his TV show *Astro Boy* paved the way for animation to be acknowledged not just by children as phenomenon, but by adults as a form of entertainment and even art.

**In 1930’s, when Disney** arrived on the stage with his feature and short films, animation started to blossom into an actual industry. Many animators, including Mc Laren or Mc Cay, expressed worries and almost sadness toward this development, because they viewed animation as having the potential to become something more than mere industry for making money. Disney created an array of characters and adapted fairytales to ultimately become one of the monopoly-holders inside the industry itself. While the development could be viewed as having a bitter aftertaste, it won’t erase the fact that, thanks to Disney, animators started to get more organized and skilled in their craft, up to a point of complete mastery of movement.

Though the year **1937** is marked as the year when the **first 2D feature animation** was born – “*Snow white and the seven dwarves*” ... the title of the **first animated feature in the world** belongs to “*The adventures of prince Achmed*”, a cutout feature created in 1926 by a female German animator, **Lotte Reiniger**.

The 1981 book written by some of Disney’s most skilled animators and veterans (nicknamed the Nine old men) – “*The Illusion of life*” – is a resource for studying animated movement and the craft of animation up to this day. It also established **Disney’s twelve animation principles** that create a very effective and insightful guide for drawing and creating movement in the most effective and aesthetic way, while keeping the animation consistent. No matter how many people work at a single project.

## **ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – 2D animation basics, total animation**

Because this semester is focused on all the other techniques, I want to ded-

icate at least a brief chapter to 2D animation. Since classical animation on paper is what really started the blossoming of animation as a medium and industry.

The possibility of creating an illusion of motion by drawing different poses of a character already appeared in **optical toys** – characters running, jumping, dancing whenever you pulled a lever, held a string, or spun a wheel on which the drawing was placed. The viewer usually viewed the illusion through a slit or hole, so that he could view it one image at a time.

**Émile Reynald** had seen a huge potential in making drawings „alive“– creating performances as long as 15 minutes. He called it the **Optical theatre** and people were delighted to visit the performances capturing very simple, entertaining stories. His artwork was not yet animation per se – **the drawings were not shot on a film medium frame by frame, nor did they use Retinal persistence of the viewer and high speed to achieve the illusion of fluent movement.** Instead, Reynald drew the character movements frame by frame on a strip of paper (several kilometers long strip), which he then projected on a screen with a static background through an invention called the **praxinoscope**.

He did everything by himself, drawing thousands of pictures carefully by hand and then doing the performance, all while **even adding foley and music, timed precisely on a specific story sequence.** Unfortunately, after the arrival of live-action film, his invention became too boring in the eyes of picky spectators and he soon gave up his craft completely, destroying most of his work in a wave of disappointment and heartbreak. Only a few of his works remained.



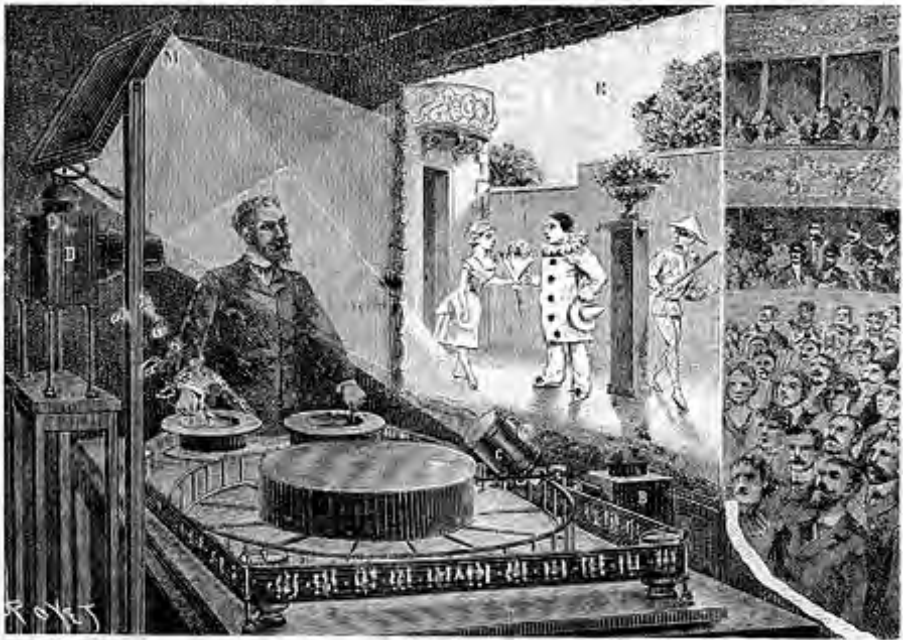


Image source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praxinoscope>

**The first hand-drawn film, captured frame by frame, was done on a chalkboard by James Stuart Blackton** – a short film capturing visual gags done by altering the chalk drawings or by using cut-out paper in combination with said artwork – *The humorous phases of funny faces* in 1906.

The **first 2D animated feature film** was made **by Walt Disney in 1926** – *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. The film used live action footage that was redrawn frame by frame (**rotoscoping**) to add more realism (since Disney thought that realism was the only way to compete with live-action film at that time) – but giving the animators an opportunity to create also much fresher animation in the characters of the dwarves and animals. The film was a huge success and opened the door for more feature animation to come.

Other notable works are TV series by the **Fleischer brothers** – the creators of such iconic characters as *Popeye*, *Olive Oyl*, *Betty Boop* and *Coco the Clown*. Their works were focused more on the **adult audience**, with Betty becoming possibly the first fictional sex symbol.

**Tex Avery** and **Warner Bros** created TV series and films in a similar spirit – using vicious humor, gags and cartoon violence for children. These cartoons

usually depicted a contrasting duo of characters who competed for dominance and sometimes for simply staying alive: Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck versus Elmer the Hunter, Sylvester the cat versus Tweety, Road Runner versus the Coyote, Tom versus Jerry... Despite the quite violent jokes, they always kept the absurdity of the humor high and making the characters basically indestructible. Entertaining kids and adults alike through Saturday and Sunday mornings on their TV screens for decades. The characters remain alive until this day, with the company creating more seasons, spin-offs and even feature films as recent as 2021.

2D animation is still relevant, despite the boom of 3D and digital techniques. In countries like Japan, 2D animation is still done on paper and will possibly remain the standard even for upcoming years. Classical on paper animation though is being pushed slowly by its digital counterpart – it is more common to use a graphic tablet and software like **Toon Boom, Anime Studio, TV Paint or ClipStudio Paint for 2D animation. The software itself allows to work with a coloring option and a timeline where you can time the sequence as you see fit, then export either an image sequence or video sequence for further editing purposes.**

### **Technique/Materials/Animation:**

There are two main types of frames in classical animation:

1. **KEYFRAMES** – the most expressive key poses in a sequence, done by skilled animators
2. **INBETWEENS** – filling in the „space“ between the keyframes – done by inbetweeners who need a keen eye for detail and shapes.

### **The existence of keyframes and inbetweens offers three ways to work with them:**

- a) **STRAIGHT AHEAD APPROACH** – without planning keyframes, simply animating ahead, without much control over the result
- b) **POSE TO POSE ANIMATION** – using keyframes and in-betweeners, with full control over the animation
- c) **BOTH** – mixing the approach, animating looser sequences with straight ahead animation and using pose to pose for sequences that need precision and control.

**Although the keyframes are usually the most important ones and done by animation veterans or the most skilled animators, the in-betweening is**

**also a very important process.** Badly drawn in-betweens can ruin even a well made keyframe sequence. Too many or too few in-betweens can mess up the pace and physics. Badly placed inbetweens mess up the softness, fluidity or needed hardness – they might make movements appear too soft, too hard or just right.

In general, a **sequence with the duration of 1 second needs 25 frames.**

In **full-frame animation**, each individual frame requires a drawing of its own (making 25 different images for all of the 25 frames).

**Animation on twos** requires only half of the drawings, each occupying two frames of the 25 (12 drawings, each drawing shot twice on camera or stretched on two frames on a digital timeline).

**Animation on threes** requires 8 different drawings for one second of animation (8 drawings shot thrice on camera or stretched on three frames on a digital timeline).

**Less than 6 drawings per second will make the animation appear choppy and no longer fluid**, so it is not recommended to stretch one drawing on less than four frames. Or even on four frames (unless a little choppiness is a wanted effect).

**The standard for most of the current 2D animation is usually animation on twos.** Full-frame animation is very time-consuming and, thus, expensive (usually reserved only for big productions with a lot of time and budget on hand).

Disney also succeeded in creating a sort of guide for fluid and lively animation – The **12 Animation Rules/Principles** – they cover how to work with frames, how to think like an animator, how to keep the shapes and what to look out for when creating animation. The point of collecting these rules into a book was to unify the industry and make people with very different animation styles and art styles to create standardized work. The rules help to keep the continuity of each shot, despite many people working on the same project. The principles can be applied to any type of animation, not just 2D.

## **PENCILTEST:**

Classical 2D animation is done on paper, with a pencil – the papers have **punched in holes**, done with a **special perforator**. Thanks to these holes, the paper can be fixated in layers onto a **pegbar**. The pegbar is holding all the drawings in a stable position, allowing the animator to flip through them and check the quality of the animation. The drawings are done on a **light-table**,

which is underlit and allows viewing the layers of the drawings all at once, thanks to the light making the paper transparent to a degree. You can only check a very short sequence of a few drawings this way – for viewing the entire sequences in one go, the drawings are shot frame by frame under a camera (or scanned) and viewed as a **pencil test/linetest**.

Once the rough animation work is done in pencil – with both, the keyframes and in-betweens and there are no issues with the timing or movements, the drawings are redrawn to a **clean form**. Another stage is **inking, scanning and coloring** (today, usually digitally).

### **ANIMATIC:**

After having a storyboard done, the drawings are usually cut and added to a **timeline** – with added key poses, camera movements, rough sound design, and dialogues. Animatic is basically the entire film shown in the expected time, with precise editing and camera movements – with each scene duration being precisely timed and **servicing as a guide for the length and choreography of each individual shot**.

### **Animators/films:**

- *Pauvre Pierrott* (1892) – Émile Reynaud
- *Gertie, the Dinosaur* (1914) – Winsor McCay
- *The humorous phases of funny Faces* (1906) – J.S.Blackton
- *Skeleton Dance* (1929) – Walt Disney
- *Thought of You* (2010) – Ryan Woodward
- *Duet* (2014) – Glen Keane
- *Wolfwalkers* (2020) – Tom Moore
- *Princess Mononoke* (1997)– Hayao Miyazaki
- *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* (2013)– Isao Takahata
- *The Man who planted Trees* (1987)– Frédéric Back
- *The Monk and the fish* (1994) – Michael Dudok de Wit
- *Dreams and Desires: Family Ties* (2006)- Joanna Quinn

## ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – DEFINITION OF ANIMATION, TYPES OF ANIMATION:

**One of the key aspects of animation is that it's shot one frame at a time! In animation, no initial movement occurs, everything is moved by the animator and shot/drawn/moved/hand-painted frame by frame.**

It's an illusion of motion that can exist thanks to the **persistence of vision** – when a sequence of pictures is shown at high speed (24 fps), our brain perceives the sequence as one fluid string of movements. The illusion of motion is located inside the viewer's mind, not in the outside reality (read more in *Animasophy* from Ülo Pikkov).

It is as important what is between the frames, as what is on the frames – meaning: each frame needs to be drawn/created depicting that specific pose or position of the fictional or real object in such a manner that the sequence as a whole will make sense, work out as a sequence – each frame depending on the previous and next.

There's speculation on the types and categories of animation, for instance, animation done in flat 2D space, such as cutout animation, can be categorized as both – a 2D technique and stopmotion.

**Rotoscoping** might not be considered animation at all, since it's traced live-action footage. But most festivals and animators do call it “animation” and allow admissions of rotoscoped films.

**Frame dropping** (a technique that leaves out frames according to a specific rhythm from actual done footage – live action or animated one) can make live action footage look like pixelation, while it was never shot frame by frame. As such, it probably cannot be considered *animation in a real sense*.

**Depending on the chosen technique, we can divide animation into:**

### **1. HAND-DRAWN ANIMATION: everything drawn by hand**

Depending on the medium used:

- a) TRADITIONAL ON PAPER/CLASSICAL ANIMATION
- b) DIGITAL DONE ON A TABLET/IN SOFTWARE

Depending on other aspects:

- A) FULLFRAME

B) LIMITED

C) ROTOSCOPING

D) LIVE-ACTIONxANIMATION

**2. STOPMOTION: everything shot frame by frame, can be done traditionally or digitally**

a) PUPPET ANIMATION

b) PUPPET-TOON

c) CLAYMATION (with or without an armature, clay painting, stratacut)

d) CUTOUT ANIMATION (traditional, digital)

e) OBJECT ANIMATION

f) PIXILATION

**3. COMPUTER ANIMATION: done entirely in a 3D software, uses a digital 3D model/puppet and rendering**

1. MOTION CAPTURE/MO-CAP

2. 2D inside 3D space – vector, flash..

3. 3D rigged models/puppets

**4. ALTERNATIVE TECHNIQUES: everything else that doesn't quite fit into the previous categories**

a) Drawing or scratching on film

b) Painting on glass

c) Erased animation

d) Pinscreen animation

e) Sand-animation and powdery materials

f) Flipbook

g) ....and more.

**Today, techniques that combine various types and approaches emerge, usually called mixed media or hybrid animation, or not even having a name and simply being a mixture of various approaches. The results can be stunning, interesting, trippy, and the reason for mixing techniques isn't just trying to**

be artsy or creating beauty. Reasons are often time and budget restraints or searching for specific animation for a specific mood or thing to convey inside a story.

**The evolution of AI art software**, such as *Midjourney*, has the animation and art industry in quite a stir as well – the AI can be fed with an infinite amount of artwork to make it learn and then produce pictures and even animation. But the topic is currently very controversial (as of 2023), because most of the developers fed the AI illegally through internet galleries, with no refunds or monetary gain for the copyright holders of the images used for the machine learning.

**It is questionable where the moral line should be drawn to not make artists or animators feel replaced or used, or reducing the media back to some kind of shallow spectacle or play that „anyone can make“, as long as they feed the AI with the correct source material. The creative aspect of such use of AI is also up for debate – does it make you an artist or animator, if you just „use the right words“ or „use the right source“.**

Nevertheless, we can already see some results with the short film *ANIME ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS* by Corridor or music videos *Lost* (Linkin Park) and *Age of illusion* (Die Antwoord).

## **ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – CLAYMATION**

### **Materials/technology:**

A stop-motion technique **using clay** in various ways to create a **frame-by-frame animation**. **Types of clay animation a.k.a. claymation** (term coined by Will Vinton):

1. **puppet – 3D or flat**, using a normal or vertical camera. The puppet has a rig.
2. **strata-cut** – cutting a huge loaf of clay, revealing patterns inside, taking pictures frame by frame
3. **clay painting** – literal painting with clay with fingers or a spatula, changing the artwork frame by frame
4. **freeform**- animating clay without using it on a rigged puppet, sponta-

neous approach

Clay is very liked as a material, especially in workshops for children, it is easy to work with, colorful, can be shaped easily, has immediate results. **However, it is not a forgiving material for a professional setting, being very sensitive to heat, dust and pressure...** Needing special handling and care. **The melting of clay under the studio lights** is especially visible over time, requiring the use of colder LED lights or having several same puppets prepared in a freezer. **Fingerprints and dust** are also very visible on clay, which might be off-putting for animators who want a crisp, clean surface on puppets. In which case, silicone puppets are a much better but more expensive option.

### **Puppet:**

**an armature** (the skeleton or rig inside the puppet) can be used – either a professional steel armature, with protected joints (wrapped in foil) and at least 2 layers of clay (bottom layer soaks in the oil from the joints). Or using a wire skeleton, wrapped in other materials for volume and then with a layer of clay on top. Wires tend to snap during production when moved too much.

**The puppet can also be entirely without an armature** (but it is harder to create a firm posture with it) – recommended just for workshops and fun projects/ freeform animation. Suited for animations without anthropomorphic characters.

**The history of claymation can be traced back to 1908!** (as part of effect animation for live-action films).

### **Animators/Films:**

*Composition in Blue, Opus series* – (1920/30) – films of Oskar Fischinger – Germany – German abstract painter, did over 50 short films, an underappreciated genius, worked with music and rhythm and hated by the Nazi regime (because his abstract movies were considered anti-art by them).

*Modeling* (1921) – Brothers Fleischer

*Gumbasia* (1953)-Art Clokey

*The creation* (1992) , *Mona Lisa descending a staircase* (1980)– Joan Graz – both films won an Oscar. Joan is a pioneer in clay painting, a technique she developed on her own. By mixing mineral oils and clay and applying it with a spatula on vertical flat surfaces.

*Harvie Krumpet* (2003)– Adam Elliot – film is nicknamed „Forest Gump of ani-



mation“, won an Oscar.

*Mary and Max* (2009)– Adam Elliot – Oscar film, about two unlikely people in correspondence, building a friendship, based on the author’s own personal experience. Elliot is an independent creator, in his films, he often deals with social outcasts and disabled people, *mockumentary* inventor (mock+documentary, films about people that could exist, portrayed in a sort of documentary format, but the story still being fiction and over the top in some way...).

*Buzz Box* (1985), *Big Time* (1986), *Pee Wee’s Playhouse* (1986-91) TV series – created by David Daniels, inventor of strata-cut animation. This type of claymation is known for producing very trippy results, creating vibrant and hypnotizing animations. A big loaf of clay that was put together from smaller, directed portions of key-moment-loafs that is cut and shot frame by frame. The author is known for making ads and inserts for the MTV channel.

### **Studios specialized in claymation:**

Aardman studio – Great Britain – established in 1972 by Peter Lord and David Sproxton, focusing on stop-motion animation and claymation.

1982 – they invented a pioneering technique, that consists of recording real-life dialogue and then animating characters and lip-sync to fit it. Won numerous awards for films like *Early Bird*, *Creature Comforts*, *Conversation pieces*.

1986 – Nick Park joined the studio and started the *Wallace and Grommit* series that became a huge hit!

**Video games using claymation:** *Neverhood*, *Platypus*, *Clay Fighter*

## **ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – 3D ANIMATION**

### **Animation/Materials/Technique:**

A technique that is digital, uses software to not just **create the puppet, but also to move it inside a digital space and render the result into a chosen format**. Some motion or effects can be **completely simulated / generated** by the software (like natural elements, fire, water, rain, snow, growth of plants, movements of the shadows, attributes of textures etc.). Other animation can be done **only via the animator’s direct input by moving the puppets and**

**changing parameters.**

Before the models can move, a **digital skeleton needs to be inserted and linked to the 3D model. This process is known as „rigging“ and the skeleton is called a „rig“.**

Several teams of specialists are needed to create a solid 3D film, with each team focusing on some aspect of the production: **creating the models, creating the environments, rigging the models, adding textures and clothes, doing animation, adding lights, backgrounds, effects, rendering and compositing.**

In comparison to 2D, where usually one animator gets assigned one or more characters that he/she animates throughout the entire production, in 3D animation, different scenes are assigned to different people. But following exact rules, principles and direction, so the outcome would be consistent.

Each animation company usually creates **its own software or tools** that make it easier to produce the film – they invent new techniques of rendering or creating nuanced animations, finger movements, skin, hair, simulation of various movements of clothes etc. For instance, in the film *Tangled*, Rapunzel's long silky hair was too big of a challenge to handle with the old software. It became unpredictable and uncontrollable. Thus, the studio needed to develop completely new software with a specific approach to hair, to be able to control the movements.

**Motion capture** is an option to make parts of the work in a 3D project a bit easier, but it still has its challenges and needs much adjustment/refinement to be able to be used for the final product. **Mo-cap is a technique where real life actors wear bodysuits with added sensors that capture the movements of their bodies and their expressions. The data is then processed to create a digital counterpart with the same movements, applying the data to a 3D model.**

The movements are further animated and refined, costume is added and after several iterations, the final version of the animation is made. Good examples are the films *Avatar* or *Battle Angel Alita*, which were two of the most expensive CG films ever made.

A 3D model consists of: **BODY/MASS – MODEL (POLYGON or NURBS model), RIG (the digital skeleton), JOINTS, SKIN/TEXTURE.** Everything is in a codependent relation and has a specific place inside a hierarchy of rules for movement and restrictions – applied in a logical manner.

The history of CGI is very long – it all started with computers that filled entire rooms, used to calculate mathematical problems and using algorithms. During the 60s, these computers became smaller (first minicomputers) and more efficient. With the creation of silicone microchips and strong processors, the computers could handle more artistic jobs. Such as creating models of cars or boats.

During the 70s and 80s, companies like *Intel*, *Mackintosh*, *Amiga* came to the scene with very fast and small computers that even regular homes could afford, giving rise to **the gaming industry, producing video games** and pushing the limits of what CGI can do.

Games like *Legend of Zelda*, *Myst*, *Duke Nukem*, *Final Fantasy*, *Tomb Raider* forever changed entertainment. After this success, CGI was step by step implemented into film (visual effects and 3D animation).

The most groundbreaking were the live action films *TRON (1982)*, *The Abyss (1989)*, *Terminator (1991)*, *Jurassic Park (1993)* and *Ghost in the Shell (1995)* – with the first three combining live action, animatronics (robotic puppets) and CG. *Ghost in the shell* was 2D animated and combined with 3D animated sequences.

### **3D ANIMATION:**

1. Creator's team – design, concept, visuals, script
2. Production team – produces the finished product
3. Technical team – provides support throughout the production
4. VFX team – visual effects
5. Administrative team – marketing + finances

### **Animation teams:**

1. Rough animation
2. Creating armature/rig
3. Painters of textures
4. Simulations
5. Visual effects and support
6. Creators of approximate and final models

## MODELS:

A) VECTOR MODELS/NURBS MODELS – created only for design, not for animation. Made from curves/splines.

B) POLYGONAL MODELS – made for animation. Uses blocks of matter with a grid, connected through points called VERTEX. Moving these will affect the grid and the intricacy of the model.

**Modeling of such models usually starts with some basic shapes that are combined, extracted, cut, stretched, twisted, and shaped in various ways, until the final result.** The more polygons used, the more detailed and smooth the model becomes. But with a high polygon count, it becomes more taxing for computers to render and animate. For games that require a real-time rendering, models with a lower polygon count are used.

Some programmes like ZBrush can sculpt a model using a brush that operates in 3D.

**RIG – PARENTING PROCESS** – the skeleton and the model need to be connected through a hierarchy system, allowing the animators to move the entire model in sync with the skeleton. The process is called **parenting**.

The same process is applied inside the skeleton itself, by **parenting the bones and joints** – by doing it correctly, the correct bone will move together with the chosen joint while not affecting any other unwanted areas!

The process is very important and influences how the puppet will react and move under the animator's guidance. **The joints, mass and bones can be programmed through various locks or collision detecting systems to prevent them from bending and moving in unnatural ways or clashing with the surroundings/interacting with the surroundings illogically.**

## FORWARD AND INVERSE KINEMATICS –

There are 2 ways to animate a 3D model. Forward kinematics – uses calculation of positions to animate. Inverse kinematics – moving the model into various positions, with restricted joints. Changing the parameters of the joints.

**RENDERING** – several computers connected through an intranet are used to render the frames. These computers are called **render farms**. There are several types of rendering that can use different ways to calculate the image and each of these is better used for specific environments (for instance, where the lighting of a scene is very important, the Ray Tracing method is used). There are also various types of **shading a material** and then rendering it in

photorealistic or non-photorealistic way.

**Pixar, Dreamworks, Disney, Studio Orange, UFOTABLE – companies currently leading in 3D/CGI.**

**ZBrush and Maya** are commonly used software. **Blender** is an open-source software that can be used by anyone interested in 3D animation.

### **Animators/films:**

- 1982- *TRON* – Disney, included 20 minutes of fully rendered CGI environment combined with live actors. The film was a huge success.
- 1997 – *Gary's Game* – Pixar – won an Oscar
- 1996 – *Toy Story* – a milestone in 3D animation, the first-ever feature film done solely with a computer. John Lasseter – Pixar's leading figure.

*Princess Mononoke, Tarzan, The Lion King, Beauty and the Beast* – all used a combination of a 2D character inside a 3D background or used 3D animation for some parts of the film, implemented in very smart non-visible ways. A similar fashion is becoming standard in the 2D industry with films such as *Demon Slayer* or TV series produced especially in Japan. Sometimes, 3D backgrounds are traced or painted over for still backgrounds.

### **Most successful 3D films:**

- *Toy Story* – 1995 – John Lasseter, Pixar
- *Frozen* – 2013- Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck, Disney
- *Finding Nemo* – 2003 – Andrew Stanton, Pixar
- *The Incredibles* – 2004 – Brad Bird, Pixar
- *Wreck it Ralph* – 2012 – Rich Moore, Disney
- *Tangled* – 2010 – Nathan Greno, Byron Howard, Disney
- *How to train Your Dragon* – 2010 – Chris Sanders, Dean DeBlois, Dreamworks
- *Into the Spiderverse* – 2018 – Peter Ramsey, Bob Persichetti, Rodney Rothman, Sony Pictures Imageworks

### **Recent popular TV shows using 3D:**

- *The Dragon Prince* – Aaron Ehasz, Justin Richmond, Bardel Entertainment (2018)

- *Ajin* – Hiroyuki Seshita (Chief), Hiroaki Andō, Polygon Pictures (2016)
- *Beastars* – Shinichi Matsumi, Studio Orange (2019)
- *Land of the Lustrous* – Takahiko Kyōgoku , Studio Orange (2017)

## ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – CUTOUT ANIMATION

### Animation/Materials/Technique:

This technique uses a **flat horizontal surface, a vertical camera shooting from above, and a flat 2D puppet made from cut-out paper, cardboard, textile, photos.... that are connected through joints or are fully jointless.** The puppets are very forgiving in terms of precision, allowing for rougher and less precise movements that are often condensed (for instance, turning the puppet from a frontal view to a profile, as few as two or three frames can be used – you do not need to show fluidity of movements by creating each position of the turn. You can use more „abbreviated movements“ while moving the puppets. For a head turn, you need to create frontal, profile view and  $\frac{3}{4}$  view, swapping out the head for each frame. The softening of movements is done by hand by shooting additional frames of micromovements).

**The abbreviation of some movements is what makes this technique charming and fun to use** – it is possibly the most popular technique for workshops with children. Since the puppets are very easy to make, the materials are cheap and the animation is done quickly with very fun results. Using collage and different flat materials (cardboard, textile, structured paper, combined with small objects such as pencils, flowers, wrappings, thread, small stones, jewelry etc. can be very rewarding and artistic).

**The puppets usually have a few joints** – depending on how intricate the movements you want to achieve – you can connect them using thread or Pritt Multi Fix adhesive dots, small bolts etc. **Or the puppets can be completely jointless** and free to move the parts as you wish – allowing the puppet to rearrange its body parts in any way possible. **By swapping the parts for parts drawn from different angles, you can create transitions between the most extreme movements or changes of angles of the puppet, making different gestures and facial expressions, change clothing etc.**

**The best materials are the more firm ones** – like thicker paper or cardboard,

since they do not tear easily even after being moved repeatedly. They keep their shape and do not wrinkle easily. You can also reinforce regular paper by sticking another layer of thicker paper underneath.

**Using black cardboard, you can shoot a silhouette film** – these films use backlighting to enhance the silhouette effect even more and cover up mistakes, and make the joints almost invisible.

**In a professional setting, a glass plane is used to press each frame firmly together with the background before making a shot** – to minimize unwanted shadows and wrinkles. Anti-static liquids need to be applied to the glass so the paper does not stick to it.

The downside of this technique – you have to shoot **continuously**, with no way of using keyframes and in-betweens. Each unseen mistake can cause an entire scene to be reshot or sometimes crucial frames to be cut out.

If not careful, your hands, hair, or accessories can sneak into the shot, ruining the frame.

The background should, out of practical reasons, be placed on a completely separate plane/layer . **For this purpose, a MULTIPLANE CAMERA is used.**

**MULTIPLANE CAMERA:** is a construction consisting of a vertical camera hovering above several planes of glass, representing the layers on which we can animate. The construction is large and tall, with animators needing to use an actual ladder to get up to the top layers and operate the camera as well.

In today's digital era, everything can be post-produced and composited with other elements, as long as a greenscreen is available. Therefore, recent multiplane cameras do not necessarily have to have as many layers as in the past.

The inventor of the camera was a German female animator – **Lotte Reiniger** (not Walt Disney, as is often assumed). Lotte used the technique in the very first animated feature film – 1926 – *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*.

**The cutout technique was often used in early animated experimental films as well as in surreal and more adult oriented films and satire. Examples of such films are listed later in the text.**

One of the world's most famous and beloved animators using the cutout technique is the Russian animator **Jurij Norstein/Yuriy Norstein**, who worked on several short films with his wife Francesca (responsible for the art style of the puppets and sets). He earned the title „Golden Snail“, for his meticulous work on lengthy projects that, nevertheless, deserve praise and admiration.

His films *Hedgehog in the Fog* and *Tale of Tales* are considered some of the world's most beautiful animated works of all time. The animation is very fluid, despite being cutout animation.

### **DIGITAL CUTOUT:**

Is as popular as its analog counterpart – with software like **Toon Boom, Anime Studio Pro or Adobe After Effects** being the most commonly used software for this type of animation. All of these have specific functions for importing parts of the puppets as PSD/etc files, possibilities to build a skeleton or structure that holds the parts together and allows for animation them as a cutout. Libraries for body parts, expressions, mouth movements/lip-sync and other objects are used to store and easily navigate through the stored files and readily use them or swap them during the animation process.

After Effect's Puppet tool allows for tweaking and deforming the 2D puppet to create movements.

Digital cutout is a popular technique for TV series, for it allows a large team of people to work simultaneously and divide each step of the work. The most famous example is *South Park* (Trey Parker, Matt Stone) TV series for adults or Slovak TV shows *Mimi and Líza* (Katarína Kerekesová), *The Tots* (Vanda Raýmanová) and animations by Ivana Šebestová, Michel Ocelot's TV series *Princes and Princesses* (2000).

### **Animators/films:**

- *Monthy Python's flying Circus* – Terry Gilliam (1970s)
- *Sophie's place, Our Lady the Sphere* – Larry Jordan, Harry Smith (1950s)
- *Labyrinth* (1962) – Jan Lenica, Walerian Boro Borowczyk
- *South Park* (1992) – Trey Parker, Matt Stone
- *Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926) – Lotte Reiniger
- *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975), *Tale of Tales* (1979) – Yuriy Norstein, Francesca Yarbusowa



## ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – PAINT ON GLASS, PAINT ON LIFESIZE SURFACE/MURAL ANIMATION

### Animation/Materials/Technique:

**PAINT ON GLASS** – technique using a glass surface, a vertical camera, and a multiplane for several possible layers of animation. The frames are painted with oil color, because they dry the slowest, allowing the artist to work on the image over an extended period of time to make any necessary repaints or corrections.

The frame isn't wiped clean for each new frame – instead, parts of the original frame are retouched, repainted, redone for each new frame – creating an image sequence with movement.

The surface of glass is underlit, and some lights are also placed over it – the placement and amount of light depend on the desired effect.

**The colors can get muddy over time** – because you are altering one frame several times, using the colors already painted and adding new ones to create the difference. By that, you mix the colors and you have to be very careful not to end up with just a black or brown mixture of nothing.

You can alter the image by using your fingers, all sizes of painter brushes and a cloth to wipe what is necessary.

**It's a difficult technique and requires patience and precision, also forward thinking regarding the movement of the sequence and required changes.**

In Japan, the hit series *Mob Psycho 100* about supernatural phenomena and espers used this technique to paint some of the entities and ghosts. The result was amazing, providing the ghosts with a distinct presence in comparison to the modern look of the characters and their digital coloring. The technique was also used for emotionally tense situations.

**Sequences done on glass ooze with creative power and expression that computer graphics or digital colors could never achieve.** It has also opened the door more experimental animation in Japan, showcasing unique textures and styles that a brush can provide.

The most famous paint on glass animator, **Alexander Petrov**, uses the technique to create realistic adaptations of books – with his most famous adaptation created for IMAX cinemas in 2007 – *The Old man and the Sea*.

The film *Loving Vincent* took the technique of painting on surfaces a step further – by **combining the art of rotoscoping** (tracing over live action footage, frame by frame) **and oil painting**. The film hand-painted with oil paints thousands of frames shot as live action performance, resulting in a really distinguished look that emulates Vincent Van Gogh's unique style.

### Artists/films:

- *Loving Vincent (2017)* – Dorothy Kobiela, Hugh Welchman
- *The Old Man and the Sea (2007)* – Alexander Petrov
- *Mob Psycho 100 Endings/insert animations (2016 -2022)* – Miyo Sato
- *On the Street (1976)* – Caroline Leaf

### MURAL ANIMATION:

It's fully possible to animate mural-sized characters, as demonstrated by films like *MUTO*, *The Bigger Picture* and *Casa de Lobo*.

**The process uses exteriors, old unused buildings or rooms that can be painted – the animation is then created by painting on the walls directly, while overpainting the previous frame or adjusting it/tweaking it.** Depending on whether the motion is minimal (such as a smile widening on a static face, blinking, object falling...) or something much more elaborate (such as walk cycles, animals crawling and slithering through objects and urban landscape, objects rotating or moving through walls), the creator chooses the best possible approach and decides how to repaint the original picture.

**It is often combined with object animation or other forms of stop-motion** to create stunning results. The amazement arises not only from the size of these creations but also from the unique atmosphere that emerges when viewers are fully aware of the room and surroundings of the animated mural, including the lighting, other objects, or puppets present.

**DragonFrame software** allows animators to see the previous and next frames through a function called **onion skin** – making it much easier to adjust the recent drawing, regardless of its size.

### Animators/films:

- *MUTO (2008)* – Blu
- *Casa de Lobo (2018)* – Cristobal León, Joaquín Cociña
- *The Bigger Picture (2014)* – Daisy Jacobs

- *Van Gogh's dinner (2020)* – Clicker (Youtube)

## **ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – PINSCREEN, DIRECT ON FILM ANIMATION/SCRATCHFILM**

### **Animation/Materials/Technique:**

**PINSCREEN ANIMATION** – a very rare and also rarely used technique invented by animator couple Alexander Alexeieff and Claire Parker. The idea behind this technique involves using a vertical board with thousands of small pins (somewhat resembling a rug made of pins). By lighting the pin „rug“ from a specific angle, the shadows cast by the pinheads create areas of black. Depending on how deep the pins are submerged, the shadows get smaller or longer, resulting in areas of black, grey or pure white (when fully submerged into the board). **You can create a gradient of greys and black and model detailed pictures that can change frame by frame** (by manipulating the pins further).

The process is slow and demands the full attention and persistence of the animator. In best-case scenario, one person pushes the needles from behind the board, while the other works from the foreground to create the image.

**The result resembles animations made with a chalk or pencil, but the movements are very limited, and the level of detail achievable depends on the number of pins used.**

Few people in the world have ever used this technique, but it is worth mentioning due to its rarity. It also serves as a great example of inventiveness of animators and showcases their passion and patience for the craft.

### **Animators/films:**

- *Night on Bald Mountain (1933), The Nose (1963)*– Alexander Alexeieff, Claire Parker
- *Mindscape (1976)* – Jaques Drouin

**DIRECT ON FILM ANIMATION** – several pioneers tried out a unique technique – animating directly onto film material. Because the work is so meticulous, 35 mm or 60mm film is more suitable than 16mm. You can either work with a blank film and use a brush, ink or another type of color that adheres to the cel. Or you can use processed film and scratch it with various

**tools** (being careful not to cut the film completely) – creating an interesting scratched look. The colors depend on how deeply you scratch the film.

This type of animation goes well with anything abstract, animation on music, animating easy shapes and patterns, playful explosions of color or shape. Small or surreal stories can be told, you can work with symbolism and metaphor or just purely with color and movement, experimenting with the results.

The approach is straight-ahead but can also be planned (for instance, you can fill in some frames and leave others blank, then come back to those later and finish the sequence). In the past, experiments with „optical soundtrack“ – accompanied drawings on film. Norman McLaren scratched or drew the sound effects on the film material.

### Animation/films

- *1000 Plateaus* (2004) – Steven Woloshen
- *Two Sisters* (1991) – Caroline Leaf
- *Blinkity Blank* (1955) – Norman McLaren

## ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – STOPMOTION, OBJECT ANIMATION and PIXILLATION

### Animation/Materials/Technique:

**Stopmotion can be considered anything shot frame by frame** – you change the position of an object before taking each new shot. These difference can be as small as simply changing where the object is positioned, to moving joints and limbs in a puppet bit by bit, to moving a person in a choreographed sequence, frame by frame. We can create fluid movement, very realistic sequences with puppets (going as far as animating breaths, hair movement, blinking...) or effects like a person sliding or flying using pixilation.

**STOPMOTION WITH PUPPETS – needs a puppet with an inbuilt skeleton (armature).** The puppet can be made of wood, clay, silicone, paper mache.... hiding a steel or wire armature underneath. **The puppet needs to be assembled in a way that the costume or outer covering doesn't hinder the movement of the armature and its joints.**

In case the costume of the puppet has sewn-in wires, the clothes can be ani-

mated frame by frame as well.

Intricate and expensive puppets can display a wide range of facial expressions – with the faces or jaw being held by magnets or other mechanism and making it possible to change the expressions and lip movement. **Nowadays, it is also possible to combine digital techniques with puppets** (for instance, drawing in pupils or lip-syncing in a digital software by hand, after shooting the puppet animation).

Masters like **Jiří Trnka** used puppets without intricate mechanisms – the feelings and intentions of the characters were shown solely by masterfully animating the body language of the expressionless puppet (*The Hand, Midsummer Night's dream*).

**Armatures can be very expensive** – with the cost depending on factors such as the number of joints, the quality of materials used for the armature and puppet, internal mechanisms, and costumes (f.i., Tim Burton puppets can be as expensive as a small car).

**OBJECT ANIMATION** – is moving objects frame by frame and shooting the changes in a sequence. **The objects do not have joints and are no puppets** – you use whatever you can lay your hands on, creating collage or making pillows dance, armchairs make love on the rooftops (like in the animations of Youtube creator PES), or make grilled chicken dance (like Jan Švankmajer did in the music video *Sledgehammer*).

**PIXILLATION** – is a stop-motion technique that allows a living person to become a „puppet“ – an actor moves frame by frame, with each frame being shot on camera and the sequence is carefully choreographed and thought through. The actor and the director need to have a very good sense of how to achieve the most expressive positions while considering the number of frames needed to make the movement appear fluid and organized. A good example is the film *Neighbours* by Norman McLaren. Pixillation allows some nice effects that would be otherwise impossible for a live-action actor without the use of VFX (flying, disappearing, sliding on the ground, eating impossible things, doing impossible things, getting impossible strength or speed etc.).

**Stop-motion can be both very expensive and time-consuming** – it requires meticulous planning and budget control, carefully thought-out storyboards and reference footage, the puppets need to be assembled and/or crafted from scratch and clothed.

Depending on the size of the puppets and the nature of the scenes being shot, you need an indoor studio with enough space to build the set, place lighting and allow animators to have access to the puppets while shooting (which can get very difficult). **Some puppets are more sensitive** (clay can start melting under the hot lights, puppets made from cardboard or paper can start to tear or get damaged, wires can snap mid-shoot). The camera and lighting must meet the quality standards of live-action filmmaking. After shooting, there is still a lot of post-production work required (if you shoot on green screen or if you need to mask out kinetic armatures that hold the puppets in position).

**Every stop-motion film is ambitious, but some creators have found ways to cheaper and more effective animation by sacrificing the need to be „realistic“ and too detailed and rather, enjoying the freedom of creativity stop-motion can offer**– films made from LEGO, felt – puppet animations (*Good intentions, Oh Willy!*), animating child toys (*A town called Panic*), animating clay (Mamshmam animations on Youtube).

History of stop-motion is very rich and filled with important names and pioneers in animation who influenced films for decades. Many of these creators achieved seemingly impossible illusions during their time – **Ray Harryhausen, Kihachiro Kawamoto, Jiří Trnka, Will Winton, Barry Purves, Georges Pal, Wladislaw Starewicz, Aleksander Ptushko, Hermína Týrlová, Břetislav Pojar, Jan Švankmajer...**

Each of them has their unique life story and approach to stop-motion – either by going to crazy lengths to create something very realistic (animating thousands of figures, attaching wires to dead beetle bodies) or finding a charming playful animation language to make a fairytale come alive (Týrlová, Trnka, Pojar) without the need to be overly realistic and allowing the puppet to show its animated origins.

### **Animators/films:**

- *The Cameraman's Revenge (1912), The Tale of the Fox (1929/1930)* – Wladislaw Starewicz
- *Screenplay (1992), Next (1989), Achilles (1995)*– Barry Purves
- *Two Little Frosts (1954), The Cybernetic Grandma (1952), The Hand (1965), Midsummer Night's Dream (1959)*– Jiří Trnka
- *Oh Willy! (2012)* – Mark James Roels, Emma De Swaef

- *Good Intentions (2018)* – Anna Mantzaris
- *Kubo and the two Strings (2016)*– Laika studio
- *Negative space (2019)* – Max Porter
- *Something about Alice (1988), Otesánek (2000)*– Jan Švankmajer
- PES animations – Youtube

## ERASMUS – BASICS OF ANIMATION – SUMMER – ALTERNATE TECHNIQUES – POWDERY MATERIALS

### Technique/Materials/Animation

**The technique uses any kind of suitable powdery/grainy material on a flat surface** (usually translucent glass or transparent glass with filters or a green-screen on a different layer), shot frame by frame with a vertical camera.

The animation does not require great precision, its strength lies in the use of negative space, shapes and dynamic energy of the movements. The technique is well-suited also for abstract animations and metamorphic transitions, animation loops and so on. Award-winning short films and commercials have been created using materials such as sand or salt.

**The most commonly used powdery materials are usually sand and salt, but also lentils, poppy seeds, crystal sugar, glitter, confetti or any grain from your kitchen** that is movable with a feather or brush. The way you light the scene or use colors can significantly impact the atmosphere.

The materials and tools for this technique are not expensive and are readily available.

The material is either using **backlight** and taped filters and colored papers on the flat surface (similar to cutout animation in silhouette) or **lights from above/sides**. Depending on the desired effect – silhouette or a focus on the texture of the grains of the powdery material.

The most popular material is **sand** (especially fine quartz sand) – nowadays you can even find colored sand in craft stores. Sand can be moved with hands, feathers, brushes and create textures with combs, stamps and other utensils – to create ripples, swirls and patterns.

The animator needs to have a keen sense of maintaining shapes and animating all the angles of moving objects and characters. Since he/she is **animating straight-forwardly by deforming the previous frame**. Thus, the art style is also somewhat limited, with less emphasis on small details and more focus on overall clear surfaces, colors, shapes and silhouettes.

**Backlighting** creates a very magical atmosphere with sand animation. Everything is shot frame by frame, do not mistake this with performance art with sand that happens in real-time in front of live audiences in talents shows etc.

**Salt** is another popular material – it can be colored with gel, then dried and ground anew with a pestle and mortar. It is a bit more difficult to move around without in comparison to sand, since the grains are finer and salt can start dissolving upon contact with a wet surface or wet fingers. Feathers and brushes are used to move it bit by bit on a flat surface.

You can even use pre-shot or pre-drawn reference animations on – first drawn in 2D, then being used to be traced over with sand or other material on a completely different layer of a multiplane camera.

### **Animators/Films:**

- *Lullabye* (2011) – Veronika Bromová – student of VŠMU created a short music video with sand on glass, with a little help of After Effects in some scenes. The result is very dreamy.
- *The Owl who married a Goose* (1974)– Caroline Leaf – based on an old Eskimo story about an incompatible marriage and its tragic consequence. Very minimalistic but brilliantly solved animation with sand on translucent glass, underlit. Leaf is teaching this technique on workshops all around the world, making it approachable by animation enthusiasts of all ages and nations.
- *Metamorphosis of Mr. Samsa* (1977) – Caroline Leaf – beautiful compositions, great use of contrast and negative spaces, very expressive silhouette and fully animated transitions between shots. Leaf is cleverly using abbreviations in movement to depict the horror of Franz Kafka's tragic hero, who turned into a beetle. The film earned her an Oscar for animated short.
- *Carmen Habanero* – Alexandra Korejwo – uses salt animation on a black background. The salt is colored with gouache, dried and ground. Her animations mostly use classical music pieces as acoustics, they are perfectly timed and animated. Korejwo is also author of several advertisements



done with this technique that have won numerous awards. She uses feathers from condors to move the salt (available at the ZOO).

- *Bead game* (1977 ) – Ishu Patel – an animation short about the evolution of power and violence, escalating into a horrible spectacle of the invention of the atomic bomb. Made out of thousands of tiny beads moved with tweezers, frame by frame, on a dark background. Oscar winner for short films.

## Editing Class

Alexandra Jonášová

### *Gestalt*

Gestalt, as a school of psychology, may at first seem unrelated to the topic of film editing, but we will discover many useful parallels. It is fascinating how much it can reveal about the overall functioning of our brain and perception of the world and moving pictures, as well as the process of making a movie.

The main premise of Gestalt is basically “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.”<sup>1</sup> This statement already resonates with filmmakers as it is the essence of montage itself. Gestalt psychologists found out that in order to understand the world and navigate daily life, our brains look for patterns everywhere. For example, estimating the distance of objects further than 20cm away is not solely based on the fact that we have two eyes but is primarily based on experience.<sup>2</sup> This is just one of many examples of how we automatically fill in gaps to make sense of what we see. In other cases, we group objects and visual clues based on their colour, proximity, symmetry or similarity just to be able to behave fast accordingly. These principles are widely used in design<sup>3</sup>. We seek logic, continuity and patterns. Our brains thus have developed a great capacity to fill in gaps and it is very satisfying to have these assumptions confirmed and anticipations fulfilled. In filmmaking, we use this all the time. Thanks to this, we are able to work with leitmotif, synecdoche, and build catharsis at the end of a film. On a microstructural level, we can work with time condensation, control the influx of information, and build emotional tension between shots. All of the tools mentioned are the main role of editing. A film starts with a message to be conveyed. Then the script is written, it is completely disassembled during production and the role of an editor is

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<sup>1</sup> Sternberg, Robert J.; Sternberg, Karin (2012). *Cognitive Psychology* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning. ISBN 978-1-133-31391-5.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.brainkart.com/article/Determination-of-Distance-of-an-Object-from-the-Eye-----Depth-Perception---\\_19672/](https://www.brainkart.com/article/Determination-of-Distance-of-an-Object-from-the-Eye-----Depth-Perception---_19672/)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2014/03/design-principles-visual-perception-and-the-principles-of-gestalt/>

to put these pieces together in a way that gets the viewer to the original message. The editor must hold the desired final message in mind, while knowing all the details about each fragment he or she works with. To recognize them and place them into their positions, leaving just enough gaps to keep it interesting, but not so many as to make it confusing. That's the task of an editor.

*Editing – physiology, history, technology, dramaturgy.*

Approaches to learning about editing differ at each institution. Our course is focused on dramaturgy, as we value storytelling as the editor's most significant contribution and asset.

**The physiological aspect** of perceiving moving image is very interesting<sup>4</sup> but it is not an aspect we use creatively when editing a movie. The workflow also changes based on the output of the film, it is different when it is a film for cinema, television or online platforms. Different countries also have different standards, so each project comes with specific needs and so it is not efficient to delve into these details during this course.

**The history of editing** is also an interesting topic. From the Méliés and the Lumière brothers, through Porter, Griffith, The Brighton School or Kuleshov, Eisenstein and Vertov to the arrival of sound and 3D cinema. As it is widely covered in other classes I just want to highlight the part that is often neglected and it is the role of women in this field.<sup>5</sup>

**Technology and editing software** are also not something that we cover in too many details, mainly because it is something that doesn't determine if someone is a good editor or not and it is something one can learn from the internet when he or she needs it, on the go. Proficiency in the most professional editing software doesn't make you a valuable editor and you can edit a fantastic movie no matter what software you use. Knowledge, experience, and communication are what truly count.

And here we arrive at the notion of **dramaturgy**. As Bresson said "A **film is born three times**. First in the writing of the script, once again in the shooting, and finally in the editing." So as an editor, in order to be able to use all

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<sup>4</sup> <https://paulbakaus.com/tutorials/performance/the-illusion-of-motion/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/6582-hidden-histories-the-story-of-women-film-editors>  
<http://womenfilmeditors.princeton.edu/>

the pieces that you obtain in the strongest way, you have to know the story structure just as a scriptwriter does, but having all the real, existing fragments ready at hand, being aware of their potential.

### *Layers of film*

When thinking about a film, it is essential to underline the complexity of this medium and its place in society. There are many ways to watch it and so there are many ways to approach its function and role. It is essential for the editor to be aware of the kind of film they are working on and its mission. In general, we can define 4 possible layers in a film. Story, Emotion, Association, and Philosophy.

The layer of **Story** represents the simple chain of events. We can say it is well created if the viewer understands the causality of events, the story itself.

The **Emotional** layer is the one that succeeds in evoking emotion in us. We become emotionally involved in the world of the protagonist and the story. We care.

**Associations** are the bridges between the fictional world we observe and our real life. This layer is fulfilled when we see connections, parallels, and we can relate to the depicted world, events, or characters.

The last layer, **Philosophical**, is the one that goes beyond the film. If this layer works well, we leave the theatre reevaluating something in our real life. There has been a shift in point of view, an urge to change or make a change or a re-consideration of previously untouched assumptions, expectations, or values.

If the film has all these layers strong and well built, it can create a truly transformative experience. Nevertheless, this outcome depends on the viewer as well, and even if the film contains all of the above, not everyone has the capacity or mood to “read” so deeply into it.

For creators, it is a great tool to check their film and build it with awareness. It should be a conscious decision, of what kind of film they create. These layers have a certain hierarchy. If creating a film for a wider audience, easy to receive, the story is the most important, and the further we go, the less important these layers become. You cannot skip any of the layers and expect the next one to work. If you don't engage the viewer emotionally, he or she will not be looking for associations or philosophy. Story and Emotion are nec-

essary to engage the audience. If you want to create an experimental movie, or a movie for art galleries, these principles do not apply, but if we talk about editing as the step to create an understandable and impactful work of art, it is useful to keep these layers in mind. Even if only a small fraction of viewers would consciously extract the philosophy you put there, the rest will subconsciously feel it and it is one of the ingredients of timelessness of films.

### *Vertical vs horizontal editing*

During this course, we often operate with the notion of vertical and horizontal montage, and it is a very efficient way to think about editing, structure, or to analyze films.

Vertical aspects are all the traits we can observe in one frame or within a short timespan, a shot, or a juxtaposition of a few shots. So it is for example the composition, perspective, colours, type of a lens used or work with the light in an image but also movement of the camera, mise-en-scene within the shot, sounds and music that are associated with the shot.

Horizontal editing is basically dramaturgy. How sequences, motives, or audio-visual cues are arranged so that the story is understandable and impactful. It is the order of vertical elements within the timeline of the film.

In order to be able to build a story – horizontally, it is necessary to know the building bricks – vertically.

Each of these aspects has dedicated chapters, where we go into more depth during the semester.

Film theory and learning about film is always made in retrospect, so knowing how to analyze films in a way that we learn something from them is a very useful skill. When watching a movie for educational purposes, out of interest how it is done, how it actually works, taking vertical and horizontal editing as a point of view can lead to surprising discoveries and is a reliable technique. There are four steps:

1. watching a film as an ordinary viewer, letting it speak to us as it is meant to
2. after finishing, taking a break and coming up with aspects that interest us. It can be anything, for example: Why do I (dis)like the main character?

Who is the antagonist? What is the genre? Why am I not bored? How do I keep track of the events and how it all makes sense? How is the relationship between characters build?...

3. watching the film again, trying to forget my “big question” from point 2 and just focusing on vertical aspects as we watch. Ideally, writing down our observations takes away the judgement or urge to interpret them too soon, before we have all the data
4. looking back at the notes and seeing patterns that emerge and answers to our questions

### *Questions and answers*

As Martin Scorsese said: “*Cinema is a matter of what’s in the frame and what’s out.*” The single frame and how it is created is much more than what we see, and every aspect of it makes a difference. And same goes with the combination of shots, as we discussed at the beginning – the whole is more than the sum of its parts, so the meaning often lies between the shots and outside of the frame.

If we stay within a context of a scene, already the relation between shot and reverse shot offers a space for examination on its own<sup>6</sup>. The amount of information, tension, drama, or comedy we can control just by working with this one juxtaposition is immense. Each shot poses questions that urge us to watch on and want to see the next shot. They can be coded in movement, composition, sound, eyeline of a character, or lines of dialogue. The next shot must provide some answers, while eliciting more questions to keep us interested. Some of the dramaturgical uses include withholding and postponing answers to create tension or anticipating an expected outcome to create comedy.

When we cut away from the situation but stay within the scene, this offers further possibilities to work with meaning and emotion. Juxtaposition of scenes is a completely new topic. The mere “technical” attributes of these transitions are a great creative space by itself,<sup>7</sup> but the moments WHEN to leave a scene and WHEN to enter a scene create the overall dramaturgy, pace, and a way of storytelling, so it would be a shame to reduce it to these

<sup>6</sup> [Joel & Ethan Coen – Shot | Reverse Shot](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Satoshi Kon – Editing Space & Time](#)

few frames of their direct contact, no matter how important and creative it is.

Constant shifting between posing questions and offering answers is what makes film storytelling possible, telling old stories in a new exciting way and keeping the audience engaged throughout the film.

### *“Rules” and types of shots (building a shot)*

Whenever discussing filmmaking, it is very tricky to use the term “rule”. Rules are typically binary. One either follows them or breaks them. Like traffic rules. But film is a very creative and flexible field, where boundaries are constantly pushed, and norms change. We are used to different aesthetics, pace, storytelling and even film grammar than audiences a few generations ago. Changes may be small, and there are timeless films that are still enjoyable to watch even after decades, but having a narrow view of film principles limit the potential of this medium.

One of many examples is a visual aspect of a frame – its composition, which is one of the vertical aspects we work with. In other words, we could also think about the position of the camera in relation to what we see. We know the basic types of shot, such as close-up, medium shot, American shot or wide shot. There is no exact definition, and these terms are used for making the communication between the director and the crew easier. Each shot usually conveys a specific quality. A close-up translates internal processes of a character, medium shots spatial relations between characters and objects, and wide shots capture a character’s place within the environment. However, there is no “rule” and sometimes a wide shot is the most emotional and an extreme close-up the most dehumanizing. Same goes for saying that in order to feel with the protagonist, we have to see their eyes. There are examples of quite the contrary, when the only “personal” shot is the profile one and en-face shots we feel disconnected. Another example is the well-known work with the horizon. Not every time looking from below makes your protagonist look strong and confident. It all depends on the context. My last example is “the rule of 180 degrees”. The idea that it is wrong to cross the line of action is long gone. The grammar used to say, that two consecutive shots have to be shot from the same side of the line of action and if we stay on one side, the difference has to be in the width of the shot and/or the position of the camera (the difference has to be at least 30 degrees from the line of action), otherwise there is a jump cut and it’s a mistake.

Via examples<sup>8</sup> we examine how these principles of interpreting the images and reading the succession of the shots can be used for dramaturgical purposes. Crossing the line of action and using jumpcut has become a widely used tool. In order to be able to use it, we must understand it and not just follow it.<sup>9</sup>

### *Vertical – sound + image, VO, music quiet*

One of the most obvious vertical editing tools is the combination of sound and image. Sound is one of the crucial tools of editors. It can create meaning, emotion, atmosphere, link thoughts, and has endless creative use and it would be a big mistake to neglect how much we can work with it at the stage of editing. Many sound cues should be already considered in the script, but editors still have significant flexibility to remove, add or modify any of the types of sounds they work with, be it spoken word, dialogue, voiceover, atmosphere, music, or quiet... Some of the aforementioned parts are more accessible, like dialogue or music, which doesn't make them easier to edit, but the less obvious parts, such as atmosphere or quiet, can be equally powerful and meaningful. There are many examples of a use of complete technical quiet, which are dramatic, meaningful or even funny.

The power of sound and how our brain translates it and connects it with what we see is greatly demonstrated in a short film by John Smith "Om".<sup>10</sup>As we talked about Gestalt, this is a great example of how our minds always try to come up with the most logical, simplest solution. John Smith is not only a very playful artist, but his work has great structure and he explores the most essential building blocks of cinematography in an entertaining yet sophisticated manner. Same goes with another of his short films "The girl chewing gum"<sup>11</sup>. In this case, he explores the potential of voiceover. He covers many different possibilities of positioning of the narrator, subjectivity and credibility of the voiceover and relations between what we hear and what we see. He highlights the importance of timing, point of reference and the use of quiet. On a very short timeframe, this film introduces many kinds of tools and strategies to lead the attention of a viewer. One of them being the title as well.

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<sup>8</sup> [The Holiday – "I feel like I'm on a job interview"](#)

<sup>9</sup> [What is a Jump Cut & When to Use It — 5 Essential Jump Cut Editing Techniques Explained](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Om, 1986, 4 mins. \(complete\) on Vimeo – John Smith](#)

<sup>11</sup> [The girl chewing gum, John Smith \(1976\) on Vimeo](#)



Sound, or its absence, can create a point of view and direct our attention to specific aspects of the image, or to see it through somebody's eyes.

### *“Rules” and space (building a scene)*

When discussing crossing the line of action, we not only talk about composition within the frame, but we talk about the way we present space. Working with space (together with working with time) is a big part of an editor's responsibility. In the editing room, we can clarify problematic spatial situations, but also make an easy set up rather confusing. If the line of action is crossed, the natural perception of space is altered and it is on us to keep the viewer engaged and not disturbed by this.

One of the great examples is the final scene in Pulp Fiction<sup>12</sup>. Considering it is a debut film, it is even more fascinating how thoroughly Quentin Tarantino works, builds space, time, tension and helps the viewers understand and be involved. He uses the basic principles, such as showing establishing shot whenever the position of the character changes, changing the width of the shot to get into the psychology of the character or using camera movement to enhance the connection between us and the characters. He uses all of these to keep everything so clear, that he can almost freely jump through the line of action.

In the same way that he creates shots (using everything it offers, even the background action) he uses everything he can when building a scene. To build his signature long scenes of dialogues, he operates with at least two parallel actions. By intersecting them, he can shift our focus and keep us interested. It can be either by surprising us and creating sudden unexpected action or, on the other hand, just reminding us of the parallel situation, and creating tension in this way.

When creating a scene, the cues coded in each frame and in each shot start to combine and work in interaction. So suddenly you have new tools to build emotion, forward an information or create a dynamic between the characters<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> [Pulp Fiction – Ending Scene \(Final\) HD](#)

<sup>13</sup> [The Silence of the Lambs – Who Wins the Scene?](#)

## *Openings*

The best examples for educational purposes of how to build a scene are opening scenes. It is a space where the creator has to catch our attention, introduce the environment, characters, main topic and explain a lot in a short time in an entertaining, efficient way. Coding these meanings must be natural to the story, so that the viewer feels at ease following the main narration.

In the first 5 to 10 minutes, the film presents everything that it offers. Depending on the genre the importance of each layer differs. Sci-fi usually has a strong political or moral aspect, while comedy focuses much more on the closest environment of the protagonist. The protagonists though usually have a very high importance across genres, and they are presented via the way they look, speak, walk and interact with the world around them. The props, costume or the tone of the voice are as important as the lines they say. Same goes with their interaction. The contrast between the main character and the rest of the cinematic universe we follow is crucial. Why is he or she unique, why should we be interested and what is the promise of an exciting story?

In the editing room it is necessary to understand the importance of these factors when building an opening. Amazing sources of inspiration are for example the episodes of the British TV show *Black Mirror*, because each episode is a standalone piece, with new universe, topic and protagonist. By comparing them, we can identify the arsenal of tools we possess as creators. We can observe the powerful difference the lighting, colour scheme or sound design can create. Each world is unique, captivating and exciting while still being understandable and relatable. Whatever new technology or political setup is created, it is clearly communicated and explained. As effortless as it may seem, by dissecting these opening scenes frame by frame and shot by shot, we find out how much craft and knowledge is behind it.

Sometimes it is the specific use of extreme close-up, the other times it is the colour of the socks of a main character. As editor, you have to be aware of how these cues and factors function, because even if you don't create them, you create a story using them in their most efficient way.

## *Structure*

Before delving into horizontal editing, let's briefly discuss structure and dra-

maturity. As it was already said, a good editor knows how to build a story and uses this skill in every project. In fiction it is vital and in documentaries it is a crucial input of this profession. The use of “fill out the blanks” approach, such as Michael Hauge’s “Six Stage Plot Structure” or even a better example “Save the cat! Beat Sheet” by Blake Snyder are questionable and not that useful for postproduction, but the close familiarity with structural principles is a must. The most relevant for the editors would be Vladimir Jakovlevič Propp’s types of characters (similar to C.G.Jung’s archetypes, it is useful to be familiar with them), Joseph Campbell’s Hero with a thousand faces (the origin of many interpretations and popular 3 Act Structure simplifications for the filmmakers) and Dan Harmon’s Story Circle (very relevant and applicable in the modern tv show format with multiple characters, episodes and series). In the editing room, there is no need to create a story from scratch, but there is always a need to fix things that didn’t work out during the production or came out differently than anticipated.

The general consensus is that we probably ran out of stories a long time ago and that coming up with a new **fabula** is really difficult, if not impossible. But what is a probable never-ending field is **sujet**. The WHAT of a story is repeating, but the HOW IT IS TOLD can be fresh, entertaining and even groundbreaking. But some core principles of the structure need to stay the same in order to allow us to move freely and bravely in the realm of sujet.

The core principles become obvious once we go through the theories describing structure since Aristotle to this time. In every era and every publication, there are common points to be found, so we could conclude that these are universally understandable and functional for our cultural context. Simply put, it is the beginning, middle and end and two points of change of situation somewhere roughly in the first and third quarter. When this is met, we can orient ourselves in the story and focus on more intricate layers and aspects of the piece while not getting bored by the predictable unfolding events we are following. Again, coming back to the “Don’t bore and don’t confuse” motto.

### *Horizontal editing – creating a story*

Being aware of how the 3 act structure works is one thing but being able to build it within audio-visual medium brick by brick, frame by frame is another skill. Some of the tools that are helping us grasp the connection of the vertical character of shots with its horizontal meaning and function are **the narrative**

## **lines and motives.**

In general, we distinguish the main story line and then secondary narrative lines (one or more). In fiction films the hierarchy is somewhat stronger than in documentaries, where they can be built in a more parallel way. For easier communication and better understanding we can call one line **the action line** and the other **the relationship line**.

The terms are quite self-explanatory. In the action line we follow the events happening and the actions of the protagonist, while in the relationship line, we get deeper into his or her feelings, backstory and relationships with others. Secondary narrative lines can concern other characters as well and by uncovering their story we get to understand our protagonist and the main theme more.

The motives are there to be the indicators of current state and so to show the change, the progress at the end of the journey. It can be the journey of a protagonist or our journey as viewers. At each point they occur, they slightly change the meaning. They still touch the same topic, same fragment of the character or the theme, but they evolve. As motives we can use music, props, lines, situations or even specific types of shots. If they are recurrent, they reflect the inner state of the character or represent a side of the theme and if they evolve as the film progresses, we can use anything as a motive.

The more obvious examples of these tools are in the classic works such as The Lord of the Rings trilogy or The Social Network. But if we look closer at modern documentary series such as Chef's Table or Abstract: The Art of Design, we can see a meticulous work with narrative lines and motives, and it is this deep analysis and understanding that helps us to truly see the potential of these tools and be ready to use them.

### *Practical task*

During the semester each student submits two practical outputs. Hands-on exercises and discussions are the most efficient way to understand the principles we talk about in theory.

First task is a photostory. Its topic is "embarrassing story". This task has multiple stages. Each stage is important and must go through feedback and discussion in order for the student to be able to move to the next one. First stage

is an idea and a script. Having a written script is essential, because that is the stage where we can make a difference between just a simple observation of an event and a story with a buildup and pay-off.

Second stage is a storyboard. The quality of the drawings is not important at all, the focus is purely on visualizing the types of shots, compositions and succession of the shots. This stage represents the transformation from paper to film language. The students need to apply the theoretical knowledge they have and plan how to translate their ideas into visual cues. Then comes the shooting itself. The technology doesn't matter in this case either, it can be done on a phone. The point is to create real photos capturing the visions from the storyboard. As fun as this stage may be, in most cases the results are not matching the visions for one hundred percent. And so, the last discussion is looking at the final storyboard and evaluating what went wrong and what was successful in this journey. At this stage, it is very important to be able to look at it with fresh eyes and look for the potential just as if we would see it for the first time. This is a skill that's really difficult to acquire and even if one has this ability, it is a conscious work to keep it alive. Being able to see the ways how to expand something, that may have had a different aim.

Second practical task is to make a short audiovisual piece out of the footage provided. The footage has very few dialogue lines, but multiple visually interesting environments and a huge potential for storytelling, meaning it is not an abstract footage. Multiple characters offer a variety of possible storylines to follow and messages to convey. Thanks to many feedbacks and discussions the students are capable of arriving to a final form representing their original idea of how to interpret the footage and in this way, they acquire some level of confidence and experience when it comes to dramaturgy and editing skills.

# Introduction and Overview of Visual Language Courses, Art, Film, and Workshops

Ian Keeble

These courses explore and analyse the elements that make up the language of the visual arts, such as space, movement, time, light, colour, and the psychological aspects of symbolism, body, and emotions. We closely examine artworks and artists that are relevant to the topic of discussion for each lecture. We will move from the external to the internal, material and non-material and delve into humanity's fundamental need, to create and communicate. We put forward questions such as: What messages do pictures communicate to us through their content and the processes of their construction? How do we approach comprehension in the context of our individual and collective experiences? It is crucial to develop sensitivity toward images, an awareness of what they transmit to us, and the language they use. This is intrinsically linked with the development of observation skills, which are fundamental across all art disciplines. We investigate the influence of painting on photography and cinema, and how they, in turn, influenced painting in the latter part of the 20th century. Subjects in the visual language course mirror and complement those in the film and documentary sections of the course. In recent years, a multitude of films about art and artists have been produced, prompting the question: How do these films now influence and educate our perspective on art? The technical capability to reproduce images has instigated significant changes in how art is perceived, and meanings can be readily manipulated depending on context and juxtaposition. Images can now be viewed anywhere, from churches and museums to homes, shopping centres, and bus stops, and they have become the predominant form of communication. Visual workshops focus on process and observation, offering students the opportunity to experiment with materials and explore creative processes. The structure of the courses is, from a history standpoint, not chronological but rather a non-linear assembly of interrelated subjects. These courses are directed towards a whole and complex visual understanding that is applicable to all areas of visual art. The focus is on the questions that arise from our relationship with art and what it uncovers about the human condition.

## The Study of Visual Language through Art

A deep dive into Giorgione's *The Tempest*: A study of the phenomena of visual language.

**Content:** How do we look and interpret pictures and extract meaning from their subjects and construction? The significance of the subject and our individual and universal connection to it. A painting as a study and exploration of some of the fundamental aspects of life. What is the visual language within a painting that allows the viewer to enter into its ideas of space, light, structure, and its psychological and philosophical discourse?

**Purpose:** The aim is to develop an understanding of visual communication and how the meaning of objects can be transformed from the literal to the symbolic. It's about connecting ideas in a non-linear form and understanding what art can teach us about a wide range of subjects and the influence of our own experiences, which form part of the process. It's about developing an openness and curiosity to the feelings and emotions a painting can provoke through its external appearance and internal essence.

Giorgione represents a change during this period in humanity's perception of itself in relation to the world. Humanity becomes self-aware and realises its ability to understand the nature of life through its own observations. Copernicus's findings discovered that humanity is no longer at the centre; it is the Sun, and humans are the observers from the orbiting position, with the sun's light paving the way to enlightenment. In the painting, nature now takes centre stage, which is highly unusual for this time. Through contrasting elements, we can build an understanding of nature, light and dark, decay and order, fire and water, and so on.

Upon first contact with the picture, it is perceived as a unitary whole: the male and female figures, the trees, the stream that runs through the middle, and the buildings and sky behind. All these objects and their relationships to each other form the compositional structures within the picture. If we think of the three dimensions of space – left, right, up, down, front, back – it is the composition that navigates the eye through these dimensions.

There are two main aspects to symbolic meaning: the universal (for example, the tree as a crown, roots that connect, cycle of life, tree of knowledge and of wisdom) and our individual understanding in the context of culture and experience. On one level, the picture could be just two adults and a baby in

a landscape with a town behind. But when we engage with developing symbolic understanding, then this more superficial interpretation dissolves into complex structures of meaning. Also, the physical aspects of the picture, such as ruins, condition of trees, different types of light, and so on, add to the psychological aspect of the picture. It is important to foster a curiosity in what we observe beyond categories such as good and bad, like and don't like.

What is the overall feeling transmitted to you from the picture?

In what way does your eye move through the painting, and what are the aspects you notice first?

How does light function, and what are the different types of light?

What is the relationship between the figures, the positions they convey, and their emotional aspects?

Look at the space in the picture and think about the way the illusion of a third dimension is created.

Explore the symbolism from a personal point of view and from a cultural aspect.

## **Movement**

**Content.** We explore visual developments in the expression of movement from the earliest cave paintings to contemporary art. The human need to make and understand visual communication. It is the endeavour to create a sense of movement in pictures which act as the meeting point between painting, photography, and film and their influence on each other. We emphasize the importance of movement in the study of psychological perception in the question of ground and object.

**Purpose.** We analyse how visual art creates knowledge and practice towards understanding the phenomena of movement. What is the relationship between imagination and the suggestion of movement in a still image? Is there a need to imitate life as a way to understand it more deeply? We aim to show the duality of art as a study of the spiritual and the material, and as connection and creativity, which form some of the basic emotional needs of humanity.

Artists throughout history have endeavoured to give the viewer of a still im-



age a feeling and experience of movement. This can be seen in the earliest surviving images of humanity in caves and on rocks which capture the movement of animals and people. Not only in the physical sense but also in the spiritual, and to portray what cannot be seen. In these drawings, we see the manifestation of two fundamental qualities, to observe and imagine. The ability to create the illusion of movement is what works on our imagination and becomes the collective experience of the viewers. This is a core aspect of art that encourages the viewer to feel something that can help them understand something about the nature of reality. The question posed, is whether this pursuit to capture movement is what created the environment for moving images technically and perceptually? If we look at movement within images as they develop through time, we see the dynamic of movement in space change and its complexity evolves. Pictures reveal how developments and knowledge become part of the culture and this is also a movement of knowledge which transcends linear time. This also relates to the scientific study of energy. Our exploration of works of art can reveal human achievements as a way of seeing the developments of humanity.

### *Questions*

What were the concepts of movement of early human culture?

How do the empirical study and spiritual contemplation in pictures on cave walls and church walls compare to cinema screens?

How is the illusion of movement created in a still image?

What is the role of the position of objects in space and the dynamics of composition?

How does the interrelationship between objects and figures and their position communicate movement?

What is the iconic spirituality and static reality?

How did the Renaissance and Baroque, being aware of the natural world and its dynamic changes, show a change in humanity's perception of the world?  
What were the developments in art's ability to show reality?

How is a moving society, industrial and mechanical, both reflected and rejected in art, moving forward and moving back, desire for change and fear of

change?

How has humanity's conscious perception of movement changed in relation to developments in art and science?

## **Time**

**Content:** This lecture explores the concept of time as past, present, and future. We examine the nature of human time, both physically and psychologically. Time is represented in the stillness of an image, juxtaposed against the continuous movement of time. Exploring contrasting aspects of time such as individual and collective human time, geological and universal.

**Purpose:** The aim is to explore how our perceptions of time change due to psychological and physical conditions. Time experience in paintings as a contrast of the present with the past and to develop awareness of this fact. We analyse different aspects of time, both mechanical and universal, and look at the contrasts of time and space in painting.

During the Renaissance, a popular secular and philosophical theme in painting was the three stages of life. These paintings revealed the physical and psychological transformation of a person's life as a whole. These images were used as reflections on the processes of change and how someone would choose to spend their lifetime – productively or in the pursuit of pleasure and vanity, which also echoes religious sentiments. In the work by Titian, we see how he delves into these subjects through the qualities of an individual's life at different periods. Rembrandt painted self-portraits throughout his life, and thus they show the history of his life in a visual form. It can be seen through his portraits how his painting technique changed with time, which also reflects the changes in his personality. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Edward Munch approached the subject of time as relative to the life of women. He visualized the effects of time physically as appearance and psychologically through the expression of feeling that he was able to impart within the medium of paint and colour. Since the 1970's the performance artist Marina Abramovic has been exploring time through the medium of her own body. In her live performances she examines themes of physical relationships and their psychological impact, and the human capacity to endure inactivity over long periods of time.

Thinking about time in relation to the still image.

Contrasts in the portrayal of time from the Renaissance to contemporary art.

The concepts of mechanical and universal time as images.

The viewer's position as an active part of the time process. When looking at a painting made several hundred years ago from our present perspective, what impact does this have on how we see the past?

Elements of time Universal, natural and human.

Time in the process of making art.

How does time change relative to developments of society?

## **Light and Caravaggio**

**Content:** This section discusses Caravaggio's influence in the use of light to create tension and drama. We study the composition of light and its transformation upon contact with transparent and opaque materials. We delve into the study of light as a path to humanism and the connection of Caravaggio with science in the early Baroque period. We also explore the symbolic meaning of light relative to the personality, in this case, the painter himself.

**Purpose:** The aim is to analyse concepts of light and their connotations within religious symbolism. We look at developments in understanding the nature of light through technical experiments in painting and the links between art and science. We also discuss the importance of Caravaggio on the development of Western painting and his influence on 20th-century film aesthetics.

Caravaggio revolutionised the position of light, introducing it as a source coming from the external world. This means that light sits on objects, in contrast to earlier painting where the light appears to come from within. Light is central to Caravaggio's thinking about humanity, within an idea of humility and the ability of light to convert to a spiritual path. The drama of life is brought to the front of the picture, so it is in your face, so to speak. His own life is enfolded within his paintings, as well as his religious convictions. He connects contemporary everyday life and poverty with a quest for the spiritual in religious teachings. His work, although greatly admired, puts him into conflict with the orthodox church, where he becomes the rebel. In the subsequent centuries after his death, he is almost forgotten, and it is only in the 20th century that his work is brought to the attention of the public. This

awareness of his work also has an influence on film language through composition and light. Could it be as a result of film and photography that the genius of Caravaggio's work is recognised?

We focus on the importance of light in early modern science and how it could be closely related to developments in art.

Experiments on how light interacts with different mediums and materials such as glass, metal and water.

The symbolic aspect of light and the importance of darkness.

The relationship between light, poverty and realism, the natural element of light and how it continuously changes the world through colour and space.

Caravaggio's use of light to show reality and within reality finds the spiritual world, why there seems to be a photographic quality to some of the paintings, and how physical drama is constructed within the painting."

## **Urban and rural landscape and road painting, Edward Hopper**

Content. As a constructed element of the land, the urban landscape overpowers and sometimes coexists with nature. The element of isolation is expressed in much of Hopper's work. The influence of transport on art and the ability to travel across the land. Journeys and places have been important subjects for art throughout its history, therefore, what might they symbolise?

Purpose. We aim to analyse the ability of art to reveal some of the deeper sentiments and emotions of an era. What could be the major influences in new ways of looking at the landscape and the human relationship with the constructed land? The migration of people from rural to urban living. We attempt to uncover modern mythologies as symbolised in the products of a modern society.

Hopper's paintings define a part of America's urban and rural landscape culture from the early to the middle of the 20th century. It also depicts a society on the move, in mass migration from abroad and internally. Does this ability to move change our relationship with the land and the nature within which we live? Hopper captures some of the human emotional reaction to this in the form of isolation and people seemingly separated from each other. It is the landscape with which he is familiar and has a strong connection to, and

by studying and painting it, he reinforces this connection with the land. He is helping his fellow Americans in creating an Identity for and with the land as it becomes something they are part of. In a sense, the still image of a painting holds movement for a moment and gives us time to contemplate and reflect. With society's new possibilities to move and travel, it can be easy to lose contact with where we are from but on the other hand, travel can heighten our ability to observe. It is through what is new and unknown even though this can render the familiar dull, and it is in Hopper's paintings where the dull is made beautiful and interesting.

Has our ability to travel changed the way we experience art?

Do we go out and search for images that can define our experiences, this might be physical but could also be conceptual?

What is our relationship to the new and unfamiliar?

Despite living in closer proximity to each other, why does there seem to be such a strong sense of isolation?

What connection does Hopper's work have with De Chirico's?

Can art create a sense of identity with place?

## **The reality of two-dimensional picture, Mondrian.**

Content. How is space created on a two-dimensional surface, and what gives us the impression of three dimensions? Examine the working methods used by Mondrian to develop his concept of space. Observe the pure and basic elements used to create these works of art and the importance of colour in this process.

Purpose. Art can teach us about the complexities in the nature of reality through observation. We aim to explore the process of developing ideas over long periods of time. We seek to understand concepts of abstract art and its importance in all areas of modern art and society. We will investigate the use of colour to create specific feelings.

Space and our perception of space is one of the main concerns of the visual arts. It is the goal of artists to create a visual idea of space. They work in two dimensions but aim to create the feeling of three dimensions. The ability to do this in western art has developed over many centuries, and the possibility

to create three dimensions out of a two-dimensional surface is more difficult to conceive than we might think now when it is so familiar to us. The biggest progress in this came at the beginnings of the Renaissance. Their inspiration came from Greek and Roman sculpture, which to create the reality of three-dimensional form was not such a problem. But in painting, there has to be an illusion of space; the viewer has to believe in something which in reality is not there.

When a mark or colour is put onto a surface, it will always stimulate a feeling of space, or if they physically overlap. In western art, it was the control of this phenomenon that could create such a convincing experience of space. Mondrian looked at this problem from a different point of view: how could one create a picture with only two dimensions experienced? This meant to deal with the reality of the picture as in fact a two-dimensional object.

He endeavoured over many years to reduce the space to two dimensions at first through observed life and this slowly became more abstract until the pictures were reduced to a pure abstract form. He limited himself to the primary colours, plus black and white as well as vertical and horizontal line. Out of this, he created a pure type of aesthetic that would influence many areas of art in Europe graphic design, architecture and applied arts.

What is abstract space?

What is the importance of colour in the creation of abstract art?

How did Mondrian's work impact on a greater awareness about the nature of space as was being developed by science?

Can we see the influence of his early work develop into the later abstractions?

How does his work impact our understanding of perception and how it functions, and the relationship between the external, the eye and the mind?"

## **The content of a psychological space, De Chirico**

Content. How the subject matter relates to the psychological personality and archetypal themes of life? Identity and the relationship of culture in the way we view the world. The creation of emotional content through symbols and feeling in the expression of paint colour and light. His use of mythological and

personal relationships to explore his own internal world.

Purpose. We aim at Developing awareness of symbolic visual language and the transformation of meaning through the juxtaposition of objects and space. The psychological relationship of the past on the present. A personal vision of art through the study of culture, psychology and philosophy.

De Chirico was able to create a visual form that did not correspond to logic or rationality and through nonconventional relationships other meaning could be gained. The important element in this way of working is the mind as imagination and the subconscious. This throws into question the relationship between external and internal worlds. De Chirico used the term metaphysical to suggest the interactions of the material world with the nonmaterial, the physical and psychological. The memory of a place its architecture, light and objects were used to reflect the human emotion and condition. His pictures excavate inner feelings and emotional conditions as hidden and part of the urban space and our psychological relationship with it. Psychological trauma as well forms part of the content which is often manifested in the anxiety of departure and arrival. This is a theme that constantly appears in his work through paintings influenced by the story of Odysseus.

He works as a precursor to post modernism through the use of images and styles from art history placed in the context of modernism. The question he puts forward is how knowledge derived from history influences the way the world is seen? It also forms a critical position to the idea of modern art as a search for original and new and that we are always influenced by the past which belongs to all art throughout history. It brings into question the idea of a linear development of art and the fact that art does not move in a constant single direction.

Did film and photography influence the way he worked and also visa-versa?

What is our interaction with space on a psychological level?

De Chirico was aware and in tune with the work of Freud and Nietzsche this came forth in the human relationships he portrayed which often reflected his own psychological condition.

What was the importance of the subconscious in his work?

How does the story of his own life relate to his work?

Can art be used as a way to understand the internal world of all humans as our emotional selves?

## Urban and rural landscape and road painting, Edward Hopper

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Hopper's paintings define a part of America's urban and rural landscape culture from the early to the middle of the 20th century. It also depicts a society on the move, in mass migration from abroad and internally. Does this ability to move change our relationship with the land and the nature within which we live? Hopper captures some of the human emotional reaction to this in the form of isolation and people seemingly separated from each other. It is the landscape with which he is familiar and has a strong connection to, and by studying and painting it, he reinforces this connection with the land. He is helping his fellow Americans in creating an Identity for and with the land as it becomes something they are part of. In a sense, the still image of a painting holds movement for a moment and gives us time to contemplate and reflect. With society's new possibilities to move and travel, it can be easy to lose contact with where we are from but, on the other hand, travel can heighten our ability to observe. It is through what is new and unknown even though this can render the familiar dull, and it is in Hopper's paintings where the dull is made beautiful and interesting.

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## **The human body and the use of mass-produced images as source material, Francis Bacon:**

### **Does art reflect life?**

Content. Art and life become one as they influence each other as a way of living and working. The use of the body as a medium of expression and painterly gesture defines the form. Painting as an existential process of exploring life with no meaning or conclusion. Bacon's paintings become icons of the tragedies of the 20th century and as a way of processing trauma. Or as expressions of love without the need to hide the socially and conventionally unacceptable.

Purpose. Reveal the connection of art and popular culture and Bacon's interest in film and photography as source material for his work. The relevance of the tradition of painting in modern society and its ability to adapt to new ideas. Has the role and task of the artist changed so much from the past to now and the personal life of the artist and its connection to the work? The importance of the human body as a reflection of the human condition.

Bacon used film and photography as a starting point, and paintings would develop out of this material with little resemblance to the original. Looking closely at the films that inspired him, there is seen the distortion of the human form both physically and psychologically. This opens the question of how we see ourselves when reflected in what seems to be the reality of film. Has our perception of humanity become distorted in light of what we are able to record through film? Does Bacon's art reflect on the whole history of image-making and what that means for us? We see in art and life where there is beauty there is also its opposite; one cannot exist without the other. The art produced and the life of the artist become entangled in the work and as an inspiration for the work itself. Art reflects life, and life reflects art? It is through the body that Bacon expresses his ideas, and how the internal emotions and feelings become external gestures of the physical. His physical use

of paint, accidents, and unintended or predetermined results reflect closely his own internal world.

What are the connections and differences in the way the human body is seen in art and images from popular culture?

Do we see the world through the images created by society?

Is there such a thing as the free will of the artist, or is there always some kind of influence on the choices made?

Are there differences in observing nature directly or the use of recorded images when making art?

Can paint express the emotional condition?

Has the life of an artist become a cliché through biographies and biopics?

## **Popular Culture, Materials and Objects through the Philosophies of Andy Warhol and Josef Beuys**

**Content.** Secular art analyses modern society through the culture and objects it produces. The connections modern art has with the past, which can help us understand the present. Modern objects and materials as mythological and spiritual interpretations that can give meaning and content to our lives.

**Purpose.** Art is able to understand the deeper implications of modern life through its ability to observe. Explore in pop art the theme that is constant in art, to visualise the spiritual and the material aspects of life. Compare differences between American pop and European, and what might the influences be, and the impact pop has had on contemporary art.

The products and objects of a consumer society become the subject matter of art. Is there some similarity to the past when religious themes were the dominant form of culture, and so in the second half of the 20th century, markets and consumerism and the objects produced take on this role? In some sense, the same attention was given to a soup can as was to a landscape or religious subject.

The question is formed in the potential meaning of something; in this case, is the artist only representing the object as it is in reality, or is there a deeper meaning to this type of art? As has been seen time and time again, art con-

cerns itself with the physical and the metaphysical or the material and spiritual.

Resulting emotions from this work are to feel pleasure and happiness obtaining the things we want and connection with society as a whole. The other side of these feelings are concerns for the health of our relationships with each other, humanity and nature. To look at how pop art explores these central themes of life.

The two main protagonists of pop art are Josef Beuys and Andy Warhol, who represent contrasting aspects of superficiality, gratification, pleasure and happiness to the spiritual transformation of society through everyday and common objects and their potential for symbolic meaning. The important question is, what is the relationship with ourselves, society and the modern world we live in?

Can art make sense of a modern society which seems to be constantly changing?

Can morals and values be created through art in everyday objects, and can it encourage us to think more deeply about their potential meaning?

And imbue objects with symbolic understanding and subsequent transmutation of meaning?

Is there such a thing as originality, or are we responding to experiences and culture of the past?

Does the pop artist become a mythological figure?

## **Observation of the Self in Photography, Reflections on Personality and Identity, Cindy Sherman**

Content. Photography can be used to reveal and hide the personality, or to portray it in a way that fits with certain types of conventions. The transformation of appearance as a way to cover the personality as exaggerations that are acceptable to society but disregard our authentic self. How art presents to society the images of women that it wants to see. In her work, there is a return to the question of time: how does it contrast with representations of time from the past to the present?

Purpose. Analyse how Sherman has shifted her images to expose uncomfort-

able truths about our identities and personalities. Photography shows us a lot about our present condition and the way we see each other; therefore, can it help us to understand ourselves better? The use of the body in photography to expose our internal world.

The internal world of our personalities and identity, who are we and how are we seen by society? Photography can reveal many things about ourselves through its ability to capture unnoticed moments and expressions in the flow of life. Yet at the same time, we feel we can hide behind a photo with an insincere smile, the clothes we wear, and what is edited out of the photo. On the whole, photos in the public domain present the ideal person and often ignore the reality of our complicated relationships with ourselves and the people around us. Sherman uncovers some of these hidden aspects of our personalities and identities through the medium of her own face and body. There is an element to her work that uncovers the brutality of our behaviour to each other and especially the abuse directed towards women. The lifeless bodies in states of decay, the personality stolen from them and abandoned, and young girls seen from above and vulnerable. The juxtaposition of earlier work with more recent reveals inequalities of society, women working in the earlier film stills series and women of high society where the experience of life has become dull. In more recent works, she looks at the question of gender transformation, where the body is moulded to the way we see and feel ourselves as a struggle between the physical and the emotional.

How are women seen by society, and how do they want to be seen by society?

Do I see myself in relation to society, culture, and people around me?

Is it possible to experience ourselves outside of the culture we are born into, to be independent?

What are the factors that influence the way society is directed towards what it sees?

Explore the psychology of self-awareness and awareness of appearance.

Is there the possibility of losing who we really are? In the need to hide the self from exposure and the lack of trust in a society that is obsessed with images of the self?

## Contemporary and Post-modern Art, the Present

**Content.** What are the contemporary trends in art over the past 30 years? And how, in this so-called post-modern era, is art produced and presented? The transformation of technology has had a big impact on art in the way society experiences and consumes art. What role can art play in modern society, and if it needs to transform itself, what qualities and values can it give to modern life?

**Purpose.** Examine possible influences from technical, social, and historical aspects that could contribute to the state of contemporary art. Can art now be looked at through traditional values of art aesthetically and conceptually? Until recently, the main subject of art was around humanity's spiritual quest that could give meaning to life; has this changed, and if so, how? Analyse positive and negative qualities of contemporary art, and does it offer a new approach to art that is more open and inclusive?

Art is fractured in this present period, which would seem to reflect aspects of modern life. The aim for individualism and originality has become paramount. On the other hand, is it going through a transformation where it is interconnected throughout the world, and the former centres of art no longer exist? A result of this opening of art to accept all forms has meant that a great deal more people feel they can become an artist, and it is the idea which takes precedence over all other concerns. In the context of the work we have been observing in the rest of the course, what now is the view of contemporary art? What does it say about us and the environment that we live in? In some sense, the art closest to our time can be the most difficult to interpret; we do not have the space of time to separate ourselves from the work. It does give us though an indication of the preoccupations of contemporary society and especially so if looked at in contrast to the past. It might seem overwhelming, the array of themes, but if we notice the subjects matter artists use, they are usually relatively similar throughout history. For example, the installation by Damien Hirst of a rotting cow's head, thousands of flies, and the electric fly killer is basically a vanitas still life exploring the fragility of life between birth and death. And the popularity of installations; are they very different in concept to religious and iconic paintings and sculpture installed in churches?

Is the seemingly shock of the new and search for the unusual a smokescreen created by the art market to get the attention and interest of the public, as they are easily distracted?

Can art reflect a changing society and world and help us to come to terms with these changes? By challenging our perceptions of the human psychological condition, the environment, and our relationships and understanding of each other?

Throughout time, art has always explored our psychological aspects of being human; can art be used in the pursuit of human well-being?

Much of art today is focused on the political; can art really bring about political change? And to what aim?

# Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking

**Marek Šulík**

## Introduction

The lectures for the course Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking are based on a practical insight into the methodology of documentary filmmaking and an understanding of the basic problems of documentary filmmaking and its analysis. The course is carried out in the classical format of theoretical lectures and demonstrations of film works, or screenings of whole film works that illustrate the given issue. Presented documentary films come primarily from Central European production – we can introduce students to older and newer works of domestic production in a natural way.

## Recommended literature

- Introduction to Documentary, Bill Nichols, 2017
- Film History: An Introduction, Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, 2009

## Topics

Definition of Documentary filmmaking

Film director and screenplay (script)

Filmmaking methods (reconstruction, observation, staging and performative approach)

Creative procedures

Ethics and documentary film

Archive and documentary film

## Definition of documentary film

Documentary films are an integral part of the information networks of human society.

They draw attention to the political, social, psychological (etc.) problems of the world, creating a space for the audience to share universal human experiences. Different forms of documentaries can be found on many platforms – from cinemas, TV, online distribution platforms, to news portals and social networks.

This is a list of short film clips that the Lumiere brothers screened on December 28, 1895 at the Grand Cafe in Paris<sup>1</sup> :

1. La Sortie de l'usine Lumiere a Lyon (literally, "the exit from the Lumiere factory in Lyon", or, under its more common English title, Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory), 46 seconds
2. Le Jardinier (l'Arroseur Arrose) ("The Gardener", or "The Sprinkler Sprinkled"), 49 seconds
3. Le Debarquement du congres de photographie a Lyon ("the disembarkment of the Congress of Photographers in Lyon"), 48 seconds
4. La Voltige ("Horse Trick Riders"), 46 seconds
5. La Peche aux poissons rouges ("fishing for goldfish"), 42 seconds
6. Les Forgerons ("Blacksmiths"), 49 seconds
7. Repas de bebe ("Baby's Breakfast" (lit. "baby's meal")), 41 seconds
8. Le Saut a la couverture ("Jumping Onto the Blanket"), 41 seconds
9. La Place des Cordeliers a Lyon ("Cordeliers Square in Lyon"-a street scene), 44 seconds
10. 10.La Mer (Baignade en mer) ("the sea [bathing in the sea]"), 38 seconds

We can see two basic creative approaches already in this collection, which have developed into today's diverse group of different film types and genres in the following years. The short humorous sketch *Le Jardinier (l'Arroseur Arrosé)* is the forerunner of today's feature film, that is, a fabulation and staging approach in which the authors of the film devise a detailed plan of the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salon\\_Indien\\_du\\_Grand\\_Caf%C3%A9](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salon_Indien_du_Grand_Caf%C3%A9)



shooting in advance. *Place des Cordeliers*, or *Le Débarquement du congrès de photographie à Lyon* show, on the other hand, the need for documentation of lived reality. Trick and animated films were very soon added to the realm of the fiction film.

It is obvious and well known that the field of art and creativity is subject to constant experimentation and pushing the boundaries. We know feature films that use elements of authentic reality (non-actors, real environments ... ), we know documentary films that again intervene in real life by staging.

To better understand the film, and – if we are its authors – to be able to create convincing films, we need to understand the specific characteristics of each genre. In our case, we need to think about what a “documentary film” actually is.

At first glance, it may seem obvious. The documentary captures the reality around us!

However, even studio sets made for the needs of a feature film are reality, actors and actresses are alive and many feature films are based on real stories. And yet (consciously or unconsciously) we accept their unreality, we accept that it's just a “game” based on the simulation of reality. If we watch a documentary, we are aware of the factuality of the world it depicts. We ask, for example, where the protagonists of the film live, what they do, what they are doing today ...

The film genre that we collectively call non-fiction cinema hides within itself a multitude of genres that range from straightforward journalistic factualism, detached observation, to highly stylized interventions into the world in front of the camera. These include, for example, educational films, scientific films, news reports, news sets, polls, interviews, entertainment programmes (reality shows), investigative films, politically engaging films, or original documentaries. These genres deal with “lived life” and factual information in different ways – from maintaining providing balanced information, analyzing related facts (striving for informational relevance and integrity of viewpoint) to a deliberately subjectivized author's testimony.

One of the first filmmakers who actually coined the term documentary was the English filmmaker and theorist John Grierson. He defined documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality”:

*“Documentary, or the creative treatment of actuality, is a new art with no such background in the story and the stage as the studio product so glibly pos-*

esses.” (Grierson 1933: 8)

*“Documentary – that’s not a very appropriate term, but let’s keep it for now. (...) Until now we have looked at all films made from documentary material as belonging to this category. The use of unrecorded material was considered a fundamental distinction. Where the camera filmed events on location (whether it was a newsreel, a newsreel for a magazine or a dramatized event: an educational film, purely scientific films or nature films like Chang or Rango), it was all called a documentary film. This register of genres is of course critically unmanageable, and we will have to do something about it. All these types of films represent different qualities in terms of processing, different aims in approach and, of course, quite different incentives and ambitions at the time of gathering the material. I therefore propose, after a short introduction on the lower categories, to use the term documentary exclusively for the higher types.(...) I see the film as a pulpit. Documentary film is the chosen one that leads the unaware citizen through the pitfalls of the era. The impact of the documentary film is primarily social, not aesthetic. It is a desire to make, in contrast to conventional drama, a drama out of the ordinary.”*

*(John Grierson, The First Principles of Documentary Film, 1932-1934)*

Personally, I still think Grierson’s definition is valid even today. It contains three words that neatly encompass the broad spectrum of creative approaches in non-fiction cinema.

*“Creative treatment of actuality”*

Creative – creativity, it means creativity of the authors, but also creativity of people in front of the camera. It’s freedom, and a variety of approaches.

Treatment – interpretation, grasping, implementation – an element of authorial subjectivity, a way of viewing the world around us.

Actuality – lived reality, that is, reality that exists even without the activity of the filmmaker and which is the direct starting point of the creation of a documentary film.

American film theorist Bill Nichols writes in his book Introduction to Documentary almost 100 years later:

*“The documentary discusses situations and events that concern real people (social actors) who present themselves to us in stories. These bring us closer to a plausible idea of the depicted lives, situations and events, or a view of them.”*

In Nichols' case we see that the elements of "story", "acting" and "representation" have entered into the definition. Nichols reflects the fact that in narrative, documentary film has been transformed from an art that shows fragments of the world to an art that is also capable of delivering a personal story, as we know it from fictional narrative. He goes on to call the protagonists of the film social actors, because he emphasizes the human need for self-presentation, stylization in front of the camera, and at the same time introduces the notion of representation (image), thus underlining that documentary film is not an exact copy of life and of the world.

The definition of a documentary film can be complicated. It does not mean that this kind of film does not exist, it is rather a proof of its liveliness and changeability. It is alive and changeable because it is directly inspired by the elusive life around us.

## **Director and script**

Under the term director or directress we often imagine a stereotypical image from shooting fiction stories. The director is sitting on a chair (with his or her name on it), with a large group of assistants and various workers moving around, giving orders with a megaphone.

The methods of a documentary film director and his crew are different in most cases. Of course, this is due to the fact that in documentary film we often work in the midst of real life with people who continue to live their lives after the film has been made.

In the documentary, the director is also the screenwriter, or co-screenwriter of the film. Only in exceptional cases it is possible to make a documentary film based on a script by another person (e.g. educational films). This is because the relationship between the director (and ultimately the rest of the crew as well) and the protagonist is crucial for the creation. If we expect the protagonist to be open, authentic, or even spontaneous, we expect those values that can only arise in a quality relationship. And building a quality relationship takes time and energy of those involved. The director of a documentary film is often also the executive producer of the film. Filming in real spaces and with real people cannot always be done in a formal (cold) organizational way. It requires empathy, tact, understanding of the context. A documentary film, specifically its shooting phase, is often done with minimum people in the

crew. Sometimes it is one person who tries to provide all the necessary professions (director, sound engineer, cameraman), sometimes it is two people, usually a trio of filmmakers. Of course, even in documentary film we know bigger crews, even documentary film uses artificial lighting, props, or complex technological processes (ride, drone, crane...). Compared to a feature film, it is generally a minimalist approach in terms of organization.

The director of the documentary is the driving element of the whole production:

Film direction is a focused activity, the aim of which is the transformation of thought concepts into an audiovisual work through the medium of film speech. A more complex definition claims that it is an artistic and organizational activity directed towards the coordination of all the creative and technical components involved in the creation of a film work, from the script to the final editing. Considering that the film is a collective work, with the participation of several artists of various professions, it is the film director who, as the leading organizer, recruits them to collaborate, gives them partial tasks and imprints a unified concept and form on the entire implementation process. This applies to the direction of documentary film, as well as to feature and animated film.

But what is the reason behind film directing, or filmmaking and filmmaking in general. It is the human need to understand the world and, consequently, the need for self-expression, to formulate our own attitudes towards topics that affect us. Documentary filmmaking (as well as other art forms) is one of the many creative ways to do this.

A film script is defined as the literary blueprint of a film work. Based on it, the reader can imagine, for example, the dramatic structure of the work, the formal way of narration, the methods the filmmakers want to use and, above all, is able to understand the subject matter.

Documentary film also (perhaps surprisingly) works with a literary preparation, which can take various forms. This depends above all on the purpose to which it is subordinated. In principle, however, literary texts on future films fulfill two basic needs.

## 1. **The need for an authorial understanding of the subject.**

**Writing is a means of personal and concrete formulation of ideas.** In writing, we are capable to realize the concreteness or abstractness of our ideas, but also of their relevance to the topic that interests us. Writing allows us to concentrate on a topic, to find new layers, surfaces, relationships but also formal ideas. Writing engages our imagination and thus allows us to anticipate, to plan, to prepare.

Even in documentary filmmaking (especially in the space of the auteur documentary) there are filmmakers who, for various reasons, reject the script. They see it as a limiting element and want to use the camera as a pen with which to record cinematic sentences. These are then edited in the editing room.

## 2. **The need to communicate with the film industry.**

Writing is a means of presentation of our plans not only to our closest collaborators (dramaturg, cameraman), but also to the structures that could support our project financially or organizationally (film funds, television, distribution platforms...)

Different needs require different forms of texts. In general, however, we can mention the following basic texts: explication, treatment, script. The information they contain is as follows:

An explication, or justification, an explanation of the topic, it is the answer to the question *Why?*

Treatment is a comprehensive description of the specific themes, characters, situations, information, formal procedures that we want to work with in the film. It answers the questions *What?, How?*

A script is a literary retelling of a future idea of a film in an assumed time structure. It thus unfolds from the beginning to the end. It is divided into images. An image is defined by the unity of space and time. The script gives specific information that the viewer will see or hear. There are many moments in which the authors do not know how the foreseen situation will unfold, but they know why they want to film the situation. They have certain ideas, expectations that they want to focus on. These expectations may or may not

come true.

This implies that the script in a documentary is as precise a guide to the actual filmmaking as possible, helping the filmmakers to navigate the shooting process, to be aware of priorities, and to make decisions in stressful situations. In extreme cases, the script and the expected form of the future film can even be abandoned if we find that the reality in front of the camera is unfolding in a different, more important direction.

In the past, it was not uncommon for documentaries to be accompanied by so-called technical scripts. Such scripts contained precise information not only about the whole picture, but also about individual shots, camera movements, sound dramaturgy, dialogue, and so on. This need for a precise plan arose primarily for technological reasons – there was a limited amount of material to shoot films under the conditions of state film, the ratio was, for example, 1:4. This means that for a 10-minute film, the authors had 40 minutes of film material at their disposal. The second reason was the need for control of the film by the state, which controlled the compliance of the content of the films with the state ideology.

Despite this, impressive artistic documentary works have been produced in the past.

(Film screening: Dušan Hanák, film *Omša /Mass/*, excerpt from the script.)

## **Directorial methods (approaches)**

The essence of documentary film, with its material being “lived life”, i.e. a reality that exists even without the artificial intervention of the authors, offers the director different creative possibilities than feature or animated film.

The director records phenomena, images, situations, characters, etc., that he has encountered in the lived world to express the desired topics by combining, confronting, stylizing, foregrounding or emphasizing them, or by using particular directorial approaches. This broad-spectrum manipulation, the concrete action by which he organizes reality in front of the camera, especially in relation to the protagonists of the film, is called a **directorial method or approach**.

If we try to precisely separate and purify the various directorial manipulations, we could arrive at this basic division:

A/ **Immediate, observational and reportage approaches:** capturing an unrepeatable reality (Robert Drew: *Primárky /Primary/*, Jan Špáta: *Největší přání /The Greatest Wish/*, Miro Remo: *Cooltura /Coolture/*, etc.)

B/ **Reconstructive approaches:** repetition of activities that are typical for the life of a given person (Robert Flaherty: *Nanuk, člověk primitivny, /Nanook, of the North/*, Dušan Hanák: *Obrazy starého sveta /Images of the Old World/*, etc.)

C/ **Staging approaches:** authorial creative input, initiation of motifs based on real circumstances (Peter Kerekes: *Zamatoví teroristi /Velvet Terrorists/*, Vít Klusák: *Svět podle Daliborka /The White World according to Daliborek/*)

D/ **Provocative, performative approaches:** generating a new, surprising reality

and tracking human reactions (Vít Klusák, Filip Remunda: *Czech Dream*, Pavel Abrahám: *Česká republika /RAPublic/...*)

Let us now focus on the director's work during the shooting only.

## Observation

It is an approach to filming in which **the film crew does not interfere with the action** in front of the camera, they either try to conceal their presence (hidden camera) or suppress it (minimal number of people in the crew). The condition of observation is that events happen mostly without the initiative of the authors, who follow their protagonists in situations that allow them to focus on events outside the filming. To the observational approach belong reportage methods, or shooting with a hidden camera. The aim is to capture the authentic, uncontrolled behaviour of the protagonists, their interaction in their surroundings and in social relations.

Many films from the Cinema Direct movement (Drew: *Primárky /Primary/*, Wiseman: *Titicut Follies*) have been shot in an observational manner. However, observation and reportage have also been used in a partial way in works dominated by other directorial approaches or invasive stylistic modes of narrative. For example, in the Dutch director Haanstra's film *ZOO*, various manifestations of human behaviour in the zoo are observationally captured, but composed into a dramaturgical whole through associative montage and music. Or in Jan Špáta's film *Největší přání* (*The Greatest Wish*), the reportage of

various events is combined with a survey and interviews. From contemporary work, let us mention Viktor Kosakovsky's film Silence!

## Reconstruction

By reconstruction we mean re-enacting various life activities by the protagonist (social actor) for the purposes of filming. But an important **condition of reconstruction is the repetitiveness of actions**, that is, that they are a repeated, natural part of the protagonist's life. This approach is based on the fact that human lives are filled with everyday repetitive activities and events that can not only be anticipated but also repeated without being faked (feeding pets, brushing teeth, eating, driving, working, having fun... and so on). The aim is to obtain pictorial material that serves as a documentation, an illustration of the protagonist's actual life.

In the context of documentary work, the notion of reconstruction does not include events that happened once in the past and the director, by repeating them, is actually fulfilling a fabulative scheme – the protagonists are deprived of the possibility to act freely. For example, in Jar Vojtek's film *My zdes*, which chronicles the life of a Kazakh family in Slovakia in a reportage manner, there is a scene in which the protagonist of the film telephones the journalist Andrej Bán and informs him of his decision to return to Kazakhstan after unsuccessful attempts to settle in Slovakia. The scene in the film was created by reconstructing a situation that the director did not manage to record authentically and therefore had it reenacted in front of the camera. In this image, a live-action scene takes place in the middle of a live documentary, as the protagonists in front of the camera become, for a moment, actors who are not allowed to deviate from the narrative framework – however once experienced – in a given situation.

A different effect is brought about by a directorial grasp of reconstruction that can shift the situation of reconstructing an event into a new authentic situation. In *Borinage*, Joris Ivens asked the workers to reenact a demonstration that had taken place in the city a month before his arrival. At Ivens's instruction, a group of workers with a portrait of Marx take to the streets to show him what it was like, but – as it was a topical issue for them – the procession was authentically joined by other unsuspecting workers, greeted by other comrades around them (the scene is at the end of the film).



Similarly, in *BATASTORIES*, Peter Kerekes had former shoe factory workers demonstrate what their work looked like when the factories were operational. The workers pantomime operating non-functioning machines and pretend to be working. Here, of course, the viewer understands that this is a playfulness and visualization of an activity that no longer exists. **After careful consideration, this approach could be called rather a provocation to which those who are present react.**

## Staging

In 1982, the Slovak theorist Peter Mihálik wrote about the staging method:

“Closely related to the method of reconstruction is the method of staging factual reality. Staging is not always appropriate when it is an imitation of historical fact or an imitation of reportage...

... It is well known that practically all the scenes of Flaherty's *Nanuk, člověk primitivní* (1922) /*Nanook, of the North*/ were made on the basis of reconstruction and staging, but at the same time on the basis of perfect knowledge of the life of the Eskimo; Flaherty was then primarily concerned with typifying and condensing the life cycle of his heroes.”

By staging, or also by initiation, we mean the artificial setting up, the initiation of situations by the director in which the protagonist **can act authentically and freely**. With staging in documentary film, the moment of **potential** possibility of the situation depicted – in relation to the protagonist's life – is important. This means that the situation, prepared by the director, must be based on the life topics that the protagonist carries – it is **potentially** possible that they could have happened. As a result, he can act authentically in new situations – in his own way and does not have to pretend to be someone else. The honesty is also an important condition – the protagonists are familiar with this type of manipulation, it is not a surprise to them. The main goal is to get authentic reactions from the protagonists in controlled situations. This approach makes it possible to strengthen the narrative of the film, as we could see for example in the film by Petr Kerekes, Ivan Ostrochovský and Pal Pekarčík, *The Velvet Terrorists* – the short story *Stano*, or in the film by Vit Klusák *Svět podle Daliborka* (*The White World According to Daliborek*). Staging is also often used by Robert Kirchoff (*A Hole in the Head*) or Jaro Vojtek (*Little Home*).

## Provocation

**Provocation uses the phenomenon of unexpected performative action that provokes authentic reactions in the participants.** In contrast to the staging, the protagonists are neither aware of such an intervention by the director, nor are they prepared for it. Its aim is to explore the protagonists' attitudes, or it may be an attempt to disrupt the mask with which they present themselves to the camera. Humorous scenes („kanadské žarty“) called Hidden Camera, which are played to passengers on planes, are based on provocation.

In documentary filmmaking, this moment, with deeper implications for reporting on the state of society, was used, for example, by Dušan Hanák in *Old Shatterhand Came to Us*, when he watched as no one understood a foreign tourist, or when he placed a large stone in the middle of the road and waited to see who would overcome convenience/conformity and remove it. Klusák and Remunda used provocation with the same intention in their film *Czech Dream* (the final scene of the revealing of the fictional supermarket), and Jan Gogola (*České Velenice Evropské* from the film *Across the border*) uses provocative communication with respondents in his film *Across the border*, or in the film *Nonstop*. Provocative situations are also applied by Peter Kerekes in the film *Pomocníci* (from the film *Across the border*), or *66 seasons*, Jaro Vojtek in the film *Nepozná ona mňa ani ja ju /She Doesn't Know Me and I Don't Know Her/*, Robert Kirchhoff in the film *Kauza Cervanová*.

**It goes without saying that in most film works, directors flexibly and creatively vary or combine individual methods to create a unified artistic whole.** The process is therefore not, or need not be, a matter of dogmatism. For example, in the film *Zvonky šťastia /Bells of Happiness/* (directed by Marek Šulík, Jana Bučka), the main characters move throughout the film within a staged-performative framework (pretending to play the roles of their favourites), performing in various staged situations, sometimes provoking the people they meet. The opening scene of the protagonist Roman collecting secondary raw materials was made by reconstruction, the scene of making money by playing music was again made by observation, with a hidden camera.

In Otakar Krivánek's extraordinary film *Deň náš každodenný /Our Daily Day/*, the author oscillates between staging and a performative approach, using a reportorial way of capturing some scenes. He places the family of the director's friend Michal Ravinger in staging frames (the daughter longs for a prom

dress, the son has an acquaintance at school, the parents deal with their children's adolescence), in which he lets them improvise freely. In some scenes, he uses minor provocations (the change of newspapers during the nail-cutting scene) and watches how his protagonists deal with the new situation. The Ravingers take on these roles so authentically and vividly that it's impossible to tell whether this is a fiction film or a documentary. The improvised dialogues contain a lot of real-life details from their real lives, their real frustrations, fears, or enthusiasms seep through.

**The method, or a variation of it, can become** a distinctive feature of the director's film "vocabulary", his **signature**. Sometimes, however, the filmmaking process does not allow for rational consideration of individual approaches and the filmmaker uses them intuitively, or within the possibilities of the situation or his own possibilities. The material obtained through different approaches can in turn be interpreted through stylistic forms (editing, music, commentary) that fundamentally change its perception. Thus, a naturalistically shot reportage scene can become an ideological appeal (Eric Gandini: Surplus – opening scene) and so on.

The above academic categorization of methods makes sense if the director is considering their benefits and pitfalls, or to be aware of the circumstances in which it can be used successfully. For example, observational filming carried out with a hidden camera may raise ethical questions, while reconstruction, on the other hand, presupposes an acting performance from the protagonist. The protagonist is playing himself in his social role, and under certain circumstances this approach may encourage self-styling and control mechanisms in him that make the resulting image unconvincing.

The development of the above methods and directorial approaches is linked to the evolution of film language, the cultural needs of society (e.g. the need for entertainment – Lumière's *Actuality* – versus the need for social engagement – Buñuel's *The Land Without Bread*) and film technology (e.g. complicated and heavy film technology versus lightweight digital cameras, film footage limited to 10-minute intervals versus recording media allowing for several hours of footage, etc.).

Already in the early days of cinema (Edison, the Lumières), when film was primarily a novelty and a matter of attraction, we can see two basic directorial approaches that reflect a different way of dealing with pre-film reality. If we understand *L'arroseur arrose*' as a story told by actors within a fictional narrative, then Louis Lumière's *Departure of the Workers from the Factory*, *Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station*, *Breakfast...* can in turn be understood as the

first primitive works of non-fiction made by the method of observation. Primitive because they do not contain an articulated narrative, but rather a simple documentation of situations. Edison's short films, produced in his Black Mary studio, may appear to us as works that combine a stylized attribute (the studio) with an authentic representative performing various – to himself – activities. As if precursors of the staging method.

The methods mentioned above refer to the concrete work with protagonists. The final form, e.g. how convincing the scenes are, is influenced by other **creative methods** that the director applies in a given case.

## Creative practices

**Creative process** means any activity that influences the final form of the work, such as the way of representation, the choice of **technological** aspects of recording, the **aesthetic** characteristics of the work, but also the **position of the crew**, the filmmaker in the narrative, the way the author enters the film, the camera work, editing approaches, sound dramaturgy and so on.

By **technological aspects** we mean, for example, the use of different focal points (telephoto, fisheye, wide optics...), the handheld or static camera, the way it moves, shooting with multiple cameras, the use of micro-ports, etc., i.e. the technical procedures by which the authors realize their intentions.

By **aesthetic qualities** we mean, for example, the composition of the image, the tonality of the colours, the temporality, the sound atmosphere, or the characteristics of the music used, etc., i.e. the final aesthetic impression created by the use of technologies, directing methods and stylistic practices.

By **the position of the crew** we understand what the Slovak theorist Pavel Branko calls the hidden, participatory or prompting camera, and we can clarify the terms introduced by him.

“...**hidden camera** – this term should be understood in a broader sense as any filming of which the filmed person is unaware. So, for example, even filming with a telephoto lens from a great distance is a hidden camera, even though in fact there is no hidden camera, or need not be one.”

“...**the participatory camera**, a way of filming where the filmmakers and their crew get close to the filmed in a long preparatory phase, the camera and apparatus are constantly in the chosen environment, often pretending to be

filming even at this stage – until finally the camera and other practicalities, limited to the smallest possible degree, influence the environment and the lives of the protagonists of the future documentary, who become themselves again, cease to “film” – and this is the moment when the filming can begin.”

“...**the prompting camera** – here the subject of the filming becomes the events that the camera, i.e. the filming, directly triggers or provokes, which therefore would not have happened at all without the filming.”

If we try to explain these three concepts from the point of view of the viewer, the **hidden camera** evokes the feeling of an authentic recording, of life “caught” as it is without the presence of a crew or even a human being. (Zoo, Old Shatterhand Came to Us, nature films) **The participatory camera** gives the viewer the feeling of being present in the action (as represented by the filmmakers) without the people in front of the camera knowing about it (Obrazy starého sveta /Images of the Old World/, Krajina medu /The Land of Honey/). (“Pretend we’re not there!” – the director’s instruction). **The prompting camera**, on the other hand, emphasizes the presence of the crew and the process of filming (66 Seasons, Who the hell is Juliette, České Velenice Evropské /Czech Velenice European/, Kronika jedného leta /Chronicle of one Summer/...).

Among the specific creative practices, ways of shooting that can be directly named, let’s mention **discontinuous filming, reportage, discussion and survey**. Some filmmaking practices have historically become so established that they have become the basis of various documentary genres – for example, the film Primárky /Primary/ is a genre of election coverage that uses a reportage approach. Some more complex documentary genres, such as the essay, may combine different directorial practices and formal elements. Dušan Hanák’s film Prišiel k nám Old Shatterhand /Old Shatterhand Came to Us/ can be **genre**-named as a socially critical essay, in which both the survey and reportage procedures are used, some scenes are shot with a hidden camera, and so on.

The term **discontinuous filming** refers to a way of recording reality that takes place non-chronologically, non-linearly, and it is only in the editing room that linear or other order is returned to the individual shots. (Its opposite is continuous filming, which is, for example, the reportage of an event that takes place over time and the filmmakers cannot go back and repeat the individual stages of the action.) Thus, we refer to discontinuous filming in the sense of prepared, arranged and non-linear filming. The authors, together with the protagonists, prepare the scene, compose it, even rehearse it, and then –

on the director's instruction, they record or repeat it. This method allows for precise work with shot composition, mise-en-scene, timing of events, movement sequences and so on. With this method it is possible to follow exactly the prepared technical scenario, to fulfil the original idea of the work. Nanuk, člověk primitivní /Nanook, of the North/, Obrazy starého světa /Images of the Old World/, Balogh Josef Pribeník 66 and so on were filmed using the technique of discontinuous filming.

In television jargon, the term "shot-by-shot technology" is also used in place of discontinuous filming – the film is shot separately shot by shot. The opposite is **live transmission** (sports footage, talk show...) where, using transmission technology and multiple cameras, a structured work is created at the time of its recording. Documentary filmmakers sometimes use multi-camera filming, but not with the aim of creating a continuous record, but with the aim of capturing multiple events, as used for example by director Pavel Abraham in the film DVA:NULA /TWO-NIL/, or by Peter Kerekes in the film Pomocníci /The Helpers/).

**Reportage** is a structured record of a situation that happens without the authors' input, it is essentially unpredictable in the nuances of its course. Typical (but not necessary!) for reportage is a moving, hand-held camera, the use of which allows the crew to react promptly to changes in the situation. It requires concentration, immediate action ability of the cameraman and soundman, because its valuable characteristic is the non-repeatability of the situation. The freedom of shooting brings the author a wealth of live material, which takes its dramatic shape primarily in the editing room, because only there can its narrative value be carefully considered.

In the history of cinematography, apart from war reporters, let us mention the Cinema direct and Cinema vérité movements, in which the reportage process became a hallmark. Among Slovak filmmakers, elements of reportage are often used by Zuzana Piusi (Od Fica do Fica /From Fico to Fico/), Miro Remo (Cooltura /Coolture/). It is in Miro Remo's films that we can see that the reportorial way of filming does not necessarily mean reduced aesthetic demands on the visual conception of the work; Remo does not hesitate to use a subjective camera, slow-motion shots and the like. The reportage capture of a situation can, by subsequent processing, escape from mere factual reporting of the event, it can take on a metaphorical character, as for example in the opening sequence of Vít Klusák's film Dělníci bulváru /The Workers of the Boulevard/.

The term **discussion** in the film is understood as a structured statement of

the protagonist, which is created in a dialogue with the director (reporter, moderator, or other protagonist). In its final form, embedded in the structure of the film, it can indeed approach the form of a conversation as we know it from informal human interaction (in oral history documentary videos, in discussion journalism formats), but much more often in films we find snippets of acquired verbal information, used in the image synchronously, or as an off-screen utterance, which are at the same time subjected to editing confrontations, or associations. Of course, we find the discussion in many documentaries; in a sense, it is a natural and common way of gathering information. A series of interviews is employed in Claude Lanzmann's monumental 9-hour opus *Shoah*, in Miro Šindelka's *Chvenie /The Trembling/*, Kirchoff's *Kauze Cervanova /The Cervanova Case/*, Kerekes' *66 sezón /66 Seasons/*, and so on. In Chakany's film *Piraňa /Piranha/*, the process of discussion (a personal confession to a friend) is part of the dramaturgical conception of the work.

A **survey** is a series of responses to a single question or questions. A survey carries the potential of a social study because it allows us to put side by side the diverse opinions of a large group of people, to explore their attitudes and moods. In sociology, the survey, as an instrument of social research, has precise methodological characteristics (the size of the group under study, its demographic stratification, etc.) so that the quantitative conclusions reached by the survey analysis are based on relevant data. The film does not have this ambition, yet the author's grasp of the survey can become a dramaturgical element,

which helps to layer (or articulate) the theme, to show its various shades. The most famous survey documentary project in the Czech-Slovak space is Ján Špáta's film *Největší přání /The Greatest Wish/*, where the survey parts grow into discussions or micro-portraits of individual protagonists, or another similar example is Piero Paolo Pasolini's *Hovory o láske / Love meetings/*. The Cinema verité movement's film *Kronika jedného leta /Chronicle of one Summer/*, directed by Jean Rouch, also straddles the line between survey and discussions. But the survey can be very easily abused, by eliminating or, on the contrary, favouring a certain type of answers.

## **Ethics and Documentary**

We have thus outlined the practices that the director uses when filming. to the work with protagonist, it is good to add something of the non-filmic pro-

cesses or skills that are an important part of the documentary filmmaker's work.

Documentary filmmaking is very much based on working with a person whose job is not acting in a film. He is not an actor who is paid for his performance (although even in documentary, performers are paid – but this is not their most important motivation) and he does not portray fictional characters to whom he lends his face, body, and speech. This implies that the documentary filmmaker stimulates other ambitions in his protagonist, based on which he decides to collaborate. For example, personal sympathy for the filmmaker, passion for the subject, the need to pass on his life knowledge to the next generation, the need to share his destiny, the search for help – to be able to confide in someone....

Only in cases of this intrinsic motivation is the collaboration on a film successful because the protagonist of the film actually becomes a co-creator of the work. Leaving aside the critical documentaries, the investigative formations in which the author "haunts" the criticized persons and uncovers socially serious failures, we can say that in documentary film – more than in other kinds of film – the collaboration is built on the creation of a relationship. And the relationship with the protagonists is built like any relationship in human life. This means that the personality of a documentary filmmaker should be characterized by empathy, interest, curiosity, the ability to communicate but also transparency of action. In the preparatory phase, the director has to spend a lot of time with the protagonist or protagonists, but also in the future environment of the film, not only for the sake of observing and collecting material, learning, but also for the sake of building a relationship and getting to know each other. In a sense, the protagonist must also feel safe, because he puts his life stories and thoughts in the director's hands and leaves them to his interpretation.

**The director of a documentary film must also have a dimension of responsibility in himself, and consider also ethical aspects,** because the final shape of the film and its media coverage can directly affect the life of the protagonist. Not surprisingly, one of the opening chapters of Nichols' book, *Úvod do dokumentárneho filmu /Introduction to Documentary Film/*, deals with ethical issues in documentary filmmaking.

*"Through audio-visual recording devices, situations and events can be recorded very faithfully and accurately; in documentaries we observe people, places and things that we may encounter in person outside the cinema. This quality of the documentary is usually the basis of our conviction as viewers: we be-*



*lieve that what the camera has filmed must be real. This remarkable power of the photographic image cannot be underestimated...*

*... The notion of representation, however, forces us to ask the question: "Why are ethical issues so important for documentary filmmaking?" But we can also ask another question: 'What do we do with people when we make a documentary?' Should they get a fee? Should they have the right to prevent events that might be compromising to them from being included in the film? Is it right to have people repeat activities or interviews for the sake of filming? Doesn't such action compromise the integrity of their actions and the claim that the film represents a reality that exists whether it is filmed or not?*

*(Introduction to Documentary Film\_Nichols, pg. 26-27 in searchable pdf)*

*What is a fraudulent practice in documentary filmmaking? Is it acceptable to feign interest in a company's successes to obtain evidence of risky work practices? Is it appropriate to film illegal behavior (e.g. cocaine use or car theft) when making a documentary about a successful but extremely stressed businessman or an urban gang? How are documentary filmmakers committed to their subjects – with respect to the audience or with their conception of the truth?... What consequences or risks should filmmakers specifically inform their subjects about? To what extent should filmmakers reveal their intentions or anticipate the specific consequences of a film, since some intentions tend to be unconscious and many consequences unpredictable?*

*(Introduction to Documentary Film\_Nichols, pg. 30-32 in searchable pdf)*

## **Archive and documentary**

When we talk about archive, archival material, we can mean **any audiovisual artefact that was created before the realization of the work (for another purpose)** in which it is used. It can be a recording of music, spoken word, photography, film, or television footage. It is irrelevant whether the material in question was created on a professional or amateur level, with artistic intent or merely as documentation; what is important is its temporal value, which is determined by the subsequent context of use. Otherwise, we are not able to distinguish whether it is an archive (a foreign element) or not.

For example:

The use of an older musical recording in a film generally does not have to

carry the value of something old and archival; it can be merely a diegetic or non-diegetic use that has its own dramaturgical or emotional value. After all, all music was recorded before the film was made.

In Robert Kirchoff's film *A Hole in the Head*, however, there is a scene in which Mr. Welward (a World War II labor camp survivor) enters a lake and swims – in the sound we hear Beethoven's composition, *Symphony No. 7*. Dramaturgically, this is a surprising use in the film, as nowhere else does the director work with this type of music in this film. The music comes across as non-diegetic, stagey, bringing an unexpected pathos to the picture. The added yet unanchored value – that is, the context – by the director is that we hear an authentic archival recording of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* from 1943, played by the Berlin Philharmonic. We hear not only the music, but also the coughing of the audience, perhaps members of the Nazi party. Only with the knowledge of this information, of the subtle context, can the viewer fully understand the ironic construction of the author.

In Adéla Babanová's *Neptune*, on the other hand, the author has used original archival material, which she has supplemented with fiction scenes shot in a similar aesthetic, thus creating a new work in which the archival material is not, or is not supposed to be, distinguishable from the new one. That is to say, the context of the archival material is suppressed, or is part of a concept in which the viewer understands that this is a performative grasp of the documentary material and the boundaries between old and new are blurred.

But these are borderline considerations and examples.

Working with archival material also has a history. Somewhere in the early days of cinematography, when film was a new medium and no one thought of preserving and archiving films, filmmakers used footage from older films when they were missing a particular shot. The uniform quality of black and white film allowed this to happen without anyone noticing. All they had to do was cut it out of the original work and insert it into the new one, as a substitute, a prosthetic. However, this was not yet a conceptual treatment of the phenomenon of archival material, which – in addition to its informational and sign value – also carries historical value and is an imprint of the time in which it was created.

The film archive thus contains a concrete record of the recorded reality, often determined by the context in which it was made, but it is also a record of the aesthetic approach of its creator, and even contains specific characteristics that have arisen due to the influence of chemical or other technical processes

(bursting of the film, the grain of the light-sensitive layer, scratches, interlaced television image...).

**The first institutions – film archives** – began to emerge after 1930. In 1933, the Film Archive was founded in Sweden, and the organization that represents archival institutions worldwide, the FIAF – Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film, was founded in 1938. The Slovak Film Institute, which is in charge of archiving audiovisual works and other artefacts related to Slovak film, was established on 1 April 1963.

The pioneer of so-called cut-up films, i.e. films composed entirely from archival material, was the Russian editor **Esfir Šubová**. (Her films from the late 1920s, such as *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* and *The Russia of Nicholas II*, were cut from the period film archives) It is only here that the way of looking at film material in the context of its historical value begins to change.

Archival material can be of varying value in documentary films. In general, we can say that it is a kind of artistic recycling of footage that was originally created for a different purpose.

Archival material is used in **two basic dramaturgical concepts**.

Either it is implemented in a new film work **in order to illustrate, associate** (or other mental game) – it is intertwined with the narrative of the present, or it is an **autonomous material** from which a new film is made, then we speak of cut films (they are not made by filming, but by cutting already extraneous material).

The simplest and most common way to use the archive is the **illustration** of verbal information, the illustration of period moods, the visualisation of the past. Photographs or film footage are inserted in a linear, descriptive connection to the spoken word, as we can see in news films, many documentaries about showbiz stars, or specifically in Martin Šulík's documentary *Milan Sládek* (Sládek talks about his arrival in Bratislava, we see archival footage of Bratislava streets from that period, Sládek talks about his studies at the School of Art Industry, we see photographs of Sládek and his classmates from the school). This method is characterized by the strongest possible link to verbal information, and it fulfils its purpose primarily in making the narrative more digestible for the viewer, more visually engaging, making the spoken information present in the image.

Working with a film archive becomes interesting in terms of film language in the moment, when there is a **creative interpretation** of the archive, and

the concrete content of the material acquires a new meaning value. For example, Mikhail Romm's editing film *Obyčajný fašizmus /Ordinary Fascism/* uses sarcastic commentary to place the original footage, which was part of fascist film propaganda, in a contrasting context of the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis. However, the edited film does not mean that the archive has to be recommended and re-explained. The Belarusian director Sergej Loznica processed the archival materials of the communist regime in the film *Revue*. After removing the soundtrack, which is the most prominent carrier of ideological overlays, he re-orchestrated the materials and created a kind of observational picture of life in Soviet Russia. He worked in a similar way in the film *Blockade*, when he created an image of a city Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) that is gradually dying from the many archive footages of the blockade. Comic films of this kind comment on social events, reinterpreting material that has already been used once; in a sense they can be said to be engaged, because they are a new discursive contribution to a given topic.

A specific line of the cut documentary film are works that work with the archival matter **in an experimental way**. For example, the filmography of the American director Bill Morrison is full of films in which he deals with various technical mistakes of the film material and these become part of the dramaturgical structure (*Decasia*).

Documentaries that incorporate the archive into newly shot material have the potential to exploit or create a **relationship between the present and the past** that spontaneously arises by bringing together the old and the new. Martin Šulík's film *Hurá /Hurrah/* juxtaposes two lines – the personal life of a man and the celebrated cinematic works that were commissioned by the communist authorities. These lines, at first united (the enthusiasm of a young man in the post-war years merges with the enthusiastic film agitations), gradually diverge more and more in disillusion, and the images of communist ideology cease to be an illustration of the main character's feelings.

In the film *Papierové hlavy /Paper Heads/*, directed by Dušan Hanák, we can again see a shift of meaning, where the period **archive, in contrast with the testimonies** of the victims of communist terror, evokes the crimes of the regime: people become cattle, the blows of the hydraulic hammer evoke beating, torture, and so on.

The films in question work with archival material that was shot under professional conditions, by filmmakers trained in the craft. Material recorded **by amateurs** has a different aesthetic and content. In the past, as today, many families created albums, at first photographic, and later, with the rise of film

technology, film albums. They mostly recorded family members in ordinary family situations (birthday celebrations, baptisms, first day at school, holidays, trips...).

But the family archives also include various social events or their own attempts at artistic expression. Amateurs have often used their talent, creativity or imagination and, even in an attempt to imitate what they have seen in cinema or on television, have experimented and created short, complete works. Therefore, it cannot be said that amateur recordings are uniform or boring, but they certainly have a different aesthetic character, which, for example, was created just by using amateur recording technology (8mm, 16mm cameras – larger grain, frequent blurriness, optical errors, etc.). Even amateur film has become an object of artistic recycling over time. In the Central European region, the Hungarian filmmaker Peter Fogács has been dealing with amateur film since the late 1970s (e.g. the film *Dunajský exodus /Danube Exodus/*); in the Czech Republic, the director Ján Šikl collects and edits amateur footage, which he compiled into the eight-part series *Súkromné storočie / Private Century/*; in Slovakia, the topic is dealt with by Marek Šulík in his project *Rodinné archívy /Family Archives/*. The results of his work are intended for filmmakers who want to use this kind of material in their works, but he has also compiled them with other directors into the series *Konzervy času / Containers of Time/*.

The evolution of film language is – like any evolution – unstoppable, and it has also affected the use of film archive in films. **Authentic footage can be used as a subject of mystification** (films *Zelig*, *Forest Gump*, *Underground*). Authentic footage can be digitally altered, as we saw in Peter Jackson's cut film *They Shall Not Grow Old*, in which he not only restored archival footage from the First World War, but also coloured and voiced it – not only the movement and atmospheric component, but with lip-reading specialists dubbing individual characters from the footage. The fact that cameras (of different nature and purpose) have become a common part of our lives and **online space has actually become a repository of a vast amount of easily accessible audiovisual material** has invaded the field of archive use in an invasive but also innovative way. Internet users are not only producers, but often also creators who constantly recycle this archive. We are not just referring to individual documentaries that draw on web footage, such as the film *Road movie*, directed by Kalashnikov, which is cut entirely from footage taken by cameras installed in cars. Short editing films, music videos, etc. creatively reinterpret material from the web, becoming memes, icons of a new era and gaining a large audience. For example, this TV station's reportage on the abuse and kidnapping

of girls became, after being cut and dubbed, on the one hand a humorous but also suggestive music video, showing the problem of the non-acceptance of the African-American population by the majority. (I knew somethin' was wrong / When a little pretty white girl / Ran into a black man's arms )