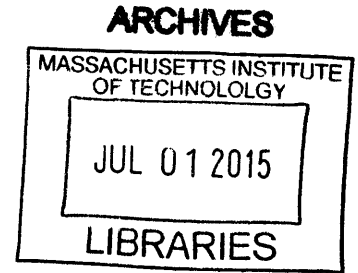


ERODING THE PALIMPSEST:
LANDSCAPE, CINEMA AND THE SITE OF HISTORY

by
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B.A., B.F.A., Film Studies
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Art, Culture and Technology
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
June 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe much of this work to those who have helped and guided me over the past few years. Though I inevitably cannot thank everyone involved here, I can extend my deepest thanks to the following:

Jurij Meden, who has been my guiding star over the past few years in coming in contact with this material. My professor Renée Green for her generosity, experience, and endless references. My professor Lucien Castaing-Taylor for his insightful critiques and direction. Jesal Kapadia and Howie Chen, their words and guidance have been invaluable.

Thank you to my peers at the Program of Art, Culture and Technology at MIT, especially my comrades Adi Hollander and Anne MacMillan for all their love, support, and comradeship. My peers in Sensory Ethnography, especially my friends and colleagues Stephanie Spray, Joana Pimenta, and Jessica Bardsley for seeing me through the development of this project.

Thank you to Fulbright, The Council for The Arts at MIT, and The Program in Art, Culture and Technology at MIT for providing the funding that made this project possible.

Thank you to my crew: Sarah Noor Phoenix, Anna Winter, and Barbara Režek. And thank you to our host and liaison in Suha Krajina, Vlado Kostevc, and the people of Žužemberk for hosting us. Thank you to my transcription assistants: Jasna Mulej, Nina Vidmar, Katarina Rakušček, Andraž Mele, Urška F., and Jan Venier. Thank you to the Slovenian Cinematheque especially Ivan Nedoh, The Slovenian Film Archive especially Lojž Teršan and Tatjana Štibilj, The Museum of Contemporary Art; Metelkova, The National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, and The Dolenjska Museum.

Thank you to Tamara Rijavec, Miha Presker, Kaja Avberšek, Andraž Jež, Jure and Maja Kirbiš, Dario Cortese, Robertina Šebjanič, Nika Avtor, Maja Smrekar, Želimir Žilnik, Ida Hiršfenfelder, Urška Lipovž, Borut Cerkovnik, Alenka Novak, Andrea & Dragica and Bar Pino, Marko Peljhan, James Longmire, Jason Longo, Jerneja Rebernak and Rene, Jamarski Klub Novo Mesto, Lovska Družina Novo Mesto, France Šušteršič, Tina and Andrej Glavič, Jože Gril, Aljaž Župančič, Gal Kirn, Domen Slovinič, Eva Pivač, Eva Ogorevc, Jurij Babič and Petra Gosenca, Luka Rukavina, Ivan Marinović, and Salomé Lamas.

And finally, thank you to my family and Ruby for all their love, support, encouragement and patience.

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for my parents...

*I saw the pines grow
into the sky. Peaceful stoics
through the flaming sun.
I could see the fire
that would consume them.*

*On a white pillow
Old-man mountains have laid their heads
and gone quiet.
The pines rustle.
(Who are they talking to?)*

*I saw the blazing pillars
go on a pilgrimage – into the sky...*

My body crumpled to ashes.

– Srečko Kosovel, *I Saw The Pines Grow*

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Abstract:

The thesis will explore the migration of content between forms, specifically between cinema and text. By reflexively interrogating my film *Dry Country*, and drawing a thread through Yugoslav film history and Slovenian history (1941-present), I will map what happens when the record of what has been captured in the film's production confronts a language, be it text or montage. The paper is a partner piece to the film *Dry Country*, in the process of becoming at the time of writing, which is concerned with a forest in Slovenia as a site of memory politics originating in the Second World War, and the echoes of that event today. The paper will dig deeper into the themes, questions, and specific historical context elaborated by the film; while in its structure it will stitch a poetic juxtaposition between the process of filmmaking and the mechanism of memory, in its capture, editing, projection, and transmission between people. By combining the theoretical trinity of the dynamic landscape (architectural), the evidential paradigm of the clue (micro-historical), and the materialist dialectic (philosophical), I have found a way to come the closest, through theory, to a means of articulating my thinking about making films in and about our relationship to landscape.

The text will consider these themes in an essayistic manner, unfolding through alternating voices experiencing the recording of 'memory' and questioning the supposed site of history. The text proposes that it is located neither in the mind of the individual nor in a specific site or image, but in the gaps between, as a space of translation. I propose that mapping this territory can be done by crossing the rift from different reference points, between voice and image, between site and archive. I am designing the film and the text to be isolated works, standing on their own, though ultimately in conversation with one another. My goal is to reveal the space between the film and the text as a possible trajectory of future exploration for my artistic practice.

Thesis Supervisor: Renée Green
Title: Professor of Art, Culture and Technology

METHODOLOGY

In the context of my working method, 'artistic research' does not mean a method of knowledge creation that is necessarily a positivistic research practice, pointing towards discreet solutions and problems. It is more of a mapping out of a constellation of things, a collection of artifacts that point towards a truth in its own right. At its root artistic research is a practice that involves a systematic accumulation of information to produce knowledge. Working in the context of MIT, the notion can be easily constrained and reified into conforming to an external rubric of value in the knowledge economy, as an attempt at legitimizing its place not only within the academy but also in the world at large, but according to an external value set. I try to carve out a place where this term makes sense for me as I can not pinpoint any of my work as something exterior to a notion of 'artistic research'. It therefore begs the question, what if anything exists solely within the category of 'artistic research' today, and to what ends?

Every project has research tendencies, yet the artist always sets the structure, terms, and stakes. Without them there would be no inside or outside of a work. As a filmmaker, my research process is generally a protracted amount of time before ever picking up a camera. It is a period of exploration, absorption, collection, and reflection that unlike the strict linear and positivistic research methodologies of the hard sciences, it spins off in networks of connections and collisions that allow for the possibility of an alternative perspective. A constellation of references, questions, and juxtapositions become the possibility of a project.

As the research is an unfolding process, the roots of this text are difficult to precisely triangulate. An internal discourse necessarily feels organic to the maker, yet it requires further articulation for the reader. The direct genesis of this project originates from a time of extended research over 2012-13 as a Fulbright Fellow in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Officially, I was there as a visiting researcher interested in regional film history and the state of the film industry through transition from the time of Socialist self-management to a full market economy. This period,

in confluence with my previous film work and interests, led directly to the conceptualization of the film and this text. I see it as an organic further exploration of the relationship between memory and landscape that has so far permeated my work. Yet, threads of my interest in issues of ‘post-socialism’ and cinema can be traced further back to other direct experiences; for example, my time studying at FAMU (Akademie Múzických Umění v Praze - Filmová a Televizní Fakulta) in Prague in 2007-8, and generally speaking, the experience of being raised in an eastern-European Jewish family, acutely aware of and identified with the rupture that was World War Two and the ashes of our roots. Both experiences directed my curiosity to a great extent.

In retrospect, the contrast of living in two distinct ‘post-socialist’ states, and the cultural distinction between them, proved to be profoundly enlightening as a collision with my own implicit ideologies. While in the West there is a general tendency to lump the experience of “actually existing Socialism” into a homogenous narrative that ignores complex national distinctions, I have a hard time now drawing a comparison between the experiences of people who I encountered in these distinct places. To speak in general terms, in the case of then Czechoslovakia, the period between 1945 and 1990 is collectively viewed as a violence that was inflicted upon the nation from the outside (USSR). While in the case of Slovenia, then part of Yugoslavia, the Liberation Struggle (Osvobodilna Fronta, OF) against fascist occupation, is still to a large extent a source of national pride for a large portion of the population, as a rupture with the past and a genuine attempt to build a society beyond capitalism.¹ It is my desire for both the film and this text to illuminate this dissonance and problematize it, not as an exercise of empty nostalgia (idealization, escapism, commodification of memory) but a means of confronting the homogenization of the historical record. I chose this history as an example; to look back for forgotten resources in the “deep subterranean pulses of time” for distant reference points and “possible sources of fuel to restart a depleted engine of progress”, as a method of

1. Though it began as an amalgamation of anti-fascist left winged groups, by the end of the war the Liberation Front was united within the Communist Party.

clarifying the present order of things and retooling for another possible future.²

It is not my interest or responsibility to write here a comprehensive history of Slovenia before and after independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, nor is it my intent to pass judgments of objectivity on the events from after the war that provide the context and tension for the film and text. I am more interested in practicing what Carlo Ginzburg has called the “evidential paradigm,” that of clues, traces of events that can no longer be experienced but only diagnosed: animal tracks, excrement, hairs, and feathers in the forest.³ This diagnostic/interpretive tactic is necessarily bound to the agent or subjectivity tracing these clues. I see parallels between my own artistic practice and this epistemology, as a means of approaching the world as an interpretive text. It is in this sense that I cannot limit my films to the genre of documentary, but I explain them as having a ‘documentary tendency’ in their production, a gesture at the *real* without ever claiming to fully obtain it.

The past two years at MIT have been an attempt to find a language for my practice. I have been deeply influenced by my professors, advisors, and colleagues over this time and this diversity is reflected in my bibliography. The texts that I have come across traverse a space between the historical, the ethnographic, the critical, the literary, and the architectural, and I see this constellation reflected in the work itself. The films I have selected to discuss serve as way markers for my own understanding of the project. Though the selection is in its essence Eurocentric, there is a telos behind the choices. The films from Yugoslav film history that I have singled out, draw a thread that leads the reader through certain socio-political events in Yugoslav history, from socialist realism, to the break with the Soviet Union and establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement, to the social reexamining and leftist critique of the Yugoslav Black Wave in the 1960’s-70’s, and to an attempt at understanding the transition of the 90’s. The other films outside of Yugoslav film history were certain inspirations and precedents that I was watching during the conceptualization of the project and hoped to be in dialogue with

2. Kluge, Alexander and Oskar Negt. *History and Obstinacy* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2014), 17.

3. Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 103.

concerning their form, content, and specific epistemology.

Structurally, the text will follow two trajectories: one the reflexive process of the production of a film and thinking about how it will circulate, and the other reflecting on the mechanism of historical memory by tracing the representation of the Liberation Struggle through the cinema. By juxtaposing the two and intercutting between them, the text will draw a poetic comparison between the process of filmmaking and the mechanism of memory. Formally, I want to destroy the cold rational voice that the reader has thus far been subjected to, as an artifact of my schooling. The text, much like the film, will drift between voices, from the inquisitive, to the journal-like, to the document, and dialogue. This is a tactic that allows me to bring other sources into the text like documentation footage captured during production, conversations, newspaper text, and archival images that will perhaps seem fragmented but is designed to allow for a kind of montage within the text through these discreet elements. As the overarching goal is to demonstrate how the content of the film can migrate into a text, I will use these tactics as a means to not only reflect the unfolding and drifting nature of the film, but to challenge myself to find a better language for my practice.

INTRODUCTION

In 1927, the German abstract animator and filmmaker, Oskar Fischinger, walked 350 miles with his camera from Munich to Berlin. He walked, penniless, in search of new opportunities, and as an attempt to hide from debt collectors. An artifact of this journey remains, a four minute silent film titled *Walking From Munich To Berlin (München-Berlin Wanderung, 1927)*. As Fischinger traversed the landscape on foot, he captured images, only a few frames at a time, of objects of interest or moments of encounter along the route. I begin with this film not for its obvious historical, anthropological, or sociological value as a *document* of the 1920's German countryside, but because it marks a distant reference point for how my work, and this text, attempts to think about space and knowledge through the making of moving images.



München-Berlin Wanderung, Dir: Fischinger, 1927

Though perhaps crude in its execution by today's standards, *Walking From Munich To Berlin* doesn't seek to objectively explain or understand this specific route or countryside, but uses the encountered landscape as a means of expression and embodied experience. His encounters in space pierce the notion of the classical *aesthetic landscape*, a distancing of the human subject from an ideal nature. The film's quick flickering montage between church belfries, fences, forrest, and the occasional returned gaze of a subject, collapses this old binary of 'natural' and 'social' space, suggesting that the landscape traversed is more a web of social relations than a view upon a distant Arcadia. We flow through the landscape in the eye of the cameraman, who stitches an

impression of the experience through these gathered images, arriving as if by chance to collide with one another. It is in this sense that the film constructs a specific filmic atmosphere in relation to the landscape, subjectively traversed and revealed; as a visual *thick description*.

What interests me in making films is somehow rendered in the extreme in this modest short film. What is this instinct for movement, this descriptive tracing of a space by the image maker? Could it be rooted in the longing for *firstness*, to attempt to communicate a kind of immediacy of being?⁴ I am fascinated by the film's flickering reality; as if the images were already in mourning as they were being made. They pass us by before we can really hold and examine them. Could the instinct be a desire for a poetic encounter? To be more explicit, I turn to Tarkovsky, "when I speak of poetry I am not thinking of it as a genre. Poetry is an awareness of the world, a particular way of relating to reality."⁵

In this introduction, pondering these origins, I seek to place my work within a theoretical constellation of root terms that the film seems in retrospect to personify, such as: the dynamic landscape, palimpsest, immersion, the evidential paradigm of clues, and the materialist dialectic of Badiou. This overview seeks to provide a language, context, and platform for the rest of the text to stand on.

A Source of Interest:

In the summer of 2009, I was making a film called *Nevada: Of Landscape and Longing*, and traveling around the desert with two close friends. We went to encounter the Nevada landscape; a paradoxical place of notorious desolation, juxtaposed to an urbanization, basking in the glow of its own spectacle in the desert. I wanted to see how people were influenced by their landscape, be it rural or urban, almost on an ethnographic level. Adapting Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* in post-recession Nevada was an initial prompt. At the time of the recession, Nevada was one of the

4. Marks, Laura U. *Touch : Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). Laura Mark's reading of C.S. Peirce's Semiotic Theory. Firstness is the emergent moment of experience before an object becomes a sign.

5. Tarkovsky, Andrei Arsenevich. *Sculpting in Time : Reflections on the Cinema* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987), 21.

hardest hit states in the country. With its previously thriving economy, Las Vegas was the fastest growing city in the United States. As we traveled from county to county we collected stories from vagrant rodeo-circuit cowboys, recently converted Mormons, old homesteaders lamenting the loss of their 'homes' to new development, native Piute elders hanging onto their language amidst a meth epidemic, a seventy year old ballet dancer and lone resident of a ghost town, gambling addicts, and others.



Nevada: Of Landscape and Longing (2011)

We realized at some point we were somehow missing the mark. In a way we were becoming Chichikov himself, the anti-hero of the novel. We rode our troika across the steppe, buying the 'dead souls' of stories we were seeking for the benefit of our film, much as he did in the novel, to inflate his fake estate and embolden his base aristocratic aspirations. We were trying to capture a place through the lens of assumed notions of what this place was before ever having followed the clues within it. We were assuming this place held meaning through complicated projections of meanings and not within its *essence* as we understood it, gazing at it. We suffered from the desire to explain, to understand, and catalogue landscape, and not necessarily as a medium to explicitly write with or be immersed within.

Instead of projecting our understanding of the landscape onto our subjects we decided to radically alter our outlook and dig specifically into our own subjectivity and drifting path through the landscape. The subject of the film shifted to the landscape itself as a container of signifiers; our outsider's gaze encountering it and reading it for clues. We came to understand that there was

something far more subtle going on in this interaction, a means for expression that I did not yet have words for at the time. By approaching the landscape through my own subjectivity, it became a text with which to interpret and drift within.

Landscape as Palimpsest:

In retrospect, I see that this shift in my perception can be related to the transition over the past half century within landscape theory between the *aesthetic landscape* and the *dynamic landscape* laid out by J. B. Jackson (1985, 1994), Andre Corboz (1983), Fred Truniger (2013), and adjacently by Anne Spirn (1998), Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Raymond Williams (1975). The mass industrialization of the 19th and 20th centuries marked the beginning of large scale human restructuring of the landscape that today operates on a global scale. The dynamic landscape embodies the idea that “there is no natural landscape space on the planet that has been spared from human contact and reconfiguration.”⁶ Today’s landscape is therefore inherently a social space. It exists within a state of constant transformation, taking into account physical changes in a topography while referencing the human’s agency in altering it. The city and the country blur into a homogenization of space and territory; through the suburb, the state park, the industrial zone, and various state infrastructures and regimes of control. As social artifacts, these changes are therefore driven by political, social, and economic forces.

With the collapse of the natural vs. built space binary over the 20th century, the *human trace* became an omnipresent artifact of the landscape; no longer alienated from it, it acts as a means of reading the landscape. As the landscape architect Fred Truniger surmises, “the dynamic landscape is not approached as an aesthetic object,” like that of the classical aesthetic landscape, “but rather as a medium of social processes. This understanding of landscape is largely independent of topography, and is instead comprised of a web of societal relations” which are embedded within the landscape and are there to be interpreted.⁷ Any analysis of the dynamic landscape must

6. Truniger, Fred. *Filmic Mapping: Film and the Visual Culture of Landscape Architecture*. Landscript 2 (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2013), 41.

7. *Ibid.*, 91.

take into an account not only physical or environmental change, but as Truniger asserts, social dynamics, for example “the calibration of land price tendencies, the function of landscape for the constitution of national consciousness, the reputation within a society of a specific region, and the myths in which it is shrouded.”⁸ My ideas about landscape shifted in the filming process somehow from the more traditional view of landscape, that much like the map, landscape is a *view* that claims and locates space; to a belief that landscape has meaning in its essence as an object revealed, but only through who is *experiencing* it, *how*, and *with what clues*, as echoed by Fischinger in 1927. Landscape has become a palimpsest⁹, existing in a cycle of constant yet incomplete erasure and re-articulation, with only traces of what existed before remaining. This cycle is as explicit in territories that undergo regime change, revolutions, as well as sites of accelerated capitalism. Or it can be as banal as an animal track left in the mud.

In outlining the characteristics of the dynamic landscape, three hypothesis are at play, as articulated by Truniger: “the sublation of the polarity of city and country, constant transformation, and immersion.”¹⁰ It is in the transition from the aesthetic to the dynamic landscape that it has become an inherently immersive, corporeal, semiotic experience in relation to the subjectivity experiencing it. They body’s scale and movement *within* a space is a necessary condition of experiencing the dynamic landscape. Adding this opens a whole wealth of literature into the mix from film theory concerning immersion, the sensorial, and phenomenology; yet I believe it is too much to touch on here.¹¹ “Immersion in the landscape replaces the aesthetically distanced gaze with a phenomenologically comprehensive, corporeal aesthetic” as a direct experience of space.¹² Film as an inherently immersive audiovisual medium, is in a unique position to account for the dynamic landscape. Filmic representation can approximate the ‘quality

8. *Ibid.*, 92.

9. Corboz, Andre. “Land as Palimpsest.” *Diogenes* (International Council for Philosophy & Humanistic Studies), no. 121 (April 15, 1983): 12–34.

10. Truniger, *Filmic Mapping: Film and the Visual Culture of Landscape Architecture*, 59.

11 See: Balazs (1924), Bruno (2002), Marks (1999, 2002), Merleau-Ponty (1945), Mulvey (2006), Sobchack (1992, 2004) et. al.

12. *Ibid.*, 61.

of experience' that moving through the actual space offers. Film can work with this sense of landscape as an experienced atmosphere, as a translation from the experience of the maker to the body of the viewer. As the cinematic experience will always be a secondary and mediated experience, it holds an interesting position bridging the gap between memory and direct experience through the re-performance of that experience. Though existing prior to any of these theoretical reference points, *Walking From Munich to Berlin* embodies this particular relation between subject and space.

Documentary as a Tendency:

As the clue is an element found in the dynamic landscape, it is possible to articulate a historical epistemology in relation to landscape based in what the historian Carlo Ginzburg called the *Evidential Paradigm*¹³, that of clues, or "an attitude oriented towards the analysis of specific cases which could be reconstructed only through traces, symptoms, and clues."¹⁴ This *reconstruction* of knowledge through an accumulation of clues is a diagnostic and interpretive tactic that is necessarily bound to the agent or subjectivity that is tracing the clues, much like Fischinger's wandering camera. The reconstructive gesture, linked to an individual subjectivity, is inherently at odds with quantitative epistemology of the hard sciences and therefore demands other standards of 'knowing'. Amassing a litany of clues through reconstruction leads directly to the roots of narrative:

This knowledge is characterized by the ability to construct from apparently insignificant experimental data a complex reality that could not be experienced directly... The data is always arranged by the observer in such a way as to produce a narrative sequence, which could be expressed most simply as 'someone passed this way.' Perhaps the actual idea of narration may have originated in a hunting society, relating the experience of deciphering tracks.¹⁵

Though Ginzburg, a historian, is uniquely concerned with the science of history and

13. Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*. (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

14. *Ibid.*, 104.

15. *Ibid.*, 103.

distinguishing its methods from the “specter of a thoughtless positivism”¹⁶, the quantitative paradigm of the sciences; I found his paradigm of clues to be a means to articulate my practice in relation to a landscape that is dynamic and palimpsestic. Only by approaching and interrogating the driving factors behind the current form of a landscape can the gesture of looking for signs be considered an actual iconography or interpretation. *To interpret* becomes necessarily linked to the subjectivity that is observing, “signs become clues when they are recognized as signs. Thus the reader of clues decides which ones may be read as signs and establishes the framework for interpretation.”¹⁷

This stance of an interpreter of landscape clues within a dynamic and immersive landscape describes my stance as an image maker. Ginzburg’s notion of the clue as a unit of knowledge clearly illuminates a tendency that threads throughout my work. It is a diagnostic stance in which to work from, a means to “discover the traces of events that could not be directly experienced by the observer. Excrement, tracks, hairs, feathers, in one case; animals’ innards, drops of oil on the water, heavenly bodies, involuntary movements of the body”¹⁸ all as a probing of found materials, and an assembly of them into an architecture. It is a ‘dance with the real’. Without ever claiming an indisputable objectivity in reproducing reality in cinematic form, it nonetheless puts forward demonstrable interpretation of clues, as a means of writing with the world as a medium. It is in this sense that I believe the category of a ‘documentary’ genre isn’t accurate for describing my work. The work is interested in the world but through a process of writing with it, of collecting its fragments into a language of my own design. As Ginzburg would reiterate “To say that a historical narrative resembles a fictional one is obvious enough. More interesting is to ask ourselves why we perceive as real the events recounted in a work of history.”¹⁹ I can therefore put forward that the films demonstrate a *documentary tendency* rather than an attempt to depict the real,²⁰ what

16. Ginzburg, Carlo. *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive*. Translated by Anne C Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 7.

17. Truniger, *Filmic Mapping: Film and the Visual Culture of Landscape Architecture*, 48.

18. Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, 103.

19. Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive*, 8.

20. Lacan (2007), Zupančič (2012).

Ginzburg would call the “effect of reality”²¹ that transcends ‘documentary’ and fictional forms.

Palimpsest and The Trace of Truth/Event/Rupture:

All of this is not to say that the work lacks a sense of truth or conviction. There is a difference in the filmic reproduction of a real experience, which will always be lacking in its gesture, and the collection of clues from within the landscape, forming the statement of the maker. Though the clues, as demonstrated above, rely on a subjectivity inherent in their selection, there is no doubt that they construct a truth in their unity and can be used as elements in a proposition, argument, or line of questioning. How then does a clue come into being? What is it a trace of? Here I arrive at Badiou and the *Materialist Dialectic*.²²

Badiou suggests that the dominant ideology today, the ‘natural belief’, can be posited as such: “there are only bodies and languages.”²³ Truniger’s idea of dynamic landscape would adhere to this notion. Badiou names this ‘axiom of our contemporary conviction’ as: *Democratic Materialism*. It is a materialism because one can only recognize the material existence of bodies in space, and firstly his or her own body in its unique finitude, absolute mortality, and sense of desire. Humanism is the foundation of this contemporary materialism. On the other hand, this materialism is democratic because through “recognizing the plurality of languages, [it] presupposes their juridical equality,” as democratic rights through a diverse set.²⁴ Yet for Badiou, the rub and danger lies in the universal relativism of democratic materialism:

Everything and everyone deserves to be recognized and protected by the law. But democratic materialism does admit of a global halting point for its tolerance. A language that does not recognize the universal juridical and normative equality of languages does not deserve to gain from this equality. A language that claims to regulate all the others, to rule all bodies, will be called dictatorial and totalitarian. Then it is no longer a matter of tolerance, but of a ‘right to intervention’: legal, international, and, if necessary, military.²⁵

21. Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive*, 8.

22. Badiou, Alain. “Democratic Materialism and the Materialist Dialectic.” *Radical Philosophy: A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Philosophy* 130 (March 1, 2005): 20–24.

23. *Ibid.*, 20

24. Badiou, Alain. “Bodies, Languages, Truths.” Lacan.com, 2006. <http://www.lacan.com/badbodies.htm>.

25. *Ibid.*,

Badiou's calls the solution to this problem the *materialist dialectic*. He subtly alters the axiom of the former to include the metaphysical category of 'truth.' The materialist dialectic becomes: "There are only bodies and languages, *except that there are truths.*"²⁶ The category of truth however, is not an addition or adjustment to the axiom, *but an exception*, existing within it. This exception provides a way out of the relativism of democratic materialism.

To relate this concept back to the former discussion is now essential. The dynamic landscape is a physical body in flux, yet it is also a set of signs: a language to be read²⁷, a web of social relations. What is truth in relation to the interpretation of landscape? Truths do not exist as material objects outside our own heads, but that is not to say they don't exist at all. "Truths exist as exceptions to what there is. We admit therefore that 'what there is'... is well and truly a mixture of bodies and languages. But there is not only *what there is*. And 'truths' is the (philosophical) name of what thus comes to interpolate itself into the continuity of the 'there is'."²⁸ Ginzburg's evidential paradigm of the clue returns here as the key. The clue is what provides the *continuity of the 'there is'* in the dynamic landscape, and in drawing a thread through their continuity, truth is found through what Badiou calls a *truth-body*: truth that is found in the world yet is not subjected to the laws of the world. It is "composed only of the elements of the world in which this body appears."²⁹ The truth-body transcends and extends beyond the physical bodies of the clues that it inhabits, projecting itself eternally into the future.

In a lecture delivered in 2006, Badiou summarizes seven ways in which the properties of a 'truth' exist in the world without needing to exist through a body or a language. For the purposes of this text, the third property is most pertinent: "A truth presupposes an organically closed set of material traces, traces that refer not to the empirical uses of a world, but to a frontal change. A change which has affected (at least) one object of this world. We could thus say that the trace

26. Ibid.,

27. Spirn, Anne Whiston. *The Language of Landscape*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

28. Badiou. "Bodies, Languages, Truths."

29. Ibid.,

presupposes that *every truth is the trace of an event*.³⁰ The truth of a clue is the trace of the event that created it. It is in the trace and their relations to each other that we can find truth.

This may seem a rather circuitous route in order to show that truth can be found in a clue, as it is merely a trace or a remnant of an event, and therefore demonstrates the validity of Ginzburg's historical paradigm. But it is important to demonstrate that the openness associated with the interpretation of the dynamic landscape that I put forward in relation to Ginzburg's thinking isn't merely an act of relativism or the cliché that 'everyone has their own truth'. Badiou's notion of truth is forward thinking and "both infinite and generic. It is a radical exception as well as an elevation of anonymous existence to the level of the Idea."³¹

Badiou's prerogative for the materialist dialectic is to establish a contemporary metaphysics, a means for demonstrating truth's existence *as an exception* in a world consisting of bodies and languages. By carving out this space, it then becomes possible to examine 'the question of change', specifically radical change, *the event*. Badiou explains, "A real change is not a becoming, but a cut, a pure discontinuity. And its most important consequence is that a multiplicity, which did not appear in the world, appears suddenly with the maximal intensity of appearing. A new body is that sort of object which supports and give its orientation to the local consequences of that sort of change. It is a logical set of creative practices."³² Radical change therefore comes with the creative uncovering of truth, and the new subjective space that it carves open.

Embedded Histories:

It is important to emphasize, in summation, that I somehow arrived to this platform of thinking through my practice and the experience of retooling my understanding of what I was doing in Nevada, *in media res*. After the experience of making that film, I lacked the vocabulary in order to articulate the trajectory that I seemed to find myself on and I continue to struggle to find it. By combining the theoretical trinity of the dynamic landscape (architectural), the evidential

30. Ibid.,

31. Ibid.,

32. Ibid.,

paradigm of the clue (*microhistorical*), and the materialist dialectic (philosophical), I have found a way to come the closest, through theory, to a means of articulating my thinking about making films in and about our relationship to landscape.

To return to Fischinger, I cannot help but see the phrenetic montage as a gesture of capturing a litany of clues or following a 'closed set of material traces' through the landscape. As the camera traverses the route, it carves out a truth with the juxtaposition of these traces. The actuality of the trip happens between the images. They pass so quickly that the viewer can barely grasp them and hold them but for a brief moment. By reaching back into the archive to these images it is possible to see in the present "the contemporary state of a territory [as] an invitation, if not a mandate to read its clues and to see it as the product of a very tedious and slow layering process."³³ I hope that this line of thought will suffice for the reader as a framework in which to enter the film and research that will be laid out in this text, and to not be sidetracked or deflected into thinking that this exercise is an attempt at an anthropology or ethnography, as I have no pretensions to either form, though I take inspiration from some contemporary writers.

The site in question is a forest in southern Slovenia. Its topography is a limestone plateau geologically known as 'Karst'. The space is full of caves and sinkholes, remnants of collapsed cave systems, the likes of which are several million years old. This eroding landscape exemplifies the dynamic landscape as it contains traces and echos of events both grandiose and banal: of regime change and animal tracks, of the fading memory of revolutions and soil erosion, of suppressed traumas and primeval birch groves. The initial clue is an archive buried in the forest. Housed on land of restricted access since 1945 when the war ended. The archive is stored in an former state security bunker deep under the forest. Its contains cinema history from a country that no longer exists.

Any totalizing political system produces subterranean histories. They linger in traces and can be found in the landscape. Though threads stretch even farther back, the forest in question is a site of memory politics which date primarily back to World War Two as an event and a rupture

33. Truniger, *Filmic Mapping: Film and the Visual Culture of Landscape Architecture*, 49.

when a genuine attempt was made to build an existence beyond capitalism. In setting out on this project, my intentions need to be made clear. I don't intend to fetishize the living memory of the Partisan struggle by setting it in a museum vitrine, that has already been attempted, as I will discuss later in this thesis. I also don't intend to propose that this memory can be simply categorized and packaged to fit within current agendas of today's memorializing institutions. But, echoing the political philosopher and critic Gal Kirn, I hope to argue for a *return to the event itself*,³⁴ both through my film as a treatment of reading clues in the landscape, and by returning to clues in film history. To then ask the questions: why this history, why this geography? I can answer honestly, because of a truth in the landscape, who's traces I encountered, and felt mandated to articulate in light of our contemporary condition.



34. Kirn, Gal. "On Partisan Poetry and Revolutionary Temporality." In *Multistable Figures: On the Critical Potentials of Ir/reversible Aspect-Seeing*, edited by Christoph Holzhey, Vol. 8. Cultural Inquiry. (Vienna: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2013). Also see Benjamin's "Dialectical Image" in *The Arcades Project*.



2.

In the western imaginary, the forest space has occupied a non-historical position, a space between settlements. Whether considered a site of some mythical unknown, a sanctuary from marauding forces, or an omnipresent danger, it can be said that western civilization developed in clearings cut away from the chaos and entropy of the forest.³⁶

June 5th, 2014:

The past few weeks I've been a bit lethargic. In conversation with S. I've been trying to hone the visual look of the piece. There is some urge to deny the human scale in this i.e. distance and the microscopic. Why? What is the argument? By denying this human scale we are somehow denying the direct subjectivity of the characters to the viewer. Push for the uncanny. Everything should be transient.

3.

Though neither a metropolitan nor a completely agrarian landscape, the forest is still a site of capital circulation whether through raw natural material, property acquisition, land pricing, and regimes of 'preservation'. What was once "the place of humankind's perdition"³⁷ has become mapped, segmented, and sold. State borders have changed as have regimes of ownership and classification. The edges of clearings where civilization once met the earth, have eroded. The center of the clearing is now all around us and the edge is nowhere.

36. Harrison, Robert Pogue. *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). ix.

37. Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, 11.

4.

In the late 18th century, Austrian dukes instituted early notions of progressive forest stewardship here as a means of insuring sustained and reliable profits from their properties.³⁸ They administered and managed tree growth and felling, as well as wild animal life. The roads lead either to the shipbuilding yards of the port of Trieste or to the imperial capital of Vienna.



Limestone Quarry, 1930's

5.

In contrast to the rest of Yugoslavia, Slovenia had a long precedent of undivided peasant owned farms maintained through imperial laws of inheritance and primogeniture, the transferral of an entire estate to the first born (son). After the abolition of serfdom in 1848, and the transition from feudalism to capitalism had been completed, there was a clear distinction within the peasant class between those left with landholdings and those forced to seek an income outside of agriculture.³⁹ Many emigrated in the late 19th century, many stayed behind in poverty. The

38. Golob, Aleksander. "Issues and Opportunities In The Evolution of Private Forestry and Forestry, Slovenia." Food and Agriculture Organization of The United Nations, n.d. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w7170e/w7170e0h.htm>.

39. Turk, Jernej, Karmen Pažek, Črtomir Rozman, and Darja Majkovič. "The Social Context of Changes in Slovene Agriculture Since Feudalism." *Društvena Istraživanja - Časopis Za Opća Društvena Pitanja*, no. 1-2 (2007):203.

largest landholders however remained the nobility of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as the Catholic Church.

6.

The Habsburgs supported and maintained close relations with the Catholic Church, championing its values which the Slovene peasantry unanimously adhered to. The combination of these values with a degree of territorial and social isolation and an emotional attachment to the land lead directly to a certain “behavioral conservatism”⁴⁰ in the countryside.

7.

After the 1st World War, the land resources that were owned by Hapsburg nobility were swiftly expropriated without compensation by the newly established Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenes, the first Yugoslavia. ⁴¹ Most forest land was appropriated by the monarchy, though the old private agricultural land holding system survived in the Slovenian region of the kingdom, due to the close ties between the Catholic Church and landholding peasants.⁴²



40. Ibid.,

41. Ibid., 204.

42. Ibid., 203.



8.

Wartime, 1941-1945, occupation. The country is divided and annexed between Italy, Germany, and Hungary. Bolstered by the local church, those who have the most to lose, the land owning peasantry and the urban bourgeois, join the collaborationist forces, the Home Guard (Domobranci). Others, transcending class lines, nationalities, genders, and religions, join the Partisans in the woods, the armed wing of the Liberation Front, to fight for an alternative. Was it a social revolution within a liberation struggle, or a liberation struggle within a social revolution? Or just a civil war, within a state under occupation?

9.

Badiou, *Metapolitics* (2005):

All resistance is a rupture with what is. And every rupture begins, for those engaged in it, through a rupture with oneself...When all is said and done, all resistance is a rupture in thought, through the declaration of what the situation is, and the foundation of a practical possibility opened up through this declaration. Not to resist is not to think. Not to think is not to risk risking.⁴³

43. Badiou, Alain. *Metapolitics* (London ; New York: Verso, 2005). 7-8.

10.

During the war, the occupiers and collaborating forces held the towns while the Partisan resistance took refuge in the forests. Yugoslav Partisans controlled the largest free territory in occupied Europe, ultimately liberating the country on their own with little ground support from Allied forces aside from material assistance.



Partisans, October 1944

11.

Since independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and the collapse of state socialism, there has been a concerted effort to reorient the historical perspective on the war that was wrapped up within the advancing neoliberal ideologies of the ‘shock therapy’⁴⁴ of market liberalization and *opening up* to Europe. Challenging the formerly official historicization of the liberation struggle became equated to a successful transition into democracy. The politics of reconciliation in Slovenia fit within a broader discourse of memorialization and reconciliation in Europe⁴⁵, that

44. Sachs, Jeffrey. *Understanding “Shock Therapy.”* (London: Social Market Foundation, 1994).

45. August 23rd for example, is the ‘Day of Commemoration For Totalitarian Crimes’ in the European Union.

seeks to discredit and delegitimize any sort of emancipatory politics. “In one swoop it equates communism with fascism, thereby ignoring that WWII was won by a large alliance of antifascist groups within which communist and partisan forces were equal and essential parts.”⁴⁶ In turn, the politics of reconciliation force another history underground.



12.

Following Badiou, to *think* meant joining the resistance in the forest. Those that could not think “remained tied to that situation, a situation that blocked any risk-taking.”⁴⁷ I want to look back at this event, or rather the accumulation of events, as a radical rupture with what was and as a means of contextualizing our current impasses. In light of the current economic crisis and austerity, much of this history is getting reenergized and is bubbling up from the underground. Landscape becomes a site for the politics of memory. The traces of the event and its repercussions are clues within the landscape, and both are in a state of constant erosion. Where does this history

46. Kirn, Gal. “Transformaton of Memorial Sites in The Post-Yugoslav Context.” In *Retracing Images: Visual Culture after Yugoslavia*, edited by Daniel Šuber and Slobodan Karamanic. Balkan Studies Library. Leiden ; Boston: BRILL, 2012. 253.

47. *Ibid.*, 276

exist? Is it in the physicality of the trace left behind, or in the testimony of a lingering memory, grown simultaneously fossilized, fragmented, and porous over time?



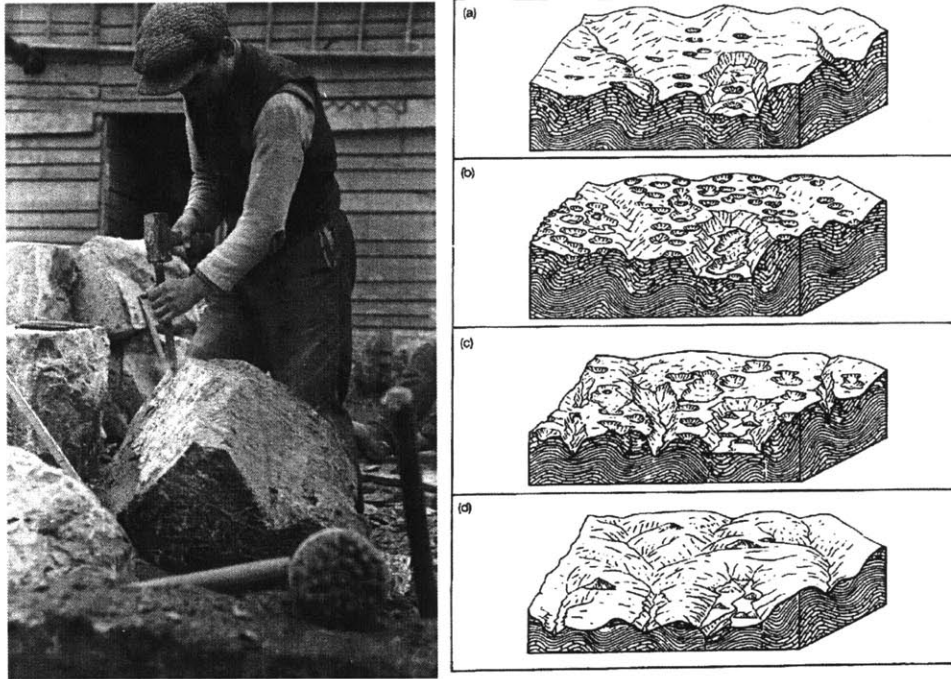
Home Guard troops, date unknown

Remnants In The Forest:

13.

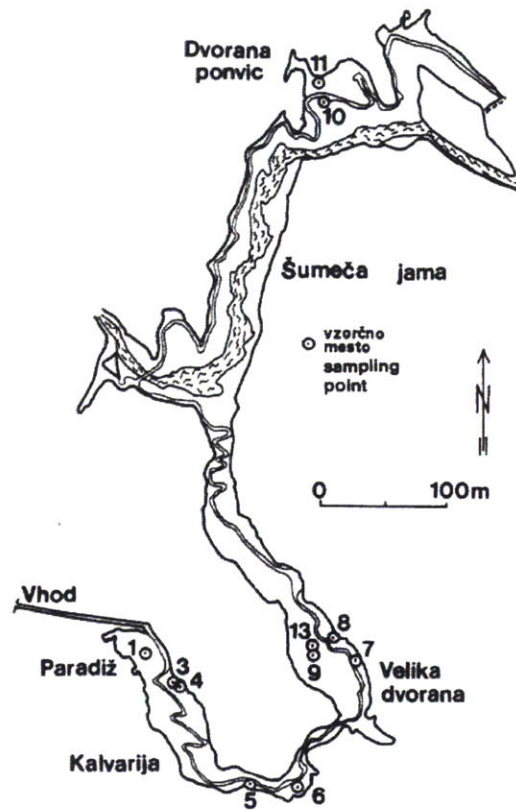
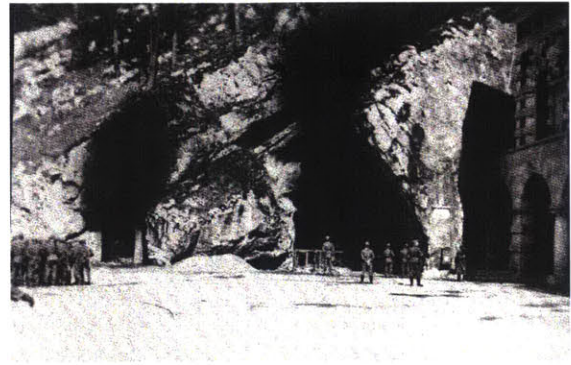
Karst is a Germanized version of the Slovene word *kras*, the geological feature and topography found all over the world and first theorized and researched in the area surrounding the city of Trieste. It is a geological feature that is typified by the dissolution of soluble rocks like limestone or dolomite, causing massive underground cave systems, sinkholes, and dolines. As surface water is constantly seeping into the ground, the topsoil erodes and exposes dramatic rock formations lying underneath the surface. As arable land eroded there was the constant effort

throughout agrarian history to clear and fight back the rock. When certain types are struck with metal tools, due to oils embedded in the rock, it wrecks of sulphur. Colloquially, it is called *the devil rock* (hudičev kamen).



Sinkholes have always been valuable land assets as they contain the highest concentration of nutrient rich soil and retain water where it would otherwise seep quickly below. The largest of the cave systems can stretch to a kilometer deep, twenty-five kilometers long, and can have several entrances, though most aren't that large. In the caves all sorts of artifacts can be found, the animal bones of Neolithic meals or dead bears, centuries old graffiti, or WWI ephemera and munitions.

During WWII, the caves in the forest were used both a civilian hiding place and a dumping ground for the dead. All sides participated in using the caves as mass grave sites, however perhaps the most notorious were the post war purges of tens of thousands of people who had collaborated with the German and Italian occupation. After fleeing to Austria at the end of the war, many were sent back to Yugoslavia by the British and killed by the Partisans as retribution, and to avoid a counter-revolution.



IZRK ZRC SAZU 1983



48



49

June 15th, 2014 - Žužemberk:

As visual references, I have been looking at the landscape paintings of the Russian Itinerant painter Ivan Shishkin and the photography of Eugene Atget. I can picture something somehow in-between. With Shishkin, there is this immensity of space in relation to the human scale of the gaze. There is usually a trace of a human figure. His work doesn't necessarily connote a sense of the sublime as with most aesthetic landscapes; his treatment of the Russian forest lacks decoration and narration. The human presence in the landscape is transient and fleeting, as if merging into it. Shishkin was a committed realist. Like Gogol, his sights were turned towards the countryside and the people who lived there. Shishkin's work, and the work of the Itinerant group as a whole, was deeply influenced by the prevailing realism in Russian literature at the time, along with a turn

48. Ivan Shishkin - *Brook In A Birch Grove* (1883) The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

49. Ivan Shishkin - *Rain in an Oak Forest* (1891) The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

towards democratic ideals and cultural criticism.⁵⁰

Atget on the other hand is the photographer of Paris. I find him fascinating for different reasons, mostly because his images, devoid of people, feel like crime scene photographs⁵¹, as Benjamin wrote; there is a clinical distance as he catalogued his city. Is this too formalist a proposition? Or a reversion to the aesthetic landscape? The juxtaposition of the immensity of a Shishkin painting with the immediacy and intimacy of a close voice is what I am looking for.



52



53

14.

On the edge of the forest is a cluster of twenty-six huts. They were built in a collection of sinkholes lined by an outcropping of spruce trees and amongst exposed limestone. Up to 200 people lived here from 1943-1945. It's location was barely two kilometers from the closest road, close enough that it was unthinkable to build something so close to occupied villages. The huts were the home to the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front throughout the war and were never discovered. The base printed agitation and propaganda literature and posters, and produced theatre. In the winter, to avoid making tracks in the snow, partisans would enter and exit the zone crawling on ladders strung through the treetops. After the war, the base in the forest

50. Charles, Victoria. *Ivan Shishkin*. Best of Collection. (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2013). 100.

51. Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken, 1969).

52.

53. Eugène Atget - *Parc de Saint Cloud, July Morning, 6:30*. 1921

was decommissioned. It was turned into a tourist attraction and at times it saw over a thousand visitors a day. After 70 years the boards are steadily decomposing. Occasionally a school group will visit, but more likely a foreign tourist.



15.

Roughly 600 years ago, the forest region was colonized by peasant settlers of the German diaspora, the Gottscheers. Most likely they were sent there as a collective punishment. Over the centuries they led an insular agrarian life and mixed little with the surrounding communities. By wartime in the 1940's, with little to no national consciousness and more or less ambivalence towards National Socialism, they were forced from their lands to relocate to German occupied territories to the northeast. Many were drafted into the Nazi army and sent to fight abroad. Their villages were subsequently burned by the Italians when the Partisans became too active in the forest.



Italian troops near Kočevje

The forest has reclaimed these villages. Traces of their society still exist in the landscape, mostly in ruins. After the war, many Gottscheers settled in Austria and in the United States. In Ridgewood, Queens they have a community hall. There is a map of the forest in German with all its lost village names. On Wednesday afternoons, the few remaining Gottscheers born in the forest gather at the hall and chat about taking a last trip to see the ruins of their past lives, though it will likely never happen.

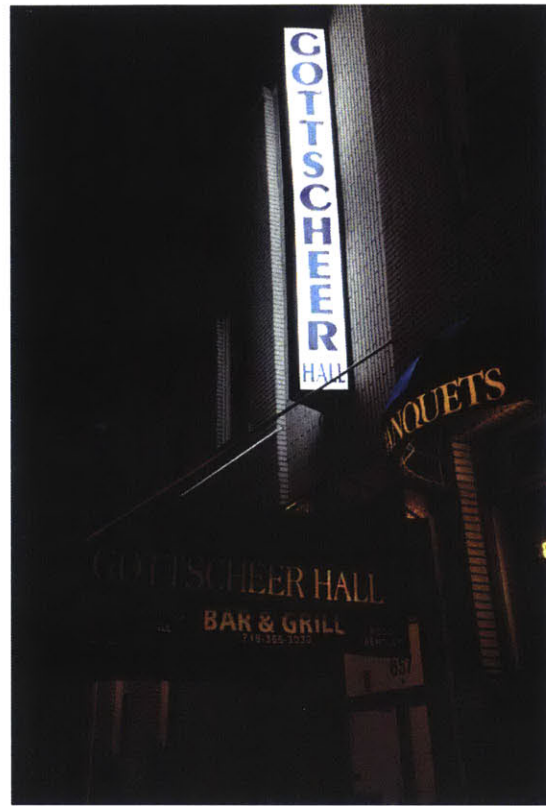
16.

On the Geodesic Administration's topographic maps of the forest, nothing signifies the ruins of a church. The hilltops were once dotted with churches before the war, a reminder of the imperial warning system that would warn of Ottoman invasion from hilltop to hilltop all the way back to the Emperor in Vienna. If the stones haven't been removed to produce paving gravel, you can easily visit these sites if you are stubborn enough to find them. No one can agree anymore who destroyed them and under what circumstances. The Partisans were hiding weapons in the church, and from the settlement below the occupiers blew it up with their heavy artillery. Or, the collaborators were hiding explosives there and the Partisans burned it to the ground as retribution. Or so they say. Now there is only a set of bells made from artillery shells, rung by religious pilgrims on holiday hikes through the forest.

17.

In 1949, on the western end of the forest in a village called Gotenica, a military exclusion zone was created and the surviving villagers were evicted. A secret state security bunker was built there deep under the forest, designed to secure top military and government officials in case of an atomic attack. To this day it is classified as a military zone, though its primary function has been altered. The Slovene Film Archive stores its primary collection in the facility, consisting of national films and films produced in Slovenia during Socialist Yugoslavia along with other sensitive national records. With up to 40% of Yugoslav film production having been dedicated to Partisan war spectacles, it is safe to say that accessing these images would be accessing a collective memory or at least a material trace of that moment.⁵⁴ To a large extent, it is a collection of images produced in a country that no longer exists. Ironically, many of these films are interred below the space where they take place.

54. Žilnik, Želimir. "Surfing the Black Zine No. 2 — Those Who Make Revolutions Half Way Only Dig Their Own Graves." In *Surfing the Black: The Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema*, edited by Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulic, and Ziga Tsten. (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie, 2012), 59.



April 2nd, 2014 - *El Cielo Gira*.

In relation to previous discussions about where this project is going, L. told me to track down a copy of Mercedes Álvarez's film from 2004, *El Cielo Gira (The Sky Turns)*⁵⁵. I see why. They seem to come from the same stock yet diverge in interesting ways. Though Álvarez structures her film around a 'return home' through her own self-reflexive voice over and is therefore speaking from a platform of identity, we both seem to have a similar approach to landscape as a palimpsest.

Álvarez's landscape is the arid landscape of the Soria region of Castilla y León in North Central Spain, and a the small village of her birth on the brink of abandonment. The film deals with slippages of time, jumping effortlessly from the tombs of dinosaurs, to ancient histories of Celtic ruins, to remnants of the Civil War, and to the faces of the elderly inhabitants who seem to have emerged from the soil itself. By compressing this time, the film seems to suggest a kind of

55. For an in depth discussion of the film see Keller (2012).

simultaneity; a simultaneous layering that permeates the present, yet is indelibly steeped in loss.

Two primary elements embody this. The painter Pello Azketa, a painter of this arid landscape who has gradually lost his eyesight and is working on what is to be his final painting. It is through his loss of vision that the locals narrate the landscape to him, describing its colors and features. The other is the abandoned palace in town. From its ruinous state, it is learned over the course of the film, that the palace is being converted into a luxury hotel. The locals will have to make do with “looking at the balconies and windows” until their deaths as they wouldn’t be able to afford the restaurant or bar.



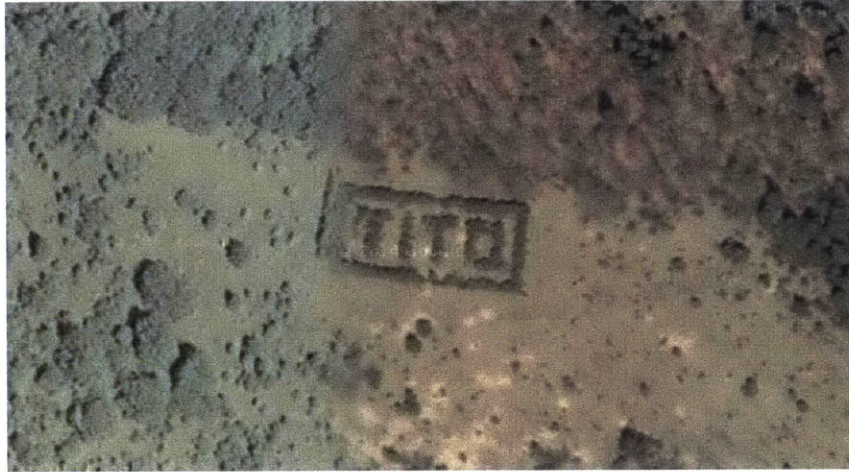
The Sky Turns (El Cielo Gira; Dir Álvarez, 2004)

Álvarez’s effort is fundamentally indexical, “to get a picture of its final inhabitants, and wretch some words from them.” It is both a cinematic witnessing of the layers of time coalesced in this space and an oral history of living memory. She is more interested in developing characters while I seem to be more interested in a kind of drifting through voices and unfolding of landscape, as an immersive atmosphere.

The coexistence of conflicting time scales I find most interesting. All the remnants of suffering and struggle that are revealed in the film and collapse within a sedimentary mass of compressed time. What is it to juxtapose the sublime nature of geological time with the immediacy of being a political subject? It instills within me a certain feeling of helplessness.

Instead of structuring the film around time and the seasons, as Álvarez has done, perhaps it is the sediment itself, the above and below ground of the karst that I should focus on in the context of the history discussed above, through the archive, through the remnants in the forest,

and through the voice of testimony. It has been my worry up to this point about wading into such a complex history. I'm less interested in making a historical film than a film *about traces of history*. *El Cielo Gira* shows an interesting precedent for how to navigate a history that is so hyper-localized and complex, how to relieve the burden of explanations and let a film be.



Tito Hedges; Google Earth, (45°38'45"N 14°34'2"E)



CHAPTER 2

The Shoot, The Capture

The British documentary film editor Dai Vaughan speaks of cinema as *the collision between the record and language*; or to be more concrete, what happens when the record of what is captured is forced into a cinematic language.⁵⁶ This chapter will be concerned with the establishing of the ‘record’, as a lived experience morphed into an image. The record is a critique of the original ‘concept’ before it is confronted with language, through the syntax of editing. In confronting the world, or as I have written previously, confronting it in a diagnostic or interpretive manner following Ginzburg, elements of *what is* are encountered in ways that the original concept, limited by language, could not foresee.

June 22nd, 2014

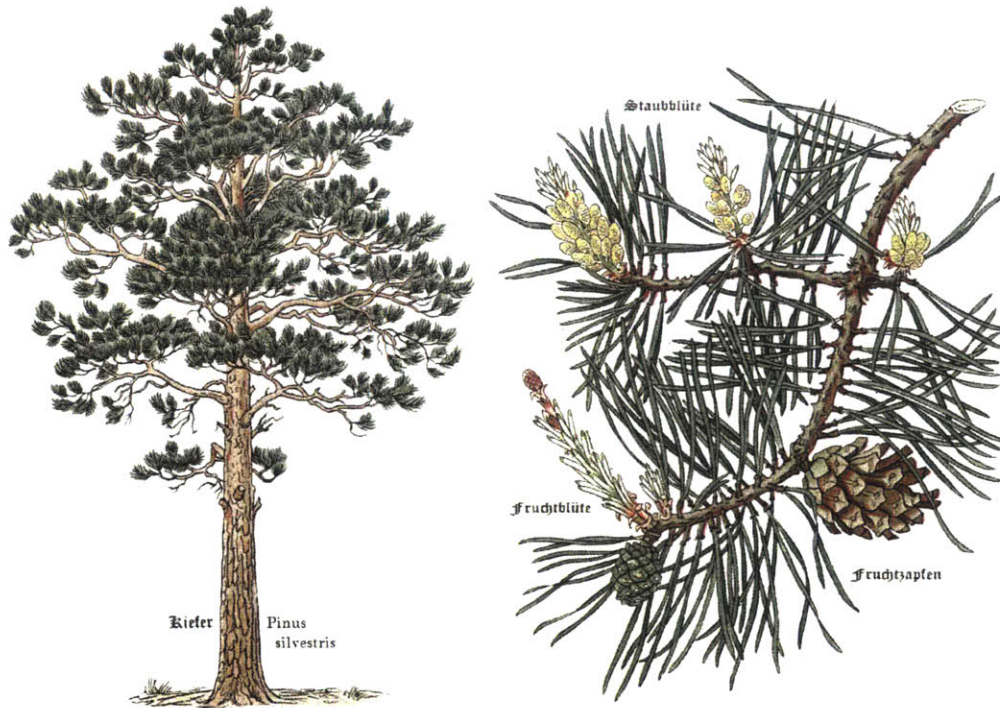
I took a wrong turn in the forest today. The road traversed a steep incline and was quite narrow, so I had to drive a while to find a place to turn around. I can’t remember who, but one of us heard chainsaws echoing down below. We stopped to inspect and sure enough there was a group of about eight workers from the Peugeot factory in Novo Mesto, burning fallen timber in a large sinkhole. They allowed us to film them working. They were volunteers. The damage from the ice storm last winter was extensive. If the dead timber isn’t cleared it becomes infested with a bark beetle that could end up destroying the forest. It reminds me of home, how driving from Denver into the mountains, the beetle has utterly decimated the lodgepole pine forest. Taking a break we drank some wine. They wanted to talk about how disgusted they were with Prime Minister Janša⁵⁷, recently imprisoned for corruption and bribery not so far from here.

56. Vaughan, Dai. *For Documentary : Twelve Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1999.

57. Former right-wing Slovenian Prime Minister and divisive political figure. An active force in the memory politics in the country. He was convicted of bribery in an arms deal in 2013.

June 26th, 2014

The geologist explained to me that the forest is originally *abieti-fagetum*, beech and fur. The trees that survived the storm here were what grew natively. The pines and others were planted as a practice from Hapsburg days both for timber and as a bulwark against erosion. From here to the sea was once a desert.



Pinus Silvestris - Scots Pine

18.

Fran Levstik (1831-1887) was a Slovene author and linguist who was a part of the rise of an emergent modern national consciousness in the mid-late 19th century. He composed children's stories, poetry, progressive political criticism and is viewed as a revolutionary force in modernizing the Slovenian language. He has been often compared to his contemporary, Nikolai Gogol, in his wit and cynicism. They also both died in a fit of psychotic religious delusion.⁵⁸

During a time of high socio-cultural germanization, Levstik located the root of national-

58. Slodnjak, Anton. "Fran Levstik (1831-1887), the First Representative of Realism in Slovene Literature." Translated by Vera Javarek. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 35, no. 84 (December 1, 1956): 39.

cultural progress in the language of the peasantry in the countryside where he was raised. He walked right by here in 1858, composing his essay *Journey from Litija to Čatež* (Original: *Popotovanje iz Litije do Čateža*). His route is now a tourist walking path. In the essay he sought to establish a literary language and a narrative “in the words and ideas of our own people and on the basis of their own lives[.] A Slovene story of such a kind that a Slovene would see a Slovene in the book, just as he sees his own face in the mirror.”⁵⁹ The essay is steeped in the banality of countryside life as the author drifts from one encounter to the next, yet there is an underlying effort to establish a language in order to properly present the experience by adapting local folk tales and conversations into his text. I can't help but draw a thread between Levstik and Fischinger, as documentarians of the walk.

19.

An image is an artifact of a physical encounter, a lived experience. A film preserves the immediacy of the encounter in every screening. It is a trace of the body of the maker in space, and commingles the bodies of subject, maker, and viewer. Before images are stitched together to create meaning, an image itself must be created. The filmmaker and visual anthropologist David MacDougall posits, “before [films] express ideas, they are a form of looking. Before they describe anything, they are a form of looking... filming, unlike writing, precedes thinking.”⁶⁰ To make a film is to carve out a space where *being* can live within a structure of *meaning*. This reference from MacDougall speaks of a specific kind of filmmaking, one where the maker is absorbed within a *cinéma vérité* kind of relation to the world and reacting through the frame of the viewfinder; where the frame is unstable, constantly alluding to what is outside it. The notion also recalls Laura Marks' use of 'firstness' and 'thirdness' within cinema, where firstness is mimetic, inherently perceived by the body, the shock of sensation, while thirdness is abstract and symbolic, as the

59. Slodnjak, “Fran Levstik (1831-1887), the First Representative of Realism in Slovene Literature”, 32. Quoting Levstik.

60. MacDougall, David. *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2006). 7

compressing of experience into film language.⁶¹ Establishing the record is essentially looking with a certain attentiveness. It is the difference between the empty gaze of a security camera and the probing gaze of a camera with an eye on the viewfinder and the touch of a body manipulating its movement.

20. *Establishing the Record: Yugoslavia, 1948:*

A major step in the relaxing of inter-national and political tensions in the post-war period was constructed around the official historicization of the National Liberation Struggle as it provided the legitimacy for the nascent socialist state. In one way, this was accomplished through several high profile trials of collaborationists and clergy members, as a clear moral accounting. Louis Adamic, the Slovene-American journalist and writer comes across an account in a village in 1948. A trial took place at a church, Sveti Urh near Ljubljana, that was run as a torture center, where over a thousand people, mostly communist sympathizers, were killed and disposed of into a 'bottomless' karstic sink:

Everything inside and around the church is as it was immediately after the battle, except for the bodies of the clerical and non-clerical war criminals who fell in the fight. Of their comrades who survived, some escaped to Austria and made their way to Brazil, the Argentine, and the United States. One is said to be in Cleveland. Several were captured, tried by a peoples court at the end of the war in the presence of two thousand men and women on the slope in front of the church, and executed. During the trial, which lasted several days, a battalion of the New Yugoslav Army was deployed on the hilltop...The troops were needed, she says, to protect the prisoners from the mothers and other relatives of the victims who wanted to tear them into bits.⁶²

Though outwardly Stalinist in ideology, certain Yugoslav Partisan actions capitalizing on their victory after the war, such as occupying Slovene inhabited areas like Trieste, parts of eastern Italy and southern Austria, and openly meddling in the Greek Civil War, ran afoul with the Allied nations and especially Stalin. Yugoslavia was ultimately expelled from the Cominform in June 1948, the organization of socialist states, and accused of "Trotskyism". The fissures within the inner ideology of the Yugoslav Communist Party caused a severe identity crisis. Overnight the

61. Marks, Laura U. *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

62. Adamic, Louis. *The Eagle and the Roots*. 1st ed. (Garden City, N. Y: Doubleday, 1952). 212-3

ideological beacon of the Soviet Union became a hostile entity, causing the need for an ideological about-face in the highest levels of government and throughout revolutionary society. This led to purges and labor camps for some who couldn't easily adapt to the new climate of Titoism and a turn towards the west. In response to the Soviet accusations, worker's self-management was theorized in 1950 as an alternative path towards socialism. Relations with the Soviet Union weren't normalized until Stalin's death in 1953. Yugoslavia was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, and Belgrade was its first headquarters.⁶³



On Our Own Land (Na Svoji Zemlji; Dir. France Štiglic, 1948)

21.

Yugoslav visual culture in the post war period up until the early 50's reflects that of other socialist countries, in that it was aesthetically reproducing a variant of Socialist Realism as a means of both cementing the official historicization of the war and showing solidarity between all Yugoslav nations in anti-fascist struggle. This successful ideological shift away from the Soviet Union further legitimized the official history of the war as not only a struggle of liberation but an independent social revolution based on homegrown socialist ideologies and without major assistance from abroad. Films from this period, a direct record of a specific *zeitgeist*, are popular Partisan spectacles that functioned to tie the memory of the people to the event that was the Liberation Struggle and the creation of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (herein SFRY).⁶⁴

22.

63. For a more in-depth analysis of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict, see Ramet (2006).

64. See Kirn (2012), Goulding (2002), Sindbaek (2012).

Early Yugoslav films from the end of the war until the Tito-Stalin split, with all of their technical limitations are of a specific milieu, and most certainly attempt to crystalize a history of the Liberation Struggle into a communicable form. They have not been seen much outside of the country. One film of Slovene origin exemplifies this trend: *On Our Own Land (Na Svoji Zemlji*; Dir. France Štiglic, 1948). The film is based around a village in the mountains and circulates more around several archetypal characters than it has a central protagonist. An elderly couple desperately tries to hang onto their youngest son while the other seven are off with the Partisans. There is the villager who largely tries to avoid the conflict to continue his life in peace, but ultimately gets sucked into the Partisan side through disgust with the occupation and actions of the Home Guard. There are the two female Partisans who struggle through forest battles and sabotage along side their other comrades. And there is the quisling older villager who is quick to turn in sympathizers to the occupation forces. Rife with melodrama, pathos, and nationalism, the film culminates living up to its title with the Partisan advance into Trieste. In this film, Tito's image appears along side that of Stalin. In films a few years later, Stalin will no longer be present, or at least his image will be physically taken down from the wall. Though uncontroversially an example of a 'propaganda' film, the film existed for its own reasons. It is still interesting to view in its own right both as an artifact of post-war devastation and euphoria for the future, but also for a glimmering of an higher aesthetic future for Yugoslav cinema.



On Our Own Land (Na Svoji Zemlji; Dir. France Štiglic, 1948)

23.

What a film *knows* is expressed through its conclusions, as an argument or rhetoric established through montage. A kind of *visual reasoning*⁶⁵ occurs that communicates a message. This is uncontroversial. Yet, what of the shot or image itself? Is it not a kind of knowledge in itself, as a state of being, through the mediating body of the maker? Is viewing a film a way of transmitting this knowledge to a viewer?

As writers, we articulate thoughts and experiences, but as photographers and filmmakers we articulate images of looking and being. What is thought is only implied, unless it is appended in writing and speech. Some would say that images, then, are not in any sense knowledge. They simply make knowledge possible, as data from observations. But in another sense they are what we know, or have known, prior to any comparison, judgement or explanation. There is a perceptual as well as conceptual kind of knowledge. This knowledge has no propositional status... Only in the will to declare it do we detect the stirrings of thought.⁶⁶

In establishing the record, I take MacDougall's side, to think of the knowledge latent in the image. But what is this tension between being and meaning in cinema? Is *showing* a way to articulate knowledge that which escapes language? To say the unsayable? To view a fictional film from 1948, or a 'documentary' like Fischenger's from 1927, one accesses this knowledge latent in the image, as if drifting into the image-memory of an other.



July 21st, 2014

The Š's took us up to the monument today. They have been tending to this and the other smaller monuments scattered around the region since this one was built in 1961. The monument,

65 MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image*, 5

66. Ibid.,

modernist in style, is the tomb for close to 1,200 Partisans and activists out of over two thousand that were killed here. There isn't much money now to maintain it so they do much of the work on their own. Nearby up the road, L. pointed out where she and her father exhumed her sister's body in March 1945. She was buried along with six others, deep in a cabbage patch, mostly teenage girls who were killed by Home Guard soldiers. Afterwards, some of them were moved to the church yard and some are buried here under the monument. The cabbage patch is only grass now.



24.

Across the valley from the monument at near equal height is the reconstructed parish church. It sits on the land of the old church that was destroyed in 1944. It was rebuilt in 1993 after independence.⁶⁷ In the church yard, there is another monument, dedicated to members of the Home Guard. It reads:

On this monument are the names of men and boys from our parish of the Slovenian Home Guard who fought against Communism. And also the names of the women and girls who fate divided from them. Most didn't die fighting but were reported and killed. Their final resting place is unknown.⁶⁸

67. Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Culture. "Opis Enote Nepremične Kulturne Dediščine #2726." Register of Immobile Cultural Heritage, n.d. <http://giskd2s.situla.org/rkd/Opis.asp?ESD=2726&submit.x=0&submit.y=0>.

68. Author's Translation.

25.

An example concerning being and meaning in the image would be the opening sequence from *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, Dir: Alain Resnais, 1955). The film begins with a nondescript landscape. Alone, low storm clouds hang over the muddy plain of farmlands with their shadows stretching out into the distance. The music begins, legato and playful yet somber, as the camera tracks down to reveal a section of rotting barbed wire fence. In one shot the landscape shifts from an embodied space, without coordinates beyond the gaze of the maker, to one of some unknown trauma, by encountering a clue. Another landscape appears. Though we know there is something more going on at this point. This time, the camera tracks backwards in space revealing more wire and an ominous watchtower. The theme is repeated again. With the procession of these landscapes, and the revealing of their human significance, comes the voice-over:

Even a quiet country scene... Even a field with crops harvested and crows flying... Even a road with cars and people passing... Even a village fair may lead direct to a concentration camp.⁶⁹

As viewers we now have a point of reference. We know this iconography. Resnais is splitting the collective mythology from the landscape. By 'mythology' I mean that the meaning that we find in the iconography is learned, absorbed as a sign. With the iconic image of the barbed wire and the watchtower, Resnais can communicate what this image *is* even without the text. By triangulating between the embodied landscape and the iconography, the image reveals that the landscape has morphed into its present state, it becomes a charged site.

26. *Circling the Image Void:*

This thinking about the different ways of the record communicates knowledge, be it through testimony, the site, or the archival image, lead me to an older conversation about the inadequacy of images. From January to March in 2001, a controversial exhibition took place at the Hôtel de Sully in Paris called *Mémoire des camps*. The show was the largest collection of images from the Holocaust ever exhibited together. The controversy has been often written about⁷⁰ and can

69. Resnais, Alain. *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et Brouillard*), 1955.

70. See Didi-Huberman (2008)

be summarized thusly: if the Holocaust, because of its immensity, is something that cannot be fully articulated or accessed, than an image is not only completely lacking in its ability to depict the Shoah, it is therefore inappropriate, and can only lie in relation to it. For some, the collected display of such images only fetishized them in relation to the event, as an event without witness.

This discussion has a long history, of course going back to Plato's cave and theological discourses over the depiction of the divine in Art. But the 2001 exhibition marks a contemporary revisiting of the philosophical question. It came about after a time of heated ethical and aesthetic debate between the filmmakers Claude Lanzmann and Jean-Luc Godard over imaging the Holocaust in cinema, and cinema's failure to bare witness to the event.⁷¹ In his work *Shoah* (Lanzmann, 1985), Lanzmann refuses the communicability of the archive in favor of conjuring and collecting the traces of the event in the present, through a juxtaposition of testimony and place. For Godard on the other hand, the archive offers a direct *contact* with the real of the event. This failure to bare witness (as there is no direct image of the Shoah, the moment of violence) is the cinema's original sin, as an admittance of its failure to serve as an index. Lanzmann's decision to entirely set his epic film *Shoah* in the 'present' and without the use of documentation material, leaves the act of remembering in the realm of testimony. He sought explicitly to make a film out of the void of the event by circling it. Agamben, in his seminal *Remnants Of Auschwitz*, which was published just before the Paris exhibition in 1999, backs up Lanzmann's position:

The witness usually testifies in the name of justice and truth and as such his or her speech draws consistency and fullness. Yet here in the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be borne witness to and that discharges the survivors of authority. The "true" witnesses, the "complete witnesses," are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are those who "touched bottom": the Muslims, the drowned. The survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony. And yet to speak here of a proxy makes no sense; the drowned have nothing to say, nor do they have instructions or memories to be transmitted. They have no "story," no "face," and even less do they have "thought". Whoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name must know that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness.⁷²

In circling the void, Lanzmann gestures that the event itself is without witnesses, and this

71. Texts on the Godard/Lanzmann argument: "Anamnesis and Bearing Witness" Saxton, in *For Ever Godard*, Williams, et al. (2004); Didi-Huberman (2008); Liebman (2007)

72 Agamben 2002: 34

‘circling the absence of a witness’ is the only viable tactic in order to approach the Holocaust through representation. Those who lived it, “touched bottom” as Agamben says, and are not alive to tell of it. And those outside of it, were excluded from the actual event.



For Godard, *Shoah* “shows nothing.” It indulges in the sin of cinema. By revering the incapacity to bear witness, the film reproduces the Nazi policy of the total destruction of the archive and trace. The image of the event on the other hand, if it were to exist, would offer only a *flash*⁷³ of the real as opposed to standing in for the experience of it, as a “possible point of *contact*, with the aid of the photographic medium, between the *image* and the *real*.”⁷⁴ Can an image, any image, to live up to Lanzmann’s standard that it must encompass the real to be ‘appropriate’?

It is Godard’s desire to construct this image through his *Histoire(s) du Cinema* (Dir. Godard, 1988-98). This image is not simply a presentation of evidence,⁷⁵ but it’s the *immediacy* of the image, that is inherently mediated by its material and maker. Didi-Huberman would call this relationship between image and truth: *a lacunary relationship in rags, as precious as it is fragile*.⁷⁶

I don’t see the positions between Lanzmann and Godard in relation to the historical image to be mutually exclusive. They are two different tactics in approaching and alluding to the *totality* of

73. For an understanding of Benjamin’s ‘Dialectical Image’ see Buck-Morss (1989)

74. Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*. Translated by Shane B. Lillis. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 2008. 75.

75. Here deviating from Barthes (*Camera Lucida*)

76. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 73.

the event, which can never be reproduced. I see tendencies of both arguments in my film as it also is attempting to think about the site of trauma, testimony, remnants, and the image. Lanzmann beautifully triangulates between the site of trauma and the testimony of survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders to locate the void of the event, to expose it in the living present. Godard on the other hand, attempts the sisyphian task of constructing the image through the rags and fractured remnants of images that remain. I suppose the heart of the matter is that for Lanzmann the Shoah is an *unknowable* that can only be referenced by triangulation, and yet for Godard, the *unknowable* of the event must be knowable as it *has been* known by those who perished. No matter how inadequate, the image *in spite of it all*,⁷⁷ has a knowledge to convey.



78



79

27.

There is no lack of images of the National Liberation Front and indeed there are still survivors who witnessed it. The National Liberation Front was keenly aware of the role of the image in communicating their experience. A Partisan photojournalist service can be dated to 1943⁸⁰ that

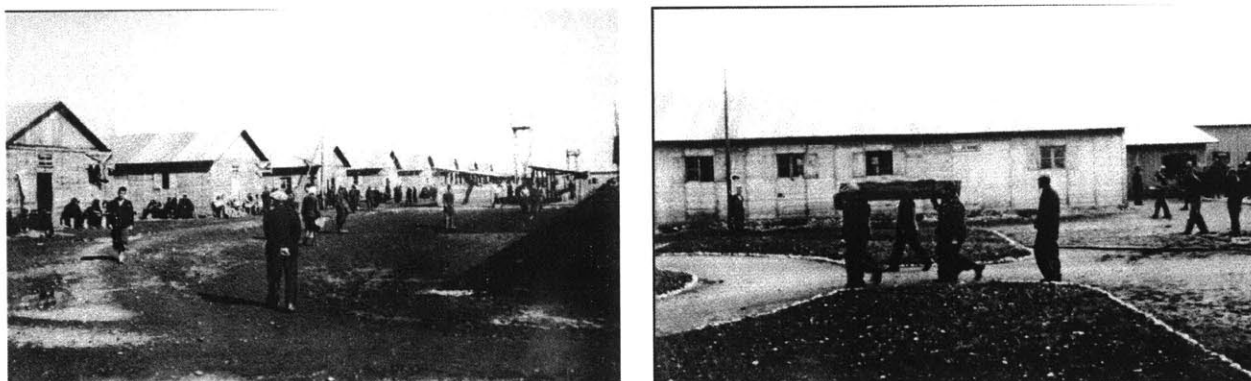
77. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*.

78. The photographic section of the Slovenian National Liberation Council preparing images at the Lackner Hotel; Črnomelj, December 17, 1944.

79. Preparing an exhibition; Lackner Hotel, Črnomelj, December 17, 1944.

80. Fabec, Franc, Dejan Vončina, and Jože Pirjevec. *Slovenska Odporniška Fotografija, 1941-1945* (Ljubljana: Modri-
jan, 2005). 76.

was organized out of the Agitation and Propaganda section in the forest. Split between two units, one was dedicated to documenting military operations and the other to documenting life in the liberated territories. As early as 1941, photo laboratories around the country cooperating with the nascent resistance, clandestinely copied negatives and photo plates that occupying forces brought to them for processing. Many images of occupation atrocities exist because of this clandestine activity, as well as images taken with a camera smuggled into the Gonars concentration camp in Italy.



Clandestine Gonars concentration camp images, Italy; 1942

28. *Still, Thank You For This Image, Executioner.*⁸¹

After the war, the covert photographers of the Gonars camp, Ivan Marinček and Dušan Povh, became filmmakers. They both had extensive careers in the Yugoslav film industry, Marinček as a cinematographer, and Povh as an editor and scriptwriter. In 1958 they collaborated on the short documentary film, *Three Monuments (Trije Spomeniki, Dir. Povh; 1958)* with the text written by Matej Bor, the Partisan poet. Much like in *Night and Fog*, the film opens with a camera probing a landscape, in this case a forest. Its gaze comes to rest on an object of fascination, a war memorial and the natural environment that it is situated in. Across the way, literally through the legs of one of the memorial's figures, stands a church still riddled with wounds from the war and lingering rusted artillery. The peace of the interior of the church is punctured by the images installed within

81. Matej Bor, *Trije Spomeniki*, Dir. Povh; 1958

it. They show that the site was in fact the church recounted in the story by Louis Adamic above, the one used as a torture center by the collaboration forces.



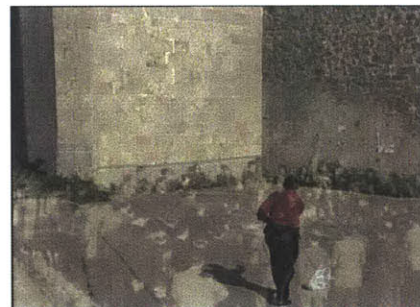
Three Monuments (Trije Spomeniki; Dir. Povh, 1958)

The images already seem to come from a distant unrecognizable past in contrast to the 'present' of the film. As we leave the church, a visual theme is established that at once examines the archival image for meaning, and fades between it and shot material in 'contemporary' time, in living color. From the image of an execution, the contemporary location of the event with the same framing as the image emerges in a colored relief. Resnais' words again resonate here, *Even a quiet country scene...may lead direct to a concentration camp.*

Mercedes Álvarez in *El Cielo Gira* uses a similar tactic but she refuses such extreme imagery. The archival images she incorporates depict the extraordinary within the banal of country life, cross-fading between images of Francisco Franco visiting the village and its contemporary reality. Álvarez's gesture of overlaying temporalities suggests the same compression of time and etching into the space.

Three Monuments has at once a reverence for the knowledge contained in the archival image, including its inadequacy, and the charge of the site in the present. Yet the film argues that neither can contain the entirety of the event. It triangulates between them with the composite image of the *cross-fade*, paradoxically suggesting both the passage of time and simultaneity within the landscape. Both image and site have value for conveying knowledge. It is in this sense that I look to *Three Monuments* (and to some extent *El Cielo Gira* in relation to its use of archival images)

as possible bridges between Godard and Lanzmann in the capture of the event. In its time, *Three Monuments* existed in a moment where the official history of the event was still becoming solidified and it ends with its gaze fixed on a prosperous future without war, under developing Socialism. The film, like the earlier fiction films of the Socialist Realist moment, sought to capture and align public memory with the event of the National Liberation Struggle, referencing here remnants within the landscape. It is in this sense that I interpret both the archival images of the war, as well as the cinematic images stored in the underground archive that came afterwards, to both be traces of the event. As for Ginzburg, the footprint in the forest is a clue or a trace of an animal's passing. We return to Badiou: "a truth presupposes an organically closed set of material traces, traces that refer not to the empirical uses of a world, but to a frontal change. A change which has affected (at least) one object of this world. We could thus say that the trace presupposes that every truth is the trace of an event."⁸²



The Sky Turns (El Cielo Gira; Dir. Álvarez 2004)



82. Badiou, Alain. "Bodies, Languages, Truths."



CHAPTER THREE

The Edit

Having established the record through the capture of the event, this chapter will examine the collision with language at the hand of the editor. As the moment of capture was a kind of critique of the original concept, through direct experience, the edit can be considered a critique of what was captured as that becomes the editor's raw materials with which to create a reality. The edited world exists solely from the images that were made in the field and rarely if ever coheres to the original concept. These isolated moments of experience that make up the image, a state of imminent pre-judgmental 'being' for MacDougall, become signifiers of meaning when strung together in a sequence. A film is made in the edit, through the sensitivity of the editor.

The films discussed here come from the perceived high point of Yugoslav cinema, between 1960 and 1972. Though they speak to the fact that like much of the world, Yugoslavia at the time was taken up in the current of the cultural revolution of the moment, the films do not easily adhere to the cliched notion of the dissident artist struggling for liberation vs. a 'Totalitarian' state apparatus. Although the films present a direct critique of state socialism and the narrative of the National Liberation Struggle, the critique comes from within socialism itself, and by using its language they functioned as what could be called a 'socialist critical art'.⁸³ Seeing a dissonance between the state's emancipatory ideals and the reality of everyday life, the films in a sense argue for a return to the revolutionary moment. To approach these films, one first must understand the context and means of production under which they were made.

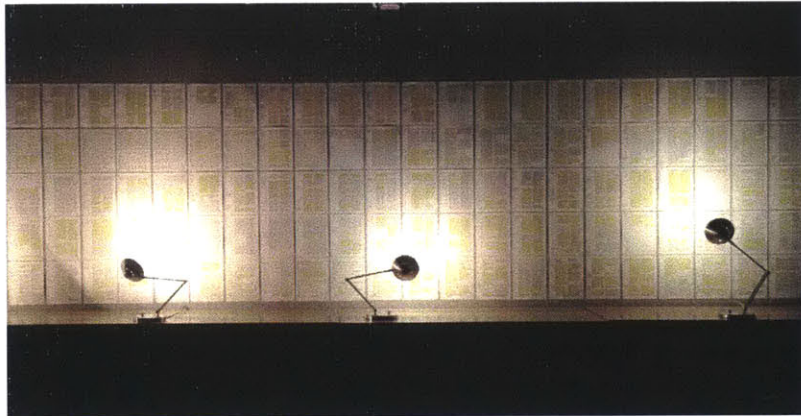
29.

Alluding to the cinema, Halbwachs speaks of the nature of the dream in relation to memory, "We are incapable of reliving our past while we dream, and that if our dreams evoke images

83. Dimitrijević, Branislav. "Concrete Analysis of Concrete Situations: Marxist Education According to Želimir Žilnik." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry* 25, no. 1 (2010): 48–55. doi:10.1086/657462.

that have the appearance of memories, these images are introduced in a fragmented state. Only detached shreds of the scenes we have really experienced appear in dreams.⁸⁴ Film can act as an index for accessing the memory of a specific time or event, albeit a limited and selected memory, constructed from fragments.

The edit is like writing with fragments of experience to construct the dream. The translation between my points of reference to the viewer's, with any coherence, is indeed the 'crisis of editing.'⁸⁵ The most complex act for me is extricating myself from the experience of the event behind the image, and seeing the image for what it is, what it communicates, how it sees. To work with an editor is most helpful if one has the resources. It allows for a critical distance from the images.



Dry Country, transcript process view; Installation

30.

Yugoslav socialist Modernism was born out of the Tito-Stalin split, and emerged as a specific cultural policy of the state.⁸⁶ In its turn towards the West, Yugoslav visual culture integrated more open aesthetic forms and artistic experimentation. Socialist Realism became a relic of the Stalinist post-war years and along with it, a certain way of representing the National Liberation

84. Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A. Coser. Heritage of Sociology. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). 41

85. Vaughan, *For Documentary*, 67.

86. Kirn, Gal. "New Yugoslav Cinema - A Humanist Cinema? Not Really." In *Surfing the Black: Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and Its Transgressive Moments*, edited by Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić, and Žiga Testen. (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Academie, 2012). 15.

Struggle in cinema, poetry, literature, and monuments. In the expulsion from the Cominform, the SFRY had to distinguish its political and economic plan for achieving socialism with that of the Soviets. Worker's Self Management was the ideological response. It was a political, economic, and administrative organization that "was a critique of the Soviet bureaucratic type of socialism... [and] claimed to politicize the whole society and invent new political forms of participation."⁸⁷ The state relinquished property to the collective ownership of 'social property', where workers had collective decision power in the organizations where they worked. This structure transcended the economy and into the cultural, social, and educational spheres:

Yugoslav self-management was a social formation which combined elements of both communism (introduction of different social relations, different types of properties, abolition of private land property, domination of labor over capital, establishment of the basic health, social, educational infrastructure, and more access to all people) and capitalism (introduction of competitive market elements, managerial domination over workers).⁸⁸

Self-management allowed for an alternative organization of the Yugoslav film industry that combined market based profit mechanisms with state funded, socially owned, yet internally managed film production companies. Each republic, including the autonomous regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina, had their own production studios that produced several feature films a year. In the 1960's a studio's budget was divided into three categories: 30-40% of the funding went to Partisan spectacles, 30-40% was dedicated to foreign co-productions, and the remaining roughly 30% was allocated to what were called 'contemporary films,' independent films that were freed from the political restraints of the former two categories.⁸⁹ The peak of Yugoslav film production came between 1967-9.⁹⁰

87. Kirn, Gal, Dubravka Sekulić, and Žiga Testen, eds. *Surfing the Black: Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and Its Transgressive Moments*. (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Academie, 2012). 187.

88. *Ibid.*,

89. *Ibid.*, 59.

90. Goulding, Daniel J. *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001*. 2nd ed., rev. and expanded. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). 64.

31.

The combination of self-management and the 1962 revision of the *Basic Law on Film*,⁹¹ an overall cultural relaxation within the SFRY and the around the world in general, and the opening up of national film funding resources to independent cinema, all collectively created the conditions for the flowering of what is known as the *New Yugoslav Film* (Novi Jugoslovenski Film)⁹². The new film period sought to open up the possibilities in artistic expression by relieving itself from 'dogmatic and bureaucratic control', and primarily turned its lens towards critiquing contemporary life rather than solely recounting the established National Liberation Struggle narrative. This movement wasn't monolithic in nature, as it existed in relation to other pan-European experimentation at the time. It drew inspiration explicitly from the French New Wave, Italian Neo-Realism, as well as the 'new waves' of other socialist countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland. Many up and coming filmmakers began their careers as assistants in Paris, Rome, and Prague. What is important to note however was that the blossoming of the *new film*, through critical of the state of contemporary life in the SFRY, wasn't opposed to socialist ideas per-se, but held the state up to its own socialist ideals and found it lacking. The film historian Goulding writes:

New film creators numbered themselves among those who favored humanistic, democratic socialism and self-government over Stalinist positivism and bureaucratic statism; who aligned themselves with Marx's earlier notions of 'praxis' over ideological dogmatism and conformity; who vigorously and critically confronted collective myths about the National War of Liberation and its aftermath, often endowing these themes with new contemporary relevance and urgency; who explored the sources of humanity's alienation in a society that had theoretically, at least, eliminated its causes; and who created a series of open metaphors about contemporary human and societal conditions which resisted closure and which refused to offer easy and optimistic answers to the questions they posed.⁹³

One example of a project from the *new film* era that demonstrates how the representations of the war had undergone a mutation in form in the mid 1960's would be Aleksandar Petrović's *Three* (*Tri*, Dir: Petrović, 1965). The film is organized into three distinct chapters and follows the

91. Ibid., 62. The law that reorganized the studio production system into a network between republics.

92. The New Film filmmakers include: Makavejev, Klopčič, Đorđević, Zafranović, Hladnik, Žilnik, Godina, Pavlović, Petrović, Rakonjac, et. al.

93. Ibid., 66-7.

protagonist *Miloš* (Bata Živojinović) through different moments during the war that reflect on its irrational brutality and violence. The first chapter takes place at a rural train station. Locals wait en masse for the next train to escape the advancing German army. A train arrives, yet it is full of retreating soldiers of the Yugoslav Royal Army. To quell the tension in the crowd after looting some provisions, some soldiers are dispatched to keep the peace. A man is noticed with a camera and they question him. He can't produce papers, and he is unknown to the villagers. He says that his papers were destroyed with his home in Belgrade and now he is fleeing with his wife. They accuse him of being a German spy. The crowd jeers for him to be shot. Miloš suggests that they should wait to see if his wife returns to confirm their story. But the soldiers shoot him anyway. After they dispose of his body across the tracks, a woman appears with a young boy in hand asking people if they have seen her husband with the camera. A new train arrives at the station and her question goes unanswered.

In the second chapter, Miloš is now a Partisan, lost in the woods alone and being hunted down by a platoon of German soldiers. After a particularly beautiful chase scene through the forest, Miloš finds his way out of encirclement arrives a moment of rest in a country graveyard. There he encounters another lost comrade and they decide to walk to liberated territory together. Wading into an open marsh space they become encircled yet again in the tall grass and decide to split up, hoping at least one will find a way out. His friend is eventually discovered and dragged to a straw hut. In refusing to turn his back to the soldiers at his moment of death, they throw him into the hut and set it on fire as Miloš watches helplessly from a distance.



Three (Tri: Dir. Petrović, 1965)

The third chapter takes place in the final days of the war. Miloš is an officer who spends his

time typing out reports at a Partisan occupied farm compound. A group of prisoners arrive to the compound, a mix of Nazi soldiers, collaborators, and a young woman who meets his gaze from the high office window with her own. A colleague arrives to borrow the typewriter, he needs it to record their confessions. They will be shot that evening to avoid the chance of escape. The woman who owns the farm takes a liking to the girl and asks Miloš philosophically how guilt and innocence are determined. She pleads for the girl's life, saying that she is young can learn the error of her ways. Miloš is distraught, when his colleague returns he asks for leniency on her part, but her case has been determined and proved with images. She was in love with a German officer of the SS. Moments later the group is taken behind the farmhouse, obscured from the camera, and executed as Miloš listens from the courtyard.

The film unfolds with relatively few words. It presents a re-visioning of the war and within that context represents the moral grey spaces that break from the clear delineations of good and evil and set character types of the previous Socialist Realist moment. It is important however to note that although the film is an example of a kind of aesthetic opening in the film culture and remembering of the war in general, the story is based on a story by Antonije Isaković, who at the time was the president of the Commission for Culture and Ideology of the Serbian Censor Committee, a director at a publishing house, as well as the president of the Serbian section of the Commission for Reviewing Films.⁹⁴ Perhaps it was purely a strategic relationship, but it is interesting to note that much of the *novi film* period, though it was pushing boundaries and brushing up against state dogma, existed in relation to the old-guard of Partisan intellectuals.

32. A Cinema By Other Means:

Another vital aspect in understanding the changing cinema of the period was the unique entity of the cinema club (*kino klub*) in Yugoslav film culture.⁹⁵ An element of the turn to self

94. Kirn, *Surfing the Black*, 62. Interview with Želimir Žilnik

95. For a detailed description of the Cinema Club culture in Yugoslavia, see Janevski "We Cannot Promise To Do More Than Experiment!" in Kirn (2012) *Surfing The Black: The Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema* or the catalogue for the exhibition *This Is All Film! Experimental Film in Yugoslavia 1951-1991*, Piškur, Janevski, Meden, Vuković; Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana (2010).

management organization was the attempt to bring technical innovations to all citizens, not only isolated professionals, and therefore to form 'amateur technical societies' or clubs. In 1946, the Popular Engineering Society (*Narodna Tehnika*) was established whose goal was to establish different amateur technical activities throughout society.⁹⁶ The kino klubs, existing in all major cities, were one such amateur society. Their marginal position within the film culture provided a hotbed of discussion and activity outside of the industrialized structures of institutional filmmaking. For most, the cinema clubs were the only place to access film equipment and have screenings. Existing as extra-systemic, they allowed for the development of an alternative culture. In an interview with Hito Steyerl and Marina Gržinić, the filmmaker Želimir Žilnik reflects on his early days working out of the kino klub in Novi Sad in Vojvodina: "I was forced very early on to use all the methods of the amateur film movement. This amateur film setting also allowed me to get rid of the administrative labyrinths through which it was only possible to get money in order to make a film. It was a certain form of freedom."⁹⁷ The kino klub phenomenon was at its height of activity in the mid 1960's and hasn't been historicized within broader Yugoslav cinema and art history. Yet there is a clear connection between the organizational structure of the cinema clubs, their function as a space of alternative cultural production and critique, and the so called *Black Wave* of late 60's Yugoslav cinema that Žilnik is a representative of. The kino klubs "allowed for the opportunity of avant-garde experimenting, for self-organization in the spirit of socialist self-management and for some form of political engagement. They mentioned art's relation to power, the possibilities and impotence, the distance from the structures of dominance and their mutual collaboration"⁹⁸.

The kino klubs were closely affiliated also with the Marxist-humanist *Praxis* school and journal by the same name (*Praxis International*) that was published between 1964 and 1974. The *Praxis* group would hold an annual symposium and summer school on the island of Korčula

96. Kirn, *Surfing the Black*, 48, 157-8.

97 Žilnik, Želimir. "An Interview With Žilnik". Interview by Marina Gržinić and Hito Steyerl, October 2003. http://artefact.mi2.hr/_a03/lang_en/art_zilnik_en.htm.

98. Kirn, *Surfing the Black*, 74.

in Dalmatia (1963-74) that became an influential place for leftists from the East and West to cross paths and share ideas. Notable annual guests were Lefebvre, Marcuse, Bloch, Habermas, Bauman and others.⁹⁹ The influence of *Praxis* found its way into the cinema's leftist critique of the state of socialism in the SFRY as kino klub amateurs like Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Lordan Zafranović, Karpo Godina and others transitioned into professional filmmaking from the amateur club scene. This movement of left critique into the cinema from the mid 60's to early 70's has been labeled the so-called *Yugoslav Black Wave*.

The Black Wave wasn't necessarily a unified movement but more a tendency of the time that was both motivated in support of the student protest movement in Yugoslavia in 1968, and unified against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia of the same year. The label of 'black' originates from an article in the newspaper *Borba*, the party newspaper, in August, 1969¹⁰⁰. The author diagnosed the trend in Yugoslav cinema, taking on the perspective of a potential viewer in the future interpreting the art of the 60's in Yugoslavia, as he "will not believe those who had directly witnessed the actual reality but rather the 'condensed and suggestive artistic story and picture that this reality produced'. In his view, this is why the future will have a black picture of Yugoslav society of the 1960s and 70s — because Yugoslav art, and above all Yugoslav film, painted this society black."¹⁰¹ Though labeled by the state as *socially nihilistic*, these filmmakers sought a form of cinematic expression that pointed towards the liberation of the individual as the foundation of social and collective progress grounded in *Praxis* Marxist-humanist thought. Makavejev's films for example, more well known in the US, are often written about in this context.

33.

As the memory of the event of the National Liberation Struggle drifted farther from public memory, the official history seemed to grow tired as fissures in the narrative began to appear. The

99. Ibid., 153, 167.

100. Jovičić, Vladimir. "Crni Val' U Našem Filmu." in *Borba*. 3 August 1969. 17—24

101. Buden, Boris. "Shoot It Black! An Introduction to Želimir Žilnik." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, no. 25 (September 1, 2010): 38–47. doi:10.1086/657461. 41. For further discussion of the critique of the Black Wave see Buden (2010)

filmmaker Živojin Pavlović diagnosed the roots of the change in his essay from 1996:

Those who here spoke about the war by way of the celluloid... did not scold history, they beautified it, but in a most disgusting way... In Yugoslav cinema, various forms of un-truth permanently replace each other... Quasi-poetics replaces quasi-epics, quasi-drama replaces quasi-psychology, and quasi-mythologization of history replaces quasi-documentation. Instead of art about the revolution, we have revolutionary kitsch.¹⁰²

Through the metamorphosis of the event, its trace, its truth, had been diluted in the image. Instead of thinking critically about and advancing the gains of the revolution, it had become ossified in official discourse, and therefore 'kitsch', conservative. Built into the *Black Wave's* cynicism is a longing for an authentic return to the rupture of the event. Not through retelling the same stories that had undergone the unavoidable edits of time and solidified in the minds of those who experienced them, but a return to the revolutionary ideal itself that was at the heart of the struggle. One such example is Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works (Rani Radovi; Dir. Žilnik, 1969)*.

In *Early Works*, revolutionary discourse embodied by a cadre of young prankster Communists, is laid over the reality of Socialist Yugoslavia, and literally beaten and dragged through the mud. It is a film that is difficult to summarize because of its fragmented structure. The main thrust of the film is the drift of this troupe through the countryside attempting to bring ideology (and therefore liberation) to the peasantry. In failing to achieve their goals with the lumpen-proletariat, the protagonists end up questioning whether or not the rhetoric and ideas of classical Marxism are sufficient to change the immediate reality of state Socialism. The film both provides a critical commentary about the incommensurability of their ideological discourse to the living reality, but it also shows a yearning to unleash "the very enjoyment of revolutionary, avant-gardist behavior."¹⁰³ The group's activities alternate between tense theoretical political debate, bomb making, sexual encounters, and playful 'Situationistic' performances in the landscape. Ultimately their playfulness leads to suffering and a sacrifice of one of their own for supposed revolutionary ideals. The film "does not attack the socialist system by ironically exposing the

102. Levi, Pavle. *Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007). 16. Quoting the filmmaker Živojin Pavlović.

103. Dimitrijević, "Concrete Analysis of Concrete Situations", 50.

absurdity of the ideological discourse, but rather adopts that discourse over-enthusiastically”.¹⁰⁴

In an interview, Žilnik reflects on the experience of making the film,

The film was shot in the autumn of 1968 and was a direct reflection of the questions and doubts developing in the socialist world after the [June 1968] student demonstrations in Belgrade and the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August that same year. At the time I was twenty-six years old and had finished my law studies [at the Faculty of Law in Novi Sad, Serbia] and began studying philosophy in [the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of] Belgrade. I remember the world we were living in had been very much shaken. I was opposed to the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, so, partly feeling that the student opposition was the opening of hope, we filmed *Early Works* in October, putting all the worries we had in mind into the film.¹⁰⁵

I have to suggest that perhaps the urge to return to the event of the revolution is not based on the grounds of arguing *for* a specifically ‘socially engaged film practice,’ but more along the lines with Godard. To triangulate back to the initial rupture and energy of the event was not only a possibility but a necessity to understand their contemporary state of existence. A way back today is through examining and engaging with the films of the time, not exactly by holding them up as paragons of virtue or examples of high cinematic aesthetics, but as traces of the event that embody their own truth. To see them is to be in close proximity to it.



Early Works (Rani Radovi; Dir. Žilnik, 1969)

To see *Early Works* as a critical recharging of the socialist discourse demonstrates that it didn't fit easily into either the official or the dissident discourses. After an initial release, the film was put on trial and Žilnik successfully defended it in court against the state labeling it as ‘anarchist’ and therefore ‘anti-communist’. The film went on to win the Golden Bear at the Berlinale in 1969. He spent a portion of the 70's working in West Germany as it became easier to make work there

104. Ibid., For further discussion on *Rani Radovi* see this text.

105. Žilnik, Želimir. “Old School Capitalism: An Interview with Zelimir Zilnik”. Interview by Greg DeCuir, 2010. <http://www.cineaste.com/articles/emold-school-capitalismem-an-interview-with-zelimir-zilnik-web-exclusive>.

instead of Yugoslavia. It can be said that Žilnik was more marginalized than other film-makers of the time. As when the ideology changed in the late 80's and into the 90's, he was again locked out of the cultural establishment of the new regime as he didn't easily fit the category of 'dissident artist'.¹⁰⁶



34. *I Filmed The Stones Like A Madman.*¹⁰⁷

How to construct a world out of these images, and how to incorporate the voice? It is all feeling too literal. With *Robinson In Space* (1997), Patrick Keiller was the flaneur and an keen appropriator of the English landscape. He set a written plot over the landscape, delivered by voiceover and inspired by the spaces he was investigating. The image and the voice exist on separate tracks with their own internal logic and reasoning. When they clash, a new meaning is created between them. Through this he investigates the postindustrial English landscape for clues, drawing links between the powers that owned and manipulated it in the 19th century and the faceless network of global capital that manages it today. I feel a certain affinity for this film, yet it is important to me that the voice comes from the world much as the clues that are being uncovered in the landscape. The construction of the atmosphere, the 'place-ness' should brush up against and dance with the rhetoric of the testimony. It collapses the past into the present as a

106 Dimitrijević, "Concrete Analysis of Concrete Situations", 51

107. Lanzmann, Claude. "Site and Speech: An Interview with Claude Lanzmann about Shoah." In *Claude Lanzmann's Shoah: Key Essays*, edited by Stuart Liebman. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. 42.

dialectic. There is a kind of 'speaking into the space' happening that breathes life into it. Instead of thinking about place as a site of a *potential* event, it is the event itself that is written into the landscape. When the voice is laid over the landscape, they reinforce each other. "The landscape lends the words an entirely different dimension, and the words reanimate the landscape" as if pulling back layers of sediment that have become overgrown in the forest.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps I should strive to establish a space and let it unfold, as Harrison described the forest, "as a place where the logic of distinction goes astray, or where our subjective categories are confounded, or where perceptions become promiscuous with one another, disclosing latent dimensions of time and consciousness."¹⁰⁹



Robinson in Space (Dir. Keiller, 1997)

35.

Toward the end our tour of the partisan base in the forest, our guide asked us that if our interest concerned how the forest space has been used and managed by humans over time, then he hoped we will be including how the forest was an accessory to hiding the post-war killings of collaborators. He reminds us that out of the over 600 known sites in Slovenia, the majority are here in caves throughout the forest.

36.

In the late 80's and early 90's, nationalism filled the void that socialism had left. Echoing the

108. Ibid., 45.

109. Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. x.

anthropologist Robert Hayden, totalizing systems produce *secret histories*. As one ‘totalizing ideology’ (socialism) was reactively replaced by another, its structural opposite (neoliberal-nationalism), another history within living memory was forced underground and into the margins.¹¹⁰ Returning to this history as a means of better understanding our social reality today is at the heart of my interest that this material.

An entire industry has sprung up around books written about the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990’s. I won’t venture here for any analysis or grand historical overview, but I will try in the next chapter to remain focused on the themes at hand in relation to this period: the role of historical memory, its manifestations in the landscape, and its representations in the cinema. The least I can do is point the reader to my reference points: Hayden (1994, 2013); Denich (1994); Levi (2007); Ramet (1999, 2005, 2006, 2010, 2014); Sindbaek (2012); Todorova (1997); et. al.



110. See Hayden, Robert M. “Recounting The Dead: The Rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia.” In *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism*, edited by Rubie S. Watson, 1st ed. (School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. Sante Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1994). 168.



CHAPTER FOUR
The Projection

August 1st, 2014

The production is finished. We spent our last shooting day up at the ruins of Saint Peter's church, the one which no one can agree who destroyed it. I was hoping to get some high angle shots from above of the valley but the morning was intensely foggy and you couldn't see much of anything. From the top, apparently you can see all the way to Austria, but this might just be local hubris. Our guides say the foxes still occasionally find Partisans who are shallowly buried here. They haven't yet been given permission to excavate the church ruins properly. They hold a mass here on more important holidays. Their bells are an arrangement of spent artillery casings. Much of the forest around here during socialism was a restricted hunting space for party members. They can't agree if Tito was ever here, but the hunting family in Novo Mesto has some of his 'trophies' so I can only assume.



111

I want to come back when the film is finished. I want to find a large clearing in the forest and

111 Tito hunting, 1960's (Photo: National Museum of Contemporary History, Slovenia)

have public projection for those who have helped us and those who have been our guides. This is my first film at this scale and I'm already nervous about how it will be presented, in what context, etc. I have shown several short films before in the film festival or art context, but I have never presented something so time demanding to a public before. How will this film circulate? What is this strict time format that I am conforming to? It has its historical precedent, its focus group tested assurances. But is it relevant any more?



112

37.

After WWII, after the resistance to occupation and the revolution, the old estates had been occupied and burnt, the agricultural and forest land was nationalized, and landlords were disenfranchised. In the forest, the old roles of stewardship migrated into provincial forest associations, cooperatives, and hunting 'families' (*lovska družina*) who continue in various forms to maintain forest life today. The founding of such protection systems "generally predates similar systems in western capitalist states."¹¹³ After 1991 and de-nationalization, the Catholic Church's

112. Soteska Castle in 1938, owned by the Austrian Auersperg family until WWII. (Photo: V. Kramarič, Dolenjska Muzej)

113. Tickle, Andrew, and Richard Clarke. "Nature and Landscape Conservation in Transition in Central and South-eastern Europe." *European Environment* 10, no. 5 (2000): 211–19. 212.

early political engagement led to wholesale reshuffling of ‘public’ land assets back to the Church. Those collaborators or their families who were able to flee abroad to Argentina, to the US, or Canada, or Australia, began returning. The Vatican was the first state to recognize Slovenia’s independence from Yugoslavia on January 13, 1992.¹¹⁴

38.

Since the early 90’s, interest in the de-nationalization of Eastern European land resources, specifically European and domestic interests, in terms of establishing new regimes of natural preservation, regulation, and property restitution, cannot be seen as being merely altruistic or neighborly. The *shock doctrine* of rapid privatization promised a quick entry into fortress Europe.¹¹⁵ Any questioning of the discourse labeled one an enemy of the transition, an agent of the *ancien regime* and impeding the fruits of western society.¹¹⁶ In Slovenia “property was denationalized to such an extent that has not been recorded in any other country in the world”¹¹⁷ making the Church the largest landholder in Slovenia, as if 1945 had never happened.



114. Pelikan, Egon. “The Catholic Church and Politics in Slovenia.” In *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe : Challenges since 1989*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet, 115–30. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). 123.

115. Sachs, Jeffrey. *Understanding “Shock Therapy”*.

116. For a cogent analysis of neoliberal policies in transition see (Gowan, 1995) And for context, the strategy put forward by the Central & East European Privatization Network through the Denationalization Act (CEEPN, 1992) and of Shock Therapy, (Sachs, 1994)

117. Pelikan, Egon. “The Catholic Church and Politics in Slovenia.”. 125.

39. *Archive, Monument, Circulation:*

The bunker archive at Gotenica mentioned earlier contains a modest 7,705 film titles with 31,480 reels of film.¹¹⁸ Much of the collection was produced at one of the Slovenian regional production companies: Triglav Film, Viba Film, and Studio Unikal during Socialist Yugoslavia. Days before the Slovenian war of independence in 1991, the collection was transferred from the central Yugoslav Cinematheque in Belgrade to Slovenia. Utilizing the Gotenica military bunker was a utilitarian decision by the Archive; the locale has the unique low temperature and correct humidity climate profile to properly store film materials. Though there are still remnants of its former function: residential and office spaces, surgical facilities, antiquated generators, and even a cinema, the bunker still makes for a suitable site for the archive.¹¹⁹ Our contact for the space, the person in charge of maintenance, mentioned that even if there had been a nuclear war the government officials wouldn't have lasted so long down there. The generator rooms, which would require constant manual operation, weren't sealed properly for radiation in their ventilation systems.

40. *The Model Image, Erosion*

Technically speaking, to project an image is to destroy it. Unlike ceramics, stone, canvas, or the paper of a book which all can last thousands of years, film is a highly perishable organic material. Gelatin emulsion, the image-containing medium of film, is made from the boiled skin and bones of animals mixed with cells of silver halide. Unlike the document archive or library, the film archive is an institution that specifically oversees and manages *decay*, the erosion of the image. According to archival standards, a film preserved at 4° C and 35% humidity can last 500 years. In more adverse conditions, say 30° C and up to 80% humidity, the life of an untouched

118. "Slovene Film Archives: Data on Film Collection." Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Culture; Archives of The Republic of Slovenia, 2015. http://www.arhiv.gov.si/en/areas_of_work/slovene_film_archives/.

119. The Slovenian Film Archive became a member of FIAF (The International Federation of Film Archives) in 1993 and a full member in 1999. FIAF is the major international association that sets best practices for film preservation and approved the Gotenica bunker as the site for an archive.

film decreases to roughly 5-10 years.¹²⁰ The state of decay for digital video is even more drastic.

The archivist and writer Paolo Cherchi Usai reflects on the inevitable futility of the moving image as a vessel for memory: “Experience teaches us that loss of memory is as inevitable as anxiety for the future. In the hopes of avoiding both, the maker of moving images fabricates memories or visions of what is to come in the cherished belief that they will exist forever in an eternal present of the spectator’s will. Exposing the spectator to a single viewing of that moving image is enough to reveal the futility of such ambition.”¹²¹ The act of screening images announces their own destruction.

The decay of the image is something that can be slowed but not avoided, it is entropy in action. Display accelerates this decay necessitating untouched master copies of a film. At every screening, a filmed image experiences its projection at .03 seconds.¹²² The average life of a circulating film print is roughly 300 projections, due to mishandling and natural decay. Therefore, the projected life of a filmed image is roughly only 8 seconds. “Once [the image] has been projected, the film resulting from this intention is subject to the physical decay of its images and the memory of perfection has been lost, thus giving birth to the history of cinema.”¹²³

41.

The archive always exists within the tension between preservation and access. Unique in the collecting professions, audiovisual archiving’s goal is to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the object, and therefore its proximity to the event of its capture. This is what Cherchi Usai has called the *Model Image*. For Cherchi Usai, the model image exists at the point where, if this inevitable decay was turned on its head, it would be the moment where the image comes into being, the event of the image, including all the intentions behind its making. That being said, it is

120. Master Class – Paolo Cherchi Usai: Perserving the Film Heritage of the Arab World. Abu Dhabi Film Festival, 2009. <https://vimeo.com/8295472>.

121. Cherchi Usai, Paolo. *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age*. (London: British Film Institute, 2001). 35.

122. If projected at standard 24fps with a 2/3 shutter

123. Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema*, 39.

not the relationship between the image and the real that is for Cherchi Usai the model image, but the moment of its creation, unmediated and uncompressed through reproduction.

42. *The Myth of The Digital Utopia*

No one denies that the digital revolution has taken over the world of image production in image dissemination and accessibility. But the one realm where digital technology is extremely lacking is in the archive. The price for archiving digital material is exponentially higher than film, why? Isn't digital video more stable than analogue mediums? It is only a string of numbers in the end.

What is unspoken of in the discussions about the digital revolution is its physical lifespan and coziness with capital. Digital images are *lossless*¹²⁴ in theory only. *Migration* is a necessity with digital media. In high industry (i.e. Hollywood), film has been found to be still the gold standard of archival material, why? If kept in ideal conditions, a film can last several hundred years before fading into oblivion. Digital media on the other hand is encoded on hardware or magnetic tapes with a total life span of perhaps 10 years. Not only that, due to planned obsolescence, as new technologies are market driven, digital media must migrate to newer media forms every 3 to 5 years or be considered inaccessible and obsolete.¹²⁵ As with film, all you need is a light source, a shutter, and screen to view the image (or just physically inspect it by eye), digital media is a helpless hieroglyphic without its corresponding hardware to decode it. The *Digital Cinema Package* (DCP) is a gesture at standardizing digital distribution to cinemas, yet there is no standard in digital display or storage because there can never be a standard. As technology progresses, new faster, smaller, higher-capacity mediums are created. With the migration of media comes inevitable loss of data, new compression rubrics, etc. The film image on the other hand doesn't need to migrate.¹²⁶

124. Lossless: To allow for a perfect transfer of data in duplicate, not loss of data in migration from a compressed image.

125. Master Class – Paolo Cherchi Usai: Preserving the Film Heritage of the Arab World

126. Ibid.,

With the sheer amount of moving images created today around the world, primarily due to digital technology, the question of selection becomes even more apparent. With every migration to a new digital medium, tape to .mov file for example, there is a process of selection delineating what will be saved (however briefly) to what *the archive* is willing to forget. An excerpt from a report on digitization from the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences:

When (color film, RGB) separations reach the end of their archival life, archivists entrusted with these valuable corporate assets must consider whether it will be better to migrate them to another generation of film stock, or to migrate them to a future digital format with its *to-be-determined* preservation methodology... The wholesale migration of major film archives to digital storage is such a large and expensive undertaking that no studio appears to be considering this currently, at least for archival preservation in the strict sense... Some old film assets will also be digitized for commercial exploitation on a deal-by-deal basis, because once converted from analog film to digital files the content can be more easily manipulated and re-purposed to generate new revenues.¹²⁷

It is not stability of image that is of concern here, but the ability to easily create new revenues, as well as a faith in the “to be determined” nature of digital media. Every moving image that is chosen to be preserved is a stand-in for the plethora of images that have been forgotten or were never allowed to be seen in the first place.¹²⁸

43.

Having returned to Yugoslavia in the late 70's from his self imposed exile in Germany, Željimir Žilnik, like many black wave filmmakers at the time, was still frozen out of the film production houses in Yugoslavia. In Germany, he had worked on several projects within the German Filmmakers Association alongside Alexander Kluge, who was the president of the organization at the time. Besides being a pragmatic decision, I think it is no coincidence that Žilnik, like Kluge at this moment, turned towards television as a viable medium for artistic and political expression.

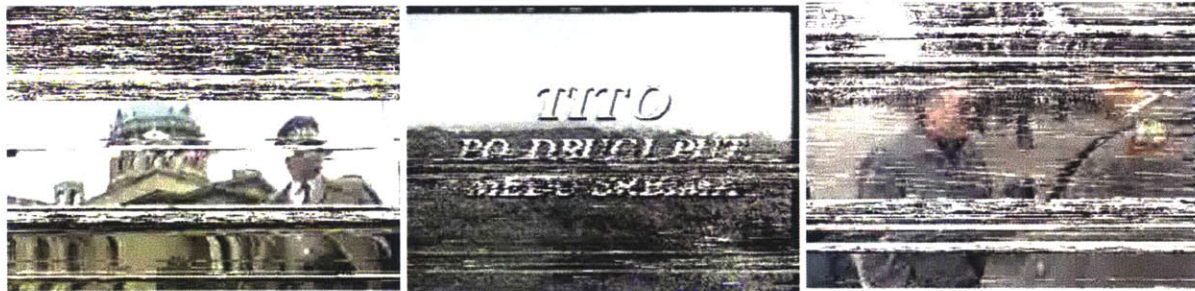
127. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. “The Digital Dilemma: Strategic Issues in Archiving and Accessing Digital Motion Picture Materials.” THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL OF THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES, 2007. 25. Author's emphasis.

128. Though the function of the motion picture archive may differ in several key ways from an archetypical archive, for a deeper investigation in the operations of the archive see the ‘Historical a priori’ in Foucault (2002) and Derrida (1996)

There were resources available and a need for local content to fill programming blocks:

The biggest challenge for me was to get my head around the idea that I, who had been prevented from showing my work to the public, now had a tool with which I could enter hundreds of thousands of homes. Each Monday at 8:00 p.m. a new television film was broadcast all over the country.¹²⁹

This direct access that comes with appropriating the apparatus of mass-media is something that Kluge has also cited as a reason for his turning away from the cinema.¹³⁰



Tito Amongst The Serbs For a Second Time (Tito Po Drugi Put Medju Srbima; Dir. Žilnik, 1994)

44.

In the tense atmosphere of 1994, with the civil war still active in Bosnia and Croatia, Žilnik made the TV film: *Tito Amongst The Serbs For A Second Time (Tito po drugi put medju Srbima; Žilnik, 1994)*. The last copy apparently in existence of this remarkable film is a beat up VHS duplicate in need of restoration. The film, part *on-the-street* documentary, part performance art piece, reincarnated Josip Broz Tito through the radio impersonator [Dragoljub S. Ljubičić], and sent him walking about Belgrade amongst *the people*, to check in on what he left behind on Earth. What resulted was an unscripted encounter, at times both heartbreaking and revelatory that is best described as *unheimlich*. The people he encounters clearly know it is not the actual Tito they are speaking with, but the moment allows for a kind of exegesis, a collective opportunity to

129. Žilnik, "Old School Capitalism: An Interview with Zelimir Žilnik".

130. Some of Kluge's more prominent TV work being: *10 vor 11*, *Primetime/Spätausgabe*, *News & Stories*, *Mitternachtsmagazin*, as well as countless TV films that reflect his style of fragmentation, collage, and hijacking of the conventional tv lexicon. Kluge organized collective pressure on the West German government to mandate 10% of the programming of mainstream commercial networks to be dedicated towards culture, and he took advantage of this as a forum for his own work and ideas concerning *Proletarian Publicity*.

express a sense of loss, confusion, or betrayal.

A woman regrets having cried for him when he died, but would vote for him under a pseudonym if he were alive. A man says that he died too soon, leaving them with massive international debt. One man wishes he had taken the rest of the government with him when he died. Another wonders if he, Marx, and Lenin are holding congresses in heaven. Another says he should have been hung.



Tito Amongst The Serbs For a Second Time (Tito Po Drugi Put Medju Srbima; Dir. Žilnik, 1994)

The film exposes that the Tito personality cult and the entire mythology that came along with it, all the way back to the National Liberation Struggle, is still circulating under the social surface of the country. With this simple gesture, Žilnik traces the underlying remnants of Titoism that still serve a function in forming the ‘contemporary’ reality of the nation. It is best here to quote Žilnik at length:

At that time the atmosphere was even stranger than the one in 1972. The system of values was altered. Tolerance was exchanged for hatred and used as a tool for waging war. History was being rewritten in many ways. Some of the antifascist engagements were swept out of the collective memory. It was officially proclaimed that Titoism should be forgotten. At that moment his name was taboo. I didn't have any complexes about entering that debate because I lived to see the bright side and the dark side of Titoism. When Miša (Milošević, DP) and I went to talk to actors that used to play the role of Tito, they said they had to because the police asked them to do it. They were scared in this new environment. They said there was no way they would go out in the streets dressed as Tito.

Then we heard about a guy on student radio who impersonated Tito. I listened to him and heard that he was excellent. We asked him if he would play the role of Tito. He agreed and we took him out on the streets in a costume that we got from Avala Film [studio], with fears [sic] that he could be beaten. After ten minutes of walking, dozens of people came to talk to him. I said, “Look, you guys know this is not Tito.” They said, “Yeah, we know, but we never had the opportunity to talk to him. We want to express our joy that he's back, because he was better than the one in power now.” For us it was not a film, it was a happening. I gave instructions about the

topics our actor [Dragoljub S. Ljubičić] should raise but I did not influence any of his dialog. I did not influence any of the people walking by. The crowd was so big that my main job was to beg the people to let him [Ljubičić] talk to them one at a time.

When we went down by the railway station people came with instruments and started singing songs about Tito and dancing around him. The traffic was disrupted, so two policemen came and arrested me and Miša. They took our camera. I saw tears forming in Miša's eyes because we thought we lost the material we had shot. After fifteen minutes the actor in Tito uniform stepped into the police station and in a very serious voice said, "I did not finish my interview! Where are you keeping my crew?" The two officers ran to our cell shouting, "Tito is nervous! He wants to finish the interview! Go!" We said, "Well, give us our camera." They saluted and said, "Marshal Tito, we just wanted to take them away because we thought they were provoking you." So we left!¹³¹

The happening and chance encounter orchestrated by Žilnik and his crew revealed that more than being a discreet historical figure or an authoritarian leader, Tito was and continues to be a projection of his subjects, as a hero, a war criminal, a liberator, a despot, as a Tito of the mind. To reiterate Halbwachs, "only detached shreds of the scenes we have really experienced appear in dreams."¹³² The more the image of Tito drifted from the source, the more it was circulated, duplicated, passed on, instrumentalized and hollowed out, the more it faded and was pushed aside.

The film confronts the reality of the state of transition, as the anthropologist Robert Hayden eloquently writes:

This replacement of one totalizing ideology with its structural opposite necessitates a supplanting of official history. Because that official history had some basis in experiences still within living memory, this replacement of communism with nationalism must itself create a new secret history of the communist movement and period of rule. Indeed, to succeed, the new official history must convert the 'social memory' underlying the old official history into a secret archive, officially both denied and suppressed.¹³³

The film, as with much of Žilnik's later work, is an entry point into this 'secret' archive that was created in the transition to liberal capitalism.

131. Žilnik, "Old School Capitalism: An Interview with Zelimir Žilnik".

132. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 41.

133. Hayden, "Recounting The Dead", 168.



134



135

45.

This moment of transition that the film is attempting to elucidate can also be seen as reflected with clues in the landscape. In the forest, to stumble into a clearing one inevitably comes across a plaque or memorial, the site of a battle, or a grave, from the Second World War. The fate of these memorials have generally fared better in Slovenia than in its neighbors, where grassroots right-wing movements sought to clear the landscape of evidence of both Yugoslavia and the Liberation Struggle. In Croatia for example, hardly a monument was spared from either destruction or modification with nationalist or religious symbols. In Slovenia, the revisionists just built new monuments, sometimes directly adjacent to the old ones. Instead of memorializing a specific individual or event, the new monuments reference an unknown body. They are often inscribed with: “*Mother, Homeland, God*” or “*Victims of Revolutionary Violence*” or simply “*Forgive.*” As the Partisan movement was internationalist in character and in its cultural representations, the

134. Monument in Kočevski Rog forest at Jelendol, 1956 (Image: Dolenjska Muzej)

135. Monument near Podstenice in Kočevski Rog forest, 1959 (Image: Dolenjska Muzej)

construction of the new 'counter' monuments sought to launch a singular *nationalized* subject.¹³⁶

46.

This nationalized subject was established around the *nameless dead* of WWII who began to be exhumed from the mass graves and limestone caves and were politicized in highly publicized events in the late 1980's and early 1990's. These unknown bones were used by all sides to further legitimize the nationalist politics that were a part of the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990's. What had been kept underground for the last 50 years was bubbling up to the surface at the hand of an editor.



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47.

On the surface, the revisionist discourse of the new monuments acts as both a liberal critique of 'totalitarianism' ("*Victims of Revolutionary Violence*") and on the other hand

136. Kirn, "Transformaiton of Memorial Sites in The Post-Yugoslav Context", 273.

137. "Justice Ceremony" at the site of a mass grave in the forest. 8 July, 1990 (Photo: Dolenjska Muzej)

as proposing national reconciliation (“*Forgive*”). However, in the end the discourse is masking the fundamental ideological intent wrapped up within the nationalized subject. It posits the ultimate historical victimhood of fascists, the uncritical superiority of liberal democracy, and the simultaneous delegitimization of an emancipatory politics. Gal Kirn here diagnoses the ideological tension behind the reconciliation discourse:

Reconciliation does not have the same meaning for both sides. While both agree that the post-war executions and collaboration with the enemy were problematic, reconciliation nonetheless goes along with passing over the historical significance of the Partisan movement for the constitution of Yugoslavia. At worst, reconciliation comes close to rehabilitation of fascism and [the] Domobranci (Home Guard). Domobranci and Partisans are put on the same footing and the allegedly ‘totalitarian’ regime that resulted from the Partisan Liberation Struggle and resistance becomes consequently condemned. Also, Domobranci emerge as the moral winner that had nothing to do with the criminal post-war regime from the reconciliation discourse. Hence, reconciliation can be possible if we become ashamed of our communist past and come to condone fascism¹³⁸.

By accepting reconciliation as a valid discourse, it would not only recognize the post war killings of collaborators as problematic (something completely uncontroversial), but also delegitimize the event of the revolution as something immoral, and discount its role in the formation of the nation-state and liberation of Yugoslavia from occupation. Placing the Fascists and Partisans on the same moral footing, in mutual forgiveness, would *erase* the antifascist Liberation Struggle, as a genuine emancipatory political event, from the political field of memory. Totalizing systems indeed produce secret histories.

48.

The older antifascist monuments, largely constructed between 1947 and 1965, cannot be viewed simply as a manifestation of a top-down ideological policy. As modernist artifacts, they exist as artistic expressions linking the revolutionary event of the Partisan struggle to the living memory of the people and hopes for the future, much like that in the modernist cinema of the 1950’s and 1960’s. Many monuments, like the monument in Cvibelj above Žužemberk, lack any of the tropes of heroism and victimization of socialist

138. *Ibid.*, 273.

realist memorials, and prefer figureless structures that point to a future in the process of becoming. It is only in this state of becoming that *'fidelity' to the event* could be created.¹³⁹



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July 16th, 2014; *A conversation at the Partisan forest base:*

JS: Germans, today's Germans, don't argue over their attitude toward Nazism. It wasn't good. But we were the winners. To accept the fact that on Slovenian grounds three totalitarian regimes fought for possession... Americans will have a hard time understanding the events of WWII here, especially, because they had no dilemma, whether you are on the good or the bad side and who the good and who the bad guy is. Here, the things are very blurred.

49. *Cinematic Removal From The Event, and Its Reproduction:*

Besides the natural decay of the cinematic image, one cannot generalize that there is such a thing as an identical viewing experience. Every print that is struck from a negative or every new digital copy made or migrated, inevitably degrades the image as "the process of migration entails some degree of loss or distortion of the image or sound information, and a change in the viewing/

139. An excellent overview of the relationship between antifascist monuments and the discourse of reconciliation in Slovenia can be found in Kirn (2012) "Transformation of Memorial Sites in A Post-Yugoslav Context" within *Retracing Images: Visual Culture After Yugoslavia*, ed. Šuber/Karamanic (2012).

140. Memorial of the National Liberation Struggle, Cvibelj; Opening ceremony, 22 July 1961 (Image: Lado Šetinc, Dolenjska Muzej).

listening experience.”¹⁴¹ Every projection is beholden to the environment that it is presented in: faults in the architecture of the space, faults in speed or focus by the projectionist, bad sound volume, disruptive audience members, differences in digital compression between copies, perhaps a film experienced too early in life, different projection color spaces, distracted viewing, jaded images repeated too many times or seen too late in life. All of these things affect the screened image. “Like other objects, audiovisual carriers [various media] are *artifacts* and attributes intrinsic to the object *cannot* be migrated. They can, at best, only be approximated on the new carrier...The provenance of a film and the mechanics of film production, editing and processing can only be fully understood by examining the artifacts themselves.”¹⁴² This leads me to agree with Cherchi Usai that cinema is not necessarily an art of *reproduction* in terms of Benjamin, but an art of *repetition* akin to performance.¹⁴³



50.

What is the role of the archive in all this? The existence of the modern archive has been predicated on two rationales: a paradigm of national heritage preservation, and as a means to

141. Edmondson, Ray. “Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles.” UNESCO, 2004. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001364/136477e.pdf>. 46

142. Ibid., 47.

143. Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema*, 59

generate potential future revenues for the copyright holders of images. Organizing archives into *National Archives* is a pragmatic financial decision as most of their funding comes from the state or private industry, yet it is also an ideological decision that easily integrates into the heritage paradigm with all the issues of interiority and exteriority that come with it. It is an attempt at preserving a curated memory, as the loss of memory is a kind of delegitimizing event for peoples, nations, sub-groups, etc. It is no secret that most of the film heritage of tropical nations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia has been lost to posterity due to the lack of proper storage facilities in adverse climates or resources being placed on more important matters, or the inability to make images in the first place. Yet it is also a western pretension and preoccupation that the regime of preservation should be placed on objects of memory.

July 16th, 2014:

Walking around the Partisan base in the forest we speak about the restoration process of the museum.

JS: Look, the wood is decaying and at one point someone will change the last authentic board, or maybe they will decide not to. It is decaying faster and faster, because 70 years is a long time and the age is already visible on this wood, it wasn't meant to last for so many decades, it was built for maybe not even a year, that's what they hoped, that they wouldn't need more. And if you ask me, I am really surprised it is standing already for so many decades after it was built.

JK: I find it also interesting that around 80 percent of the original wood is preserved. But it is also interesting, western versus eastern understanding of monuments. To compare the Parthenon on one hand and a Japanese temple on the other. The Parthenon is a 'monument', which is a symbol of western civilization, of Greece, of democracy, it doesn't matter, it stands there as it is and it is slowly falling apart. On the other hand, in Japan there is a wooden temple, which they demolish completely every 15 to 20 years and make a new one from new wood and this has been going on for centuries already. And they don't see the point in the material, but in the symbol of the temple. Well, they can make the same temple and change it. And the wood is new every time, while we have the Parthenon, which is slowly falling apart.

BR: We accumulate history...

JK: While they refresh it.

51. *The Model Image & The Poor Image; Or, To Project An Image Is To Preserve It:*

I always oscillate between wanting my work to live online or not. It is not due to an ideological stance to fully relinquish the work to the vast ‘digital commons,’ but more as a node of existence and a point of access for anyone interested. To control your images is to control their presentation experience. I make work for a cinematic venue and intend the material to be shown there. Like many filmmakers in my position, if the film is viewed elsewhere I do not count it as actually experiencing the piece. But this brings up an interesting contemporary question of audiovisual archive theory.

In her book *Saving Cinema* the archivist and professor Caroline Frick suggests that because the question of *access* has always been binary opposite of *preservation* in the realm of the archives,¹⁴⁴ perhaps in the ‘digital age,’ “widespread, bountiful access is, itself, preservation.”¹⁴⁵ By relinquishing the fetish of the *original carrier*, as called by audiovisual archivists, and favoring widespread proliferation and copying, one subverts both paradigms of the modern archive: the custodial claim to present and preserve a *national heritage*, and the regime of copyright law and ownership.

I must confess that although I consider seeing something in its original format, i.e. *cinema*, the only means of really *seeing* it, I recognize that the only way I have access to much of what I would like to watch or what some people can only watch, is online. In the lineage of the programs of Benjamin and Kracauer,¹⁴⁶ the artist Hito Steyerl has called this circulating contemporary digital image, the *poor image*, as opposed to the *model image* of Cherchi Usai:

The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image, distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution. The poor image is a rag or a rip; an AVI or a JPEG, a lumpen proletariat in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded,

144. In that they are mutually exclusive (a fully accessible film cannot be preserved) and yet mutually dependent (why preserve a film if it is not accessible?).

145. Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). 153.

146 Steyerl’s notion of the ‘Poor Image’ can be read as an attempt to update the projects of image lacuna of Benjamin (*Arcades Project*) and Kracauer (*The Mass Ornament*) for a contemporary moment. Though I think she falls short for reasons explained in the text.

shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends toward abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming. The poor image is an illicit fifth-generation bastard of an original image. Its genealogy is dubious. Its file names are deliberately misspelled. It often defies patrimony, national culture, or indeed copyright. It is passed on as a lure, a decoy, an index, or as a reminder of its former visual self. It mocks the promises of digital technology. Not only is it often degraded to the point of being just a hurried blur, one even doubts whether it could be called an image at all. Only digital technology could produce such a dilapidated image in the first place.¹⁴⁷

The poor image exists as a social relation with a fundamental emphasis placed on the migration of *content* over the *fidelity of the original*. The poor image escapes the 'archive' because of its valuelessness as *degraded*. As the poor image disregards its visual substance "it recovers some of its political punch and creates a new aura around it. *The aura is no longer based on the permanence of the "original," but on the transience of the copy.*"¹⁴⁸ There is a historical precedence to this as when a 'lost' film is rediscovered it is usually in the form of a copy projection print, viewed and then forgotten in a closet somewhere. Steyerl ties the movement and function of the poor image to the neoliberal restructuring of post-socialist and post-colonial states, "while some nation-states are dismantled or fell apart, new cultures and traditions are invented and new histories created. This obviously also affects film archives — in many cases, a whole heritage of film prints is left without its supporting framework of national culture"¹⁴⁹ which are then sold off. The boundless privatization of national resources also included the commodifying of intellectual and cultural content. This put along side the 'digital revolution' that aims at the cheap, frictionless, and controlled circulation of images, in turn creates the piracy and appropriation that announce the poor image.

The poor image isn't only artistic expression or 'lost' ephemera, but it is also pornographic, racist, and paranoid. It lives seamlessly in both 'capitalist media assembly lines and alternative audiovisual economies'. The poor image allows for the commodification of what had been once left out of the archive, what has been called the 'orphan' image, that with little exploitable or

147. Steyerl, Hito. *The Wretched of the Screen*. E-Flux Journal. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012). 32

148. Ibid., p.42 my emphasis

149. Ibid., 38.

marketable quality and no national significance.¹⁵⁰

With the poor image, Steyerl proposes an adjustment in image value from the old paradigm of exchange value and the fidelity of the original, to another form of value in addition that one might imagine defined by “velocity, intensity, and spread”,¹⁵¹ as a dematerialization of the image that allows it to be compressed and rapidly circulate, to change form depending on its use. This new image value would for Steyerl, “on the one hand, [operate] against the fetish value of high resolution. On the other hand... [it is] perfectly integrated into an information capitalism thriving on compressed attention spans, on impression rather than immersion, on intensity rather than contemplation, on previews rather than screenings.”¹⁵² The poor image operates between these polarities, challenging the fetish value of the original carrier, be it a film negative or a DCP, and also easily conforming to the contemporary demands of image commodification in digital circulation.

52.

Today, the promised ‘celestial digital jukebox’ is a chimera. The vast amount of recorded material produced everyday in the world cannot be equally preserved nor accessed. Digital saturation and proliferation is certainly one way to *re-perform* the image. By submitting to the ‘digital commons’ one indeed subverts the curatorial power of the archive. Yet through a hidden capture that presents itself as a democratization of media, the maker relinquishes what little power they have to corporate stewards of images whose primary interest is inherently profitability, as opposed to a trained archivist, educated in the problematics of the archive and intrinsically passionate about the context within which a work was created.

Frick’s *holistic* argument for the digital commons as a path to a more just representation in images, predicated on the fact that it is closer to an ‘indigenous’ set of object relations,¹⁵³ is

150. Frick, *Saving Cinema*, 120.

151. Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, 41.

152. *Ibid.*, 42.

153. Frick, *Saving Cinema*, 174.

misleading. It specifically refuses to acknowledge that we live in a state of advanced capitalism that seeks to appropriate all things, something that those societies arguably did not contend with. The digital commons, in fact is no commons at all, but a dematerialization of capital that exists as a broader trend in the 'sharing economy.'¹⁵⁴ It is a reflection of neoliberal policy, a kind of capture or accumulation of resources at the lip-service of democratization and 'public', but that also acts as a means of diverting all media through controlled technology that every 3-5 years must be upgraded and renewed. The digital commons is therefore just as controlled of a space as that of the archive though it manifests itself differently.

The archive has always existed between the polarity of potential future revenue gains, and the paradigm of heritage. The digital commons wantonly commodifies the 'orphan' image that was once forgotten from the archive, but now finds its own use value in generating marketing revenues. Although the notion of the poor image directly challenges the hegemony of the archive and object oriented preservation discourse, it still fails to escape capture.

53.

The contemporary archive, like the museum, is in a state of reevaluating its role in society. To conserve the original carrier, and protect the event of its creation, means that all future options are kept open. Certainly there will be eventually a media form beyond the digital and its set of relations, though we cannot quite conceptualize what that will look like. An archivist would be rash to now throw out their collections of original prints and negatives. Yet the poor image suggests a different kind of formal image relations, it favors content over proximity to the event of its capture, "the poor image is no longer about the real thing — the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about conformism and exploitation. In short: it is about reality."¹⁵⁵

I cannot propose any solutions to this dilemma, I can only include it in the conversation and

154. Example: Airbnb owns no property yet is the largest hotel in the world. Uber owns no cars yet is the largest taxi service. Etc.

155 Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, 44

think about it in relation to my work. I wouldn't want to create different classes of images, the model and the poor, but to just think about how my own work will potentially circulate in today's image economy. Much like our inability to capture the *real* in an image and only stand by it, and much like our inability to access the revolutionary event except through its traces, the *model image* is a concept that can only be gestured at, there are only approximations through various re-performances of it. To view the original carrier in its intended context it to get as close as possible to it, yet the poor image is still a valid trace.



CONCLUSIONS

Film isn't the sort of history that deals with wood and ashes, it's the living memory of the flames. There's a history that patrols the cemetery... and another form of history that tries to be 'a resurrection of the past,' a redemption of the past: that's memory, something that can be only realized in a work of art.¹⁵⁶

- Youssef Ishaghpour, *Cinema: The Archeology of Film and The Memory of A Century*

What is gained and what is lost in this migration between cinema and text? This text has given me the opportunity to lay out my source material and the historical constellation that has informed me thus far. It has allowed me to probe various theoretical influences in relation to my practice and my instincts for making work in general. However, the text cannot replace the film. They fill in the gaps of one another, and this has been by design. The film is a kind of actualization of the text. It is the raw experience that shows rather than tells. It traces the palimpsest of the landscape in its immersivity, rather than through the rhetorical mode. But the text acts like a collection of footnotes emanating from the piece, anchoring it to the world outside it's constructed universe, and supporting its meta-structures. My direct goal was for both to exist on their own while being in dialogue and mutually supportive.

To make a film is not simply to make a complete end product of research, but it is an ongoing and unfolding of research in itself. It is stepping into a current to test the waters, reflecting on where they came from, but yet always standing in relation to this very moment, communicating it. Standing here and looking back, this point marks a trail marker, painted onto the side of a tree or a stack of rocks, marking the way ahead. For this text, I appropriated the form captured by Fischinger in *Walking From Munich to Berlin*, to drift through the material, taking an image here and there at moments of interest on the route; to collect a constellation of meaning and allowing

156. Godard, Jean-Luc. *Cinema: The Archeology of Film and the Memory of a Century*. English ed. (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2005). 24

for a triangulation between reference points. Doing so allowed me to chart out the material in relation to the experience of making the film, and think about how it will possibly circulate in the future. Yet, from the outset of this project I have had to walk a narrow line in thinking about an audience. How can this film and this text live between those who know nothing of this history and those all too familiar with it? Who am I as an outsider in relation to this material? How can I communicate it? How can I give it form?

Perhaps the gap between the image and the text that is found in this migration can be best approached through what I consider to be a shortcoming of the idea of the 'poor image'. If the poor image is no longer about the 'real thing' of the model image but that of conformism and exploitation, I wonder who's reality does Steyerl speak of? Not only does it establish a class struggle between images, but it also denies the existence of a reader of images in the equation. The question of the *model image* and the *poor image* must not be relegated to an empty formalism, because it ignores the entire affect of the image. The reader-subject is absent in the discussion that focuses solely on modes of delivery and accumulation of image data. The discussion must continue on to deal with how one learns from images, how they can be read like a text, and set into action. Understanding the 'reader of images' was a primary preoccupation of Benjamin in the *Arcades Project*:

The historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time. And, indeed, this acceding "to legibility" constitutes a specific critical point in the movement at their interior. Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each "now" is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time [...] It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural [bildlich]. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical—that is, not archaic images. The image that is read—which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.¹⁵⁷

157. Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1999). 462-3.

To read an image is to return to its moment of legibility, the event of its creation. I return to the film archive in the forest, to its contents, and share them here as clues to be read. Maker and reader merge within the constellation, which intersects the archival image, testimony, site, and artifact or clue. The constellation is a montage that, although fragile and a fragment, points back to the event and the imprint of its “critical moment”. By looking at the cinema produced at specific moments in time, we can follow the trajectory of the history of what came after the People’s Liberation Struggle through its traces in visual culture, how it has been represented, remembered, instrumentalized, and its echos throughout society today. The films provide a convenient alibi within which to explore such a thread as they are artifacts of a certain zeitgeist, and are by no means comprehensive. With this project, I aspire to take up what Gal Kirn¹⁵⁸ and Miklavž Komelj¹⁵⁹ have already charted out to a great extent in their writing, that of a return to the event of the National Liberation Struggle; to reactivate its images in the light of the contemporary, as a distant reference point with which to better understand today’s world. Stereyl neglects to articulate this struggle within the poor image as if it were an empty technological container, containing various objects and subjects, bodies and languages. I believe however, that the struggle is embedded within the image and emanates from it be it ‘model’ or ‘poor’. To reiterate Badiou, “there are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths.”¹⁶⁰ Here lies the paradox of the archive, to project a film is to erode its materiality, yet to project a film is also to preserve it, in its proliferation and in the mind of the reader. To only see a film as a container for circulating ‘content’ merely leaves it open for continued commodification and in the end denies its transcendental potential as a *re-performance*.

By now I have answered the initial questions of ‘why this history, why this geography.’ Unlike Germany, Slovenia hasn’t had a reckoning with its fascist past as the lines of guilt seem more blurred there today than ever. In an overall climate of rising right-wing movements within

158. Kirn, “Transformaiton of Memorial Sites in The Post-Yugoslav Context.”, et. al.

159. Komelj, Miklavž. *Kako Misliti Partizansko Umetnost?*. (Ljubljana: Založba /*cf., 2009).

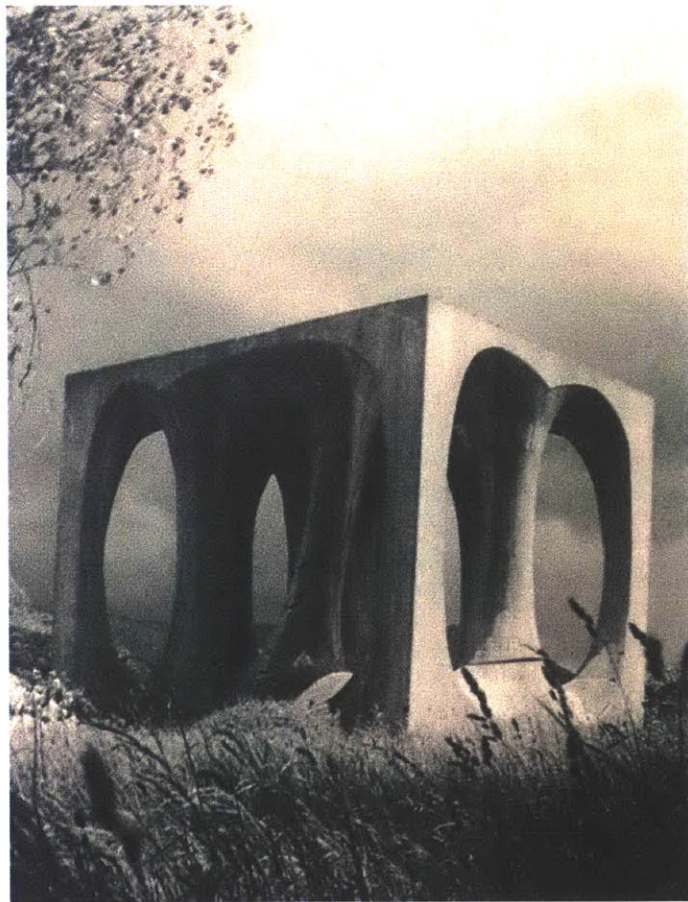
160. Badiou, Alain. “Bodies, Languages, Truths.”

Europe and internationally, it has become vitally important to reclaim the images of struggle in the face of the revisionism that masks itself as national reconciliation, and anti-totalitarianism. The migration between the film image and the dematerialized digital image was a migration that occurred in the wake of the collapse of socialism and the neoliberal takeover of the so-called 'post-socialist' states. What untold sums of images have been lost in transition? With the edit of the historical record comes new ideological imperatives that in turn cause an edit in the archive. Although the images of the National Liberation Struggle cannot encompass the real of the event, the images brush up against it and, as fragments, point to it as something that was indeed experienced. However, just as the landscape of the forest is in a constant state of erosion, so is the image.

Perhaps this is the root of my fascination, and the keystone of this project. The struggle against erosion is all consuming. Everything is eroding: this karst landscape of caves and endless sinkholes, the memory of the National Liberation Struggle, the films that keep the contact alive, the monuments in the forest, the geology itself, the middle class, all of it. Erosion is the unifying theme. Human time comes into contact with the profound indifference of geological time. I think my initial interest in making films came out of a naive belief in the permanence of the image. To be so moved by the images of Tarkovsky for example, something that seemed so eternal in its scope and reach, that was a life-project that I would want to give myself to. Perhaps this project was a means to come to terms with this lingering affinity. How does it hold up in this reality of erosion, that today seems so accelerated and inherently unstable? How can one come to terms with it? Working through this project I have understood that there is truth in the fragment, and that "loving a disappearing image means finding a way to allow the figure to pass while embracing the tracks of its presence, in the physical fragility of the medium."¹⁶¹ Its truth projects itself infinitely outwards into the future. A work can be complete in its fragment. This material, its representations in the cinema, the traces of clues in the landscape, cannot be

161. Marks, *Touch*, 96

simply limited to a specific national history. To do so would deny the internationalist reality of the Liberation Struggle and its relevance today. My role as an 'outsider' is to draw attention to the event to the best of my abilities, to gather its clues that I come across, to claim it as a point of reference, as a moment where the glimmer of an alternative reality was attempted. If anything we need to seek out more of these moments. They are like fireflies glowing at the 'end of history.'



IMAGES

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- p. 38: Clockwise from top-left: (Photo: MNZS); *Dry Country*, (Author); Gas Fire - Postojna Cave 24 April, 1944; (Photo: MNZS); Šumeča Cave Map Diagram - (Yuan, 1998); (Photo: MNZS).
- p. 39: Shishkin; Top: *Brook In A Birch Grove* (1883) The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (<http://blistar.net/images/photos/300f11865370aca96882708fa1557d07.jpg>); Bottom: *Rain in an Oak Forest* (1891) The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (<http://www.artsait.ru/art/sh/shishkin/img/28.jpg>)
- p. 40: L. Atget (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eug%C3%A8ne_Atget,_The_Panth%C3%A9on_-_Getty_Museum.jpg) R: Atget (http://artxart.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/atget_saint_cloud1.jpg)
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- p. 55: *Dry Country* still (Author)
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- p. 59: Agitprop Division (Photo: MNZS), both
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- p. 61: Still Frames; *Trije Spomeniki (Three Monuments)* Dir: Povh, 1958
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- p. 68: Still Frames; *Tri (Three)* Dir: Petrović, 1965
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- p. 74: *Dry Country* still (Author)
- p. 75: Still Frames; *Robinson in Space*, Dir: Keiller, 1997
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- p. 88: L: Monument in Kočevski Rog forest at Jelendol, 1956 (Image: Dolenjska Muzej)
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FILMS

- Walking From Munich to Berlin (München-Berlin Wanderung)*, Dir: Fischinger, 1927
On Our Own Land (Na Svoji Zemlji) Dir: Štiglic, 1948
Night and Fog (Nuit et Brouillard) Dir: Resnais, 1955
Three Monuments (Trije Spomeniki) Dir: Povh, 1958
Three (Tri) Dir: Petrović, 1965
Early Works (Rani Radovi) Dir: Žilnik, 1969
Shoah, Dir: Lanzmann, 1985
Histoire(s) du Cinema, Dir: Godard, 1988-98
Tito Amongst The Serbs For a Second Time (Tito Po Drugi Put Medju Srbima) Dir. Žilnik, 1994
Robinson in Space, Dir: Keiller, 1997
The Sky Turns (El Cielo Gira) Dir: Álvarez, 2004
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