

Éva T. Bortnyik and Csaba Tubák

Éva Tubák-Bortnyik

born 1945 in Cluj, Romania. Studied painting in Cluj. Lives in Vienna.

Csaba Tubák

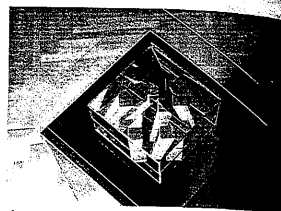
born 1943 in Cluj, Romania. Studied business administration in Cluj. Computer expert (software development). Lives in Vienna.

Joint exhibitions and film screenings

- 1982 *d'Atelier Symposion*, Paris
- Festival of Experimental films, Budapest
- 1983 *Einstellung-Ausstellung*, Großweikersdorf
- 1984 *Exakte Tendenzen*, Schloß Buchberg, Buchberg am Kamp
- Begegnungen*, International Symposium, Breitenbrunn
- Österreichische Filmtage, Wels
- 1985 *Raumkonzepte*, Buchberg, Fészek Galéria, Budapest
- Collegium Hungaricum, Vienna
- 1988 Fészek Galéria, Budapest
- 1989 *d'Atelier Symposion*, Szombathely
- Symmetrie*, National Gallery, Budapest
- 1992 *Hungarian Experimental Films*, Galéria National du Jeu de Pomme, Paris
- 1993 *Rend és Káosz*, Academy for Fine Arts, Barcsay Hall, Budapest
- A-Symmetrie*, Kilátó Galéria, Budapest
- 1994 *Ann-Art*, International Symposium, St. Anna-See
- 1996 *4 x 4*, Leopold Bloom Galéria, Szombathely
- Festival of Austrian and Hungarian Experimental Films, Budapest; Vienna
- Super 8 lebt*, Vienna
- 1999 *Perspektiva*, Műcsarnok, Budapest

The Deluded Eye, 1996

The light guided by the plane lens system seems to break the rules of perspective by touching the spatial composition made of geometrical forms. The deluded eye gives up its instinctive attempt to "correct," only to discover that it has become one of the active creators of the work.

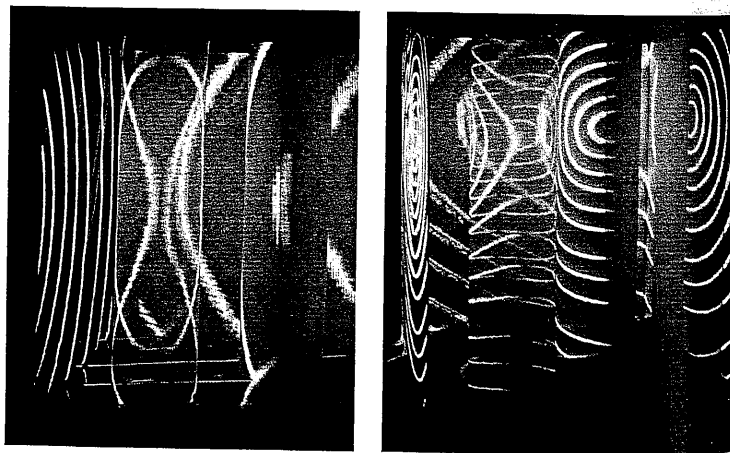


Éva T. Bortnyik and Csaba Tubák
The Deluded Eye, 1996

Transit VI, Video Installation, 1996

Two video players show films in synchronicity. They project onto a box installed in the darkened space, whose walls are punctured with a network of holes. Two same-size cylinders, one white and one translucent, are also set up. Hidden from view, the projectors form a right angle, making it possible to see both a front and side projection of the film at the same time. Since the spectator does not see the installation from the angle of the room's diagonal axis, he sees two very different images of the same film.

As the machines run, back light is allowed to escape through the holes in the black walls. During the projection, these streaks of light become sources of light, giving off active energy. The surfaces are moved by hand, providing a counterbalance for the strictly geometrical characteristics of the work. Whereas the stationary or slowly moving streak of light produces a sharp image, the accelerating one widens; the form dissolves and loses its sharpness as well as its luminous intensity at the same rate of acceleration. During the projection, the holes in the walls passively transmit the light, as an external force. The objects placed in the dark environment intercept the streaks of light. However, the spectator does not realize that the objects are being illuminated, but instead falls prey to the illusion that they are giving out light themselves. At the beginning of the projection, the viewer's eye instinctively tries to follow the movements of the streaks of light. Yet the eye soon realizes that the visual experience lies in the interplay of space, time, and light. Sometimes the spatial experience dominates; at other times, the perception of movement has a stronger effect, or the aesthetic impact of the light comes to the fore. The musical soundtrack is the fourth factor reinforcing the visual effect; at the same time, it helps to filter disturbing elements from the world outside. Manipulating the speed of the projection increases the overall effect of the spectacle. The material was recorded in real time, but is played back over a longer period of time.



Éva T. Bortnyik and Csaba Tubák, *Transit VI*, 1996, video installation

Beyond Art: A Third Culture

Peter Weibel

Viennese Formal Film (2005)

1944-1948

In 1925, Arnold Schönberg, founder of the New Viennese School of Music, wrote to Josef Matthias Hauer, the actual inventor of the dodecaphonic system:

For instance, I have also observed numerical symmetries in my own work, such as the First Quartet, where so much that is divisible by five unconsciously occurs. Or in the Serenade, where the theme consists of variations of two times fourteen tones in eleven bars, and the entire movement is only seventy-seven bars long on purpose; or in the sonnet with its fourteen, eleven-bar lines.

In 1928 he wrote about the third movement (composed in 1920) of the *Serenade Opus 24*:

The numerical relations are the only interesting things about this piece. They are deliberately used here as the basis for construction.

On the genesis of his twelve-tone technique in 1937:²

After 1915, the goal of my work was always to consciously base the construction of my work on a thought that guarantees unity, which would not only give rise to all the rest of the thoughts but also determine their accompaniment, the "harmonies."

Schönberg found this basic unifying principle, which is bound to the classical forms of counterpoint, in the twelve-tone technique. The word counterpoint is a derivation from *punctus contra punctum*, which can mean "point against point" or "note against note," or (1) whole notes against wholes, (2) two notes against one, meaning half notes, (3) four notes against one, meaning quarter notes, or (4) syncopation. In the serial technique, we will again find the four classical forms of counterpoint (prime, inversion, retrograde, retrograde inversion). In the twelve-tone technique, the twelve tones of the chromatic scale (the twelve half tones of the octave) appear in a particular, unchanging succession throughout the entire piece. In this constructed succession, none of the twelve tones can be repeated before all of the others have had their turn. All twelve tones have the same rights; there is no longer a central keynote. Each one of the twelve chromatic-scale tones can be used as a point of departure for both the basic series and every other form of the series. The four producing types or forms of the series are the base form, inversion (mirroring), retrograde (backward movement) and retrograde inversion. There are four series of twelve tones each. Each series of notes thus has forty-eight possible forms, whereby as many different connections as possible should be created through correspondences within the series, such as symmetries (mostly of a numerical nature), analogies, arranging them into cells, etc. We can see that classic canonic forms such as retrograde canon and mirror canon are also resurrected in the series. The term "serial" came from the description of the *Composition with Twelve Notes Related Only to One Another*. Yet it was in Webern's work that the series first took on the aspect of a function of intervals — a hierarchical function that creates permutations and proclaims itself in an arrangement of intervals. So it was thanks to Webern's decisive steps that new music began.

In contrast to Schönberg, whom one can accuse of thematic composition and romanticism, Webern recognized the inner nature of the serial technique. For him, the row is a prototype, a nucleus, from which everything else follows:

No, the twelve-tone series is not a theme in general. However, by dint of the unity now guaranteed by other means, I can also work without a theme — and thus more freely. The series provides the context.

Webern's series technique set the tone for serial and aleatoric composing. Following Webern, the series principle was extended to all characteristics of the phenomenon of sound: numerical relationships between intervals of pitch, length, volume, and tone. Serial thinking was applied to the structure of the entire piece. The law of the series governing the sequence of notes and pitches was applied to the proportional sequences of length of notes, volume, tone, etc. This led to the most important motto for the 1950s musical avant-garde: 'equal opportunities for all parameters,' which meant the 'equality of all twelve tones.' The attentive reader will probably already be aware, perhaps through the choice of words (proportion, interval, numbers, etc.), that in this discussion I am basically referring to the sources for the first structural films. Minor changes in vocabulary will make a cinematographic analysis out of this musical one. Apart from the evidence of the persons involved (Kubelka, Tony Conrad, Michael Snow, etc. are also musicians) this analysis shows that early structural films arose from musical inspiration, unlike the later structural films whose sources were based in problems

1. Hauer described himself as the "spiritual father of twelve-tone music" and published the first piece on twelve-tone music in 1920.
2. Anton Webern, *Der Weg zur Neuen Musik* (Vienna, 1960) p. 31.



Peter Kubelka, Ferry Radax
Mosaik im Vertrauen (Mosaic
in Confidence), 1954-55

of visual perception. This dependence of formal film on music as a highly developed, formal (non-representative) art is already evident in the works of its greatest early master, Viking Eggeling. The fact that music was a source can be seen not just in film titles such as *Horizontal-Vertical Mass*, *Horizontal-Vertical Orchestra*, and *Diagonal Symphony*, but also in the various theoretical terms for his *Presentation of Motion Art* (such as *General Basis of Painting*), as well as in the technique he used to compose.

The founder of the Viennese School of Formal Films, Peter Kubelka, has been deeply influenced by Webern. Webern's style coined the following epithets: the courage to be ascetic, tone ascetics, serial music architect, musical aphorist, concise style, musical shorthand, abstraction, form molecules, permutation processes, pointillist style, and obsession with formal purity to the point of silence, etc. Webern's intention to articulate the form against a backdrop of simple principles led him to many different kinds of reduction, not only as in *Opus 24 (Concert for New Instruments)*, where the series does not consist of twelve, but four times three tones instead, and the relation between the three tones in all four cells (three groups of tones) the same. In limiting himself to a small number of interval relations, he was expressing his preference for exploring the musical microcosm, the small form. Webern developed compositions whose brevity and concentrated dynamics led to the borders of perceptive possibilities, especially in concert halls. He was therefore accused of "cutting ties with the listener." His shortest works are *Sechs Bagatellen für Streichquartett* (Six Bagatelles for String Orchestra), *Opus 9, Fünf Stücke für Orchester* (Five Pieces for Orchestra), *Opus 70, Drei kleine Stücke für Violoncello und Klavier* (Three Small Pieces for Cello and Piano), and *Opus 11*, all limited to a total of ten bars. In its entirety, *Opus 9* (1913) is less than four minutes long.

The end of the Webern's style of compression was the reduction of music to the single note and interval. This gave rise to the "pointillist style" — composition with points (see also counterpoint) — between 1950 and 1955. This tendency towards brevity, to contraction, this way of thinking in single notes and intervals led to a final reduction: the emancipation of the pause — an enormous renewal in the area of rhythm, a concept which binds the note to the pause by means of exact organization. Music is not just the art of notes, but rather more of a counterpoint made up of sound and silence! (Boulez). Webern's technique of orrisis led to an attitude toward the pause that had been previously unimaginable in musical history. Accordingly, the pause had a unique optical appearance in the notation system. For Webern, the pause was, for the first time, the "component of a rhythmic structure and a dynamic value at the same time" (H. K. Metzger, *Series 2/49*), because the pause and the note share a common feature: duration. Ever since Webern developed this art of note and pause, music is not only the art of sound, but also the art of silence. How important silence/emptiness have been since then, and how they led to a more open attitude toward "non-musical tones" is testified to both by the title of John Cage's first book, *Silence*, as well as his musical praxis: "He needed to attach himself to the emptiness, to the silence. Then things — sounds, that is — would come into being of themselves" (Cage). A reference to Wittgenstein's understanding of music is interesting in this context. In his *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik* (Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics), he gave special emphasis to the structural aspects of music (especially Viennese classical music) and worked out the concept of "structural hearing." This was supported by Webern, and later, Theodor W. Adorno, as well as Berg, who spoke of the "discernment" of a connection, although Webern had already insisted that it "need not be perceived." We see, therefore, that the concept of structure played a role in music decades earlier than it did in avant-garde film. This rather lengthy musical outline is justified, not simply because it is a theoretical introduction to formal film, but also because it supports my thesis that Austrian art also contains strong constructive/formal tendencies, revived in post-war Vienna — and not just the Expressionist tradition of Klimt, Schiele, Gerstl, and Kokoschka.

The poetry of the Vienna Group, for example, shows extreme formal tendencies. Gerhard Rühm (born 1930), who first became active in 1954, primarily in literature, was especially influenced by Webern, and not only musically. His *Ein-Wort-Tafeln* (One-Word Panels), and his *punktuellen dichtungen* (pointillist poems), as well as 1952's *Ein-Ton-Musik* (One-Note Music) are generated from Webern's discovery of the single-tone Jazz musician Oswald Wiener was influenced by Ernst Mach, Fritz Mauthner, and the Vienna Circle, among others. International formal influences came from Dada, literary Expressionism, and Constructivism. Thus, after 1954, there were constellations, formula poems, concrete poetry, written films (Rühm, in draft only), number poems, montages, drafts for a functional language by Rühm and Wiener, and drafts for plays with a basic serial organization. Formalism also intensified in the mechanical production of poems (already laid out in montages) such as in methodological inventionism, a mechanical procedure that was supposed to make it possible for anyone to write a poem. Artist and filmmaker Marc Adrian was also involved in this. A high point of these formal tendencies was reached with the text *Der Vogel singt. Eine Dichtungsmaschine in 571 Bestandteilen* (The Bird Sings. A Poetry Machine in 571 Parts) by Konrad Bayer (based on a draft from

Wiener), whose skeletal prose also reveals a search for a reductionist form. In 1958 and 1959, both of the literary Cabarets gave presentations, which were comparable to the later Fluxus actions and Happenings.

By the mid-to-late 1950s, a complex cultural climate (clearly not an official one) had already emerged in which new, formal paths were taken. Naturally, they occasionally mixed with contemporary trends such as existentialism, neo-verism, etc. The genesis of Viennese formal film can be observed within this cultural climate. The preoccupation with time — as a derivation from those Viennese definitions of music as a way to structure time — was already evident in the first films by the earliest representative of Viennese formal film, Herbert Vesely, before he emigrated to Germany and (cum grano salis) took to making films for television in 1955. *An diesen Abenden* (These Evenings, 1952) based on a poem from Trakl, is definitely Expressionist; however, the picture composition, editing, and sound are already very formal in style. *Nicht mehr fliehen* (No More Running, 1955, 35 mins.), with music by Gerhard Rühm, is an amazing documentary of time — literally, due to its treatment of time — and thereby of the narrative form, too. "The mosaic of images and sounds tore open the structure of the plot and created a network of circumstances and feelings — an ambivalent construction" (E. Schmidt Jr.). This construction is similar to the structure that dominates the film *Mosaik im Vertrauen* (Mosaic in Confidence, 1955), by Peter Kubelka and Ferry Radax. Vesely also employed this independently developed formalism in the movie he had begun planning in 1959, *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* (The Bread of the Early Years, 1962), based on a Heinrich Böll story.

Formal time structures are likewise a noticeable feature of early experimental works by Ferry Radax, who attended film schools in Vienna and Rome from 1953 to 1956. Radax was a cameraman for Vesely's *An diesen Abenden* in 1952, and he and Peter Kubelka filmed *Mosaik im Vertrauen* from 1954 to 1955. His 1954 film, *Das Floß* (The Raft) remained a fragment. The first part of the title, *Mosaic*, explicitly refers to the structure of the film, which is a network of relationships among documentary material (such as recordings of news shows), scenes enacted by amateurs, which were influenced by the then current neo-verism; and autonomous optical and acoustic elements. The sound: scraps of dialect, sounds from magnetophones, pistons, radio, etc. Sound and picture came together to form a new unit through montage, whose technique determined the entire structure of the film: rather than chronology, simultaneity came into play. By and large, films by Russian formalists Eisenstein and Vertov retained a narrative form, which was simply but forcefully interspersed with moments of montage; yet in this case, the entire film was constructed with montage. Montage no longer served merely to articulate meaning in a sequentially limited way, as in the expressive concept, but rather it was applied to the entire film: all parts of the film are connected. Vertov's sound-image montage was especially decisive in this process of expansion. Two courses became evident. The first was to transmit the overall structure of the montage to small working organisms, so that every tiny bit (the individual frame) follows a formal law, which would paradoxically lead to the total loss of the narrative (curiously enough, like the process of permutation, which contributed both to the discovery of the twelve-tone serial technique and its later dissolution). The alternate would be to allow the montage itself to become the narrative form. Kubelka followed the first path, Radax (and Vesely) the second. In Kubelka's work, the montage is transformed into serial



Herbert Vesely, *Nicht mehr fliehen* (No More Running), 1955
b/w, sound, 35 min.



Ferry Radax, *Sonne Halt!* (Stop, Sun!), 1959-62
b/w, sound, 40, 35 or 25 min. (three versions)

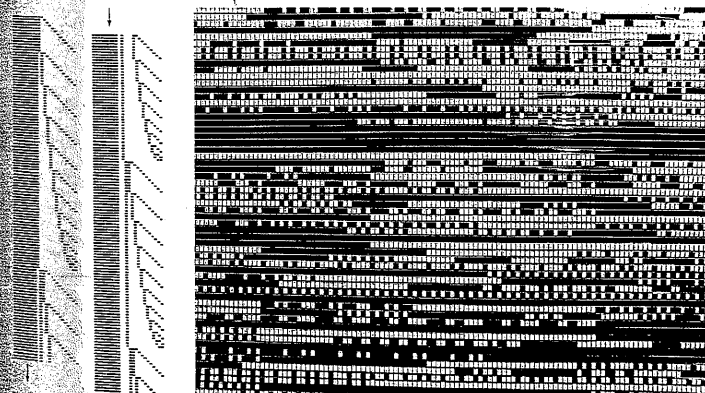
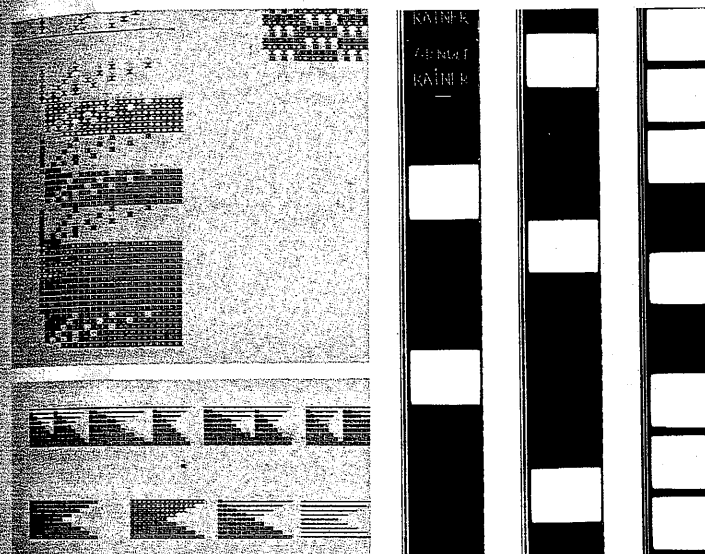
technique. Radax followed and refined the narrative montage in his next film, *Sonne halt!* (Stop, Sun!, 1956, 35 mm, 26 mins.), which featured Konrad Bayer, a member of the Vienna Group, as writer and actor. Bayer, by the way, had also collaborated already on *Mosaik im Vertrauen*. This formally rich and complexly organized avant-garde film expanded the very subtle counterpoint montage of image and sound with film techniques such as positive and negative images, time-lapse motion camera, short cuts, spatial and temporal breaks, etc. The fact that Kubelka turned away from narrative montage after *Mosaik* (1954-55) and followed the path already laid out in *Mosaik*, where the form of time was totally formalized by semi-narration, was based on Kubelka's strong grounding in music, especially the twelve-tone music of the Vienna School. In the reductive climate sketched out at the beginning of this article, and under the influence of the Webern discussion, Kubelka — to put it in brief, formal, technical terms (thus making it only partially valid) — transmitted and adapted twelve-tone techniques for film. This constellation was apparently more viable and typical in Vienna than in Paris or Hamburg. I can see two traditions that serve as both foundation and background for Kubelka's three purely formal films (*Adebar*, *Schwechater*, *Arnulf Rainer*): the Vienna School of Music and the films of Eggeling, Vertov, and Dreyer. Vertov was the strictest Russian formalist; he had already postulated a cinematic language, frame for frame: "Cinematic language is the art of writing with the film frame." He "mounted the film as a whole," and (diametrically opposed to Eisenstein) likewise took the path away from scenarios on his search for the cinogram. Straightforwardly, Kubelka adopted several of Vertov's statements such as "material — artistic elements of motion — are the intervals (the bridge from one movement to another), but not the movement itself." This interval theory in film is a natural counterpart to an interval theory in music. Kubelka also took on Vertov's quaternion, made up of image and sound relations as a way to articulate meaning in film. In the search for valid compositional principles of a syntactic, formal nature for film, Kubelka proceeded analogous to music, especially to Webern's. Time in film, like that in music, was considered denumerable; the sounds, as a point in time, became a frame. Just as Webern had reduced music to the single tone and the interval, Kubelka reduced film to the single frame and the interval between two frames. Just as the law of the series and its four forms determined the succession of tones, pitch, etc. the succession and number of frames, positive and negative, colors, emotional value, movement, stillness, etc. determined the film. As in serial music, filmmakers produced as many relationships as possible (mostly numeric) between these factors. Kubelka therefore called these films "metric films." The metrification of the means of art, already laid out in *Mosaik*, now became a metrification of the individual frame. He moved, so to speak (like Webern), from thematic to serial organization, and, also like Webern, he regarded the series of frames as a function of intervals. From these considerations arose Vienna's first pure photo-film, *Adebar* (1957).

Amazingly enough, in 1960, Rainer was not the ultimate high point of this particular development; Kurt Kren's *48 Köpfe aus dem Szondi-Test* (48 Heads from the Szondi-Test) introduced a new development, which at first glance might be considered a repeat of the first. Kren was familiar with Kubelka's films. He had, however, already completed his first film, *Versuch mit synthetischem Ton* (Experiment with Synthetic Sound), in 1957. However, a significant change of direction — from a musical structure to a perceptive one — cannot be overlooked. The title of Kren's second film, made in 1960, referred to a psychological perception test invented by Hungarian Lipót Szondi in 1947. An abstract graphic solution for the formal act of creation (as, for instance, in the abstract play of light at the close of Rainer) is rejected here. The succession of photographs (still frames) was not meant to analyze movement or synthetically simulate it, but rather to point out the process of perception itself and its accompanying psychic mechanisms, and thus offer a subject-intended (rather than the earlier object-intended) approach.

B. Hein, W. Herzogenrath, eds., *Film als Film: 1910 bis heute* (Cologne, 1977) pp. 174-179, pp. 216-218



Kurt Kren, *2160 48 Köpfe aus dem Szondi-Test* (48 Heads from the Szondi-Test), 1960 b/w, 4 min.
© VBK, Vienna, 2005



Peter Kubelka, *Arnulf Rainer*, 1958-60
35 mm, b/w, consisting of four elements: light and not-light, sound and silence, 24 x 24 x 16 frames

Peter Kubelka
born 1934 in Vienna. Since 1964 co-director of the Vienna Film Museum. In 1970 founder of Anthology Film Archive (J. Mekas, etc.) New York. From 1980 professor of film art at the Staedel-School in Frankfurt/Main. He lives in Europe and the U.S.A.

1987 Austrian Film Museum, Vienna
Kulturzentrum bei den Minoriten, Graz
1988 Secession, Vienna
1989 Fotohof Gallery, Salzburg
1995 Kunst-Halle, Krems
1996 1822-Forum, Frankfurt
2002 Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam
2003 *Viennale*, International Film Festival, Vienna
2004 *International Festival of New Film and New Media*, Split

Films
1955 *Mosaik im Vertrauen*, 35 mm, b/w and color, sound, 16 min.
1957 *Adebar*, 35 mm, b/w, sound, 69 min. 1/3 sec.
1958 *Schwechater*, 35 mm, color, sound, 1 min.
1960 *Arnulf Rainer*, 35 mm, b/w, consisting of 4 elements: light and non-light, sound and silence, 6 min. 24 sec.
1966 *Unsere Afrikareise*, 16 mm, color, sound, 12 min. 30 sec.
1977 *Pause!*, 16 mm, color, sound, 12 min. 30 sec.
Denkmal für die alte Welt (work in progress)

References:
Gabriele Jutz, Peter Tscherkassy, *Peter Kubelka — Eine Monographie* (Vienna: 1995).
Alexander Horwath, Lisl Ponger, Gottfried Schlemmer, *Avantgardefilm Österreich. 1950 bis heute* (Vienna: 1995).

Opseography Instead of Cinematography

Kurt Kren
born 1929 in Vienna. Co-founder of Austrian Filmmakers' Coop, 1968. Died 1998 in Vienna.

- Film Screenings**
- 1961 Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna
 - 1971 Cannes Film Festival
 - 1976 National Film Theater, London
 - 1979 Museum of Modern Art, New York
 - 1988 The Collective Films of Kurt Kren, Stadtkino, Vienna
 - 1992 festival voor experimentele kunst, Utrecht
 - 1994 personal-film-show-tour, USA
 - 1996 Secession, Vienna
- Group shows**
- 1970 International Underground Film Festival, National Film Theater, London
 - 1974 Projekt 74, Cologne
 - 1977 documenta VI, Kassel, film als film; Kunstverein, Cologne
 - 1978 Logical Art/Logische Kunst, Secession, Vienna
 - 1980 Film as Film, Hayward Gallery, London
 - 1990 Auf der Suche Nach Eden, Wien 1950-90, Museum for Art and History, Freiburg
 - 1992 steirischer herbst, Graz Identität: Differenz, Neue Galerie, Graz
 - 1993 Miteinander Zueinander, Rupertinum, Salzburg Erotische Photographien, Galerie Hummel, Vienna

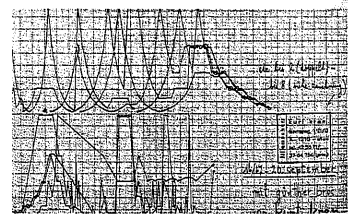
References:
Hans Scheugl, *Ex Underground. Kurt Kren. Seine Filme* (Vienna, 1996).
Kurt Kren, *Tausendjahre kino* (Vienna: Vereinigung bildender Künstler, Secession, 1996).
Kurt Kren, *Film Foto Wiener Aktionismus* (Vienna: Galerie Julius Hummel, 1998).

The laws of perception and the physiology of sight, such as afterimage, stroboscopic effect, and phi phenomena (all findings from experimental perception psychology), as well as corresponding technical methods such as multiple exposure, positive and negative copy, looping, et cetera, build the groundwork for the experimental films of Kurt Kren. Kren uses film materials and the cinematographic apparatus to experiment with perception and the mental processes that accompany and enable perception. This gives Kren a place in a tradition that began in 1900 with Ernst Mach and has continued to the present. In the 1950s and 1960s, there were advanced approaches and theories of optical art in Vienna advocated by people such as media artist Marc Adrian, writer Oswald Wiener, and artists Helga Philipp and Alfons Schilling. The formal visual language of Kren's film experiments therefore resulted from two directions: one, his experiments with processes of perception (faster cuts, fast viewing, single frame series, and series of frames) and two, his experiments with film material (black frame, trailer, mass technique, positive/negative copy, et cetera).

1961 Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Wien
1971 Cannes Film Festival
1976 National Film Theater, London
1979 Museum of Modern Art, New York
1988 The Collective Films of Kurt Kren, Stadtkino, Wien
1992 festival voor experimentele kunst, Utrecht
1994 personal-film-show-tour, USA
1996 Secession, Wien

1970 International Underground Film Festival, National Film Theater, London
1974 Projekt 74, Cologne
1977 documenta VI, Kassel, film als film; Kunstverein, Cologne
1978 Logical Art/Logische Kunst, Secession, Wien
1980 Film as Film, Hayward Gallery, London
1990 Auf der Suche Nach Eden, Wien 1950-90, Museum for Art and History, Freiburg
1992 steirischer herbst, Graz Identität: Differenz, Neue Galerie, Graz
1993 Miteinander Zueinander, Rupertinum, Salzburg Erotische Photographien, Galerie Hummel, Wien

Kurt Kren, *2160 48 Köpfe aus dem Szondi-Test* (48 Heads from the Szondi-Test), 1960 frame plan © VBK, Vienna, 2005



Kurt Kren, *16/67 20. September, 1960* frame plan © VBK, Vienna, 2005

Kren is not searching for the identity of image and movement, the language of motion, cinematography, or the surrogates of life. He interrupts motion, brings it to a stop; he cuts up the image, the gaze; he rips apart space and time and the way we naturally perceive them. The sliced up gaze not only slices up the flow of images, but also everything it perceives: the world, and the body through which the world is experienced. The sliced up glance, the sliced up body, and sliced up time form a logical chain. Kren's work makes reference to Vertov's thesis that the materiality of film is the actual medium, and to another thesis: that the intervals between the frames are the actual center of the film's configuration. In his films, Kren does not create moving images, but rather images of time. The perception of time can be experienced. He borrows the single frame from Vertov's language of film, not for the sake of movement, but in order to guide processes of perception. He borrows Marey's graphic method: the graphic score for dissecting time and movement in the frame, the graphic design and production methods for guiding the processes of perception. Kren's art is thus the language of seeing, the opseography; the study of the glance, of visual processes; the optical study of the processes of perception. In his films, therefore, we do not experience real space and natural time, but instead the time and space of cinematic media. This corresponds to Kren's preference for (re)filming media

reality. Many of Kren's films are recordings or appropriations of already existing photographs, posters, et cetera. His films refer again and again to media reality, a secondary reality. He is not satisfied with merely showing us that film is the art of illusory movement; rather, he presents it to us as the art of illusory perception. Out of the four fundamental factors of pure cinema — movement, material, light, and perception — Kren has built an artistic universe, where he experiments in particular with the perception of motion, images and with the observation of images in motion and their material substratum.

Peter Weibel



Kurt Kren, *31/75 Asyl (Asylum)*, 16 mm, 92 m, 8 min. 26 sec., silent © VBK, Vienna, 2005

Scheugl: *Asyl* was made with very complicated techniques. How did it come about?

Kren: I don't know. It was the first time I had ever lived in the country, and maybe I was a little unhappy about living there. I was always a city person. Maybe I went a little crazy there. Maybe I also saw the disunity of the whole. What I did technically: the film was shot in twenty-one days. Every day, it was processed through the camera once. There was a black mask in front of the camera with holes in it, which allowed the light to come through and light the film. The holes changed each day. All of the holes together would uncover the entire image over the course of the twenty-one days. In some sections, it's raining; in others, the sun is shining, or it's snowing. That was in the Saarland, in Germany, near the French border.

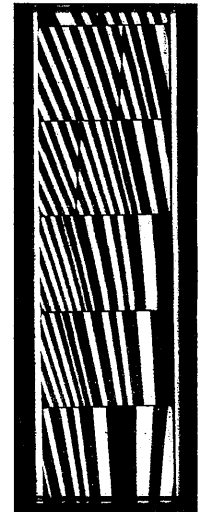
Scheugl: Contrary to your original description of yourself as not liking the country, the film's effect is quite beautiful, as if you had finally found asylum there.

Kren: The one thing is true, and the other is, too.

Scheugl: The changes in time and season that often play a role in your films — you were very closely exposed to them while you were there.

Kren: Yes, that's the schizophrenic element in it. I've always loved seasons, especially when they are changing — in spring and autumn.

Hans Scheugl, ed., *Ex Underground. Kurt Kren und seine Filme* (Vienna: PVS Publishing, 1996) p. 171, pp. 100f.



Kurt Kren, *11/65 Bild Helga Philipp*, 16 mm, 27 m, 2 min. 29 sec., b/w, silent © VBK, Vienna, 2005

The print of the Op Art image by Helga Philipp serves as blueprint for the film. Kren filmed the image, or parts of it, in individual image shots and without a system. On the screen, the black components appear to move, that is, the Op Art effect is carried out.