

Written Trailers

Harun Farocki

1944

I should have been born in Berlin, in the Virchow Hospital, but we left the city because of the bombing. I was born in Neutitschein, today Nový Jičín, at that time Sudetengau, today the Czech Republic. We stayed there for only a few weeks; we spent less time there than I have ever needed since then in order to explain that I'm neither a Czech nor a Sudeten German. I have also spent lots of time with the spelling of my name, Harun El Usman Faroqhi, until I simplified its spelling in 1969.

1945-1953

My father was Indian. He first trained as a pilot in Dessau; later he completed his first period of study with a Ph.D on The Hindu-Mohamedan Conflict from an Economic Point of View in Gießen, and then studied medicine in Berlin. My mother was German and grew up in Berlin. After her training as a foreign-language correspondent, she worked for a scientific society and then studied medicine for a few semesters. In 1947 we moved to India, where my father intended to settle down as a doctor. The civil war took us to different places. In 1949 we moved to Indonesia where my sister Suraiya and I went to school. First in Sukabumi, later in Jakarta; the school language was Dutch.

1953-1958

We moved back to Germany and lived in Bad Godesberg, a little town near Bonn in which only five houses had been bombed, where I attended a Jesuit School which was full of the sons of the economic and political elite. I saw my first Westerns and gangster films in the Burglichtspiele cinema. Other cultural experiences: 1958 in Cologne, the big Picasso exhibition; in Bonn at a school theatre, Thornton Wilder's Our Town.

1958-1962

My father set up a doctor's surgery in Hamburg. We moved into a terraced house and had a Mercedes. I saw the world premiere of Brecht's Saint Joan of the Stockyards. Things didn't go well at school. I went to a disreputable bar every day, and this helped me to rebel against my father. I ran away from home several times and wanted to be a writer.

1962-1966

I ran away once and for all, moved to West Berlin and, following the beatniks' example, I scraped a living with casual jobs and lived in various cheap flats. I also went to evening classes and finally took my A-levels. Occasionally I succeeded in getting a proposed review accepted for radio or a newspaper, less occasionally, a short literary text.

1966

This year I made my first film of three minutes duration for a Berlin television

channel. (Zwei Wege/Two Paths). Ursula Lefkes and I got married. I was admitted to the just-opened Berlin Film Academy, the DFFB. I also got my driving licence.

1967

I was thrown out of film school with five other students after an intermediate examination. This led to a big protest by the rest of the students. In the following summer the protest movement swelled enormously and in autumn we were re-admitted for a trial year. That summer I travelled through Venezuela and Colombia for several months in order to have a look at the revolution and the guerrilla movement, but I didn't find them.

1968

For once in my life I was ahead of Godard: at the beginning of the year we disrupted a festival of experimental film in Knokke, Belgium, fortunately not the films by Shirley Clarke and Michael Snow. In May my daughters Annabel Lee and Larissa Lu were born. I was thrown out of film academy again, this time with around 15 other students, because of political activity.

1969

My father Abdul Qudus Faroqhi, born 9 March 1901, died on 21 January 1969.

I made a short film with a budget of some DM15,000. (Nicht Löschbares Feuer/ Inextinguishable Fire, 1969). The producer at WDR, Reinhold W. Thiel, thought that the actors' way of speaking and acting was not stylised enough, or stylised in the wrong way and proposed that all the actors should be dubbed by two voices. Night after night I edited the working prints into synchronised loops, which turned out to be far too long, as I realised when I did the sound recording in a youth film studio where I could work for free. When the film had its premiere in Mannheim and I saw it for the first time on screen, I realised you could see my cameraman's girlfriend with her blonde curly hair who was taking a joyride in the aeroplane we hired to fly over Munich that stood in for a cropduster on a mission to drop pesticides over Vietnam. Critics blamed me for technical sloppiness and overcalculation. In those days things were changing quickly and a few months later the film was not regarded as awkward or cold any more; it actually gained a certain recognition, also beyond the anti-Vietnam War movement.

1970

Hartmut Bitomsky and I planned to film *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx; the first part, *Die Teilung aller Tage* (The Division of all Days), was completed in this year. We read Marx and Marx commentaries and texts on semiotics, cybernetics, didactics and learning machines. Our programme: "to make film scientifically and make science politically."

1971-1977

During the production of the second part of *Das Kapital – Eine Sache, die sich versteht* (15x) (Something Self Explanatory (15 x), 1971) – we overreached

ourselves completely. Before our daily shoot, with very little money and a small team, we had to accomplish Herculean tasks; for example collecting a donkey with a mini van and pushing it up three steps, which was much easier than motivating it to climb down again. Once Hartmut had to push a dolly with one hand and hold a prop into the image with the other, while performing a voice over. Another time we had to push a car up a steep ramp, and do so this very quickly because we were filming secretly in the Academy, where we were banned.

Out of stupidity or courage we sometimes gave an entire scene of some minutes to an extra from the job centre. When the film was finished the comrades who belonged to political parties were bound to dislike it for the simple reason that their own party hadn't commissioned it; the so-called undogmatic factions found it not undogmatic enough: if anybody can be a revolutionary, then anybody can be a filmmaker. We had tried to protect ourselves from this kind of criticism with our scientific pretension. We had also speculated that with our work we could reach film people who were after innovation and that this would offer us a niche in the cultural industry. This calculation didn't add up. For the next few years we could almost only get casual jobs to make a living. To me it looked as if we were being punished. We had tried to exploit the guilty conscience of those who had called for 'revolutionary film' or had nodded in agreement, but they now didn't want to be reminded of their guilty conscience or their nodding.

It wasn't easy to do anything political in television, firstly because I didn't want to understand politics as simply content or discourse. I was looking for an advanced political practice as promoted by the Groupe Dziga Vertov or Tel Quel. For example I was against intercuts or shot-countershots.

For a while I tried an alliance with the proletariat in the TV industry, with the female editors and cameramen (in those days the former were exclusively female and the others male). I talked to editors and published our conversations in the journal *Filmkritik*. We discussed worker participation and how it should affect the quality of production. If such participation had been seriously attempted or actually achieved, it would certainly not have improved my production possibilities.

In the early 1970s the WDR television channel instigated a series called *Glashaus*, which included TV criticism. I contributed the feature *Der Ärger mit den Bildern. Eine Telekritik von Harun Farocki* (*The Trouble with Images. A Critique of Television*, 1973) in which I examined the word-image relations in daily broadcasts. It wasn't difficult to demonstrate that television images didn't show what the commentary inferred from them.

That language is the key medium and that images are only nominally supposed to depict what the commentary addresses. My critique triggered agitated debates in the television industry. At that time, public-sector television had no competition and a yearly growth rate that was almost equal to that of the overall economy. It employed a host of functionaries who dealt with the requirements of the political parties, the church and other lobbyists. They also fielded the demands of the new political left, which was calling for new and different treatments of issues. But it was unable to deal with a critique of television's overall daily practice. And many people who were

covering new issues (women's liberation, reform of the education system) found my criticism unhelpful.

1977-1979

For many years I tried unsuccessfully to find the means for a film which would show that it was the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production that drove German industry into crisis and to Hitler. As Alfred Sohn-Rethel pointed out, they put Hitler into the saddle while they themselves were the horse. In autumn 1977 I started shooting with around DM30,000, which I had earned from other productions. Everyone in front of the camera received DM100 per day, everyone behind the camera DM50. Sometimes we worked in comparatively luxurious circumstances: while the lighting was being prepared I rehearsed with the actors in Ursula's flat, where the wardrobe was also located. But in the evenings I had to schlep heavy objects, convince an actress about our project – for four or five evenings, in the end successfully.

Shortly after completing the shoot, the body of the murdered Hans-Martin Schleyer was found. I had a gun in my flat which we had used as a prop, and in those days the police always came to a few hundred suspicious flats after a sensational event – they had also called on me a few times. In panic I got rid of the gun – but the police didn't come. After 10 years they finally knew who was using guns for artistic purposes.

After the filming was done I first had to do the work for which I had already been paid; and I hadn't kept in mind that you also spend money while you're earning it. *Zwischen Zwei Kriegen* (Between Two Wars) was completed in the summer of 1978, and working off its production costs lasted until late 1979. But by then I had learned how to earn money. Meaning that I learnt how to make use of the big television apparatus. Later on I read that the 1970s were the Golden Age of West Germany, and I only learned at the end of the decade how to skim off some of the profits. I probably only had the courage to make productions which didn't fit into any programme because I was surrounded by such wealth and energy. From 1979 until 2000 I was able to make one production every year with television finance, sometimes two or three.

1980-1982

For *Etwas wird Sichtbar*/Before your Eyes Vietnam (1982) I received around DM300,000 from ZDF. Two weeks before the shoot in 1980 I realised what I hadn't admitted to myself for a long time: that I had sided with the Vietcong without dealing with the politics of the victorious communist regime and without mentioning the boat people or the detention camps. I cancelled, and wrote a new script. A year later we began to shoot. We filmed on 35mm and had 50 days on location.

1983

We had a few days shooting in a studio belonging to the magazine *Playboy* in Munich, documenting how the centrefold with the nude girl was produced. (*Ein Bild*/ An Image, 1983) Some 10 years before I had watched a make-up artist painting a bad injury onto an actor's body. She rolled some synthetic

material into a small strand thinner than a tooth pick, glued it on in tiny curved portions, and this looked as if the skin had been broken open by a blow from a blunt item and as if the injured parts had swollen up – even before she painted on the blood. I thought it would be more appropriate to show how a wound is painted than to show a fight that results in a wound.

For a long time I had planned to relate the alienation effect not only to Brecht but also to pop art. I had the idea of documenting cultural-industrial production processes both at a distance and right down to the last detail with my camera. I came back to this again and again. The first of this series is *Make-Up* (1973). It shows in detail how a make-up artist paints a model's face. Using a technique that was often practised in the silent-film era, he covers a woman's face with masses of powder, which he then rubs deeply into the skin. Through the addition of black or red tones he produces a strong effect of plasticity. He transforms flesh into marble, he fossilises female beauty – later on I used parts of this production in *Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges* (Images of the World and the Inscription of War, 1988). Unfortunately I also staged a few things in *Make-Up*. The next title in this series was *Single. Eine Schallplatte wird produziert* (Single. A Record is Being Produced, 1979), and then later on also *Stilleben* (Still Life, 1997). In almost all of these cases we were keen to profit from the glamour of the studios in which we were filming, in many cases from their expensive lighting.

1984

I received DM80,000 from the Hamburg film subsidy for a film about Socially Useful Products. In the workers' movement criticism of products was mostly postponed until after the revolution. But in the 19th century there had already been a counter-movement, often anarchically inspired, which insisted that workers should fight not only for their salary and proper working conditions but also for producing something useful. I read a lot of books, brochures and pamphlets about the so-called conversion movement, which wanted to turn the armaments industry – which had become obsolete before the end of the Cold War – into something new. I also read Hannah Arendt's *Vita Activa* and other works of hers. During my research it became clear that it wouldn't be possible to work in the mode of an observational documentary film. Instead I had a kind of draft film or project film in mind, like Pasolini's *Appunti per una Orestide Africana* (Notes Towards an African Oresteia, 1969). Over many years I had collected material (for my last two films *Between Two Wars* and *Before your Eyes Vietnam*), which then went into a script with a kind of plot and characters who kind of carried the plot. This seemed an unnecessary detour to me now. I found a way in which I could make texts become an issue without the detour of an action. *Wie man sieht* (As You See, 1986) is also the only film of mine that is not sober, but has a somewhat drunken feel. Over the years I had cultivated a way of talking and drinking amongst friends in which you produce nonsense in a productive way. I practised this almost as an art, but in my work I was always seriously austere.

In 1984 the last issue of *Filmkritik* appeared, a magazine to which I contributed as an author and editor for more than 10 years. During its final years we had succeeded in organising a few television productions in order

to earn money for the increased printing costs. Once we realised that we would have a yearly deficit of DM20,000, we had to quit.

1985

I had dismissed decorating a political issue with a kind of story, but I still wanted to do a proper story film. 10 years before, I had read a short newspaper item about a man who in the heat of the moment had killed his wife and was now living with the sister of the dead woman. She pretended to be her dead sister, and there were also two children around. I worked on this theme again and again over the years, and now the production money came together, almost a million DM. It was only while casting that I realised I couldn't conceive of the actress I was looking for as a real person. And when the film was finished I realised that this newspaper item had only interested me because it didn't go into how the living woman was a substitute for the desired dead one.

I had to take more criticism and scorn for this film than for any other one, especially at its premiere in Hof. It felt as if the West German film business was taking revenge for all the impudence that my friends and I had produced over more than a decade in Filmkritik. We didn't think much of Fassbinder, Herzog and Reitz, and only approved of the early Wenders.

Today I don't want to see or show *Betrogen* (*Betrayed*, 1985). Some of it is really silly. The film pretends that it has been shot in 1958, under the restrictions of the studio system. In those days I thought that in some minor works of film history – in plot and acting, quite unspectacular – there would be something that was essentially cinematographic, and that this could become a starting point for completely different works. This was why Godard appreciated Hollywood and even John Ford appealed to Straub. I probably never got rid of this belief entirely. Aiming for this core idea is very presumptuous and needs a different kind of practical experience.

Before I made *Betrayed*, the film *As you See* hadn't been finished entirely. It came out in spring 1986. The film was rejected by the Berlin Film Festival's Forum and the Parisian Festival Cinéma du réel only showed it in a side series. It was shown at the Duisburger Filmwoche and later I was able to sell it to television. Because I worked for two years on these two films – for *Betrayed* I had to defer my fee – I didn't have time to earn any money, so I was initially very much in debt.

1987

During the late 60s I had heard about a training film that showed managers how to cope with their employees. For example, they were supposed to demonstrate how to screw someone up and how to praise somebody else. I couldn't find this film and asked myself if it had existed at all. I now proposed to a TV producer the idea of making a film about management seminars. It was unbelievably difficult to find such seminars. I started to doubt whether they even existed, but then I found a coach who wanted to be filmed at all costs and forced his students to agree to participate by telling them that if they weren't prepared to be filmed, their managerial skills couldn't be up to much. We installed our video equipment, several cameras and microphones in a

hotel in Bad Harzburg. I became anxious when the meeting room began to look more and more like a TV studio, so I had some floodlights coloured with pink, blue, green, purple and yellow foils.

In those days there were only three television channels in West Germany, and when the film was broadcast on a Thursday at 8.15 pm the other channels were only showing church issues and political debates, with the result that *Die Schulung* (Indoctrination, 1986) reached almost a third of the television audience. I also got a lot of letters, mainly from outraged PR agencies and consultants, asking what they were supposed to think about what they had seen – the film had no commentary. It was a surprise to me that I could gain more attention with a film that had been shot in only five days and edited in about four weeks than with other more labour-intensive productions. This film was also a great help with getting better funding from television. But what is more important was that these multiple production opportunities allowed me not to be restricted to only one approach and type of film, like so many other marginal filmmakers are, or have to be. I made shorter and longer films one after another or at the same time – direct cinema as well as films with an image-text construction.

I made an application to the North Rhine-Westphalian Film Fund with a paper in which I questioned the current status of film and photography, quoting a lot of Vilém Flusser, whose work, which had just been published in Germany, I admired a lot. I got the money and also further funding from WDR for this project, a 45-minute-long film. I was now in the very rare situation of having funds for a project whose specific mode had not yet been settled. I also had a lot of freedom in the choice of subject matter. By chance I read a text by Günter Anders in which he called on people to blockade access to nuclear weapons of mass destruction. When it became known in Britain and the US during the Second World War that the Germans were murdering millions of people, there was a demand to destroy the railway lines that lead to the camps. According to Anders this didn't happen but should have happened; and if we were serious about protesting against the impending destruction of the world, today we would have to blockade access to the missile silos.

During my research I found out that in 1944 American bombers had taken aerial photographs, which also showed Auschwitz, while they were attacking factories in Poland from Italy. In these images you could see a train entering the grounds, a group of inmates queuing up in front of the registry and another group on its way to the gas chambers. The photographs were only discovered in 1977. Two CIA employees, who had seen the television series *Holocaust*, found them during off-duty research. That images from the camps had been taken unknowingly and that they could only be read after decades – that is a strong metaphor. So strong that for a long time it was very hard for me to find space for other things. The phrase 'helpless anti-fascist' still applied to me. In order to avoid being a 'helpless anti-fascist' you have to contextualise fascism properly. You can only prevent fascism occurring in the future, or at least know how to fight it, if you are acquainted with its roots. In *Between Two Wars* I had depicted the crisis in heavy industry around 1930. The crisis came into existence due to technical innovation – the development of the productive forces as Marx puts it – that undermined production relations. Company

owners had to look beyond the limits of their own property but were not able to do so. They welcomed fascism in order to institute a command economy, in which they wouldn't lose their investments. And because they expected Hitler to expand the market with armed force. My film doesn't deal with the Jews and what was done to them. The only person I show as a victim of the Nazi terror is a worker who has gained insight into historical processes. The left was often unable to speak about the Jews when they tried to prove something – the same with me. My starting point now was the impending mass destruction through nuclear weapons. Hardly anyone responded to this attempt to relate Auschwitz to the current armaments situation. I worked on both versions (*Bilderkrieg/Images-War*, 1987; *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, 1988) for about two years, mostly at the editing table. My working day was very long – and around 11 pm I usually went for an endurance run. Often a word or a montage idea would come into my mind – though I didn't know what I was looking for. It often happened that I couldn't find what I needed and I first had to put all my books into alphabetical order before I could go back to the editing table.

1989

I begrudged Michael Klier his idea of making a film entirely out of surveillance-camera imagery. (*Der Riese/The Giant*, 1983). My idea was to depict life in West Germany through role play – from birth to death. This idea can be communicated in one sentence; so first I didn't want to write it down and preferred to talk about it with the commissioning editors at ZDF *Kleines Fernsehspiel*. It had to be uttered like a magic spell. But then I did have to write it down – and got funds from ZDF and arte. We were producing for about nine months. Michael Trabit- zsch found an institution – let's say, a group which was holding a breastfeeding course. I went along to have a look. Then I had to convince the group to give me permission to film them. Sometimes there was a single person who didn't want to be filmed. Sometimes the group agreed, but when it came to shooting there was suddenly someone who hadn't attended the meeting before and didn't want to be filmed – so the shoot had to be cancelled. Or meanwhile most of the women had already given birth and the course didn't exist any more. There was a huge vacant hospital in Berlin-Wilmersdorf which had been given to self-help groups by the senate – groups for women whose husbands were foreigners, groups for anorexic or bulimic people, groups for relatives of addicts. The pleasure of organising a political group had obviously been taken over by the necessity of learning or managing something. After around 10 months we had found what we were looking for – and even more: a car one could turn around like a suckling pig on a spit, in order to practice how to get out of a car that had overturned. Or a military exercise by the Federal Armed Forces, where the trainer tells his soldiers to be more excited when reporting a tank approaching: "NATO has been expecting this moment for 30 years now."

During the making of this film the Wall came down. With the end of East Germany the welfare state of West Germany – as marked in the film – also came to an end. When I later presented the film in the US people knew what the film was about. But this didn't seem to be the case in Portugal, France or

Spain. I thought perhaps that in Catholic countries people learn enough from their families and don't need to have a training course for everything.

1990

My mother Lili Faroqhi, née Draugelattis, born 9 March 1910, died 31 July 1990.

1991-1992

I saw images of the shootings in Rumania and heard about 60,000 dead bodies. I also watched a report about the cemetery for the poor in Timisoara, where mutilated corpses had been found – torture victims of the Securitate it was said. Later this turned out to be wrong; the bodies had been autopsied in a hospital nearby. Baudrillard therefore came to the conclusion that there had been no revolution in Rumania, or at the most, a fake television revolution. In 1990 I read a book about the fall of Ceaușescu, edited by Hubertus von Amelunxen and Andrei Ujica. I had the idea for a film in which a handful of people who understand something about politics and images would analyze in detail a series of images from those December days in 1989. To make a film like a seminar. I visited the book's two editors. Andrei Ujica suggested that we make the film together, and in summer 1991 we went to Bucharest. Despite many socialist buildings (school centres, factories, housing estates) the journey through Hungary was often like a tour into pre-war times. But in the countryside in Rumania we felt as if we were back in the 19th century. Two horses were pulling a haywain, the carter was asleep. In Bucharest we were able to use a room in the Ministry of Culture as an office. We got an office in the building of the art administration in which piles of oil paintings of the Ceaucescu's were stored. We began researching images that had been made in the days of the revolution. It was not difficult to gain an overview of the given material. First of all, nearly everybody who had been filming in those days knew each other: staff of the Centre for Documentary Film, television people, students. A year before, television producers from Britain, the US and France had catalogued the material. Private people and student organisations had set up small collections. But it was difficult to get hold of the best-quality material. Television had many hours of material, broadcast by Studio 4 during the revolution, which hadn't been taped by themselves. In some cases they had copies viewers had made with VHS recorders – aware of the specialness of the historical moment. When we were working in the television building at night, soldiers would hang around with their submachine guns, as if the old regime were still a threat. After we had again and again seen images showing tens or even hundreds of thousands of people coming together in order to achieve the overthrow of the old regime it seemed absurd to call this a television revolution. We dismissed our initial idea of a filmed analysis and decided to reconstruct the five days of a revolution, from 21 to 25 December 1989, from various sources of material, as comprehensively as possible. We started the offline editing with UMatric low-band equipment in my flat in Berlin in summer 1991. Andrei Ujica was based in Heidelberg and joined me each time for a week. It wasn't easy to figure out the day and the time the scenes had been filmed – it was important to us that each shot of our montage would

appear in strict chronological order. In order to find more material we were again in Bucharest in autumn 1991. The research took five weeks in total. The outline of the film and the offline-montage took around nine months, the post-production three months. Nobody had expected such a quick and non-violent collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. I would never have thought that a film about a revolution would simply fall into my lap. All the more a film about a revolution that would not establish, but abolish socialism.

Twice during the editing I was invited by the Goethe Institut to present and discuss my films in the local institutes, film clubs, film archives and universities in the US and Canada. Since then the Goethe Institut has invited me to travel to more than 15 countries. For me these various encounters and experiences have been a compensation for the fact that since 1992 hardly any cinema in Germany has shown my films. *Leben BRD (How to Live in the FRG)* did go on release in around 30 cinemas in 1990, when Germany was almost reunited. But when *Videogramme einer Revolution (Videograms of a Revolution, 1992)* had its premiere in two cinemas in Berlin in 1993 there were only two people in the audience – in both cinemas.

1993

Before we started the production of *Videograms of a Revolution* I had already received the commission for a film to be compiled entirely from commercial clips. I wanted to make something like an iconographic study, for example to show how a piece of soap comes into contact with the body. It became apparent that although there were many such shots, they were too different to edit them simply one after another. In a commercial for the soap *Cleopatra*, for example, we see a Queen Cleopatra, followed by a huge entourage, entering a bath of white liquid that is perhaps supposed to be ass's milk, accompanied by a brass band playing music by Verdi. She places a piece of *Cleopatra* soap in a little wooden ship, puts it in the water and gives it a push. The bath perhaps alludes to the one in which Cleopatra had asked Caesar to make her Queen of Egypt; the ship of the Egyptian fleet she secretly mobilised against the Romans. So the clip also says: the use of this soap transforms a woman into Cleopatra. Verdi – Shakespeare – George Bernard Shaw – Elizabeth Taylor. You can't undo such a continuum with cuts. So I tried to do it with movement cuts: Cleopatra puts the little ship into the water and gives it a push – from this impulse a sledge with vodka whooshes across the polar ice. I had to reduce myself to transitions and give the clips an order. I wanted to tell the story of one day, from early morning to night, as Vertov or Ruttmann had done, but here with material from four decades. It often turned out that the material we were given for the offline montage was totally different from what we got for the on-line postproduction; there were many versions of one clip and not every version was still available. A cut from the *Cleopatra* ship to the vodka sledge was not possible any more because either the one or the other shot was missing.

The producer of this TV production was Ebbo Demant. He had established something special at SWR Baden-Baden: a time slot for documentary films in public-sector broadcasting. And he had built up a pool of regular contributors. He tried to give a group of about 40 to 50 people the repeated

possibility of producing something for television. He organised a meeting every other year where films were viewed and discussed. He was also the one who made it possible for Peter Nestler to produce something for television after some 20 years. I only liked a few of the works of these regulars, although I did like more films than I had expected.

1994-1995

I thought about a kind of remake of Retraining; I wanted to show how managers from the East were being connected to the West. It turned out that the same man who had been the protagonist in Retraining seven years ago was now going to train the employees of two construction companies from Saxony that had been bought up by a company from Stuttgart, in a mountain hotel in Switzerland. The first days were completely useless. The seminar was held in an Alpine wood-panelled room which was far too small for the more than 40 men and women taking part. And they were not very talkative. If a man or a woman did answer a question from the seminar facilitator – then it was quite short. Before one of the two camera-men found the person speaking, who was often also half hidden, and before the soundman had placed the boom – the comment was already over. Only within the last two days a useful situation came up; they were performing role-plays in which the building employees had to play the commissioner or the representative of the construction firm. The seminar facilitator often gave harsh criticism that was mostly received with shame and only seldom contradicted. Most of the participants had a background as workers or craftspeople and they obviously found it dishonourable to speak like management. But they didn't express this and the facilitator certainly didn't understand what was going on with them. When I made a 45-minute-long film from this material I never even had to make a painful choice between two scenes. On the contrary I had to take every scene that was merely suitable. I felt like someone who couldn't do anything but repeat his old ideas, and the repetition is even worse than the original.

In the same year I talked to Werner Dütsch from WDR about a film I wanted to make for the 100th anniversary of cinema. A film that would deal with the first motif of the first film that was ever publicly presented: *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (Workers Leaving the Factory, 1895). I watched feature films, documentary films, industrial films and also corporate videos. You can see thousands of workers leaving the Ford factory in Detroit in a documentary from the 1920s. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) the worker-slaves wear uniforms, they trudge along in synchronised movements with bowed heads. In Lang's *Clash by Night* (1952) Marilyn Monroe leaves a fish factory. This makes you think about fairytales in which princesses suffer – they suffer a tremendous misery, compared to which ours seems pathetic, although her suffering probably ennobles us if we feel for her.

Over many years, even decades, I had avoided dealing explicitly with the content of films. When I was around 20-years old I read closely or repeatedly many crit- ics influenced by Kracauer, whose method of interpretation I had adopted. The film A shows a person B who acts in a C way. Accordingly the film expresses that the B-person always acts like C, but actually this is bad,

because there are also B-persons who act in a D way. Or better, who should act in a D way. But when I came to the Film Academy and the protest movement arose, when there were thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people who thought they knew how a film should depict the world – I looked for another field of activity. I refined Kracauer's method in as much as I said: film A shows how B acts in a C way, but doesn't know that it tells it exactly as if B would act like D. As if the story of a female worker were told like that of a princess. In order to avoid the call for films having to give an example, I then tried to completely ignore the plot. That went so far that I sometimes only paid attention to the space between the protagonists and not at all to what they were saying or doing – which is mostly also saying. But then I realised I had to give up this stance of strict denial. It only now became clear that I had stuck to it longer than to communism or revolution.

1994 was a bad year for us. Ursula became seriously ill and had to have an operation. It was hard for me to work under these circumstances. I watched every scene that might be useful for the Workers Leaving the Factory project several times – more often than I usually would have done, because I couldn't see how they were relevant. According to which criteria should I arrange the scenes, and what should the order reveal? During a montage process there usually always comes the moment in which I recognise the basic principle of a project, and this is the key to every necessary decision. But during this project this moment never occurred, so obviously I looked for it afterwards. First I wrote a few newspaper articles about Workers Leaving the Factory. I presented the film several times together with additional material, which I hadn't or had only partly used, and commented on it. I gave one of these presentations in Cologne and it was transcribed and published. A year later Workers Leaving the Factory became the starting point for an entire conference, about which an entire book was made.

1996

Ursula Lefkes, born 14 October 1935, died 31 July 1996.

1997-1999

In the early 1990s Kaja Silverman and I had had a conversation about Godard's *Passion* (1982), which was published in the magazine *Discourse*. We now planned to write a book about eight Godard films. First we watched each film we had agreed on in the cinema. In the case of *Le gai savoir* (1969) we rented a 16mm reduction print from a distributor in New York that delivered prints to colleges. The print was almost 30 years old and apart from red, every colour was almost completely bleached out. Kaja had a so-called 'analytical projector' in Berkeley with which you could control the projection speed and jog backwards and forwards like you do at an editing table. We organised VHS tapes from France, Germany and the US. We always began with a conversation, which we taped. Kaja then did a transcription, made a text out of it and marked the passages I should work on. First I wrote in German and then I roughly translated it. Kaja revised it and I corrected it – again in German – and so on and so forth. Kaja had the major part in our

production, not only because the book was produced in English, but because Kaja was more experienced in writing. The book was first published in the US. We also found a publisher in Germany and Roger M. Buerghel did the translation. I worked with him on the German version in Berlin, in Vienna and in California and also rewrote some passages. Kaja and I did book presentations on both continents. We each read our parts, either in German or in English – although not everything attributed to me was always written by me. Kaja had sometimes arranged her argumentation as a dialogue between us. The cinemathèque in Toronto had screened all eight Godard films before we gave our public reading. We gave a presentation with video-beamed excerpts from *Nouvelle Vague* (1989) at the Berliner Ensemble's rehearsal stage. The invitation to this theatre reminded me that I had seen Brecht productions here some decades before. In those days I would have never dared to dream of an appearance at the Berliner Ensemble myself. The auditorium was packed, but to my disappointment we only sold seven signed books. Our publisher Rainald Gussmann said that this was not such a bad result.

Sometimes friends complained that for five years now, since *Videograms of a Revolution*, I hadn't made a longer film. Neither a feature-length film nor one that could be compared to a book, but merely short films like newspaper articles. Christian Petzold thought that my writing and teaching was responsible for this – between 1992 and 1999 I taught every other semester in Berkeley, mostly together with Kaja Silverman. My reply of course was that major works only counted from a career-driven point of view; that it would be entirely anti-modern to accuse an artist of only making drawings and no large oil paintings any more. In fact there are only a few filmmakers who make a short film for television, cinema or other forms of distribution after having made a feature-length film. And if they do so it is seen as something of a comedown. I now realised that I preferred the small format because I had nothing big to say. The thing I wanted to contribute to, the social revolution, had been forcibly cancelled after all. 1989 was the counter-year of 1917. Of course it was still conceivable to make a feature-length film, a film that would have nothing to do with 1917. *How to Live in the FRG* already had hardly anything to do with 1917. But that there were only two people at the premiere of *Videograms of a Revolution* had shown me that cinema didn't even have a symbolic presence any more.

In 1995 Régis Durand invited me to contribute something to an exhibition in Villeneuve d'Ascq (Lille), asking me to make a video commenting on my own work. I wanted to work with two sound-image channels. I had been waiting for this opportunity since seeing Godard's *Numéro Deux* (1975). It was the first time in a long while that I had had to write a script again; we filmed it in two days in my flat. A script was necessary because in those days I didn't edit with a computer programme but with S-VHS equipment, and you couldn't have an offline montage of two parallel channels. I guess I was anxious that the production of a two-channel video wasn't artistic enough, so I asked my assistant Jan Ralske to look for some old blackboards. He found some on the street in Berlin-Mitte, where a school building was being cleared out. We had them sent to France by courier. I then chalked some quotations from my work

on to them. When the installation travelled to another art space in Nice the blackboards remained in Lille – and since then I have done without any additional items in my installation works. When Schnittstelle (Interface, 1995) was presented in the exhibition Face à L'Histoire in Paris I realised that more than 10,000 people visited the Pompidou every day, and if only 10 people per day would see my work during the 100 days of the exhibition it would still mean thousands more than I could reach in cinemateques or film clubs. In 1996 Catherine David invited me to make a film for documenta X. First we did some research in San Francisco at the studios of stills photographers. One woman was specialised in food photos and we watched her having someone count what was swimming in a can of soup: how many pieces of meat and carrots, how many peas? In the US there are many lawyers who specialise in suing companies who show more pieces of carrots in their adverts than there actually are in the cans of soup. We agreed on several dates for shoots, which we had to postpone all the time; most of them were cancelled in the end. When our cameraman Ingo Kratisch finally arrived – after his flight had been postponed constantly – we only had two days left to shoot, and we could only use a few minutes from the material. When we gave back our equipment we found out that the camera distributor, the only one left in San Francisco specialising in 16mm, was to close down the next day because there was no longer a market any more for this format. It was also very difficult to set a date for a shoot in Paris. Photographers are used to constant postponements because commissioning agencies or companies are not able to decide what they want. All this meant that my film wasn't ready for the opening of the documenta. The film Still Life (1997) actually had its premiere 50 days later. When I gave my apologies to Catherine David, she said: "But we aren't in Cannes here!"

In 1997 I met Doris Heinze – at a station or a film reception – with whom I had been on a jury 10 years before. She said that she was now working for the TV channel NDR, which produced documentary films that could cost up to DM300,000. This was almost three times more than I usually got for a 45- to 60-minute film. We agreed on a documentary about the so-called 'industrial TV', the production of talk- and game shows, (Worte und Spiele/Words and Games 1998). I was somewhat astonished when the first broadcast was scheduled for half past midnight. In the previous years I had often produced my films in collaboration with other European TV channels in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Austria. Sometimes it was also possible to sell a film to other foreign countries or to resell a film whose licence had expired to a German TV channel. Before this I had been only able to earn money from production, but never from distribution. Basis Film, who had distributed all my films since Between Two Wars, scarcely made any profits and paid me – when things went well – a few hundred DM per year.

Along with the crisis that hit the independent cinemas in the 1990s the distribution sales also narrowed; some of my films weren't distributed at all within a year. I made a little more profit abroad: a retrospective brought in several thousand DM. But the costs for foreign-language versions, for handling and shipping, were pretty high. In the mid 90s I put all my prints in storage – which of course meant a further narrowing down of income.

Nowadays films like mine are only shown in film museums and archives; other venues abroad – also museums – are only prepared to present videos or even DVDs. It's almost a rule for producers in Germany that they have to earn from producing, because later they will earn hardly anything from distribution. A production contract with a TV channel includes a licence for broadcasting and therefore entails a future share. But due to the fact that the last payment is made when the film is finished, you get the impression that the film won't have a future. In the 1990s, with some sales and retrospectives, the situation improved for a short time, and for a few years it looked as if there was an increasing demand for documentary films. With the end of the decade this was all over – at least for me.

2000-2003

Because I spent half the year in the US I wanted to make films there too. A curator of a museum in New York asked me to produce something. I proposed an examination of the depiction of prisons in film and video, a study like *Workers Leaving the Factory*. The first meeting took place in SoHo, where I had the most expensive lunch of my life. I never heard from the man who paid for it again.

There is no other democratic country in the world where such a high percentage of the population is in prison. The amount of prisoners even increases if the crime rate sinks – as in recent years. I once travelled to a prison construction site in Oregon with an architect who was employed by an office with several thousand architects. He told me about a certain Bentham and his ideas about the panopticon which were being applied to this building. He had never heard about Foucault or about all the subsequent discourses in which Bentham's idea had been read symptomatically and not as a practical proposal. I travelled from California to Camden, near Philadelphia. The main road was totally ruinous, the only functional building was the prison complex. A director gave me a tour. He showed me the inmates, who could be seen in orange overalls behind glass panels. He pointed to a device on the ceiling. These were the ends of gas pipes; there had been plans to sedate the inmates at the touch of a button in the case of an uprising, but then it turned out that the chemicals would decompose after a few months. He also said that the inmates used to be allowed to have barbecues with their families in the courtyard. But he had stopped this because he wanted to avoid the possibility of the inmates becoming role models for their children – above all for their sons. They had told me that I would be allowed to film in Camden, but then I wasn't allowed to bring the equipment into the building. A few weeks later I again flew to Oregon, to a prison I was only able to enter under the condition that I wouldn't bring a camera with me. The first thing the guard who gave me a tour asked me was where my camera was, so I fetched it from the car. He also allowed me to copy a range of archive material. We got in touch with a civil-rights organisation which had organised material from Corcoran in California. In this high-security prison, guards had shot at inmates 2,000 times during one decade. Five inmates had been killed. A wedge-shaped, concrete and treeless prison courtyard; men in sportswear who start a fight, other inmates throw themselves to the ground; a cloud of smoke crosses the image

– a guard has opened fire. A single person remains on the ground and is carried away on a stretcher. A human-rights organisation got hold of these images from a surveillance camera thanks to the Freedom of Information Act; I was allowed to copy and quote the material.

At the same time I was researching for a film about shopping malls. I had been reading articles and books about the history of retail architecture. I learned about astonishing experiments, for example about a studio in which they had tried to find out which floor coverings would accelerate the pace of the consumer and which ones would slow it down. I had the idea that I could make a film in which the all-too-familiar subject of the shopping mall would unfold entirely differently. I visited the first mall ever built, by Victor Gruen in Minneapolis, and the then biggest mall in the world in Edmonton. But after several months of research we still hadn't organised a single shoot. Neither the architectural offices nor the real-estate scouts, neither the interior-decoration companies nor the eye-tracking specialists – nobody wanted to let us in. Only after a while did I figure out that the mall industry wasn't rejecting us because it wanted to hide its secrets. On the contrary, the rejection was because there weren't any secrets, and this shouldn't become public. And it wasn't so very different in Germany and Austria, where most of the scenes of the film were finally shot. (*Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten/The Creators of Shopping Worlds*, 2001). After the film was broadcast on public-sector television the producer Gudrun Handke-El Ghomri told me that a future project with her would not be possible. My film had a viewing figure of only 5%. Doris Heinze from NDR had already signalled through her behaviour during production meetings that I wouldn't be getting anything more from her in future.

In autumn 1999 Roger M. Buerger called me. He was curating an exhibition at the Generali Foundation Vienna with Ruth Noack. Would I like to contribute a film? I told him about the project with the prison images, which wasn't progressing at that point in time. During a few months I completed a two-channel production. Because there wasn't enough money in the exhibition budget we made an agreement that the work would later be purchased for the Generali collection. I had to deliver an outline and called it *Ich glaubte Gefangene zu sehen*, because I had just read the English edition of Deleuze's *Unterhandlungen (Negotiations)* where he quotes Ingrid Bergmann from *Europa 51*, saying: "I thought I was seeing convicts." In the German version she said something different and something different again in the original Italian version. For me this was just a working title, but Roger and Ruth had already sent it to the printers, so they asked me to keep it. Later several museums and collections wanted to buy the work, but I had signed a contract saying that it was a unique work. I still don't read contracts that closely, but I always make sure that every work for art spaces has an edition of three, with two or three additional artist copies. This installation has often been rented out to museums and galleries, around 40 times up to now, and each time the curator Sabine Breitwieser has insisted that the installation can only be shown at a single venue at any one time. I had now already made two works with double sound-image channels and I was looking for a subject that invited you to set two images in comparison. I thought about image processing, where it

often happens that a video image is translated into a computer image. The war of the allied forces against Iraq in 1991 came into my mind. In those days a new kind of image appeared on television: filmed from the head of a projectile flying towards its aim – when it hit its target, transmission ceased. It was said that these were images from intelligent weapons. 10 years later both images and weapons had hardly been examined. During the following three years I was concerned with these issues and made three installations; Auge/Maschine I (Eye/Machine I, 2001); Auge/Maschine II (Eye/Machine II, 2002) and Auge/Maschine III (Eye/ Machine III, 2003). Apart from that I also completed the film Erkennen und Verfolgen (War at a Distance, 2003). For the film I received funding from the television producer Inge Classen (3sat), for the installation I was funded by art institutions. This funding alone would not have been enough to carry out complicated research and to film or copy the necessary material. The money for Eye/Machine I came from media-art institute ZKM, Karlsruhe, because Tom Levin invited me to participate in his exhibition Ctrl/Space. The money for the second part came from Bruges, which was European Capital of Culture at the time, and for part III I got some money from the ICA in London. All of these were chance connections. Before beginning the project I had tried to raise money systematically and asked the curator Anselm Franke to apply for money from around a dozen art institutions; each would contribute a small amount, for which they would then have the opportunity of showing all three works in the end. This didn't work out, because I assume most exhibition makers want to take the initiative themselves: they are less interested in contributing to something that already exists than to set the stage for something new. As curators they also want to be authors. So I started to collect ideas and to wait for opportunities.

2004

The project about war and image-processing was still in the doldrums. Because of the secrecy rules in the army and the defence industry it took us weeks and months until we were allowed to have a look at anything. When we finally got permission to film or copy images, the material was re-examined afterwards – in some cases it was a series of images of less than a minute. I was therefore eager to make something quickly now, and with a surplus of material. So I planned a direct-cinema film about venture capital. During this project we often had to take the train at 4 am from Berlin to Aachen or Munich the very next day in order to observe the negotiations between venture-capital applicants and possible investors. Since we didn't know the participants and couldn't foresee anything, we sometimes filmed four hours in a row. Even on our way back we often knew that we wouldn't use the material, because the invention at stake was an operating application, for example, for which the negotiations had been held in a technical language. After around 14 of such shoots we came across an ideal situation: for a couple of days two applicants persistently negotiated with two venture capitalists about a loan and its price in an office near Munich. All four were rhetorically skilled and well able to present themselves, and each of them clearly had a different role – in their negotiations it became immediately obvious what the money was for and under which conditions it would be invested. Only when the film was finished

did I realise that I had never seen extended financial negotiations in a documentary film before. The producer of this film was Werner Dütsch from WDR, Cologne. I had made *Inextinguishable Fire*, my first film after leaving the film academy, for this TV channel, and I had worked with Werner Dütsch since 1979. The producers in the film department at WDR had initiated a programme like those in cinemathèques. The films of Griffith or Eisenstein, the American film noir, Sternberg or Western-series were broadcast here long before you could see them in West Germany's major cinemas. They were also given critical introductions. Films by Jean Rouch could be seen, sometimes for the first time. The department also produced documentary films, by Hartmut Bitomsky, Claude Lanzmann or Marcel Ophüls. In the 1990s the budget for these activities was gradually reduced. I think this short boom in the documentary film occurred because the producers realised that they could make a documentary for a tenth of the amount took for a feature film. It needed a few years before they noticed that it was even cheaper not to produce documentary films either. Commercial television asserted itself in Germany and throughout Europe during the 1990s. The public-sector channels adjusted themselves to their competitors. *Nicht ohne Risiko* (Nothing Ventured, 2004) was the last film I made with Werner Dütsch as producer, who was now going into retirement; the other producers left shortly before or afterwards. There was only one successor for all of them. Nowadays the WDR has no producers for literature, theatre or ballet. Now there are only animal documentaries and films with the actor Heinz Rühmann against which the WDR had always fought, no matter whether they were from before or after 1945. But there must have been at least one reasonable person left there, otherwise the huge administration buildings of the channel would have collapsed long ago.

2005-2007

If you apply for film funding you have to submit a lot of paperwork, even if it's about a documentary film for which you can't know where you will shoot and with whom. This is not expected from an artist. To receive money from museums or other art institutions you only need to submit a few pages of text. I received fund- ing from the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) on the basis of a single page, and the juror thanked me explicitly for the brevity with which I had explained that I would like to make a film and an installation about bricks: how they were produced and laid. We spent a week in Gando, a village in Burkina Faso. It is situated in the African savannah, where the roots of the trees reach the ground water, so the trees are green, but the earth – when it is not rain- ing – is utterly stark. We were there in the dry season – only then do the inhabit- ants have time for a collective work. We watched how hundreds of people erected a little clay building that would serve as a clinic. And we observed them working on a school annexe, a brick building with three classrooms and an arched roof. I have never watched people whose life was so different from mine in such proxim- ity and for such a long time. An anthropologist would need weeks or months to get into a position like this. Our informant was Francis Kéré, who comes from the village of Gando and took his matura in Berlin, where he also

studied architecture. He organises the finances in Europe, including donations, and designs the buildings. The school building with three classrooms costs 30,000 Euro. It has a roof that keeps away the heat and under which air circulates. Only local materials are used for the construction; not even electricity is needed. Apart from this the buildings designed by Kéré and put up by the village community are very beautiful. For this project we also filmed twice in India, and in France, Austria, Switzerland and Germany. The Viennese art space MUMOK offered me a solo show, for which I made a double-channel installation from this material. (Vergleich über ein Drittes/Comparison via a Third, 2007). The people shown producing and building bricks are heard in various languages that are not translated. There is neither a commentary nor intertitles. The work was projected by two synchronised 16-mm projectors. 16-mm projectors are not produced anymore, but there is a small company in Canada that specialises in synchronised multiple projection.

Sabine Breitwieser invited Antje Ehmman and myself to curate an exhibition at the Generali Foundation in Vienna. We planned to show works that in a narrower or broader sense examine film. Works in different media – photography, painting, sculpture – that give an insight into what film is or can be. We wanted in every way to avoid showing films that were made for the cinema or cinema-like situations, and to focus the awareness on the difference between cinema and non-cinema. During the preceding years Antje had worked for an exhibition about the phenomenon of shrinking cities. She watched hundreds, maybe thousands of films which dealt with urban decay or were set against the backdrop of run-down cities. She made a double projection where on the left image you could see people – individuals, couples, groups, sometimes also humanoids or animals, taken from all sorts of different films with different production values – moving from right to left; on the right image you could see individuals, couples, groups and the same humanoid moving from left to right. (Wege/Paths, 2006). I was stunned by how strong an analytical effect could be achieved from a montage according to motif and direction of movement. I realised that I had always wanted to make simple montages like this and that I had refrained from doing so because of producing for television. I had also not yet made full use of the newly gained freedom in my work for art spaces. For her installations Antje again watched hundreds or thousands of films in search of motifs like the woman-on-the-telephone or the man-looking-into-the-mirror. Whatever project I was working on – writing, editing or organising – I could always hear the sound of all these film scenes from the next room, where Antje was digitising them, trying to include them in her montages, or most of the time dismissing them. It was planned that the exhibition Cinema like never before (Vienna 2006, Berlin 2007) should include works by Antje, by myself and some that we wanted to do together. We did a lot of additional research to find suitable works by other authors or artists, some of whom we also commissioned. At the same time I was also busy with other projects, doing research, making plans and organising shoots. Suddenly our place turned into a proper production company.

During the preparations for the exhibition Roger M. Buerghel and Ruth Noack

invited me to produce something for documenta 12. It was supposed to be something about the World Cup. For years Roger had wanted me to make something about football; he mentioned Bayern Munich and money from BMW. For the documenta I had the idea of presenting the Cup Final on 20 screens, half of them showing the game from different camera positions: a single player, different players; the goalkeepers would each be tracked by a camera over the entire game. The other half of the screens would display various analytical methods, the paths of a single player or all the players, for example. I decided to use already existing analytical systems and to commission new ones. Roger told me at our first meeting in autumn 2005 that the National Museum in Oslo and MACBA in Barcelona would support the project. A few weeks later I wrote to Roger that we had calculated the costs for the project and that some 500,000 Euro would be needed. He wrote back that he would pass on the figures. Then I heard nothing from him for a long time. In February 2006 we were finally in a position to speak to two representatives of FIFA, the international football association, in Switzerland. Their bosses had decided to allow us to use the material from the cup final for our installation. This generosity was lessened a bit by the license fee of 20,000 Euro that we would have to pay; for FIFA this is a mere tip. The FIFA people only got back to us a short time before the Cup Final – and we only got six instead of the promised 26 image tracks. I still had no budget after the Cup Final was over. Then we succeeded in getting 260,000 Euro from a cultural foundation. That was half of what we had calculated, so we cut down the number of image tracks from 20 to 12 and we also dispensed with commissioning animations. For over a year I hadn't known if we would get the original material or the money. You could say that Roger Buerger's way of doing things was a bit nonchalant. Even though he managed to realise a great many projects for the documenta, also ones that were not earmarked in the budget.

Since The Creators of Shopping Worlds, Matthias Rajmann had been my assistant, contributing to every production, first as a researcher only, then also dealing with production issues and acting as soundman. He always takes a lot of initiative and makes suggestions following from his research, and I often make use of them. For this documenta production he had more to do than ever before. For example, it took more than three months until a Russian software company in Nizhny Novgorod had adapted its software in the way we needed for particular image tracks. In this period Matthias corresponded with Russia several hours a day. He looked all over the world for companies and research institutes specialising in football. He persuaded the ones we selected to collaborate with us, and he also coordinated their contributions to our project. He coordinated the production in Berlin and Munich, our editing room, the company for the installation technique and the graphic designers. This project was very conceptual and certainly modern, but it annoyed me that I basically had to supervise and make decisions and could hardly contribute anything practically. I therefore edited a track on my laptop, even when I was travelling, in trains, in hotels, on a cold Easter day in Jerusalem or in Jeonju, a small town in South Korea with a festival, Jeonju International Film Festival (JIFF), where many independent films were presented. I had to go there in

April because the festival had given me some money for a film (*Aufschub/Respite*, 2007). The three films commissioned by JIFF – apart from mine, one was by Pedro Costa, another by Eugène Green – had been presented at the Locarno International Film Festival in August 2007. We won a Silver Leopard. I was surprised by that, and also by Michel Piccoli, who was in my row and from whom I managed to get an autograph, and when I ran onto the stage of the open-air cinema in the Piazza Grande, I praised the Jeonju Festival for making independent productions possible.

2007-2009

Whenever I taught film I insisted on watching the material in great detail; first at the editing table, then with the help of video, today with DVD. Sometimes we watched a film – sequence for sequence – for four days, scrolling backwards and forwards again and again. This method is not at all common in film schools or film-theoretical seminars. In fields of study where everything is about words, it is also not the usual practice to read and discuss a text line by line, as I learnt in 2005 when Antje and me met with some friends once a week in order to read and discuss texts together. Everybody in our group – with the exception of myself – had studied either literature and/or philosophy and everybody had only experienced this kind of reading in self-organised groups outside university. Amongst other texts we were also reading Giorgio Agamben's *Was von Auschwitz bleibt*. (*Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*). Additionally we also re-read other texts about the camps and watched films about them, which I also showed and discussed in my class in Vienna, at the Academy of Fine Arts. A particular scene in Erwin Leiser's *Den Blodiga tiden* (*Mein Kampf*, 1959) and Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955) caught my attention: men, women and children are getting on a train that will take them to Bergen- Belsen, Theresienstadt or Auschwitz. This material was shot in Westerbork in 1944. Westerbork, situated in the north of the Netherlands, was at first a camp for Jewish refugees from Germany. After the Netherlands' occupation by the Nazi Germans it came under the control of the security forces and was renamed *Polizeiliches Judendurchgangslager Westerbork* (*Westerbork Police Transit Camp for Jews*). Around 100,000 people, most of them Jews – according to the Nazi's concept of race – and also a few hundred Roma and Sinti were brought here and then transported to other camps. Only a few thousand survived. Westerbork was a special camp, in which many inmates wore civilian clothes and where the SS was hardly visible. There were no beatings or murders; food was scarce, but nobody starved to death. And there was a hospital, a laundry, a kindergarten; there were religious services and cultural events, concerts and cabarets. The camp administration was carried out by inmates: inmates registered the newcomers, served in different camp police groups and drew up the weekly deportation lists – although the leader of the camp, SS man Albert Konrad Gemmeker, had the last word. Gemmeker commissioned the photographer Rudolf Breslauer, a Jewish refugee from Germany, to shoot sequences with two cameras for a film about the camp. Some pages of the script have survived:

Close-up: the commander in uniform, at his desk reading the certificate. Behind him on the wall, the Führer's image. The commander stands up, presses a bell button.

Cross-fades: the junior squad leader enters the room, approaches the commander, helps him into his coat, gives him his leather belt, cap and gloves.

Cross-fades: the command building, from the front. The commander leaves the building, approaches the camera on the middle path.

These scenes were never realised or did not survive. Gemmeker told the court after the war that he had intended to make a film about the camp for its visitors – a kind of record of achievement for his superiors. First I ordered a DVD with documentary footage shot by Breslauer from the West-erbork memorial. When we first watched this material in my seminar, we all had a hard time reading these images. One student pointed out a man in the camp's railway station who was helping a policeman to close the sliding door of the wagon in which he himself was being deported. Almost everybody getting on the train was carrying luggage, and we realised that you have to consider that all their belongings will be taken away by the Nazis as soon as they arrive in Auschwitz. Taking this into account, the bundles, parcels and blankets being dragged along – which usually indicate a compulsory change of location – turn into tragic signs.

I read more about Westerbork during the following months, an extensive diary for example, written in the camp by the inmate Philip Mechanicus. He doesn't mention the film shootings, but he reports that in 1944 many of the inmates were afraid that the camp would soon be closed down. He also thinks that the SS wanted to maintain the camp in order not to be sent to the Eastern Front. So it is also possible that Gemmeker wanted the camp to be filmed to prove its usefulness for the war economy. In the images of the deportation from Westerbork to Auschwitz – and here we see the film's only close-up – we can see a girl wearing a headscarf and looking timidly or anxiously into the camera. This image has been reproduced frequently. In 1992 the Dutch journalist Aad Wageaar successfully identified her after a year's research: 10-years old Settela Steinbach, a Sinti. In one of the film's sequences he discovered an inscription of a name and date of birth on the suitcase of a woman who was being brought to the train in an invalid-chair. From the deportation lists he was able to work out the date of the shoot. He also discovered the number 74 written in chalk on a wagon, and that this number had been crossed out and corrected to 75 when the train left – so a further person must have been assigned to this wagon.

I repeatedly discussed what I was reading in the seminar in Vienna. We looked again and again at some details of the images and tried to understand the motivation behind certain scenes with the help of our background knowledge. I decided to make a film in the spirit of such studies, a film that would also depict the process of examining the images. The raw material was silent, so I kept it like this and only added some intertitles. I wanted the images themselves to speak. (Respite, 2007). Television doesn't show any silent films. Music, sound or a voiceover are always added because of the

anxiety that the viewers might immediately think that there was something wrong with the transmission or their television set. So I didn't even try to find television money for this project. But the TV channel 3sat did actually show the film without sound in 2009, although at a very late hour – this might have evaded the attention of the programmers higher up. Inge Classen, who programmed it, told me that she had only once shown a film without sound, *Un chant d'amour* (A Song of Love, 1950) by Jean Genet.

In 2007 I finished quite a few projects I had been working on for years, including *Übertragung/Transmission*. When we were in Washington in 2003 to do some archive research for *Eye/Machine* and *War at a Distance*, we saw that almost everybody who visited the Vietnam War Memorial touched either the stone or the names of the more than 50,000 dead engraved there. It was Antje's idea to make a film or installation about the behaviour of these and other visitors to memorials all over the world. The opportunity to realise this project came about a little later, when Christoph Schenker of the Zurich Academy of the Arts invited us to make a work to be presented in a public space. During the following years we were always on the look-out for places where people would touch a stone or a sculpture. The visitors to St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome probably touch the foot of the Petrus sculpture in order to gain some of its holiness. But in the Jesuit Church in Munich they pat the cheek of the bust of Father Rupert – who was an anti-Nazi – because they want to pay respect or to console him for his sufferings; so here they want to give and not to gain. We filmed many types of magical touchings, efforts to transmit something invisible.

The work was installed in a tram station in Zurich. A flat screen was fitted next to a WC. When I came to this place shortly before the official opening, I saw that there was a bench in front of the screen with two homeless people sitting on it. They already seemed to know the film very well and predicted what was coming next. But many people waiting for the tram didn't give it a second glance. When the bar tables with snacks and aperitifs had been set up, I spoke to a technician about how to enhance the quality of the sound. Then there was a honk behind me: a cleaning vehicle was approaching the station. Two men began cleaning the concrete floor with a high-pressure device. A bystander took photos of this, whereupon a cleaning man threatened to punch him. This must have intimidated me, because when one of the men also begun to clean the wall where my screen was embedded, I was struck by the thought that the tram station had already been spotlessly clean even before they started to clean it. The next moment the screen faded out. When the technician took a look at it, water poured out of our installation. So there was no ceremonial opening. We went to a dinner where I was introduced to Mr and Mrs Schwyzer-Winiker, whose foundation contributed a lot of money to the project *Kunst Öffentlichkeit Zürich*. Usually you have to explain a film in order to get money for it; here politeness required me to explain my film after I had spent the money on it. The equipment had been paid for by the city of Zurich, and municipal workers had destroyed it. It took a few weeks until they found a way to repair the damage.

In January 2009 we had a two-day shoot in the military base of Fort Lewis, near Seattle, Washington. Fort Lewis is 40 square kilometres in size and has

up to 40,000 inhabitants. We were in only one building with some seminar rooms next to a canteen. We were filming a workshop in which civilian therapists explained to army therapists how to work with Virtual Iraq, which is used in the treatment of soldiers and ex-soldiers who had been traumatised in the war. Immersion Therapy lets the traumatised patient repeat his or her crucial experience, retell it and re-experience it. Virtual Iraq, or VI, is a computer-animation programme which is supposed to make the immersion, the diving into the source of the trauma, easier or more powerful.

The civilian therapists who work for the companies and institutions that develop and distribute the VI system, and who are also in charge of the supervision, were dressed like lawyers or business people – most of them were women. The military therapists – the majority were men – wore camouflage uniforms. They kept their jackets on, which was advisable since the heating system hardly worked. The rooms were carelessly furnished, the ceiling lighting – as we learnt – hadn't functioned for years. There are hardly any private companies that would hold their seminars in run-down rooms like these. Such austerity – I also saw this in the Bundeswehr – stands in bizarre contrast to the usual waste of the military. We were allotted three go-betweens, one person for each member of our crew. A PR woman was flown in from the Pentagon in order to monitor/advise us.

The civilian therapists first gave rather half-hearted talks with image examples. Afterwards role-playing. The therapist sits at a computer, wearing a headset. The patient sits or stands next to him, wearing data-specs. These show the Virtual Iraq imagery. There are two locations: one is a desert road, which is driven through by a Humvee. The other is a city with a market place, a mosque, large squares, narrow alleyways and houses you can walk through. The patient chooses his path, the therapist selects incidents. The therapist can lead the patient into virtual ambushes or make him witness terrible assassinations. He can choose between accompanying sounds of helicopters, muezzins and explosions of all kinds.

During the role-plays everybody was cooperative. You might think that a patient would say that these two scenarios with only a few choices would have nothing to do with the cause of his trauma. But it became apparent that the role-plays which were attended by military therapists alone, lacked a certain degree of fantasy and tension – so we could only use very short sequences from them. Most of the military therapists chewed gum as if they were just ordinary soldiers.

Then something really extraordinary happened. One of the civilian therapists who was playing a patient described a patrol walk through Baghdad. It was his first mission and he had been assigned to a certain Jones. They had been ordered to clean the streets, which basically meant pulling down propaganda posters. Jones suggested separating and that each of them should see to one side of the street. This was against orders, but they did it. When he went into a courtyard, he heard an explosion. He ran over – at this point the patient faltered and began to ramble. The therapist playing the therapist interrupted him: what had he seen?

Soldier: "When I went around the corner, I heard this explosion. I thought to my- self: Shit! No! I immediately turned around to look for Jones, but I couldn't

see him anywhere. Damn! I immediately ran to the other side ... I can't see him any more ... I ran over to see what had happened. There was smoke everywhere ..."

Therapist: "You're doing great! What did you see there?"

Soldier: "When I arrived, I saw ... that there was nothing left above his knee."

At this point he broke down. In the following session he repeatedly asked to stop, insisting that he couldn't bear it any more. The therapist insisted on continuing. He hesitated, stuttered and got caught up several times in self-reproach and attempts to explain what he was thinking back then. His acting was so convincing that friends of mine, to whom I had explained our film (Immersion, 2009) nevertheless believed that they were watching someone recounting a real experience. The press officer who had given us permission to shoot also thought that it was real.

The images that were made to provoke a recollection of the trauma are very similar to the ones with which US soldiers are now being trained and prepared for the battlefields. I would like to deal with this in my next work.

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