The Value of Filmmaking
Avant-garde, Hollywood and Film Linquistics

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Everything we know, whether discovered or especially built, has a structure; physical and mental. Nature and its particles, physique, all the creations of people. In our surroundings structure is found. If an unseen object or e.g.. a new star is discovered, we take out our calculators or cutting knives (surgical if you will) and analyze and measure the new case to bits and pieces (in the field of biology/anatomy this usually means actually slicing up the object, and seeing whats inside) until its functions have come to some sort of an conclusion - This ability to extrapolate things is leaning to the scientists personal history of learning the discoveries of the ones before her/him, added to her/his own findings and experience.

> "No on would equate a film theory, which after all is merely an order of words, with the experience of a film. But at the same time who would deny the value of geology just because it reduces the phenomena of earthly substances to chemical and mathematical formulas? It is precisely such formulas which allow us to see the place of the earth in the whole of the universe."
> (J.Dudley Andrew, The Major Film Theories: 6)

The modern film theory combines form and story (a.k.a screenplay), and I have no intentions of parting from that. I firmly do believe that in a narrative or in a non-narrative story everything should be considered in the terms of the film-to-be-created, everything should serve the purpose intended. Then again, how exactly can the purpose be defined? Could it be that in some cases the sole existence of a film rests on attempts to enhance or to question film language - Instead that the film was dwelling in its thematic purpose?

Proceeding with modern ideas also means that whipping out such artist-theorists like Maya Deren is very essential for the point of view in this text. She at her most progressive period, was a part of the small branch of artists[1] who saw that the industrialized film was threatened to not to be as linguistically evolved as it should have been. Though Maya Deren did infact enjoy watching mainstream films, in her mind they lacked true invention, and needed more courageous and, perhaps, scientific approach in order to keep up the interest. Still today her theories feel fresh; Though the film monopolies seem to be more openminded, there still exist people who are interested with nothing more than finding the perfect formula[2] to gain more financial goodies.

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[1] at times called avant-garde artists, hence the word

[2] It is good to know such formulas, but also could be interesting to try find another types of telling things. To get to the fresh start, I will be starting from the beginning, the invention called film art. Actions and reactions are being made clear, when causality is somewhat to be explained.

"IN A WORLD SO INTIMATELY OVERWHELMED BY SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, REVELATION AND INVENTION – WHERE EVEN THE MOST DESOLATE ISLAND BECOMES A FUELING STATION FOR THE GLOBE-CIRCLING AIRPLANE - IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO JUSTIFY A NEGLECT OF IGNORANCE OF ITS REALITIES. YET THE SCHIZOPHRENIC SOLUTION IS PRECISELY THIS: TO DISPUTE NOTHING, TO RESOLVE NO CONFLICTS; TO ADMIT TO EVERYTHING AND TO DISGUISE, UNDER THE HOMOGENEITY OF THIS UNASSAILABLE TOLERANCE, THE MOST INSIDEOUS CONTRADICTIONS. ---"

"THE POPULARIZED NOTION OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE FAILS TO COMPREHEND THAT VERY ELEMENT WHICH MAKES THE ACTUALITY POSSIBLE:
THAT THE FACE OF THE MAN AND THE BEAST ARE ONE AND THE SAME."

- MAYA DEREN, AN ANAGRAM OF IDEAS ON ART, FORM AND FILM

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2. THE VALUE OF EXPERIMENTING

When being discussed about with fellow film students, mainstream film usually seems to have a somewhat nasty reputation of representing everything but courageous use of fresh approach.
Screenplays and structures of early fiction films were strongly leaning on literature – their play-like nature affected both the dialogue, and the mannerisms of actors. Nowdays the film language is more visual in nature, though the importance of the written screenplay is still there.

Times are changing, but mainstream films still do have their own, more specific way of being structured; Despite however "carefree" appearances, the screened experience squeezed in approximately two hours is very much written and drawn[3] beforehand. Structure-wise; Though sometimes accompanied by its more appealing siblings, three-act structure thrives on – it is a logical chain of events, with plotpoints, twists, character evolution, cause-and-effect. Fully functional (incl.character-and storywise) film, which has emploed three-act structure regarding the needs of the story, will greatly satisfy the couch-escapist for those two hours.

The very visible need for the film to succeed (to beat the boxoffices) is being shown by certain repeating elements, and the repetition of formulas[4] that previously have thrived. The more scientific approach, the approach testing new ways of forming and understanding, yet appears to be more of a "risky business" for most production companies[5]. Different, more perhaps allowing filmfunds have been increasingly set up, but under the sub-section of art – which, in a way, makes the gap between film and film art greater. Though the favourism of mainstream film out-shadows the more "avant-gardean" approach, both of the arguing parties have similar basic structural values (in other words – there has to be a structure/A human has been involved and thus left her/his mark), and each takes something from the other. Funny enough – What we see now, something that was very experimental in the forties or fifties, seems to be very common for us (e.g.. reversal shots, increasing amounts of shots in a minute etc). So the avant-garde becomes, in a way, mainstream. The question is, could mainstream become a bit more avantgardian, a bit more unpredictable and fresh for us?

> "But should that triumphant moment – when the elements of a man`s experience suddenly fuse into a homogenius whole which transcends and so transfigures them – be left to the rarities of natural coincidence? Or should the artist, like the scientist, exercize his imaginative intelligence – the command and control of memory – to consciously try, test, modify, destroy, estimate probabilities, and try again... Always in terms of the instrument by which the fusion will be realized."
> (Maya Deren, An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film: 13)

Interestingly, as we students - this includes the scholars-for-life[6] - have the need to experience the changes of expression, to push further, we do commit the acknowledged "crimes" of the early mainstream films e.g.. predictability, and the uninteresting use of dialogue, instead of giving time for the simplest of expressions. Talent means to try, fail and prevail; To understand everything accomplished and in between.

There is nothing wrong in the careful planning of ones films. On the contrary, the punctilious approach to ones work especially in preproduction phase is very much appreciated and encouraged. There exists only a question about how to hire – successfully even - a fresh way of telling whatever purpose one intended the film to have; A question which requires a certain kind of courage to be answered; A question of inventing new, perhaps by fusing before separate forms together in such a manner, that the film only resembles the beforeseen and excludes some of the more popular mannerisms. Without being too naive[7] (or pessimistic) about it, it still is possible to create something having that "new smell". Again and again; To test, to fail, to succeed.

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[3] Though I`ve noticed that in Finland there seldom are film productions that use storyboards as tools for the crew. One reason for this is the very short section of pre-production period, in which the cinematographer and the director are able to collaborate and carefully plan their work on paper, shot by shot. If such a plan has been made, it usually consists in stickmen, which only the cinematographer and the director understand; Production houses here usually have no intention to hire a storyboard artist who could make the drawings more useful for the whole crew – Storyboards in marketing purposes is a whole different and newly discovered – yet a rare - thing. Storyboards as tools seem to be an time-spending, alien-idea up here. Personally, I`d love to know each shot, and I`m sure does everyone else.
[4] Formulas are being used becouse they do work. The basic structure of storytelling – the beginning, the middle, the end, with some increasing suspence and some conflicts – has from the very beginning made sense for our species. Mainstream film structure is leaning on to this knowledge, and not without a cause.
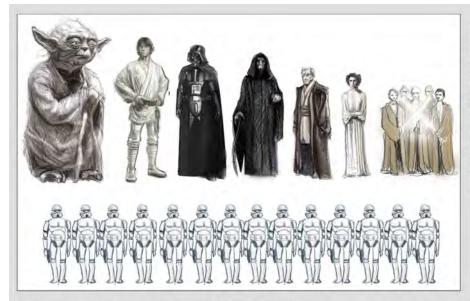[5] All understood – an investment is an investment.
[6] I have the greatest of respect for their passion to learn and discover more. Settling in does not satisfy these people for too long – though they`d do make films that spoke little about their discoveries, behind curtains they continue the journey. ...I`m afraid I`m one of you.)
[7] With "being too naive" I mean such an approach to filmic language, that neglects the importance of all previously created claiming that e.g. mainstream – or then again avant-gardean - films never resulted anything.

3. A PEEK INSIDE THE TOOLBOX

An artist, a painter gets an idea, more conscious or more subconscious, but an idea that needs to be interpreted by her/him to the canvas so that it creates a feeling that is either somewhat understood or then just profoundly disturbing[8]. The means to either one do exist, though we prefer not to mention about them. Balancing/unbalancing the image, the shapes/ the forms, darkness and light, color, depth/2 dimensional, lines that lead the viewer to the key-meaning-points of the image – all tools that the artist is aware[9] of.

These tools are being constantly discovered, as fast as the pages of history turn. In art history e.g.. the whole period of renaissance[10] could be seen as particularly specified in the visual form of art. Visual ideas were interpreted into canvases – in other words, into two dimensional space - with underlying care of perspective, naturality and illusionism. The attention of the spectator was to be directed via the lines of perspective, and of lines forming such bodily shapes of subject which would lead on in another point of attention and back. Instead being scaled on canvas accoding to their social status, subjects of the images were now scaled similarly, naturally[11] (P1,P2)

P1.
LOOKING BACK AT THE ART OF THE MIDDLE AGES, RELIGION SEEMED TO BE THE POPULAR TOPIC. PAINTINGS, CARVINGS ETC PREACHED ABOUT WHO WAS TO BE HELD AS A PERSON OF HIGH STANDARDS - THE PERSON OF AUTHORITY, THE PERSON CLOSEST TO GOD. THE PHYSICALLY BIGGEST FIGURE IN THE PAINTING WAS TO BE PERCEIVED AS THE MOST POWERFUL ONE. THE PRESENTED LEVELS (AS IN THE PICTURE ON THE LEFT, THERE ARE TWO HORIZONTAL LEVELS) CAN BE SEEM AS AN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE PERSPECTIVE.

P2.
RENAISSANCE (STARTING IN 1300, IN ITALY) MENT THE BEGINNING OF CHANGE, BOTH WITHIN CULTURE AND ART. NATURALITY IS ONE OF THE KEY WORDS OF THAT PERIOD - ART BEGAN TO IMITATE LIFE MORE SPECIFICALLY. PERSPECTIVE AND THE PROPORTIONS OF EVERYTHING WERE IMPORTANT. HUMAN FIGURES, NO MATTER THE STATUS, WERE NOW SCALED NATURALLY. A SMALL POPE WAS A SMALL POPE IN PAINTINGS (OF COURSE IF THE PLAYING PARTY WAS ALSO BEING THE MAIN CHARACTER WITHIN THE PAINTING, SOME BEAUTIFYING MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED).

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[8] Mentioning only two extremes, for the sake of the example, which should appear clear.

[9] It is also good to know some key-things about human physique, e.g. Our predator-eyes are sensitive to certain things, such as movement (what is too fast for the eye, whats too slow. Filmspeed is based on this knowledge), light and color.

[10] Renaissaince (ital.rebirth, humane movement starting from Italy 1300. Jakob Burckhardt; The birth of selfconscious human.), is within itself divided into separate parts, due to progress; Early period of renaissance (quattrocento 1400), renaissance, and late period of renaissance. Renaissance is perhaps most recognized by the change of general idea – more scientific observation of the surrounding world was becoming important, and not only for artists alike. Before renaissance, religious subjects on canvases had been thriving.

[11] The pope being as short as a common man.

Cinematography, lighting, sound, music, editing and space are all tools for a filmmaker to use. These tools, physically, have been modifed and molded for the needs of today, ever since their prototypes. The principles of their functions are still the same – as if an old soul from the end of the 18th century would have survived until this day, walking among us in todays clothes.

The filmic language is being constantly created with the collaboration of these tools and the mind of a man. A man gets an visual idea, then tries to create something that most resembles that idea on film. To record that idea he needs all his tools, especially the camera, which of course functions as the recording device. In additon to recording, the camera is to be employed to the purposes of the idea; Controlling angles, movement, framing, colors etc. affects the end result with different proportions. All these choices - including choosing the things which are and aren`t visible to the viewer – are choices for the filmmaker to decide upon. The equiment does nothing if it is not employed.

> ”The most simple and primitive of artificial wholes is the arithmetical whole, which is the sum of its parts. The next step is the construction of a whole which consists of the sum of its parts in a certain arrangement, either in space or in time. A machine in such a whole, and standardization is possible because the parts are interchangeable with their equivalents. That is, a bolt or wheel may be replaced by similar bolts or wheels; a like organization of bolts, wheels, pulleys, etc., will result in a like machine. In such constructions the parts remain themselves; and although they may be designed to function in a certain manner, they are not transformed in the process of functioning. Concequently, such wholes are initially predictable from a knowledge of their parts.”
> (Maya Deren, An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film: 12)

The history of filmmaking gives us detailed descriptions about how the filmic language, as we now know it, has been evolving. Each and every framing has its own history, and we are being told when e.g. extreme close-up was being discovered. There exist a couple of film-industrially stable framing systems that both include the extreme close-up, as well as the others we know; The difference between the systems is that they handle the proportions of each in different manners. For first system, extreme close-up visually includes only the two eyes, or a mouth etc. For the second system the extreme close-up includes both eyes and the mouth, making the plane of the image more wide. The previous example is a good way of presenting these ”rules”, which in the end are depending in the purpose of the film, and the aesthetics of the maker of the film. Employing a single take successfully (and with greater intentions in mind) requires that e.g. the medium shot doesn`t simply mean ”showing things happening closer”, but that the filmmaker is aware why anything happening within the frame is shown in that particular medium shot. If your sequence has the feeling of a certain kind of secrecy – e.g.. you want to show what the character is doing, but not what he is thinking - maybe the upfront medium shot is not the best choice. Or if the stubborn inner drive forces you to make one more upfront medium shot into your work, you do have the possibility to make hundreds of variations. Some choices here would be to frame the image so that the face wasn`t showing, or create shadows on the characters face so that his thoughts are left unknown, but hands are more than visible. If there`s a will, there`s a way.

Today everyone`s a filmmaker and composer, because e.g.. the most popular camera-equipment doesn`t require the presence of an engineer. Equipment and software are very much accessible due to digital technology, which itself seems to be more or less common knowledge (The younger generations ”speak pixels”. Even if they will grow to appreciate some of the evolution processes, as we have, today they demand the qualities of tomorrow). We are so profoundly surrounded by different types of mediums that we will learn even though we didn`t want to; The amateur filmmaker is able to frame his films succesfully, because he is educated by the surrounding pop culture. He knows how e.g.. a horror film is supposed to look like, so by imitating his favourite movies he creates something visually valid – Theral understanding is not required in this matter. From a more professional point of view it has become increasingly important to really understand what one is doing and for what purpose; What one can accomplish and how. Understanding the constructions of fluent storytelling helps creating the concrete piece of art. From the technical point of view, the advantage of a professional compared to the common man, is that she/he won`t necessarily have to be on the mercies of the automatic-button.

> ”The configurations and colors of a landscape are a part of an infinite complex of climatic, chemical, botanical, and other elements. In a painting of such a landscape, the harmony, brilliancy etc., had to be achieved through the manipulation of paint, line, color, shape, size. The least requirement of such a transcription was professional skill and an understanding of one`s chosen medium.”
> (Maya Deren, An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film: 23)

Depending on the chosen subject and the nature of it, each of the prementioned tools can be used creatively to enhance the purpose. To know how to manipulate these tools – no matter the model or the format of the camera and the sound recorder - is a great advantage to get the results one wishes to have.

3.1 PIECES COMBINED - A STRUCTURE

Pieces combined (tools employed to form a shot, shots together forming a sequence, sequences together forming the film, films together forming a sequel and so on…) form a structure; A structure is something that is being employed by the story or the purpose. It is the physical chart of the thing created.

There exist some previously used structures of several types under each phase of production of a film. One can use a linear (three-act structure) or non-linear (like in Memento) structure. One can use structure based on time (like some of the German experimantalists you`ll know after reading this slim pile of papers) or to study other aspects of film linguistics.

If one wishes to employ a seldom seem structure/element, repetition helps; The viewer will understand and then embraces or neglects the previously unseen. We name it and we place it in a box as fast as possible, because it`s in our nature. After boxing, the problem is somewhat solved and we are able to proceed towards more appealing things. Truly understanding, would mean a lot of time, capacity and interest[12].
The logic of this "boxing" does kill all originality eventually, and so what`s fresh today, will be boxed tomorrow.

> "But man`s great dream is to achieve a whole whose character is far more mysterious and miraculous – that dynamic, living whole in which the inter-action of the parts produces more than their sum total in any sense. This relationship may be simple – as when water emerges on the interaction of hydrogen and oxygen. But let a third element be added, which transfigures both; and a fourth, which transforms the three – and the difficulties of analysis and creation become incalculable." – Maya Deren, 2A Ideas thoughts (s.12-13)

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[12] 1. We don`t live forever, 2. We do have a quite a capacity in comparison to other animals; Yet, our brains do have a system for "deleting unused files". The brains are being used most effectively considering the current interests. There`s not enough space to deal with everything, 3. Interest affects everything. Though you`d live hundred years, and had the capasity of a genius – if you`re really not that interested, you either will spend double the time of forcing yourself to learn, OR, like most of us, push the non-interesting thing aside and let others more appealing ones thrive. As diversed as the subject itself is (thinking media-critisism, of which I and many others are all for), for a human mind it is easier and faster to believe explanations of others about the things one really isn`t interested about.

CAMERA
FORMAT:
ANALOG/DIGITAL
FILM (8MM, S8MM, 16MM, S16MM, 35MM)
MINIDV, DV, DVCPRO, BETACAM, BETASP
HD, HDV
RED

ASPECT RATIO:
4:3 (1.33:1)
16:9 (1.78:1)
CINESCOPE ETC.

FRAMING EG.
EXTREME CLOSE-UP (ECU): 1900, GEORGE
ALBERT SMITH, GRANDMAS READING GLASS
(HISTORY OF WORLD CINEMA:32)
CLOSE-UP (CU)
MEDIUM CLOSE-UP (MCU)
MEDIUM SHOT: SEEN IN THE EARLY LUMIÈRE
FILMS (BABY EATING, A KISS ETC),
(HISTORY OF WORLD CINEMA:32)
LONG SHOT (FULL SHOT/WIDE SHOT): USED
IN EARLY CINEMA; FIXED CAMERA SHOT
THEATRE-LIKE; FULL PEOPLE ON SCREEN
(HISTORY OF WORLD CINEMA:31)
EXTREME LONG SHOT

TWO-SHOT
THREE-SHOT
PIVOT SHOT
SUBJECTIVE CAMERA (POV)

ANGLES
HIGH
LOW
EYE-LEVEL
HORIZONTAL/VERTICAL ETC

CAMERA POSITION
CAMERA SIZE, CAMERA MOBILITY
GRIPPING THE CAMERA:
A CAMERA CAN BE GRIPPED INTO ANYTHING,
ACCORDING TO THE LIMITATIONS OF THE
CAMERA, ITSELF AND THE "GRIPPEE" - SMALL
SIZE COMES IN HANDY
MOVEMENT
TILT
PAN
" AT A VERY EARLY DATE, AT LEAST AS EARLY
AS 1901 ACCORDING TO TRADE
ADVERTISEMENTS, TRIPODS WERE FITTED
WITH A SWIVEL HEAD. THE IMAGE OBTAINED
BY TURNING THE CAMERA IN THIS WAY IS
TO THIS DAY KNOWN AS THE PANORAMIC,
OR ` PAN ` SHOT."
(HISTORY OF WORLD CINEMA:33)
TRACKING SHOT (MELIES & PHANTASMA-
GORIA DEVICE - MOVED ONSCREEN OBJECTS
TOWARDS THE CAMERA IN SUCH A MANNER
THAT THE OBJECT SEEMED TO GROW)
(THE HISTORY OF WORLD CINEMA:33)
DOLLY
ZOOM

COLOR, B/W
NEGATIVE IMAGE

SPEED; 25FPS ETC.
SLOW MOTION
FEET – METRES

EXPOSURE

PIXILATION/ANIMATION:
CAMERA STOPS AND THE
OBJECT MOVES
SUBSTITUTION: CAMERA
STOPS AND THE OBJECT
CHANGES
(THE EXECUTION OF MARY
STUART 1895, BY EDISON
CAMERAMAN)
MULTIPLE LAYER SHOOTING
POINT OF ATTENTION

VARIOUS WAYS TO INFLUENCE A FILM-TO-BE:

LENSES
DEPTH OF FIELD
DEPTH OF FIELD CAN BE
AFFECTED VIA LENSES
CHOSEN, DISTANCES
BETWEEN THE CAMERA
AND THE OBJECT +
BETWEEN THE OBJECT
AND THE BACKGROUND.
WITH NEW HIGH
DEFINITION-CAMERAS,
THE IMAGE IS BOUND TO
BE VERY SHARP –
THE GRAINY FILM FORGIVES
SOME SOFTNESS, ENHANCES
IT EVEN (TAKES IT IN
PROUDLY), WHEREAS HD
PIXELS FORGIVE NOTHING.
INTENDED SHARP MUST
TRULY BE SHARP,
OTHERWISE IT SEEMS TO BE
A MISTAKE.

DISTORTION

FLATNESS
(CITIZEN KANE, AND
WELLES, BOY IN THE WINDOW
- BACKGROUND)

FOCUS/BLUR
TELEPHOTO LENS
WIDE-ANGLE LENS
FISH-EYE LENS
MACRO LENS

EDITING
MONTAGE
CONTINUITY EDITING
JUMP CUT
WIPE
FADE
COLOR GRADING
RHYTHM
FORM
REVERSE

EFFECTS on SET
EXPLOSIONS
WIND
SMOKE
WATER (RAIN/POOLS ETC)

EXTRA ELEMENT OF RAIN
OF ANYTHING (SNOW,
RAIN, FLUFF) MOST OF THE
TIME COMPLIMENTS THE
SHOT – THOUGH RAIN, AS
IN WATER, IS A BIT
THREATENING FOR ALL THE
ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT, AND
EXPENSIVE WHEN CREATED,
IT IS BEAUTIFUL ELEMENT
WITHIN A SHOT.

LIGHTING
LIGHTS
SHADOWS
LIGHT MOVEMENT
HIGH KEY/LOW KEY
FRONT/MIDDLE/BACK
KEY LIGHT
REFLECTING
KICKER LIGHT
BACKGROUND LIGHT
SOFTNESS/HARDNESS OF LIGHT
HMI/TUNGSTEN
LIGHT INTENSITY
THE DIRECTION OF LIGHT
THE COLORS OF LIGHT (GELS)

SOUND
ATMOSPHERE
DIALOGUE
EFFECTS
MUSIC
SYNCHRONOUS/
NONSYNCHRONOUS
SOUND

ACTORS
POSITION/MOVEMENT
(CAMERA & OTHER
ACTORS)

MISE-EN-SCÈNE
COSTUMES
PROPS
SET/SCENERY
STAGING

AFTER EFFECTS
CINEMATOGRAPHER MUST BE
FULLY AWARE OF EACH AND
EVERY EFFECT ATTENDED –
IN ADDITION ONE MUST THINK
ABOUT SHOOTING CONDITIONS;
LIGHTING, SCENERY AND SHOTS.
HAVING THE AFTER EFFECT
PROFESSIONAL ON SET WHILE
SHOOTING IS A GOOD IDEA.
HE/SHE WILL NOTICE IF SOME
ESSENTIAL MARKINGS ARE
LACKING.

WEATHER
THE WORST ENEMY TO HAVE.
WHEN FRIENDLY, THE BEST
PAL EVER

"BY 1900, THEN, THE FILMS VISUAL VOCABULARY HAD BEEN RECOGNIZED.
ONLY GRADUALLY WAS THE IDEA OF SYNTAX APPRECIATED, THE NOTION
THAT THE ESSENCE OF CINEMA IS THE JUXTAPOSITION OF SHOTS INTO
AN EXPRESSIVE CONTINUUM."
(THE HISTORY OF WORLD CINEMA: 36)

4. HISTORY OF FILM

> "While the cinema was this evolving its characteristic organisational and economic form, film-makers were discovering techniques and aesthetic principles. Presented with a new medium, no-one could define, a priori and complete, its nature and its rules. They had to be discovered, bit by bit - - - The structural peculiarities, the dramatic potential, the whole artistic nature of the film medium, were only to be developed gradually over many years; but within a surprisingly short time after the first Lumiere show the full range of optical techniques had been realized or indicated."
> (David Robinson, The History of World Cinema: 31)

Because the history of movies/filming is very much to be combined with the development of the camera and sound equipment[13], that is exactly where were going to start. Though many respective inventors around the Globe provided for the motion picture camera, the film, the sound and the screening equipment, to save time and few pages I`ve chosen one man to lead the journey. According to my literary sources it can be concluded that within the tale of this man the development of the mainstream film industry is being suprisingly accurately personalized.

Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) was a highly appreciated inventor of his time. Though generally he is remembered as the inventor of the sustainable light bulb, he did put an effort to the creating of the film camera and synchronized sound. As soon as photography was invented, Edison got interested about it. He was especially interested in viewing images in motion. Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), an English photographer, who had gained some fame for his serial-shots, visited Edison and showed him the "Zoopraxiscope" he had invented in 1879. The round object could contain serial-shots e.g.. about a running horse – The rotating object with some peeping holes outside of it created an illusion of motion within the head of the observer. From this confrontation Edison got fascinated about the idea of having an object that actually could record moving images. In his mind, the idea of a film camera had been born. William K.L. Dickson was the man to work on Edisons concept of the film camera.

George Eastman of the Kodak company invented nitrocelluloid film in 1888, and Etienne-Jules Marey got an idea about film strips. Edison combined the two, creating long lasting film strips he could use within his soon to be born Kinetograph (and kinetoscope for viewing). The first film created with this equipment was presented in 1893[14], in Black Maria. Black Maria was maybe the most famous of Edisons inventions in the field of film industry; It was the very first filmstudio in America - in West Orange of New Jersey, to be specific. Cause the early film needed huge amounts of light, Black Maria was built on a rotating plate, so that it could be turned towards the light – Light penetrated through a huge window on the ceiling of the studio, and as surely the sun sets down and get up in the morning, the light-dependend Black Maria needed to be rotated.

At the later stage of all this that Edison found, combined and molded (without hesitation, or intervention of morals) had evolved into something far more greater than was expected. Along the way there had been strong suspitions about the nature of films as greater entertainers[15], concerning screenings, public interest etc. Before some major problems were being solved and money actually started rolling in, films were seen as vaudeville-experiments, similar to spectacular magic-shows etc. (which, actually at a point was a part of the truth – magician Mèlies with his trickery films). Money undoubtedly started to also affect the minds of few inventors, along them Edison.

> "As salaries and production costs mounted, producers sought ways of standardising production methods, of discovering sure-fire values that could be injected into their films to quarantee success at the box-office. Hence there came into being certain characteristics od American production which were to persist for several decades."
> (The History of World Cinema: 72)

Motion Picture Patents Company, MPPC, was established in 1909. It was the biggest film monopoly there yet, yearning to rule and possess all the rights there were to get. MPPCs producers were: Edison, Biograph, Vitagraph, Essanay, Selig, Lubin, Kalem and the french firms of Mèlies and Pathe. MPPCs distributor being George Kleine. Already in 1910 MPPC established the GFC, General Film Company, in order to gain total monopoly of film

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[13] Equipment that wasn`t necessarily evolved by the making of films in mind. Making of filmic entertainment evolved aside the camera, and camera became a vessel for something else intended, art.

[14] http://www.inventhelp.com/ThomasEdisonAddsMotiontoPictures.asp

[15] e.g. In Edisons period, it was a known problem of the investors that there yet was no greater way of screening the films for bigger audiences. Edisons, and others films were presented via peep-boxes, that abled only one viewer to see the film. There were, later on some experiments with 4 peep-holes, with two different films, but everyone knew that the solution, as mentioned before, was the evolvement of screening equipment.

exchanges. Independent producers, who were not given membership for the MPPC, sought another chances. They spotted a place with decent weather conditions and estates – Within this place there was also cheap labour to hire. The soon to be "mushrooming" Hollywood was a strike at the face of MPPC. Studios like Paramount and Universal were born – MPPC started fading.

Film-industry in America, by the mid-1920s was focused on "Hollywood film". Stars[16] thrived and the major studios ruled; Film industry was very much perceived as a business. Huge amounts of cash were spent on films that so much resembled each other – From rags to riches and other happy endings. The early chase-films, slapsticks and comedies shot mainly in theatre-like longshots, got company of hollywood-dramas which had succesfully employed the visual vocabulary e.g.. such as D.W.Griffiths[17]. Hollywood embraced such genres as comedy, western, romance, horror etc., each having acknowledged conventions of story, character, and the overall visual appearance. The becoming of sychronized sound on its part enhanced the need to have more dialogue, which, on its behalf made the existence of the screenplay even more important. The written form of a film – which mostly seemed to be based on to the three-act structure – was there to stay, along with some other more-or-less officially confirmed conventions of film making. It was no secret that the "foolproof formula" of the films was a driving force for the most powerful[18]. The "John Does/Jane Does" who were interested in making e.g.. form-wise unconventional films, were going to have a hard bargain. Financially they were to be utterly by themselves.

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[16] Florence Lawrence 1st of the twinkling stars in 1910

[17] Among some other early filmmakers, D.W.Griffiths visual influence was one of the really good things that happened, regarding the filmic language in general. When D.W.Griffith, one of the enhancers of film narrative and vocabulary we today recognize, separated form these formalities and made his film After Many Years in 1908, he was to be questioned about his methods; "How could a movie be made without a chase?" His montage-techniques were also being questioned; "How can you tell a story jumping about like that?" (The History of world cinema: 60).

[18] The one having the money and the means to influence massmedia – In this case the big studios, corporations, monopolies.

5. FAST FORWARD - ROOM FOR EXPERIMENTATION

Who and when exactly started the history of making avant-garde films? What is it that defines avant-garde films?

Avant-garde (French.) Experimental or ground-breaking trend in the field of art.

As we`ve previously discussed, ever since the twenties the big studios of Hollywood ruled the film markets. Money would rule everything, and the most productive types of films would stay as they were for one period. Experimental, perhaps more playful side on the industry was left on the shoulders of people like Maya Deren[19], Jonas Mekas etc. Alongside their filmic inventions and insights, these film-makers took the time to speak out loud about the poor condition of financing more unconventional films, and about the too slow lingual evolvement of the more industrialized filmart.

Some of the "avant-gardean" film makers are being held up on a pedestal for more than just the films. Such artist-theorists like Maya Deren – to whom we shall return soon enough – are known for their industry-confronting theories, writings, their personal perseverance, and the inspiration they give others by functioning the way they always have.

Personally, I yet haven`t discovered anyone who`d dare to define the exact person who is responsible for the birth of the underground movement of filmmaking. As I`ve written in the previous pages, there have been beaming signs about the will to explore further this new way to communicate, already in the beginning of filming - even before there were definitions such as filmic drama etc. The whole discovery of serial shooting, moving images could be perceived as a one huge test - While the equipment was evolving in the hands of inventors, small films were being made along the way. Films that historians have learned to appreciate for they were there all the time to teach next generations, on their part helping the filmlanguage to evolve. All this films, more mainstream or avant´garde, with or without narrative do count; All of them have a purpose, and all of them influence in one and other, taking filmic language one step further.

The ones that have been studing film history for a longer period of time, and from a wider perspective, do know it is not math we`re talking about. There are no simple aswers, only conclusions of chosen perspectives, as in all man-written history. Also I cannot clame to be aware of e.g.. the avant-garde movement in India (which happens to be providing so much films, that surely there exists a subculture of making non-mainstream films), so I have chosen to write things I`ve learned about the making of avant-garde films in Europe and United States of America.

5.1. AVANT-GARDE

Film audiences in the twenties – when there was not yet sychronized sound nor colors in movies – had already gotten to know such filmic spectacles that contained movement[20], reversal, and theatrical trickeries. They had seen films that contained narrative[21], and films that visually had more than one theater like camera-angle. Mainstream film was beginning to be defined; A narrative film made tasty with a bit of trickery, magic.

Some of the more independent filmmakers were not too satisfied with the mushrooming definitions about how things were supposed to be in movies, and so they started to evolve the filmic language with their own sets of rules. Because the filmic language was evolving too slow, in other words no one seemed to push hard enough for it to evolve, the filmmakers intrigued by visual experimentation decided to make something about it.
They started experimenting with color, with movement, with sound – anything that was remotely interesting to them. They were driven by the passion to find something beyond the narrative, mainstream film, and the lack of means could not stop such inventions[22].

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[19] Maya being perhaps the most influential of them all as filmmaker, filmtheorist and public figure. Her wits – on paper, person and in making films - made her to be taken seriously, to be remembered throughout time.

[20] The recording of movement of course being the very first idea, the whole idea of filming – magical movement on flat surface. E.g. Lumieres were professionals producing movement towards the camera – The train, Field etc.

[21] Edwin S.Porter`s The great train robbery in 1901, The Dream of a rarebit friend 1906, Griffiths Intolerance 1913, Birth of a nation.

[22] ...Though without the existence of the film camera there would not have been any idea of such things in the first place.

For some film historians, there exists a divination of the early avant-garde between the years 1920-1970; The First Avant-garde in 1920-1939, The Second Avant-garde in 1943-1955, and The Third Avant-garde or Underground in 1955-1970. The periods are divided by the golden peaks of each, the type of the work/interest, the fashions/interests of the periods. Between the first and the second avant-garde the second world war happened.

When such a chart – containing a list of artwork & short description of it - is set infront of anyone who is even a bit aware of e.g.. the European or American history, it is quite easy to locate e.g. when the beat or the hippie-cultures thrived. The surrounding popculture is not without an influence when it comes to language of any kind.

When talking about Avant-garde films, I include within the bunch the ones that consider themselves as dadaists, expressionists, surrealists, - I do not outline anyone who`s work has something new and linguistically (considering film language) conclusive within it, something that is not considered mainstream. Avant-garde film, in my text means experimental film, something that attempts (and succeeds) to create new ways to communicate.

When the first Avant-garde period (1920-1939) is being mentioned, there are few names that need to be said out loud; In the German team we have Hans Richter (1888-1976), Walther Ruttmann (1887-1941) and Oskar Fischinger (1900-1967); In the French team we have Man Ray (1890-1976), Henri Chomette (1896-1941), Fernand Lèger (1881-1955), Germaine Dulac (1882-1942), Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), Renè Clair (1898-1981) and Jean Vigo (1905-1934). There were also few others from elsewhere worth mentioning; Swedish Viking Eggeling (1880-1925), a Dutchman Joris Ivens (1898-1989), New Zealander/Kiwi named Len Lye (1901-1980), A Scottish-Canadian Norman Mclaren (1914-1987), Hungarian Ernö Metzner (1892-1953), Polish Jean Epstein (1897-1953), Russian Alexandre Alexeieff (1901-1982), and of course the legendary Czech filmmaker Alexandr Hackenschmied a.k.a Alex Hammid (1907-2004). Dziga Vertov a.k.a Denis Kaufmann (1896-1954), Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) and German expressionistic filmmakers Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1888 – 1931) with Friedrich ”Fritz” Lang (1890-1976) also make an appearance in the avant-garde history, and their constant effect in the work of others is more than visible (Vertov with his acclaimed film The Man with a Movie Camera in 1929), which among other things questions the objectivity of the camera, making a point out of the point-of-view; Eisenstein with his montage theories, esp. Intellectual montage seems to have had somewhat of an effect for avant-garde artists – AND Eisenstein did contribute in the form of the film Romance Sentimentale (1930); Directors such as F.W.Murnau or Fritz Lang, were showing their expressionistic orientations in their films, using more experimental shots or sequences alongside the more mainstream filmlanguage; F.W.Murnau in his Nosferatu 1922 used negative shots, reversal and fast-forward effect to create a weird atmosphere; In Der Letzte Mann, the last man 1924 – which is considered being more Kammerspiel[23] -film than expressionist film, Murnau was using the subjective point of view. Fritz Lang who can be seen being a part of the German expressionist movement, on his behalf employed Walther Ruttmans talents in his film Die Niebelungen. Teil 2: Kriemhild`s Rache - Kriemhild´s Revenge.

5.1.1. THE FIRST AVANT-GARDE (1920-1939)

When watching the work of the prementioned filmartists, it becomes visible that filmmakers were more than interested about color[24], movement[25], rhythm, lights, shadows, reflections, trickery[26], non-objectivity, geometric objects/abstract figures, and in different ways of seeing; Subjective point of view being perhaps the most interesting point of view to focus on. Also the absense of the camera in the motion picture making process (Hand-made film, Len Lye) was making its way being popular. Alongside ”Gasparcolor[27]”-invention by a Hungarian chemist Bela Gaspar in 1933, Len Lyes colorful, hand-made expressions soon made their way into commercials.

Cinema Pur was a one particular movement in France during 20`s and 30`s– especially embraced by prementioned filmmakers Henri Chomette, Germaine Dulac and filmmakers considered being dadaists; Man Ray, Lèger, Clair, Duchamp and Dudley Murphy. As dada ridiculed the conventional ways of making films, Cinema pur was all for the motion, rhythm and composition. Motion pictures traditionally have been almost seemlessly

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[23] ”Chamber Drama” film – concentrates on character psychology.
[24] To gain something which is lacking is always as interesting – color lacked.
[25] Movement being till this day as interesting for like-minded artists as ever
[26] Things disappearing and re-appearing, reversal, shooting through dirty glasses, distortion.
[27] Gasparcolor, ”subtractive 3-color process on a single film strip” – wikipedia.

connected to fine arts, theatre and writing[28]; Pure cinema movement was being created because of the need to have own particular language for film, in its own terms.

In the 20`s also another subgenre was being born – Abstract film. Hans Richter, Walther Ruttmann, Viking Eggeling and Oskar Fischinger were drawn to make these non-narrative films, with abstract figures which were moving either across the picture plane or within it. The movement was bind to rhythm and form, and so these films are usually also referred as being something called "visual music".

Walther Ruttmans (1887-1941) technique to paint single frames on glass produced filmserie named Opus (incl. Opus I, the most famous of the work, Opus II, Opus III and Opus IV). He accomplished this animated series of abstract, floating-by-objects by painting the the whole strips, without any interference of a camera. Coloring, which was rare in the twenties, Ruttman achieved by careful hand-tinting and toning of whole strips.
For the finished abstract film, a musical score was composed by his old friend Max Butting. It is being said that in the screening of his films Ruttman himself was playing the cello, along with the string quintet, in 1921.

Man Rays "rayogramm[29]", and Alexandre Alexeieff`s pin board (One could control one singular pin, to make a color stamp – the result being animationlike movement) were also invented during The First Avant-garde.

> "Man Ray made this film (Retour à la raison, 1923) partly without a camera by applying his technique of the Rayograph to the film celluloid: "On some strips I sprinkled salt and pepper, like a cook preparin a roast, on other strips I threw pins and thumbtacks at random; then I turned on the white light for a second or two, as I had done for my still Rayographs
> (Man Ray, Dada and Surrealist Film: 3)

> "All the films I made were improvisations. I did not write scenarios. It was automatic cinema. I worked alone. My intention was to put the photographic compositions that I made into motion. As fas as the camera is concerned, it serves me to fix something which I do not want to paint. But it does not interest me to make "beautiful photography" in cinema. Principally, I do not like so much things that move."
> (Man Ray, Dada and Surrealist Film: 3)

Fernand Lèger, Dudley Murphy, Ballet mècanique (1924)

5.1.2. THE SECOND (1943-1955) AND THE THIRD AVANT-GARDE (1955-1970)

The Second Avant-garde and the Third avant-garde don`t have such clear distinction.
The second avant-garde was therally affected – one could say that it was even ruled by - by Eleanora Derenkowskaya, better known as Maya Deren (1917-1961). From forties to sixties Maya was at the peak with her theories about time and space, and films that worked many times as vessels for her theories – As the centre of attention she kept theorizing about filmic time, filmic reality, space, and created something called "trancefilm". Mayas theories still have the fresh feel, and because of that we will spend a whole set of pages later on with her history and her work.
Though some filmmakers – such as Jean Epstein, Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye, Norman Mclaren - from the first period of avant-garde were still working hard and evolving through the second (and some through the third), fresh faces started to appear.
Marie Menken (1910-1971), Kenneth Anger (1927-) and Hy Hirsh (1911-1960), were among them who made use out of natural color film, which now was there to grasp. Though natural color film existed a bit before, it became affordable around the 1960`s. Before natural color film, there were few ways to get color on film[30]; 1st The possibility to paint on the filmstrip by hand – which was slow and demanding work. One could also tint the filmstock or tone B&W emulsion. The result was somewhat striking, but unrealistic. 2nd Technicolor – Three stripes of full color – in 1934.

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[28] Writing more connected, evidently becourse of the appearing of synchronised sound – suddenly writing dialogue became more important than before. Before there were only charts between shots, implying dialogue or to things that were happening.
[29] Rayogramm, an object is placed directly on photographic paper, and it is exposed to light.
[30] More about the coloring processes http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/oldcolor/oldcolor.htm.

Though Kenneth Anger became fabulously know in the young age of 20 via his first work, Fireworks[31] (1947), he is more widely known about his Scorpio Rising in 1964. Scorpio Rising describes the life of motorcyclists, at some points the "Tom-of-Finland"-way. Throughout his working history, Anger was very much influenced by pop culture, which can be noticed from his colorful pictography (In the beginning of his career Anger used tinted color) and the use of music (popular music) in his work. On the other hand, it was Anger`s Scorpio Rising, which especially influenced on the visuals of rock`n`roll and punk music videos.

Young Stan Brakhage (1933-2003) made his first appearance behind Maya Derens door at the end of the second avant-garde. As known as he is today – as being very productive, finishing approximately 400 films (of which we will not analyze every single one) – back then he was heavily influenced and glorified by Maya Deren and her work. Mayas influence is very visible in Brakhage`s The Way to Shadow Garden (1954).
During his long career, Brakhage experimented with and without the camera; He painted the film, tortured film by scratching it and from time to time gluing various objects on the film, giving his creation the label of a hand-made film[32]. When working with a camera, Brakhage, like other avantgardian film-makers, shot with hand-held stylo with the beloved 16mm Bolex – sometimes editing his material with the camera.
In his early films, the people infront the camera were Brakhages closest ones[33] ; He shot few intimate scenes with her wife in 1959 for films Wedlock House: An Intercourse (studing conflicts, using negatives) and Window Water Baby Moving, in which he showed the homebirth of her wife. Later on Brakhages much debated homebirth video was being used by maternity centers as teaching material.

Though at first look the second and the third avant-garde`s seem to be filled mainly by Americans[34], there yet were avantgardists from around the globe. Structuralists (has nothing to do with structuralism as philosophy) such as Kurt Kren (1929-1998) and Peter Kubelka (Unsere Afrikareise, 1966) were interested in somewhat "random", everyday-life-objects shot and then manipulated by predefined rules, that were consisting of the duration of each shot – in other words, the amount of frames were being preset e.g.. via charts, kaderplans.

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[31] Though Anger was only 20 years old - and from time to time it was showing in Fireworks as humourous events within the shots - he was able to provide a fragile and yet aggressive piece about the sexuality of a young man
[32] Hand-made film, Camera is not involved in the making of the film. Mothlight 1963 is famous for the fact that Brakhage glued grass and moth wings, among other things, on perforated tape – equaled 16mm film, so that he could present his work with existing tools – and thus created an interesting serial effect by screening his art
[33] Man Ray favoured Kiki de Montparnasse and friends; Mayas actors alongside herself were Alex Hammid, Hella Heyman and selected group of friends and dancers; I myself seem to use my little brother and friends as subjects. Conclusion; The closest people are a great source of material. Though, a word of warning; If someone starts to despise being shot, one may have shot one time too many. Oh, BrakhageBrakhage...
[34] Before generalizing one maybe should remember though, that some of these americans were originally born elsewhere, but the war made many of them to emigrate – e.g. Maya Deren was born in Ukraine, Alex Hammid was from Czech Republic, Jonas Mekas "the godfather of American avant-garde cinema" was born in Lithuania, was took captive in a labour camp near Hamburg when he was passing through to get to University in Vienna. After series of happenings, the Mekas brothers emigrated to United States.

6. WITH MAYA DEREN – Theories and beliefs, Time and Space

Maya Deren was an intellectual, who was very much aware about the visual nature of film and about the non-excisting absolute truth. When Cinèma Vèritè was making its way to America, to be an essential part of popular culture, Maya Deren was there to observe the landing. She understood that everything a person touches, he/she manipulates; The reality in a film is nothing more but the filmic reality, though the resemblence to the surrounding world was there. She knew some adjustments (especially in thinking) needed to be made in able for the mainstream filmart to evolve. Though she had no resources nor financial aid whatsoever, with her essays and manifestos Maya Deren made herself heard. Her films proved many of her statements about the filmic language, if only by being fluent and thus accepted.

In her writings and speeches Maya Deren talks a lot about the relationship and relativity of science, nature and art. Unlike some fellow artists, she doesn`t deny the fact that we are somewhat constantly being surrounded and influenced by man-made definitions of something that already existed far before we humans landed from trees. She recognizes the inbuilt learning habits – which mainly seem to rely on a complex, non-linear memory-system based on our experiences - of us humans, and thus is able to succefully relate scientific details e.g.. to the evolvement of film art.

> "Art is the dynamic result of the relationship of three elements: the reality to which a man has access – directly and through the researches of all other men; the crucible of his own imagination and intellect; and the art instrument by which he realizes, through skillful exercize and control, his imaginative manipulations. To limit, deliberatly or through neglect, any of these functions, is to limit the potential of the work of art itself."
> (Maya Deren, An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film: 17)

As herself, being the "artist-scientist", Maya was intrigued by the artforms/instruments[35] special ability to affect space and time. By comparing bodily functions with the camera functions[36], she made clear how the possibilities were similar regarding e.g.. thinking processes – The camera, by simply its recording ability, made remembering possible, but also so that one could record things from the past and this moment, and then combine them in he editing booth – Like our memory and thoughts, we are not subdued by only one moment or time, we are able to move in time.

> "Unlike a cat ("through its own immediate experience of reality , will become a complete cat") "a human infant , out of itself, will not develop into its proper adulthood. it must learn beyond its instincts, and often in opposition to them, by imitation, observation, experimentation, reflection – in sum, by the complex "horizontal" processes of memory.
> By `horizontal` I mean that the memory of man is not committed to the natural chronology of his experience – whether of an extended period, a single event, or a compulsive reaction. On the contrary, he has access to all his experience simultaneously. He can compare the beginning of a process to the end of i, without accepting it as a homogeneous totality; he can compare similar portions of events widely disparate in time and place, and so recognize both the constancy of element and their variable functions in one context or another; and he is able to perceive that a natural, chronological whole is not immutable, but that it is a dynamic relationship of functioning parts."
> (Maya Deren, An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film: 11)

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[35] Maya was also very aware of the possibilities and limitations of her equipment. She knew her cameras physique therally, and enhanced her own thinking mentally. Alexander Hammid – Alexander Hackenschmied – a recognized czech cameraman, and later Maya Derens husband, was there to guide her technically, and to collaborate in her first film At Land. Mayas later work is considered to be conceived by her especially, but in At Land Hammids collaboration was at its most visible.
Hammid shared similar visions with Maya, and so they connected at more higher level. Hammids writings are also cited by Mayas most known text: An Anagram of Thoughts ...)

[36] One must keep in mind that the two – the camera and the body, are two separate things (Awareness of Maya, self, and many others). Written down, and this way, it feels most ridiculous, but I suggest studying through e.g. the ideas and theories regarding truth and film. Though not said as in such shamelessly direct way, some theorists let us understand the camera holds capabilites of telling the truth objectively – In my mind, this would require the camera to have all the knowledge in the world (Absolute truth and the question of it), and then provide the most objective/neutral fact for the audience. This would also mean the lack of humanity – the very power which makes us angry when we e.g. see a child abused. To make it short – A very wise, quick, incorruptible machine, which was not fooled by apparent behaviours (most tend to fool others in certain circumstances – the cheaters and the gullible cheaters, both in good and in bad. In mass media, even the most reliable news, unfortunately cannot be protected by the influence of deceitful party), and lacked humanity and opinion. Not too much to ask, huh?

Time and space – Both can be fragmented and expanded. The filmic illusion of now and here, is something that happens in the head of an active viewer. The captured time is never the same as now – when the material is being viewed, it is always something from the past. Shots within the same scene – a scene of "now[37]" can be captured in different days, different weeks.

Though the audience today is aware that a film is shot (and manipulated) before it is screened, a-good-enough film lands a mist upon that awareness. An individual in the audience becomes a part of the film, falls in love with some characters, and gets scared by the threat that the world is soon to end.

The illusion of the filmic "this instant" has a lot to do with continuos aspects within the film; continuous editing, continuos movement, continuous lighting, continuos acting[38], and taking care that the particulars of the mise-en-scene (such as the wardrope, hair, make-up) are kept if not the same, similar within the scene.
In Maya Derens films "this instant" has a lot to do with continuos editing and movement. Collaborating shots contaning movement with similar nature (slow-slow, fast-fast) on their part made the transformation of the background space possible, and acccetable.

Though Maya Deren had her intentions, and we know some of them in the form of her prementioned theories, the interpretation of an individual is always the interpretation of an individual. Thoughts, personal associations.
In the next interpretation, by moi, I `ll describe At Land (one of my favourites from Maya) via it`s series of happenings, from the beginning to the end. The description includes some of my immediate associations (which are mine, not necessarily true for anyone else), and I haven`t forgotten to mention some of the cinematographical aspects either. If you do not wish to know what happens in the flm, please skip the next part.

Here goes…

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[37] It is an illusion that the series of action are happening within the same 15 minutes; Of which the TV-serie called 24 is a very good example. The whole series is based on what exactly is happening within the 24 hours of each episode, the episode having 45 minutes to show these key-elements of the 24 hours.

[38] An experienced actor is very much "there" at the time of capturing each shot. A piece of work made by an unexperienced actor collaborated with an unexperienced director easily results not-so-fluent expressions – the mood within a scene is changing too many times, making the participating characters seem too crazy to identify with. The successpul collaboration of the actor and the director in mainstream film is futile. The prementioned couple of the more unexperienced director and actor CAN get to good results if they are able to back-up each other, to communicate somewhat clearly about what is it really that is pursued by the scene and by the characters

ELEANORA DERENKOWSKAYA A.K.A MAYA DEREN

(1917, KIEV, UKRAINE - 1961 NEW YORK, U.S.A)

"Creativity consists in a logical, imaginative extension of a known reality. The more limited the information, the more inevitable the necessity of its imaginative extension."
(MAYA DEREN; AN ANAGRAM OF IDEAS ON ART, FORM AND FILM: 16)

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EDUCATION

BA	SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK JOURNALISM, POLITICAL SCIENCE	FINISHED IN 1936
MA	SMITH COLLEGE ENGLISH LITERATURE	FINISHED IN 1939

WORK EXPERIENCE

CO-DIRECTOR WITH ALEX HAMMID, WRITER EDITOR, ACTOR	MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON 16MM, B/W, 14MIN, SILENT	1943
DIRECTOR	WITCH`S CRADLE 16MM, B/W, 12MIN, SILENT	1944, UNFINISHED
DIRECTOR, WRITER ACTOR	AT LAND 16MM, B/W, 15MIN, SILENT	1944
DIRECTOR CINEMATOGRAPHER	A STUDY IN CHOREOGRAPHY FOR CAMERA 16MM, B/W, 4MIN, SILENT	1945
DIRECTOR ACTOR	RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME 16MM, B/W, 15MIN, SILENT	1946
DIRECTOR, WRITER CINEMATOGRAPHY	MEDITATION ON VIOLENCE 16MM (1.37:1), B/W, 12MIN, MUSIC BY TEIJI ITO	1948
DIRECTOR, WRITER CINEMATOGRAPHY EDITOR	THE VERY EYE OF NIGHT 16MM, B/W, SILENT	1958
CINEMATOGRAPHY WRITER	DIVINE HORSEMEN: THE LIVING GODS OF HAITI - ORIGINAL FOOTAGE BY MAYA DEREN (DIR BY.CHEREL ITO, TEIJI ITO) 16MM, 20.000 FEET (6096 M/6,096 KM) OF FILM OF VODOUN CEREMONIES & SOUND RECORDINGS	1985

MAYA DEREN`S NOTES FOR AMATEUR/INDEPENDENT FILM MAKERS

PICTURE ABOVE: INGRID BERGMAN WAS SOMEONE MAYA DEREN ADMIRED. SHE OFTEN MENTIONED MS.BERGMAN AS HER EXAMPLE WHEN TALKING ABOUT STRONG ACTING.

INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER USUALLY LACKS THE POSSIBILITY TO WORK WITH PROFESSIONAL ACTORS, WHO ARE ABLE TO TRANSMIT SILENT EMOTIONS IN CLOSE-UPS. THUS, IT IS MORE THAN IMPORTANT FOR THE INDEPENDENT FILM MAKER TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND TO USE THE FILMIC LANGUAGE CREATIVELY. CHOOSING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT, THE RIGHT SPACE FOR THE SCENE (A SCENE WITH CERTAIN CHARACTER) AND THEN FRAMING IT CREATIVELY DOES HELP TRANSMITTING THE EMOTION.

ADDING CONTRAST F.I IN THE FORM OF OTHER MORE STORYWISE-INSIGNIFIGANT CHARACTERS IS A GOOD WAY TO MAKE THE POINT OF THE SCENE CLEAR.THE PICTURES ON THE RIGHT SIGNIFY A FEELING OF LONELINESS - A LONG SHOT IN A WIDE, OPEN SPACE IS A GOOD STARTING POINT. THE "PASSERS BY" MAKE THE MAIN CHARACTER MORE ISOLATED IN HIS LONELINESS, AND AT THE SAME TIME GIVE US THE IDEA OF ¨ THE NATURE OF THE LONELINESS; HE LACKS SOMEONE TO GROW OLD WITH.

"THE ENTIRE BURDEN OF ACHIEVING EMOTION RESTS NOT WITH THE EXPRESSIVE SKILL OF A PERFORMER, BUT UPON THE FILM-MAKER, WHO MUST CREATE THE EFFECT BY A MANIPULATION OF THE TOTAL VISUAL ELEMENT, THE COMPOSITION OF THE FRAME, THE SEQUENCE OF SHOTS AND THE ALL-OVER CONCEPT OF THE FILM."
- ESSENTIAL DEREN: FILM PRODUCTION COLLECTED WRITINGS ON FILM BY MAYA DEREN P.159

6.1 My interpretations, thoughts and notes of Maya Derens At Land

At the beginning of At Land, a woman (whom later on I will call the entity or alien – for some reasons) is being washed a shore. After this the sea pulls back (reversed shot). The woman gets up and start climbing up along the roots of a fallen tree. She will end up in a room (continuos editing – movemet connects shots) at the end of a long table, alongside which there are loads of people having a drinking and talking. At the other end of the table there`s a man, playing chess, concentrating only in it – this fascinates the woman, the entity, whom nobody seems to notice. She crawls her way to the man (through the wildlife – branches associating to the people, people through whom she needs to get through to get to the man) and looks down to the chess game. The man gets up, leaving the came unresolved. Everybody seems to be leaving. When left alone the invisible entity, by the power of her mind, starts moving the chess pieces - very surely even, as she would have the solution.

Check mate. A piece fall down the table, and once more the space changes – The entity has ended up on a mountain (near the sea), and shes following the chess piece floating on, until its beyond her reach. She then leaves the mountain.

The next time we see her is when she`s walking on the road (this time the transformation from the place from another is done more traditonally. Now we are not aware of for how long she has been walking the road/ how long it took from her to get from the mountain to the road. Until this particular cut we`ve been led by continuous editing, led by movement and the actions of the woman-entity). The feeling of this segment is different than the ones before. The woman picks up flowers and seems to be very much within her thoughts (perhaps recollecting everything before?). Suddenly a man appears beside her, talking. She listens to him, and seems to disagree. The man changes (within the picture – another man, clothed similarly, is positioned to the place of the first man, when the camera is being pointed on the woman. Do the similarly dressed men, who she seems to listen but to disagree with, represent all the mouths talking/having the same explanation? Everybody trying to convince her about their opinions?), and keeps talking to her. The more they walk and talk, the more the entity disagrees. Until the last man (Alex Hammid) wishes to show her something, perhaps trying to prove something to her. Again a cut to a similar place, but the road has disappeared – again we do not know for how long the woman has followed the man, but through some changes in her behavior imply that a good amount of time has been spent, and she has had more time to consider. The woman seems now more eager to follow the man. He leads her to an old forrest cottage, but closes the door behind him. The woman finds another way in, crawling once more from a hole on the side of the cottage.

As before, she ends up in a room. She looks around the room with such a manner that implies she`s not from around here, or that if she is, she sees things very much differently that the rest of us (a"terminator"- look, because it reminds me of something from a terminatror/robocop film – Similar effect, implying that she`s seeing things differently, she`s not from here). While studing the room, the woman notices an older man lying on the bed, covered in white sheets. The man stares back at her as relentlessly as she herself is watching him. (with a terminator walk) The woman leaves the man, who still is shamelessly staring at her (I have no explanation for the cat, so I will just pass interpreting this one).

After leaving the room, the woman-entity ends up in a maze of doors. She`ll go through some, others she`s passing. From the last door she steps on a precipice – frightens a bit, but soon realizes that in order to get down (theres no way back) she has to face getting down.

 In slow motion, she jumps on the opposite rock formation, and climbs then slides down (by the way, the sliding down shot, the close-up – Personally, always reminds me from the fact how much Maya as artist was prepared to give out of herself in order to say something. The act of sliding down, though not factual, looks painful, and the mood of the shot is very strong). By the end of her journey of climbing down the precipice, the entity is smashed on the final rock formation. She survives, and runs to the sand of the beach. When she looks back at the precipice, it has been transfigured into a wooden construction of something (I have no idea about what exactly this construction is. Maybe it doesn`t matter. Maybe it`s the fact that its a careful construction, and not at all the natural part of the world it in the first place seemed to be. that matters.)

Across the dunes the woman-entity travels (frames being cut from between every dune – to make her movement faster – What makes great of this "shot", is that no matter the edition in between, the panning of the camera seems smooth).

In the end of At Land we see three figures (Maya gives us the information that they are separate characters, in the same universe, whitch before seemed unattached) – One collecting rocks very harshly, another one finding the way to enjoy her time, to enjoy the sun on her face (I`d also like to link this character to the first one – the one that first found the game being played fascinating, now she`s turned her fascination on the players, and finds the true quality

of the game). The third character is intrigued by the sun bather, and steals a part of their world. The stone barrer is left alone.

Doesn`t this interpretaion remind you of something? Something that is so very common for us, and especially in our chosen field of occupation?

There are the ones who work very hard to get the knowledge they wish to have, others just have what it takes – have the joy, have the sun, shining on the face. The third party is the idea stealer, the one that takes when no-ones looking, and ends up running towards the sunset (and by the way; the idea stealing entity runs through most spaces she visited before, facing the parallel entities). Everyone sees what has happened, but are unable to do anything, cause the stealing party is already far away.

7. CONCLUSION

The avant´gardean filmic language – however unusual in 1920-1960 – has indeed made a giant leap to popular culture; Only today we do not distinct the specialities, for we are constantly being served with so much visual and vocal stimuli. More unusual visual experiences are easy to come by when watching e.g.. music videos. A music video is a great format for one to experiment, for the it allows so much without judging.

Amongst the famous Hollywood filmmakers today there also seem to be quite a bunch of experimental-film enthusiasts[39]. At some point in their career they`ve ”crossed the line”, testing and modifying the filmic language; David Lynch`s, as well as John Waters` and Peter Greenaways careers could be said being very much based on this ”line crossing”-business; David Lynch`s film stylo at parts resembles that of Maya Derens; John Waters pushing limits with his ”trash-films”; Peter Greenaway focusing e.g.. on comparing film linguistics with the linguistics of a man, questioning our comprehension combining simple matters (alphabets, words, numbers) in new way. Peter jackson[40], best known for his Bad Taste, Meet the Feebles and Lord of the Rings, in collaboration with Costa Botes also provided something called ”mockumentary” in 1995. This fictional documentary about New Zealand-born, never-before-heard-of filmmaking pioneer, was taken seriously by the audience after it was aired in New Zealand TV – The audience believed in the existence of the main character because of the documentary-like form of the film. The next day Forgotten Silver needed to be explained by its creators[41]. on that same channel. As I`m desperately trying to testify with my short list of examples[42], the will to enchance the filmic language lies only not with the avant´garde artists.

Gladly there do exist those filmmakers who respectively carry the avant´gardean torch within[43]. Their torch is being followed by likeminded filmmakers. These filmmakers courage us to constantly challenge the aspects of filmic language, in order to evolve it further. They parade in the dawn of new inventions, yet never turning their back to the intellectuals of yesterday.

My conclusion is, that there are no conclusions – as there are no absolute truths. Everything relates in a way or another. Each artform influences another eventually, eating off of another plates happens all the time. As much as I would have loved to speak (and believe me I did, in the first version of this text) about the importance of pre-planning of ones work and about the importance of purpose (cause that`s the way I personally prefer to work), the truth seems to be that the purpose will ultimately find your work anyway; Whether you already had one or not, whether you liked it or didn`t. Your friend, (or enemy) a.k.a the active viewer will figure it out in her/his own terms.
When making films, the true value of the work exists in ones integrity, considering what one thinks is important and appealing. If there are no funds, or then again plenty, ”To test, to try, to modify”- is not at all a bad idea.

> ”I see that screenwriting, both as an art and a craft, has evolved into an international language of engaging visual expression.
> We`re currently standing on the threshold of a new frontier in film, and there are no rules as to what we can or cannot do. It is a time of evolution/revolution, a time of transformation in which the theater of technology has embraced a new era of digital technology. What we see and how we see it have changed.
> Story exposition is shown rather than told; characters are revealed through behaviour, not dialogue; time present and past have merged into a compelling storytelling device. As said in Eastern philosophy, the inside and outside are one; the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that are inside our head are what creates the fabric of our experience. Basically, you are the baker of the bread you eat.”
> (Syd Field, The Screenwriters Workbook – Newly revised and updated 2006: 2)

”That which was frightening today, is no longer frightening tomorrow.”
(Maya Deren, An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film: 20)

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[39] And why wouldn`t there be experimental film-enthusiasts among them? They once were, some of them still are, passionate scholars of film like you and me.

[40] About Peter Jacksons film Heavenly Creatures (1994)– It resembles Dimitri Kirsanoffs Mènilmontant (1926) quite a lot. Could there be a reason to doubt that Kirsanoffs film directly influenced Peter Jacksons film?

[41] Orson Wells did something similar in 1938, but for the radio; With his Mercury Theatre he created a radio play about an alien attack, and directed it to be made in the form of radio news. The play was taken as news, and so it caused masshysteria. http://www.transparencynow.com/welles.htm

[42] Stanley Kubrick, Federico Fellini, Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, Andrei Tarkovski, Roman Polanski, Jim Jarmusch, Woody Allen, Jean-Luc Godard, Francis Ford Coppola – The list goes on.

[43] *- Thank you Henry, thank you Martin, thank you Martina.*

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