

Plan

In *Realtime* (2002) - a four and a half minute long piece of work by Siegfried A. Fruhauf - a bright green ball can be seen which emerges on black ground from the lower edge of the picture and moves slowly towards the centre where it fades away into the dark. A spherical-buzzing tone is to be heard that leads into an onomatopoeic wake of sound. Fruhauf records the movement of the sun in realtime, combines this with a very short extract from a pop song, which he extends to the duration of the piece, and thus shows the basic components of cinema - light and sound in combination with movement and time - in an extremely simple and plausible way. The duration of a sunrise develops into a study of cinematography, bringing together apparatus and sensuous factors. Leap back in time: Peter Kubelka as well, right from the beginning of his cinematic work, elaborates on the peculiarities and possibilities of cinematography. This is shown in its most radical form in his third metric film *Arnulf Rainer* (1960), commissioned by the Austrian painter of the same name. The film is exclusively made of light, darkness, sound (white noise) and silence. Or formulated mathematically: '16 entities of 576 frames, where 576 is the square of a cinematic second (24x24) and defines some sort of integral framework of themes (288x2, 192x3, 144x4, 96x6 etc.)' In between each entity Kubelka, following a defined score, combines different themes that eventually form a harmony which embraces every element of image and sound.

Video *36* (2001) by Norbert Pfaffenbichler and Lotte Schreiber is metric as well. In the form of a graphic abstraction, the visual area resembles a framed monitor whose surface is divided into a square and a rectangle. Whilst 'in the left area 36 vertical and horizontal lines run through the patterns of movement according to the principle of a digital binary system of order (0=vertical, 1=horizontal)' (Gerald Weber), the right part of the picture consists of a continually varying range of colours. Underlying is a time-axis which, like an hourglass, gives the duration of the work. Each area precisely corresponds to a variable of the number in the title (36). The beauty of geometry is set into a mathematical system of order. A direct translation of acoustic material to a sequence of images accomplishes the video *Instrument* (1997) by Jürgen Moritz. Using simple pictorial working methods, six seconds of material filmed from the monitor several times with several formats (S-8mm, 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP) are alienated and combined differently. The rhythm of music and its distortions define a principle of order and engender a stringently composed mosaic of dynamics which in addition refers to the texture of the apparatus.

In numerous films Kurt Kren has also worked on the transposition of mathematical series to images. The technique of shortcutting - with which the frame, as smallest entity of montage, replaced the shot - is as legendary as the golden cut of rhythmic. By this Kren meant a serial montage in sequential technique, where the length of the shot is calculated from the number of frames which, in turn, are determined through the addition of the two preceding numbers (the exception is 1) respectively (1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34).ⁱⁱ One of the best known examples of a sequential technique with the possibility of combination is *15/67 TV*, produced 1967 in Venice. The film consists of five differently shot sequences of 1 and a half seconds in length, each of them copied 21 times by Kren. 'These 21 times 5 shots were then set up in a specific sequence, something like a children's poem, a nursery rhyme'.ⁱⁱⁱ Interesting as well appears the chosen detail, where an interplay between light - i.e. what is visible, the concrete image in a way - and shadow - the part of the image that through the silhouettes of people can be merely perceived as a black surface - proceeds. People standing, sitting or walking, cast in black, regulate and determine the gaze on the almost documentary images. Moreover in *15/67 TV* the rhythm of time is made plain by rendering the film's structure perceivable. In contrast, duration in the video *R4* (2000) by Michaela Schwentner, because of its temporal linearity, is visible right from the beginning. In a graphically distorted image, a train is to be seen leaving the station slowly but systematically, synchronised to the minimalistic sound track of electro-acoustic band Radian. The video, as one would expect, ends when the last car pulls out of the station. *R4* organises, delays and extends time and thus renders possible the process of movement in its duration.

Structure

Geometrical forms have always generated a substratum for new aesthetic experiences in structural films. Clear patterns, precision, conceptuality or formalism are but a few key words for a current that moved in so many different ways and can be grasped through this notional system only up to a point. In a variety of recent video productions form proves to be an essential factor. For instance, architect and media artist [n:ja] (=Anja Krautgasser) in her video *Rewind* (2000) uses as her basic element a line out of which emerge - and, in the end, return - numerous shapes. The content finds its expression in the composition, i.e. in the order(ing) of, and tension between, the individual elements in the picture. Referring to the geometrical line Kandinsky once coined the beautiful term 'invisible essence'. The line 'took rise from movement - and that through destroying the highest self-contained rest of the point.

Here a jump is made from the static to the dynamic'.^{iv} This principle appears to be incorporated in the piece: the dynamics of form, which follows the rhythm of music by Shabotinski, in order to make audible and visible the process of visual and acoustic building. Quite different pictorial working methods can be found in the work of artists reMi (=Renate Oblak and Michael Pinter). Here a system is attacked in order to gain from its result. Countless calculated computer crashes are assembled to a *tour de force* of the perceptive apparatus. The sound asserts the rhythm. Software is used to deceive and render inefficient oneself and the hardware. Interference, or the 'wrong' picture, – which does not exist here – proves to be the stylistic and structuring element. It is not merely the production of pictures that is important – each 'crashed' image stands in an alliance to abstraction – but rather the process of destruction that generates the images of reMi and becomes visible in the picture as well.

Material

A very different form of attack represents the genre of found footage which, in Austria, has been continuously used as a means of artistic expression in avant-garde and experimental cinema from the 60's on and today can be detected in numerous video works too. The artistic process here does not anymore lie in the autonomous production of pictures but manifests itself in the selection and subsequent questioning, destruction, alienation and new contextualisation respectively of mainly historical material. An important part of the productive process – comprising cinematic handicraft as well as the use of computer technology and software programs – constitutes the treatment (omission, scratching, new scanning, changed exposure, use of filters, interfering signals, video feedbacks etc.) and rhythmicisation of the material. The interplay between picture and sound landscape proves to be fundamental again, where both parts can be viewed as autonomous though inter-related areas. Whereas in the video *AUS* (1998) by Skot (=Tina Frank and Mathias Gmachl) an already existing piece of music by Christian Fennesz serves as the original material, films like *Outer Space* (1999) by Peter Tscherkassky or *Passage À L'acte* (1993) by Martin Arnold generate – through the filtering and treatment of background noise, snatches, screaming etc. – a sound track that in the context of an electronic club culture easily functions as a singular piece of music. The sound communicates with the picture which is skinned in order to advance to the depth structures of the film's body, to dissect the latter, decode it narratively and simultaneously signify its materiality.

Although the working methods and formal languages of the films and videos sketched in the above are quite different, they share some references and an aim: an attack on the current sensoric apparatus to be felt by the recipient; and also a corporeal cinema which understands the screen as a field of confrontation and pleads for a reflected perception.

Dietmar SCHWÄRZLER

(Translated by Kurt HIRTNER (AHRB Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History, University of Leeds))

ⁱ See Peter Tscherkassky, 'Die gefügte Zeit. Peter Kubelkas metrische Filme', in Alexander Horwath, Lisl Ponger and Gottfried Schlemmer (eds), *Avantgardefilm. Österreich. 1950 bis heute* (Vienna: wespennest, 1995), p. 121.

ⁱⁱ Cf. Gabriele Jutz, 'Eine Poetik der Zeit', in Hans Scheugl (ed.), *Ex Underground Kurt Kren* (Vienna: PSV Verlag, 1996), pp. 102ff.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Kurt Kren, 'Die Filme. Eine kommentierte Filmographie', in *Ex Underground Kurt Kren*, p. 173.

^{iv} See Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zur Fläche* (Bern and Bümplitz: Benteli Verlag, 1973), p. 57.

Dietmar Schwärzler

Dietmar Schwärzler is currently employed by Sixpack Film. He is a freelance curator and head of Projektor Forum for Discussions in Film and New Media.

Sixpack Film

Established in 1991, Sixpack Film is a distributor and sales agency for shorts, documentaries and experimental film and video produced in Austria.