

## FIGURES OF THE EXTRA

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Figuration by means of human extras confronts us with what is incidental, unnecessary. This human scenery represents the undirected, uncontrollable broader context against which every activity takes place. In the classic narrative motion picture, the extra – being a living attachment and not a figure of action – primarily manifests itself as a “Fremdkörper” (foreign body), as a discord within a whole that is dramaturgically intertwined.<sup>1</sup> Why did Hitchcock continue to appear on screen in his films? This explicitness, this sort of pronounced figuration without any apparent reason has something of an enigmatic quality. Hitchcock as an extra: an ironic wink to the viewer from the director-demiurge who banished the coincidental or accidental from his films?

Extras are unrelated to a film. Like Hitchcock’s cameo appearances, they are somewhat self-referential. The extras do not participate or anticipate. Their equivalent in real history is the people, the masses. History is written by the actors, not the extras. The formulation of a typology of extras necessarily departs from the approach taken by classic cinema (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 – *Stage Fright* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1950).

### Temporal economy, foreground/background dialectic

The extra expresses a false attitude, lacks a “naturalness” and is at odds with the rhythm of the film. This awkwardness manifests itself in the extra’s action, the way of moving forward and the gesture of self-orientation. Since it is the extra’s role to be indifferent to the directing and since he only comes into view for a fleeting moment, which he has been anticipating, he automatically tends to overact. The extra relates uneasily to the foreground in the imaginary space where the

action occurs. “Foreground” is not meant here as that which immediately catches the eye, but as the space which permits the embodiment of the action and narrative development.

The use of extras is subject to a temporal economy. In this respect we are able to distinguish between metre, tempo and rhythm. We can disregard metre, an abstract principle of order not determined by movement. The difference between tempo and rhythm lies primarily in the fact that rhythm is incorporated in life. Rhythm is distinguished by its organic nature. One can talk of the rhythm of the seasons, a pulse rhythm, but tempo cannot be used so easily in this argument. Rhythm has to do with internal structure. “All interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms,” is how John Dewey expresses it.<sup>2</sup> As far as humans are concerned, rhythm is connected to the regulation of psycho-motor functions, habits and acquired behaviours. Both rhythms and tempos can be adopted, but only a rhythm can be acquired. Tempo has something of an external character. A tempo is imposed on or developed by someone. In the temporal economy of the classic motion picture, the actor is on the side of rhythm and the extra on the side of tempo.

*City Lights* (1931) by Charles Chaplin – who, like many great classic film-makers, keeps the extras under strict control and neutralises their self-referencing – is illustrative of this differentiation. In this film, it is striking how, from a directorial perspective, the contrast between the acted parts and the appearance of the extras is the object of a giant foreground-to-background construction. The extras function as a stylised background which highlights the foreground (the vagabond figure of Charlie). Chaplin leaves no room for the unexpected in his *mise-en-scène*. His narrative construction and tectonic vision transform each scene into the display card of a well-wrought dramaturgy which leaves nothing to chance. In the scene in front of the flower shop, Chaplin’s performance contrasts with the hurried tempo of the city. He uses the extras to assist him in this regard. In contrast to most films, the extras do not just fill up the cityscape. Instead, Chaplin uses them to delineate his own character in the foreground. On the one hand, there is the street, the pavement along which an enormous mass of people is passing. None of the extras are given any personal characterisation. Chaplin-the-director directs the mass in an angular and linear way, in an almost choreographic fashion, to a similar mechanical tempo. In contrast, Chaplin-the-actor loafs around on the pavement like a dreamy and lovestruck vagrant, detached from the purposeful and decisive flow of people around him. Chaplin’s two-part, rhythmic directing results in two autonomous fields of activity within the scenic space, which develop a fertile dialectic. Charlie as a vagrant-flâneur has a completely different rhythm, a totally different plasticity in both time and space than the extras. This is a pronounced form of foreground/background delineation. That which has not been resolved is controlled by the situation and not vice-versa. Charlie always remains the plaything of circumstance. In *City Lights*, he is reduced to a wretched creature, to an object on the pavement in front of the flower shop. Just as there is a dialectic presented in this film – oddball versus society – there is also a dialectic in Chaplin’s work in general. The special aspect of Chaplin’s *mise-en-scène* is that an *ipso facto* secondary body, such as the extras, bears witness to it through the foreground/background dialectic. In stark contrast to the helpless vagabond that Chaplin plays in *City Lights* is the depiction of the “savoir vivre” of the main character of *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947). Monsieur Verdoux is Chaplin’s incarnation of decisiveness. Verdoux controls each situation with the necessary flair. Even when this “Landru” is recognised by the family members of one of his previous victims, he still remains in full command of the situation. As the psychological counsellor of rich widows, Verdoux, in contrast to Charlie-the-vagabond, is not someone who is constantly suspected by the police. Verdoux is eventually arrested because he wants to be caught. This reversal also manifests itself in the foreground/background

opposition. The ball scene at the end of the film in which Verdoux is recognised is a marvellous illustration of this. In *Monsieur Verdoux*, the main character is among equals. The background consists of a composition of individuals, each endowed with their own personal traits. There is no delineation between foreground and background as in *City Lights*, but merely a subtle gradation. Chaplin models the action on the second plane to fit the image of Verdoux. The actors with small supporting roles and the extras also have the same theatrical control and distinctive stylisation of the actor-director. *City Lights* versus *Monsieur Verdoux* or a dramaturgically and directorially opposed engagement with the second plane. In Chaplin's work, the reversal which André Bazin refers to when he notes that "Charlot est par essence l'inadapté social, Verdoux un suradapté"<sup>3</sup> is achieved by means of a dialectic with the extras.

## Camera-eye, conflict of orientation

Acting as a process of acquisition and familiarisation is a matter of authenticity. Authenticity is thereby connected to creativity, whereby the impulse to act must come from the person himself and cannot be imposed externally. The use of extras is characterised by the reverse: non-authenticity. In classic cinema – let us call it the Hollywood model – the catchword is transparency: seamless editing and a camera presence which may not be sensed by the viewer. Post-war modern cinema, which takes the primacy of reality and not the staged situation as its starting point, radically distances itself from this approach, for example by permitting jump cuts and individualising the camera presence and camera work. The epistemological rift between classic and modern cinema is also not without consequence for acting positions, but more on this subject later. Let us first consider the camera. Someone who is captured through the eye of a hidden camera is characterised by an unforced rhythm that coincides with him- or herself. The conscious experiencing of the camera leads to disorientation, sometimes constraint, and elicits a pose as a defence mechanism. When being captured by a camera, each individual experiences a moment of identity conflict, a stiffening caused by the objectivising camera mechanism. The actor, as the agent that embodies a character, enjoys immunity from this, aided by his *métier*. When viewing the extra or the amateur actor, one automatically gets a sort of friction between the extra and the camera.

Just as actors can be subdivided into leading and supporting roles, there are various gradations of extras. The spectrum ranges from an anonymous individual in a large crowd to a specialist extra who appears prominently in the foreground and briefly performs an action. The appearance of the extra is generally characterised by a pose. The identity reversal effected by the camera position paves the way for this. Those who pose have a somewhat forced, wooden and unreal bearing. What distinguishes an actor from an extra is a form of orientation. This does not come only through the interpretation and embodiment of a role, but primarily through anticipation and interaction within a broader whole whose final crystallised form is still hidden at the moment of shooting. For extras, the ability to develop an intuition that is able to support the composite logic of a film always remains elusive. In addition to this intuition, an actor also possesses the manoeuvrability to respond to a situation. This involves reacting to changing and unforeseen situations without losing oneself and the distancing which is contained within the activity of acting itself, and in particular a command of voice and body as instruments. If there is interaction in a group scene, one seldom sees extras respond. Instead, they mainly react stiffly. Those that tense up lose the ability to embody and support a broader whole.

Self-referencing characterises the individual extra. In this regard, it is a question of authentic-

ty in reverse, that of a figure with a characteristic physiognomy and posture. This singular body manifests itself most explicitly at moments that are at odds with the temporal economy of a film. Eisenstein wrote:

*I can't recall who speaks with whom in one of the street scenes of the modern story of Intolerance. But I shall never forget the mask of the passer-by with nose pointed forward between spectacles and straggly beard, walking with hands behind his back as if he were manacled. As he passes he interrupts the most pathetic moment in the conversation of the suffering boy and girl. I can remember next to nothing of the couple, but this passer-by, who is visible in the shot only for a flashing glimpse, stands alive before me now – and I haven't seen the film for twenty years!<sup>4</sup>*

The extra's fascination with appearing in shot runs parallel to the fascination with the self-image, being caught in the strait-jacket of unconcealed recording, testing whether your identity is certain or if it drifts. As Jean Epstein puts it:

*Que ce soit en pis ou en mieux, toujours le cinématographe dans son enregistrement et sa reproduction d'un sujet, transforme celui-ci, le recrée en une personnalité seconde, dont l'aspect peut troubler la conscience au point de l'amener à se demander: Qui suis je? Où est ma véritable identité? Et c'est une singulière atténuation à l'évidence d'exister, au "Je pense donc je suis," que d'y devoir ajouter: Mais je ne me pense pas ce que je suis.<sup>5</sup>*

Roland Barthes' observation regarding photography applies equally to film: "Chaque fois que je me fais (que je me laisse) photographe, je suis inmanquablement frôlé par une sensation d'in-authenticité..."<sup>6</sup>

The change from individual to one that poses results from knowing that one is being watched, a process of consciousness. Barthes: "dès que je me sens regardé par l'objectif, tout change: je me constitue en train de 'poser,' je me fabrique instantanément un autre corps, je me métamorphose à l'avance en image."<sup>7</sup>

Jean Renoir once called the profession of actor "a constant birth:" the rebirth of the individual through the image that he himself creates of himself. The extra struggles permanently with the impossibility of bridging this identity conflict. The inability to adopt a believable bearing makes an individual a poseur. An extra cannot be reborn: he is never fertilised. This image filler is discussed in terms of appropriateness. The extra is at odds with the rhythm of a film. Extras are assumed to always experience the duality between their own identity and the pose. Barthes: "Devant l'objectif, je suis à la fois: celui que je me crois, celui que je voudrais qu'on me croie..."<sup>8</sup> This identity conflict is further intensified due to the fact that most extras are unsure of the finality of their activity. Project with projection. Body without embodiment. Being present in physical form only, the extra searches for his place. If the extra already embodies something, it becomes a conflict of orientation. An exception is made for the category of films by the director-demiurges, the Hitchcock-genre which has total control over what happens on set and in which the extras always partly play themselves. Extras generally walk too quickly, they look too sullen and they speak in an unnatural way because they are too strongly aware of the camera. In general, the extras do not have any prior knowledge of the script or the dramatic scene in which they are appearing. These living accessories are witnesses to a film; they experience it but do not create it.

## Mass, maturity

Extras are within reach of the image, but not of the word. They have no individual voice: they become literally – and sometimes figuratively, as the personification of a mass – of age when they appear in a group. They then fill out the sound decor, a register which can range from silent pottering to applauding or even chanting. Extras see themselves as unique, but are generally conceived *en masse*: as passengers waiting for a train, as passers-by on the street, as the audience at a performance or a political meeting. In contrast to the actor, extras only embody something from the moment they appear in a group.



Fig. 2 – *American Madness* (Frank Capra, 1932).

Frank Capra's *American Madness* (1932, fig. 2) tells the story of a bank and its employees at the time of the Great Depression. The pivotal theme around which this plea for Roosevelt's New Deal is constructed is the faith in people and, by extension, in the financial institution. Capra uses the extras as a motif in this morality tale. The individuals who make up the group in *American Madness* do not have any personal characterisation. Capra directs the anonymous crowd as a one-dimensional force. The horde of people in a state of panic due to currency depreciation is driven by a blind collective hysteria which causes each individual to lose himself in the group. The crowd develops as a force which transcends itself and inevitably causes every individual to be swept along in the mass psychosis.



Fig. 3 – *Elena et les Hommes* (Jean Renoir, 1956).

In contrast to Capra, who depicts the mass as an abstraction without differentiation, in *Elena et les Hommes* (*Elena and Her Men*, also known as *Paris Does Strange Things*, 1956, fig. 3) Jean

Renoir personalises each individual within the mass. Here, the population is a composition of characterised individuals who retain their individuality. The group has something picturesque, a spectral richness. Just like his father Auguste, Renoir Jr. is able to characterise the collective. The crowd represents a gathering of like-minded, but not identical or identically-reacting people. *Elena et les Hommes* depicts the population of Paris during a 14<sup>th</sup> of July celebration. In festive situations, collective solidarity goes hand in hand with each individual's safeguarding of their own specific character. In the film, the mass is stirred by the parade of Général François Rollan (Jean Marais). The Polish princess Elena Sokorowska (Ingrid Bergman) who has gone to watch the general's parade, is rocked to and fro by the passionate crowd which surrounds her. She becomes the plaything of the people's enthusiasm. The extras function here as a counter-rhythm, as a resistance which causes Elena to come into contact with the noble squire Henri de Chevincourt (Mel Ferrer). At a certain moment, Elena attaches herself to Henri's arm and does so by pushing against the frenzied crowd. Just as in Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (*Journey to Italy*, 1953), the people of Paris in the year 1900 function somewhat as an element between the main characters throughout the entire film. In Renoir's film, the extras display a great authenticity in the crowd scenes. Different reactions are constantly extracted from the body of the crowd. In contrast to Capra's *American Madness*, this sense of spectral characterisation lends the crowd something of a panoramic quality.

## Extras tell no story

The viewer identifies with the main characters and not with the extras. Identification is associated with duration. Extras represent what is momentary, incidental and fragmentary. They lack duration, which is a condition for development. They therefore have no story to tell. Extras are unformed and never acquire the status of actual bearers of action. They acquire shape, form and intention as they come into contact with bearers of action. They are concentrated on them and acquire meaning and purpose through them. This is illustrated by a scene from Vincente Minnelli's *The Band Wagon* (1953, fig. 4).



Fig. 4 – *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minnelli, 1953).

Following the flop of a musical premiere, the star dancer Tony Hunter (Fred Astaire) returns from the dismal official cocktail reception. Astaire, surrounded by ten waiters, is the only guest at this reception organised by the production company. Once back in the hotel, he hears in the corridor another party going on. It is the background dancers who are animatedly enjoying one another's company, unperturbed by the disastrous events. As soon as Astaire enters the room, it



is as if the extras suddenly no longer feel at home at their own party. They begin to act as guests in his company. The space is gradually possessed by another dimension alien to the extras, namely that of a purpose. The fact that Astaire, surrounded by extras, is going to propose his own idea for the show is symbolic. By launching his plan, he gives the extras purpose. Extras are given purpose through their coming into contact with bearers of action. In *The Band Wagon*, they become witnesses to a gradual focus on Astaire as the leading actor. Astaire pulls the extras along with him. Whereas previously everyone was spread throughout the room in small groups and everyone had their own discussion partner (symbolic maturity), a circle now forms around the inspired Astaire, who proposes his project with increasing enthusiasm. The circle, which literally closes around him, is a striking representation of how the peripheral action is increasingly embedded in a narrative process, in a finality brought forward by the action bearers.

## A new condition: modern cinema

In post-war modern cinema, it is not so much the characteristics of the extras that change, but the conditions under which they appear – just like those of the actor. The classic films, which were rooted in the studio system, were based on the assumption of a reality marked out in advance in the script. Production was a hierarchical operation, whereby all dramaturgical cross-linking techniques were designed to maximally stimulate the viewer's perception. The narrative illusion had to be kept up. Modern cinema, which in Europe emerged alongside Neo-Realism from the ruins of the Second World War, seeks out the street, does not assume the primacy of the script, rejects hierarchisation and swears by an open narrative structure. The devastation, the battles and the genocide created not only a historical caesura, but above all a mental one. The relationship between mankind and the world had been severed. Gilles Deleuze: “La croyance ne s'adresse plus à un autre monde, ou transformé. L'homme est dans ce monde comme dans une situation optique et sonore pure.”<sup>9</sup> According to Deleuze, the task of modern cinema is to film our belief in this world, our only possible link with it.

With the neo-realistic trilogy (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945, *Paisà*, 1946, *Germania anno zero*, 1948) and the films he made with Ingrid Bergman, the actress who would become his wife, such as *Stromboli, terra di Dio* (1950), *Europa '51* (1952) and *Viaggio in Italia*, Roberto Rossellini was a pioneer of modern cinema and paved the way for subsequent *Nouvelles Vagues* in various countries. Alain Bergala provides an excellent description of the change in film's ability to reveal a truth which represented by the film-maker and modern cinema:

*Comment la vérité peut-elle advenir au film? Telle aura été la grande question du cinéma moderne. C'était une question neuve car le problème n'a jamais été, dans le cinéma classique, que la vérité advienne au film. Le film pouvait proférer une vérité, mais elle lui était antérieure : dans le contenu du scénario, dans la définition psychologique de ses personnages, dans les présupposés philosophiques du récit qu'il était chargé de traduire en images. Pour la première fois, avec la modernité, le cinéma prend conscience qu'il n'est pas condamné à traduire une vérité qui lui serait extérieure mais qu'il peut être l'instrument de révélation ou de capture d'une vérité qu'il n'appartenait qu'à lui de mettre à jour.*<sup>10</sup>

On a derivative level, the Rossellini-Bergman relationship makes the friction between the two distinct cinematic regimes visible: classic cinema versus modern cinema. Bergman, the celebrated Hitchcock actress, and Rossellini, one of the godfathers of Neo-Realism, met one another at the high point of their respective careers. Bergman saw *Roma, città aperta* and *Paisà* in the United States and was so struck by them that she introduced herself to Rossellini by sending him a letter, which has since become famous, offering her services as an actress. *Stromboli, terra di Dio*, the first film on which they worked together and also the start of a personal relationship which would last five years, illustrates the contrast between the two concepts of acting. On many occasions, Rossellini places Bergman between two worlds, between person and character. This director was in the habit of revealing lines of dialogue only just before filming or only at the start. What he was aiming for, in addition to a form of spontaneity, was to enable the actress to show something of herself as an individual. Such moments of revelation elicited from the space between person and character are typical of his approach as a director. In the film, the actress plays a Lithuanian refugee who is interned on the volcanic island of Stromboli and marries a fisherman there whom she first met at the camp fence. Homelessness in a foreign land and foreign culture, and desperation regarding one's own identity and lack of freedom are all recurrent themes in Rossellini's films with Bergman. Echoes of their own relationship come through, for example in *Viaggio in Italia*, where a couple whose relationship has come to a dead end go on a sightseeing tour of Italy to finally become reconciled with one another.

The background, in this case the island and volcano in *Stromboli, terra di Dio*, or ancient Naples in *Viaggio in Italia*, against which the action takes place – which is traditionally subordinated to the narrative foreground – gains in prominence. Serge Daney, together with Gilles Deleuze and Jean-Luc Godard one of the most important advocates of the canon of modern cinema, expresses it as follows: “Ce qui était ‘moderne’ dans le cinéma, c’était la décision implicite de ne plus partir des ‘hommes’ mais de leur environnement.”<sup>11</sup> Or put another way: “Trois étapes (toujours trois, décidément) pour ressaisir l’histoire du cinéma: l’espèce humaine, l’être humain, l’espace humain. La foule, l’individu, l’environnement. Si Renoir ou Ford vont de la foule à l’individu, Godard ou Coppola vont de l’individu à l’environnement.”<sup>12</sup>

It must be clear that in cinema, in comparison with the visual arts or literature, there is the issue of a divergent conception of “modernity.” Not that cinema has not known any forms of modernity comparable to the other arts, but they never became a canon. Jacques Aumont provides a vivid analysis of the divergent relationship which cinema has with modernity in comparison to the other arts:

*C’est clair: la modernité n’est pas une affaire d’art ni d’historien de l’art; c’est une affaire de conscience historique et de régime – intellectuel, moral, et, au fond, ontologique – du rapport au monde. Le moderne commence avec la défiance envers le monde, notre monde. [...] Étrange modernité, qui veut bien rencontrer son temps, mais là où il est le plus proche de ce qui ne change pas: l’être-au-monde, la Geworfenheit, l’ambiguïté immanent au réel... [...] Le cinéma moderne est celui qui laisse le monde se débrouiller tout seul pour signifier.*<sup>13</sup>

Modern cinema sees the status of the dramatic figure undergo a significant change. The assumption of the primacy of reality and a degree of independence on the part of the world in acquiring meaning entails a different interpretation of the role of the actor. Daney: “Il fallait pour que de ‘l’humain’ apparaisse (non comme un donné mais comme une visée) que les corps, les acteurs, les rôles, les personnages soient mis à plat, non plus synthétiquement, mais analytiquement.”<sup>14</sup>



That which is a fictional character, actor or physical body becomes independent. The personality which hides behind the actor in turn becomes the raw material for the film. On the other hand, Deleuze points out that the character acquires a sort of spectator role:

*Il a beau bouger, courir, s'agiter, la situation dans laquelle il est déborde de toutes parts ses capacités motrices, et lui fait voir et entendre ce qui n'est plus justiciable en droit d'une réponse ou d'une action. Il enregistre plus qu'il ne réagit. Il est livré à une vision, poursuivi par elle ou la poursuivant, plutôt qu'engagé dans une action.*<sup>15</sup>

A new type of character for a new type of cinema, but also a new type of actor:

*Non pas seulement les acteurs non-professionnels avec lesquels le néo-réalisme avait renoué à ses débuts, mais ce qu'on pourrait appeler des non-acteurs professionnels ou, mieux, des "acteurs-médiums," capables de voir et de faire voir plus que d'agir, et tantôt de rester muets, tantôt d'entretenir une conversation quelconque infinie, plutôt que de répondre ou de suivre un dialogue (tel en France Bulle Ogier ou Jean-Pierre Léaud).*<sup>16</sup>

In this paradigm, the extras gain in prominence. Fabienne Costa has made a fascinating analysis of the use of the body in the films of Federico Fellini. In it, she makes mention of the "transitive," variable body of the actor which does not so much enter into action itself, but is propelled forward by the film. This actor can be extended by the background against which he is placed, replaced by a landscape, the *hors champ*, or an extra can take over from him.

"De l'acteur au figurant, la notion d'action' disparaît au profit d'un 'surcroît de présence' (Rilke). Il ne s'agit pas d'une réduction de l'acteur au figurant, ce passage n'implique pas une perte mais, au contraire, un gain d'apparence."<sup>17</sup>



Fig. 5 – *Fellini-Satyricon* (Federico Fellini, 1969).

*Fellini-Satyricon* (1969, fig. 5), a free adaptation of Petronius' satirical chronicle of the seamy side of Roman society under the reign of Nero, provides a good illustration of this creation of appearance. The obscure, non-linear plot means that the events are not always connected. In the foreground, there appear eccentric characters and hundreds of unusual extras. There is no longer the issue of the god-like bodies of Hollywood or Cinecittà, but of actual bodies which are chosen on account of their physical and physiognomic peculiarities. Serge Daney argues that Fellini's films have no themes, no "subjects," but instead have "myths" (youth, Rome, [the city of] women...): "Toutes choses inépuisables qui se reflètent en chacun des détails mais qui ne 'consis-

tent' jamais. Chez Fellini, la 'figuration' est la condition humaine."<sup>18</sup> For Fellini, the extra does not represent abstract and manipulable human material, but something irreducible and unique.

The individualisation of extras, primarily by bringing them into the foreground as individuals and not professional actors, is a hallmark of modern cinema. Even actors cannot escape from "figuration." Fabienne Costa continues by citing Fellini:

*Marcello Mastroianni incarne parfaitement cette nonchalance du figurant tant appréciée par Fellini: "... avec lui, tout est ... naturel, un naturel parfois qui lui permet de sommeiller pendant les séquences où il est en scène, au besoin au premier plan." En outre, la place de l'acteur dans le film oscille entre présence et absence: "Je travaille très bien avec Marcello, surtout dans ce type de film où le protagoniste, le personnage principal, doit avoir une position ambiguë. Il est dans le film – et, en même temps, il est hors du film."*<sup>19</sup>

This last point answers the paradox created by extras: they see the film from outside while being in the middle of it.

A unique aspect of modern cinema is that the actors, both professional and non-professional, embody functions rather than characters. They are to be viewed as figures in the broader, dramaturgical sense. In the case of Robert Bresson or Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, who almost exclusively use non-professional actors, this is coupled in a divergent way with the curtailment of the modalities of the game of acting. Bresson neutralises as much as possible the consciousness of his non-professional actors, whom he calls "models," in order to expose a naked, psychomotorial force: "Être (modèles) au lieu de paraître (acteurs)." A few more maxims: "Tes modèles ne doivent pas se sentir dramatiques;" "Modèles. Mécanisés extérieurement. Intacts, vierges intérieurement," or "A tes modèles: 'Parlez comme si vous parliez à vous-mêmes. Monologue au lieu de dialogue.'"<sup>20</sup>

Pier Paolo Pasolini takes up an opposite position. Just like Bresson or Straub and Huillet, he worked with non-professional actors in various films. Like them, he attaches importance to close-ups of facial expressions, but without restricting the modalities of the game of who is acting. An example of this is his *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 1964, fig. 6) with the young revolutionary Catalan student Enrique Irazoqui as Jesus, and Susanne, the director's mother, in the role of the elderly Virgin Mary. In Pasolini's work it is about the naturalness, the pureness possessed by someone who has never acted. Anyone who is plucked from everyday life and possesses any natural acting ability can bring a character to life with their unadulterated "being." The winning situation is to be found in the contraction of the two.



Fig. 6 – *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1964).

Socially-critical cineastes educated in literature and philosophy such as Pasolini and Godard use extras as a subject or allegorically as a motif. In Pasolini's short film *La ricotta* (1963), which caused a scandal at the time, an extra plays Christ on the set of a passion film made by a foreign director (Orson Welles). The staging of a tableau vivant-reconstruction of the descent from the Cross occupies a central position in the film. The extra is a lumpenproletariat from the outskirts of Rome and is shoved brutally to and fro across the set by the director. The poor devil, always hungry, is constantly searching for food and dies on the cross from indigestion after eating cheese. Orson Welles remarks after his death: "And to say that he had to die to remind us he was alive." *La ricotta* is a compact short film which does not shy away from a burlesque register, sharp satire or anarchistic scorn. The innate anarchy of the proletariat, represented by the extra, fascinated the Marxist-inspired Pasolini. In the film, he plays this off against the enslavement of mankind by capitalism, the Catholic Church and the media into a single type of person. In one movement, he targets the unworldliness of the petty bourgeoisie and the conformism of the PCI, the former Italian communist party.

In the work of Jean-Luc Godard, as with so many other modern directors, there is no longer the issue of the traditional, psychologically coloured and motivated film character (although he of course does not neglect to play with the codes of that register). Fiction and non-fiction, poetry and pedagogy coexist in intertextual films which, due to their reflectiveness and rhetorical mastery, bear close resemblance to the essay. His work is the embodiment of a "pensée-cinéma." Godard thinks in terms of figures, not just action-bearers or extras, but also spatially in the form of camera movements or how what is being filmed relates to the camera apparatus. Two figures can thereby be distinguished in relation to the extras: on the one hand, the lateral movement past groups of extras and, on the other, the procession of individual extras moving head-on towards the camera.

The first figure, for example, appears in the traffic jam scene in *Week-end* (1967) or in the hypermarket scene in *Tout va bien* (1972). The camera in long, uninterrupted takes and at a constant speed, moves along a line of various passengers who have gotten out of their cars, or along an endless row of cash-machines at a supermarket, the cashiers facing away from the camera. No large crowds in view, but, instead, small groups: the passengers of a car, a family at the check-out. It is striking that nobody looks into the lens of the camera, as if the camera is sliding past a piece of the world under a glass dome. Another feature is that the extras occupy the foreground and the leading actors the background. In *Week-end*, Jean Yanne and Mireille Darc work their way through the traffic jam in their convertible. In *Tout va bien*, Jane Fonda walks up and down deeper into the supermarket. Sometimes she is captured by the frame, which then slips away again. Both films respond in an almost choreographic way to the rhythmic interval of the irregular spectacle in front of the lens and to an autonomous and imperturbably regular camera movement. Godard twice acts as an observer and chronicler of what dehumanisation involves in industrial society, whereby people are also links in a chain at the extreme end of consumption. The fact that this is made visible by a passing camera represents a break with classic film, such as those films belonging to the genre of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). As a result of its autonomy, the camera movement places all action at the level of figuration.

A chain of extras approaching the camera head-on characterises the second Godardian figure. This form of procession, a nod to film castings, occurs in the media-critical *Ici et ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*, 1974) where, in a directed project, the most normal of people walk directly in front of the camera one by one, each holding up to the lens a photograph relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – a reality far removed from their field of knowledge, intended for the false window on the world which television represents. The images express the inability to reconcile

the “here and there”. A similar loop of extras also occurs in Godard’s meta-cinematic work *Grandeur et décadence d’un petit commerce de cinéma* (*The Grandeur and Decadence of a Small-Time Filmmaker*, 1986, fig. 7). In an impressive scene, the director Gaspard Bazin (Jean-Pierre Léaud) has long rows of extras, recruited from an unemployment office, file past the camera. Each extra is reciting a fragment of text by Faulkner. Extras as excerpts. The extras embody nothing more than their own uprooting by, and in front of, the camera. Extras as a cyclical ruin or the impasse of the imagination. As Gaspard Bazin says to Eurydice (Marie Valera) at the beginning of the scene with the extras: “C’est comme s’il y avait la mer et je vous donnais que les vagues.” (“It’s as if there was the sea and I was only giving you the waves.”) (Gaspard spreads the cards with Faulkner’s text fragments on the table). Gaspard: “ça c’est les vagues. Essayez de trouver la mer.” (“Here are the waves. Try and find the sea.”) A lack of orientation, fragmentation. The extras appear and disappear. They serve as a sort of opening to the outside world, to everything which carries on as normal outside the film. The extra passes the window on the world that cinema represents, but it cannot determine its outlines. The figurative nakedness of the extras in Godard’s relay race in front of the camera represents the rediscovery of the sources of fiction.



Fig. 7 – *Grandeur et décadence d’un petit commerce de cinéma* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1986).

A comparable sequence is that in the film-letter *Lettre à Freddy Buache* (*A Letter to Freddy Buache*, 1981), in which Godard slows down, stops and then restarts images of pedestrians in the streets of Lausanne. His voice-over: "...ça m'intéresse de regarder les choses un peu scientifiquement, d'essayer de trouver dans tous ces mouvements de foule, de rythme, le départ de la fiction."<sup>21</sup>

In modern cinema, with its concern for the individual – and at the same time the anonymity and namelessness of the individual – the extra is brought into the foreground. Extras can embody a function or represent a motif, but the relationship with them remains like that with an instrument. As with Godard, they may then manifest themselves as a confrontation with a basic condition (or a zero degree of fiction) and their autonomy remains curtailed. As individuals, they do not move away from their baseline. Extras are fitted in. Creating cinema is a power relationship and with modern cinema the power is held by the author, not the actor. Illustrations of this unequal relationship can be found in the films by director-actor couples such as Rossellini-Bergman and Godard-Karina. Godard describes the hierarchy as follows: "Dans mes films j'ai besoin de prendre des gens qui peuvent dire leurs vérités tout en restant dans ma fiction à moi et je leur demande que leur vérité supporte ma fiction, sinon ma fiction s'effondre."<sup>22</sup>

## Documentaries and documentary fiction as a zone of exchange

Godard's "auteur" cinema – although still aware of documentary codes – is more concerned with viewing an ontological condition, rather than sharing one. At certain moments, gradations come into play and it is instead a question of scale. In works from his political period, such as *Tout va bien*, the director moves a substantial distance in the direction of participative film. Documentary and documentary fiction on the other hand are based on a principle of sharing an ontological condition. This presupposes a zone of exchange and complicity between the person in front of and behind the camera. This pluriformity gives rise to a very different sort of "actor." Jean-Louis Comolli, who has analysed the status of the actor in documentary film, talks of an "acteur de passage" (passing actor). In classic cinema, the actor associates and synthesises and pretends he is not being filmed, as if there is no camera present (transparency). The relationship between the camera and the "passing actor" who appears in his own reality, can only be himself and can suddenly turn up out of nothing, is a point of reference (opacity). Comolli:

*il y a quelque chose de puissant et même de grisant dans un tournage (et pas seulement "documentaire"), quand le monde et les êtres viennent à ta rencontre, comme les fantômes de l'autre côté du pont. Comment – jouissance – ouvrir la scène que l'on tourne à celle ou celui qui vient pour être filmé(e) et que je dois reconnaître et accueillir comme celle ou celui qui vient prendre le film?*<sup>23</sup>

Comolli rightly points in this regard to the importance of the voice, of speaking – a possibility which, historically, is directly connected to the development of a silent and lightweight 16mm camera which permits synchronised sound recordings, a revolution in recording technology which began in the 1960s. This created not only a new aesthetic category, but also strengthened the realisation that "documentary practice postulates that all of us are *bearers of fiction* to the extent that we are speaking subjects."<sup>24</sup>

Giving prominence to the subject in front of the camera is also the underlying principle behind documentary fiction, a genre which compromises fiction and reality. With *La Commune* (*Paris*,

1871) (2000, fig. 8), Peter Watkins created a monumental work in this hard-to-categorise hybrid genre. Joining the battle against post-modernist cynicism and defending the notion of a collective social utopia, Watkins makes a connection between the historical events surrounding the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871 and contemporary French society. The Commune was a democratically elected revolutionary government which temporarily governed Paris and implemented many socialist reforms. This insurrection of the Communards was violently suppressed between the 21 and the 28 May by the temporary national government supported by the royalists. Several tens of thousands of insurrectionists, mostly normal citizens, were killed.



Fig. 8 – *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (Peter Watkins, 2000).

For the staging of these historical events, which involved many group scenes, Watkins recruited more than two hundred non-professional actors. In other films, the group would have been played by supporting actors or extras. Instead of giving the non-actors the status of actor-character or extra-puppet, Watkins allows them to participate. The non-actors were briefed in great detail about the political and social context in which the Paris Commune came about and were asked to make parallel connections to their own lives and social conditions. There was no script written in advance and Watkins filmed uninterrupted scenes in sequential order. This is in contrast to the normal feature film practice of filming fragmented scenes in non-sequential order for financial or practical reasons. Watkins:

*Many of the people felt this whole process to be exciting and stimulating, quite unlike the pre-planned and prescribed manner of making most films. This process also enabled the cast to improvise, change their minds, relate to each other in actual discussions during the filming, etc. Many found this filming method to be dynamic and experiential, for it forced them to abandon pose and artifice, and led to immediate self-questioning on contemporary society – which they had to confront on the spot.<sup>25</sup>*

The amateur actors interpret the historical events with a sense of realism but regularly step out of their character – mainly towards the end of the work, which lasts more than 6 hours – in order to let their own personal voice be heard. These are fascinating turning points. In order to place and contextualise the events, Watkins uses two television reporting teams. The *Statist TV Versailles* primarily broadcasts detached studio commentaries. The politically engaged, communard-sympathising *Télévision communale* enables the voices of the citizens on the barricades to be heard. Television reporting with its “hit-and-run” tactics was the catalyst that led the director to balance individual expression with that of the collectivity. A difficult balancing act:



*It is true that a camera arriving and departing quickly can be seen and experienced as limiting, especially from the point of view of an individual positioned along the route. It is quite different, however, from the point of view of an audience or the group of actors as a whole, because we can see how the individual statements and utterances within a long sequence can form a collective whole. I believe this notion of collective expression to be extremely important, while at the same time I realize the dangers of fragmentation accompanying it.*<sup>26</sup>

Watkins describes *La Commune* as a “process film” which breaks with the hierarchy of the monoform structure, and from what he himself calls the conservative MAVM (Mass Audio-Visual Media). With its monoform structure, the hierarchical and standardised canon is intended for commercial film and television production. According to Watkins, the mass media is heading for a catastrophe and it is therefore important to seek alternatives in more open, creative and collective processes. His own film which, partly due to its length and the lack of concessions, came into conflict with the producer, Arte, was broadcast sometime during the middle of the night and did not reach a wide audience. The logic of the film process was however continued by the establishment of *Le rebond pour la commune*, an association which was set up after the film’s release by actors with the aim of giving extra life to the ideas and dynamics of the film in society.

## Cinema as a referent in the visual arts

The hypothesis of modern cinema declined in strength from the end of the 1970s. It was replaced by a mannerist or postmodern cinema. Unlike modern cinema, this no longer took the primacy of reality, or the *Geworfenheit* in the world as Aumont so strikingly put it, as its starting point, but was increasingly self-referential, partly by reworking genre conventions and the incorporation of ironic and pastiche elements. Characteristic directors in this genre, despite their use of different registers, include David Lynch, Peter Greenaway, David Cronenberg and Brian De Palma, a line which can be extended to the present day with film-makers of a younger generation such as the Coen Brothers and Quentin Tarantino.

Postmodern cinema can be seen as one of the forms of cultural expression of a world colonised by the mass media and the shifts which are occurring in the fields of production, employment and financial deregulation in the late-capitalist, transnational economy. For the extra, the non-professional actor, stylistically, as far as the use of documentary codes is concerned, postmodern cinema marks a regression.

The beginning of the 1970s, the period that marks the transition between modernism and postmodernism, saw the introduction of video into the visual arts. The medium was used by artists as a tool to break open the static, object-oriented categories of the visual arts in favour of everything which was conceptual and process-based. The artists who left the studio space were interested in videotape recorders, Super 8 film or Polaroid instant photography for countercultural reasons. The social space became a determining factor and television – as a form of social control – became an important referent in this involvement. The first artists were extremely interested in the idea of entering into a critical dialogue with the mass medium and, where possible, breaking into that medium. The same battle, in fact, that was fought by directors such as Rossellini, Godard, Kluge and Watkins. In the neo-liberalism of the 1980s, political commitment evaporated and video, which had the merit of having introduced a sociocultural dimension into art, experienced a decline. Grand gestures in painting (Neue Wilden, Transavanguardia, ...) determined

the art-market agenda. The object had regained its position. Video made a comeback in the visual arts in the 1990s, no longer with unlimited single channel works as in the 1970s, but with installations which had a spatial, physical appeal (Viola, Hill, Nauman, etc.) and were released in the form of limited editions. Ever since, video and film have occupied a large part of the visual arts field in a variety of ways.

Why this brief sketch of the historical developments? Because there are unmistakable parallels between the primacy of reality and the emancipatory ideas on which modern cinema is based, and the use of the lens-based media in the visual arts in the 1970s. From approximately 1995, the hundredth anniversary of cinema, one notices that cinema, as hardly ever before, became a referent in the visual arts. Here's a hypothesis: cinema has colonised and mapped the world. The signified – the extra-medial reality – has long since been the signifier. Today, audiovisual data surrounds us like a second skin. "Cinema," as a reservoir of the imaginary things that are (or should one say "were") at the centre of society, then itself becomes a referent. It is this that postmodern film and the visual arts draw from. For many visual artists, reality resembles a film: "Fiction precedes any subjects" says Clemens von Wedemeyer: "Cinema permeates everyday gestures, its aura radiates far beyond the cinema. One can tell an actor: 'Play it just like X in the film Y.' These are communication aids, first of all, but they can turn into general grammar... When I use a known cinematic expression, it takes on a new content in opposition."<sup>27</sup> In his work, reversal, turning the inside out, is an essential figure. For example in *Occupation* (2002), where he removes the audience from an auditorium and, using them as extras, places them on a football pitch in an area similar to the size of the cinema screen and has them directed by a film crew made up of actors. Like von Wedemeyer, visual artists generally limit themselves to the autopsy of what one might call the anatomical body of cinema. The fixation on a single narrative element or style motif (such as the foreground-background relationship in Mark Lewis' work), quotation (Christian Marclay, Christoph Draeger, etc.), pastiche and reformatting (Pierre Bismuth, Pierre Huyghe...) are just a few of the common methods used.

## Prominence of the motif of the extra

The prominence of the motif of the extra in the visual arts has been striking in recent years. At a time when the idea of community has become problematic, social questions regarding desubjectification and the place and status of the individual find a way to be expressed. Nothing is then more metaphorically appropriate than the (dead) symbolic body of the cinema, which has always been a model for a place of shared references; the idea of the collective consciousness, too. Works which have the figure of the extra as an object must primarily be read as social and/or political allegories. Francis Alÿs' *Cuando la fe mueve montañas* (*When Faith Moves Mountains*, 2002) is a good example of this. In a collective action, five hundred volunteers, digging next to one another in a long line, shift a sand dune in Ventanilla in Peru by ten centimetres. In this area outside the capital city, Lima, seventy thousand people live without running water or electricity in slums built on the sand dunes. The mass of people achieved in one day what it would have taken nature years to do. In this epic work, the artist transforms the social tensions in and around Ventanilla into a poetic gesture which encroaches upon the imaginary landscape of the place itself. Alÿs calls his project "at once futile and heroic, absurd and urgent."<sup>28</sup>

Various works take the form of socio-psychological experiments. This involves photo shoots, auditions, castings and re-enactments. In particular, re-enactments of events that are etched into the collective memory appeal directly to the formation of consciousness. The re-enactor is in the

event but views it simultaneously as a performer and an outsider, from a certain distance. In this sense, the role of the re-enactor corresponds with that of the extra, the difference being that the re-enactor may possess some prior knowledge of the work being filmed. This double position can be found in *The Battle of Orgreave* (2002), a joint venture by the artist Jeremy Deller and director Mike Figgis. The film shows Deller's historical reconstruction of a battle which took place in the mid-1980s in Margaret Thatcher's Britain, between miners who had been on strike for months and the riot police. Thatcher wanted to destroy the power of the trade unions once and for all and the battle of Orgreave saw her win the day. Deller did not use media images for the re-enactment, but, instead, the memories of the miners and police officers who also took part in the re-staging of the events alongside the re-enactment groups and often in the opposing camp in relation to the actual events. This reversal of roles and the cathartic experience of working through the past breaks open the interpretation of history and allows one to conceive the present from that time.

In contrast to *The Battle of Orgreave*, in *Auditions for a Revolution* (2006) the Romanian filmmaker Irina Botea diametrically opposes the double position of the re-enactor who possesses prior knowledge and is confronted with their own past. She asks students from a Chicago theatre school to recreate scenes from the memorable live television broadcast during which the 1989 Romanian revolution reached its conclusion. The young Americans are not familiar with the historical background, struggle with the language and their bodily posture and embodiment are utterly contrary to the expression of a revolutionary ethos. Is it a coincidence or not that in re-enactments made on the basis of a cinematographic inspiration – such as Watkins' *La Commune* or Deller and Figgis' *The Battle of Orgreave* – one is confronted with extras or occasional actors who are recognised as subjects, and that this only occurs sporadically in the visual arts? Does this have to do with the notion of shared community; the larger, projective gesture that is inherent in cinema, whereas the visual arts – and performance work does not shy away from this – are based far more on the object or scene? In the visual arts, the practical value has the ascendancy and the individual is instead used as a passive and instrumentalised object. One work that lacks all socio-collaborative practice is João Onofre's *Casting* (2000). Young male and female models are assembled in a studio and placed in groups against a background. One by one – just like the Godardian procession figure – Onofre has them approach the camera head-on and recite Ingrid Bergman's famous, despairing line from *Stromboli*: “Che io abbia la forza, la convinzione, ed il coraggio.”<sup>29</sup> This emotionally and dramatically charged line and the way that it is recited by the young models, ill at ease in front of the camera, are in complete disharmony with one another. The impossibility of embodiment and the absence of identity – the basic condition of being an extra – come into play here. The imaginary and the worldly utopia, notions connected with cinephilia as a form of consciousness of the world, are converted into social residual material in this small experimental scale model. The young people are not actors, but at most spectators of their own state of dislocation, into which they are forced. Being an actor would suppose a mandate and a personification. What *Casting* introduces – by using a line from Rossellini to allude to the idiom of modern cinema – is the impossibility of placing oneself in the position of others and empathising, in short the impossibility of projection. This can also be expressed in terms of historical projection or the inability to (re)articulate history.

Action bearers in the visual arts are an “apparition” – “une figuration” to use the French term – instead of being agents which embody something. If there is a character, the degree of personification always plays a primordial role. The subject becomes muddled. It is no longer clear who is talking. Someone “speaks,” but they are also being “spoken.” The work of Pierre Huyghe, including re-enactments such as *Remake* (1994) or *The Third Memory* (2000) is interesting in this regard. Jean-Christophe Royoux has referred to the “deincarnated residue” of the characters in Huyghe's work:

*Plus qu'à des acteurs, nous avons à faire dans le travail de Pierre Huyghe à des travailleurs, des employés dont l'aliénation par rapport aux tâches qu'ils accomplissent n'est pas sans rappeler les premières analyses du statut de l'acteur au cinéma par Rudolf Arnheim et Walter Benjamin, avant l'apparition du phénomène des 'stars'. Les 'stars' au cinéma n'ont été que la sublimation de leur statut essentiel de travailleur aliéné.*<sup>30</sup>

The intertwining of reality and its representations is a characteristic feature of the society of spectacle and makes processes of individualisation complex. "What do you embody at a certain moment in whose history?" is a pertinent question in this regard. Are people – such as the revolutionaries in the television studio during the Romanian revolution – often not involuntary protagonists? As with Pierre Huyghe, are they not confronted as time goes by with the irony generated by the folds of time? These are aspects which are also of relevance in the photographic work of Jeff Wall. The intertwining of reality and its representations is also found where extras are brought into the foreground so that they may speak. Christian Jankowski's installation *This I Played Tomorrow* (2003) is in two parts. In the first part, extras are asked in front of the entrance of the Cinecittà studios why they work as extras and what fully-fledged role they would like to play if given the chance. In the second part, they have the opportunity to make their own fiction film and interpret the characters or dialogue that they mentioned in the first part. In *Spielberg's List* (2003), Omer Fast does not just listen to the testimonies of Polish extras who took part in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), he also sketches the whole reification operation that always accompanies the representation of the Holocaust. The boundary between what is documentary and fiction, perception and history, becomes blurred. The artist takes advantage of this ambiguity. In *Background Action* (2006-2007), a multiple documentary installation, Krassimir Terziev draws a parallel between the extra and the migrant in a globalised world. He followed the comings and goings of several hundred Bulgarian extras who were recruited for Wolfgang Petersen's historical action film *Troy* (2004). This sort of Hollywood mega-production is an ideal case-study in which to expose paradoxical processes and economies in a globalised world. On the personal level, there is little to be gathered. The relation between some intention and aspiration and their outcome becomes increasingly arbitrary. In a discussion of Terziev's work, Ivaylo Dichev compares it with a game of chance:

*Die globale Bühne des Begehrens is nichts anderes als eine räumliche Darstellung des Glücksspiels; Wer auf Feld X landet, zieht eine Gewinnkarte, und wessen Figur auf Feld Y zu stehen kommt, der muss drei Schritte zurück. Wir bewegen uns auf dieser Bühne nicht als Handelnde, sondern als Statisten.*<sup>31</sup>

In the installation-related, non-documentary register in which Aernout Mik works, citizens on the social stage are also assigned the status of extras. His work is based on the assessment that today's world is ruled and determined by mass phenomena. In what can be interpreted as a chronicle of the ins and outs of a post-historical world, disrupted collective behaviour and desubjectification occupy a prominent place. Mik always presents a *fait accompli* that resulted from a moment of societal overpressure or crisis, with all the disorder, abandonment and dismay which this implies. It might be about a stock market crash, a massive accident on a motorway, an evacuated school or a supermarket which is being broken into. Nowhere is figuration as a social condition so strongly portrayed as in Mik's work. He mainly uses non-professional actors selected in casting sessions. They fit perfectly into the typology of the extra. First and foremost, nobody has a voice, which is literally the case in Mik's work. The artist records no sound on the set, which

allows him to continue issuing instructions during the recording. The situations Mik sketches are not subject to narrative development or a plot. He always shows a state of irrationality. The desperate people on screen have no psychology. Nor do they have an identity, because that would presuppose a set of personal characteristics that is psychologically determined. Nobody is a bearer of action. Action entails the changing of a situation, but nothing changes here. People may walk around or perform actions, but they remain fundamentally deprived of any relationship with others or with their surroundings. They are autistically enclosed in a world which is difficult to call their own. The trance which controls them at certain moments reminds one of the zombies that wander around town in George Romero's cult film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). There is no question of the possibility of orientation or finality. The camera roams around and becomes a floating body in the presence of the action taking place. To put it in cinematographic terms, there is no point of view. In terms of the camera, he plays on transparency. The frontal gaze into the camera and an appeal to the viewer – one of the best examples of the modern figure – does not occur. Even when large spaces appear on screen, such as a sports arena or a school playground, spatiality is a side issue. Space as a hybrid. This all makes Mik's work, without a clear beginning or end, perfect for loops. From an iconographic perspective, it is indebted to the horror films of the 1970s, but stripped of their dramatic action.

If the starting point is the recognition of the occasional actor or extra as a subject, one could argue from an ethical standpoint that Mik's work is conservative. Indeed, despite the long takes, there is no socio-collaborative project or any form of docu-fiction like that of Peter Watkins. This is beside the point, however, since the work aspires to sculpture rather than scenography. In his exhibitions this is expressed by the incorporation of the viewer into the installation through the use of upright scenic elements which contain background projections and which partly surround the visitor to the exhibition.

When it comes to the individual, two opposing approaches can be distinguished from the viewpoint of figuration. The "object-based" approach is rooted in alienation and reification; the "embodying agent" takes humanisation or re-subjectification as its starting point. Between them are countless gradations and forms, a number of which I have attempted to touch upon. Albert Laffay's observation on cinema<sup>32</sup> that "l'homme jeté dans l'univers ou l'univers enfermant l'homme [...] tel est toujours au fond le thème invariable du vrai cinéma,"<sup>33</sup> is ultimately the basis for every form of artistic expression.

(Translated from Dutch by Gregory Ball)

- 1 Dramaturgically speaking, this paradigm is founded on the correlation between action and the dramatic figure, and the dialectic relationship between them. If you define action as a change in a situation and a situation as a given relationship between figures and an object-based or ideal context, and between figures among themselves, the dialectic involvement between the categories of figure and action becomes obvious.
- 2 John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Minton, Balch & Company, New York 1934, p. 14.
- 3 André Bazin, *Le Mythe de M. Verdoux*, in Id., *Charlie Chaplin*, Le Cerf, Paris 1975, p. 42. "Charlot is in essence the social misfit and Verdoux socially overadjusted" (my translation).
- 4 Sergei Eisenstein, *Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today*, in Id., *Film Form. Essays in Film Theory*. Edited and translated by Jay Leyda, Harcourt, San Diego 1949, p. 199.
- 5 Jean Epstein, *L'Intelligence d'une machine*, Jacques Melot, Paris 1946, p. 6. "Whether for better or for

- worse, the cinematographer's recording and reproduction of a subject always transforms it and recreates it in a second personality whose appearance can trouble one's conscience to such an extent that one is led to ask the question: Who am I? What is my true identity? And it's an unusual relief from the obviousness of existing, from 'I think therefore I am,' to which one has to add: But I do not think what I am" (my translation).
- 6 Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*, Cahiers du Cinéma/Gallimard/Seuil, Paris 1980 p. 30. "Every time I allow myself to be photographed, I am inevitably touched by a feeling of authenticity..." (my translation).
  - 7 *Idem*, p. 25. "As soon as I feel myself being watched by the lens, everything changes: I begin 'posing,' I instantly create a different body for myself, I metamorphose in advance into an image" (my translation).
  - 8 *Idem*, p. 29. "In front of the lens, I am simultaneously both what I believe myself to be and what I would like others to believe me to be..." (my translation).
  - 9 Gilles Deleuze, *L'Image-temps*, Minuit, Paris 1985, p. 223. "Belief no longer appeals to a different or transformed world. Man is in this world as if in a pure optical and sonorous situation" (my translation).
  - 10 Roberto Rossellini, *Le cinéma révélé*, textes réunis et préfacés par Alain Bergala, Éditions de l'Etoile, Paris 1984 p. 6. "How can truth be revealed in film? That would have been the great question of modern cinema. It is a new question because the problem was never there in classic cinema. A film could affirm a truth, but it would have been secondary in the context of the script, in the psychological definition of its characters and in the psychological presuppositions of the story which it is compelled to translate into images. With modernity, cinema is aware for the first time that it is not condemned to translate a truth that is external to it, but that it can perhaps be the instrument of revelation or of the capturing of a truth which it alone can bring up to date" (my translation).
  - 11 Serge Daney, *La Rampe*, Cahiers du cinéma/Gallimard, Paris 1983, p. 69. "What was 'modern' in cinema was the implicit decision to no longer take 'man' as the starting point, but rather his environment" (my translation).
  - 12 Serge Daney, *L'Exercice à été profitable, Monsieur*, P.O.L. éditeur, Paris 1993, p. 42. "Three stages (always three, without question) to recapture the history of cinema: the human race, the human being, the human space. The crowd, the individual, the environment. If Renoir or Ford go from the crowd to the individual, Godard or Coppola go from the individual to the environment" (my translation).
  - 13 Jacques Aumont, *Le Cinéma a-t-il jamais été moderne?*, in Marianne Alphant (ed.), *La Parenthèse du moderne*, Centre Pompidou, Paris 2005, pp. 89-92. "It's clear: modernity is not a matter of art or art history, it is a matter of historical conscience and a system – intellectual, moral and, ultimately, ontological – for relating to the world. The modern person starts from defiance towards the world, our world. [...] Strange modernity, which wants to encounter its era, but where it is closest to that which is unchanging: the notion of being-in-the-world, *Geworfenheit*, the inherent ambiguity of reality... [...] Modern cinema leaves the world to manage on its own in order for it to have meaning" (my translation). See also Jacques Aumont, *Moderne? Comment le cinéma est devenu le plus singulier des arts*, Cahiers du cinéma, Paris 2007.
  - 14 Serge Daney, *L'Exercice à été profitable, Monsieur*, cit., p. 41. "In order for the 'human' to appear (not as a given, but as an aim), it is necessary for the bodies, the actors, the roles and the characters to be completely revised, not synthetically, but analytically" (my translation).
  - 15 Gilles Deleuze, *L'Image-temps*, cit., p. 9. "He may move, run, bustle about, the situation in which he finds himself overwhelms all his motor capacities and makes him see and hear that which no longer requires a response or action. He records more than he reacts. He is abandoned to a vision, pursued by it or pursuing it, rather than being engaged in an action" (my translation).
  - 16 *Idem*, p. 31. "Not only non-professional actors with whom Neo-Realism had reconnected with its beginnings, but what one could call professional non-actors or, rather, 'actor mediums,' capable of seeing and making something visible rather than acting, and sometimes remaining silent, sometimes maintaining a nondescript, infinite conversation, rather than responding or following a dialogue (such as Bulle Ogier and Jean-Pierre Léaud in France" (my translation).



- 17 Fabienne Costa, *Devenir Corps. Passages de l'œuvre de Fellini*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2003, p. 99. "From the actor to the extra, the notion of 'action' disappears in favour of an 'increase in presence' (Rilke). It is not about the reduction of the actor to an extra; this process does not imply a loss but conversely, a gain in appearance" (my translation).
- 18 Serge Daney, *L'Exercice à été profitable, Monsieur*, cit., p. 68. "All inexhaustible things which are reflected in each of the details but which never 'consist.' In Fellini's work, 'figuration' is the human condition" (my translation).
- 19 Quotings by Federico Fellini respectively taken from *Fellini par Fellini. Entretiens avec Giovanni Grazzini*, Flammarion, Paris 1987, p. 68, and Charlotte Chandler, *I, Fellini*, Bloomsbury, London 1995, p. 118, cited in Fabienne Costa, *Devenir Corps. Passages de l'œuvre de Fellini*, cit., p. 99. "Marcello Mastroianni perfectly embodies this nonchalance of the extra which was so appreciated by Fellini: '... with extras everything is ... natural, a naturalness which sometimes allows them to doze during the sequences in which they appear, in the foreground if need be'. In addition, the place of the actor in the film oscillates between presence and absence: 'I work very well with Marcello, especially in this type of film where the leading actor, the main character, must have an ambiguous position. He is in the film but, at the same time, outside it'" (my translation).
- 20 Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe*, Gallimard, Paris 1975. "Being (models) instead of appearing (actors);" "Your models must not feel dramatic;" "Models. Mechanised externally. Intact, inner virgins;" "Talk to your models as if you were talking to yourself. Monologue instead of dialogue" (my translation).
- 21 "I'm interested in looking at things slightly scientifically, in trying to find the source of fiction in all these rhythmic mass movements" (my translation).
- 22 Jean-Luc Godard, *Propos rompus*, in Id., *Godard par Godard*, Editions de l'étoile/Cahiers du Cinéma, Paris 1985, p. 470. "In my films, I need people who can tell their truths while remaining in my fiction and I require that their truth supports my fiction, otherwise my fiction will collapse" (my translation).
- 23 Jean-Louis Comolli, "Passage à l'acteur," in *Trafic, L'Énigme de l'acteur*, no. 65, P.O.L., Paris, print-empis 2008, p. 122. "There is something powerful and even exhilarating in the shooting of a film (and not just 'documentary' films) when the world and people come to meet you, like ghosts from the other side of the bridge. How – oh joy – do you open the scene that you are shooting to those who come to be filmed and whom I must acknowledge and welcome as those who are coming to take the film?" (my translation). See also "The Passing Actor: Sketch of a Renaissance," in *Actors & Extras*, Argos & Siemens Arts Program, Brussels 2009.
- 24 Jean-Louis Comolli. "The Passing Actor: Sketch of a Renaissance," cit.
- 25 Peter Watkins, "The Paris Commune of 1871: A Brief Historical Background", *Peter Watkins*, <http://p Watkins.mnsi.net/commune.htm>, last visit 6 April 2010.
- 26 *Ibidem*.
- 27 Clemens von Wedemeyer. *Filme / films*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln 2006, pp. 80-81.
- 28 "A Thousand Words: Francis Alÿs Talks about When Faith Moves Mountains," in *Artforum*, vol. 40, no. 10, New York, Summer 2002, p. 147.
- 29 "May I have the strength, conviction, and courage" (my translation).
- 30 Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Les travailleurs du temps libre et de la reconfiguration de l'espace public," <http://multitudes.samizdat.net>, last visit May 2001. "More than actors, in the work of Pierre Huyghe one is faced with workers, employees whose alienation from the tasks they perform recalls the first analyses of the status of the actor in cinema by Rudolf Arnheim and Walter Benjamin, before the appearance of the phenomenon of the 'stars.' The 'stars' of cinema only represented the sublimation of their essential status as alienated workers" (my translation).
- 31 Ivaylo Ditchev, "Globale Statistenströme," in *Lettre Internationale*, no. 72, Spring 2006, p. 113. "The global stage of desire is nothing other than a spatial representation of a game of chance. Whoever lands on square X draws a winning ticket and whoever ends up on square Y must take three steps back. We do not move about on this stage as actors, but as extras" (my translation).

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32 Albert Laffay, *Logique du cinéma, création et spectacle*, Masson et Cie, Paris 1964. p. 13.

33 “Man thrown into the universe or the universe encompassing man [...] is fundamentally the invariable theme of true cinema” (my translation).