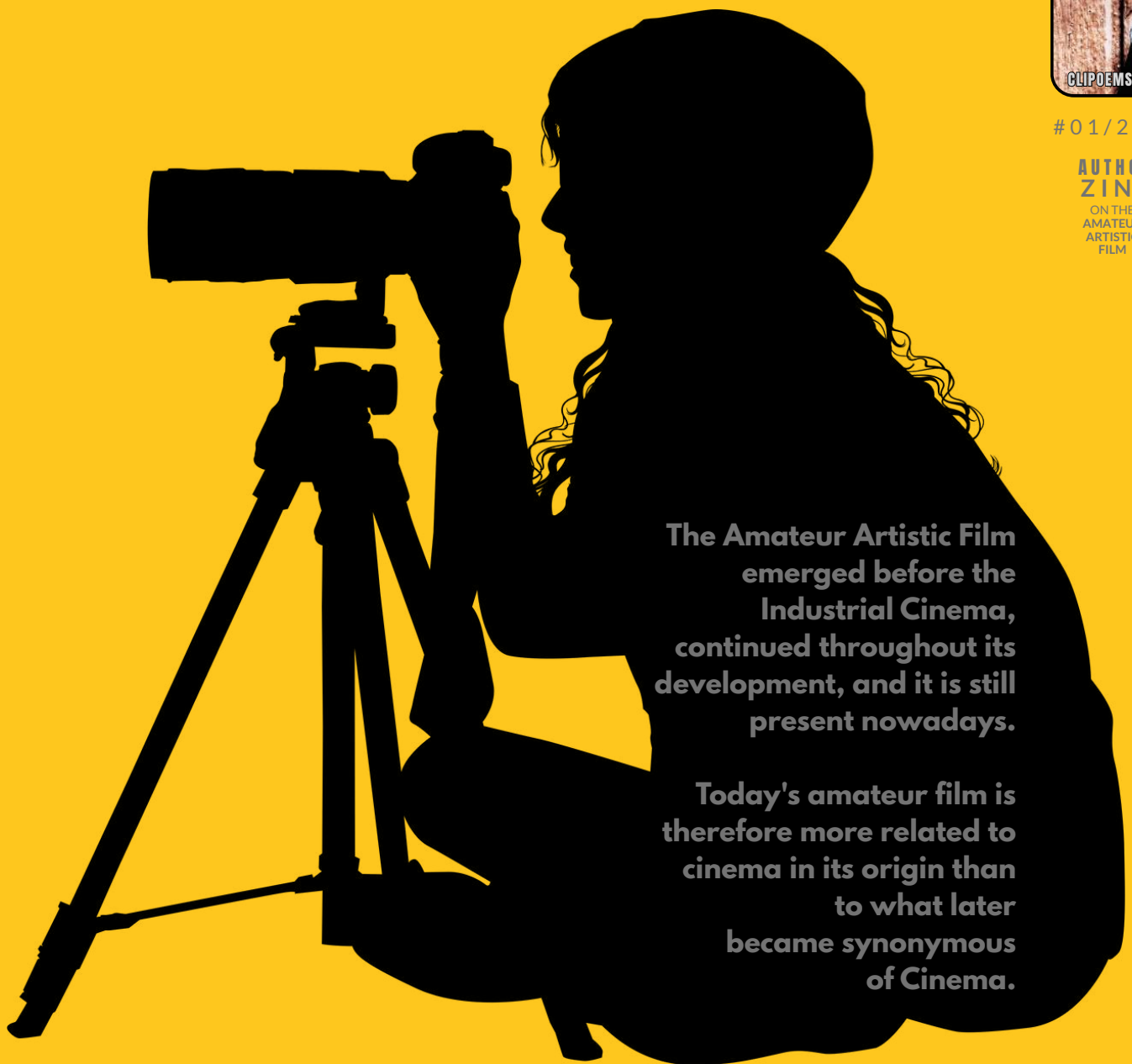


TO AMATEURS, WITH LOVE



#01/2025

**AUTHOR
ZINE**
ON THE
AMATEUR
ARTISTIC
FILM



The Amateur Artistic Film emerged before the Industrial Cinema, continued throughout its development, and it is still present nowadays.

Today's amateur film is therefore more related to cinema in its origin than to what later became synonymous of Cinema.

**A CINEMA THAT DOESN'T WANT TO BE CINEMA:
AMATEUR ARTISTIC CINEMATOGRAHY AND INTELLECTUAL RESISTANCE**

by Arthur Caria



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ABSTRACT: This text aims to read the performance of the amateur artistic filmmaker as a contemporary intellectual. The analysis aligns certain achievements of a strictly artistic nature - philosophically, aesthetically and geographically heterogeneous - that throughout the history of Western cinematography have built a common impetus for intellectual autonomy and artistic freedom. The amateur artistic filmmaker, in his personal work to articulate his principles and worldview through her/his film or video, is a contemporary intellectual, because she/he is widely independent, from the very beginning of her/his project and the filming phase, throughout the edition stage and until the moment of its disclosure, this artist made it all her/his own way, lonely and with what she/he had at hands. Unlike the organic intellectual, for example, who responds and reports to his cinematographic organization/corporation, obeying its agenda, the amateur filmmaker will remain an independent intellectual as long as her/his works are guided by creative freedom and intellectual autonomy.

KEYWORDS: Filmmaker; Contemporary Intellectual; Contemplative Cinema; Art Cinema; Art Film; Stasis Films; Underground Movies. Amateur Films.

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by Arthur Caria

Such works are flagrant lashings out at this status quo. They are the voices, acts, and the images of individual personalities completely destroying existing ideas of how and what people and things should appear on the screen. (RENAN, Sheldon, An Introduction to the American Underground Film, 1967, p. 36).

INTRODUCTION

All men are filmmakers, but not all of them are filmmakers in their societies. This paraphrase of the classic statement made by Antonio Gramsci (GRAMSCI 1968, p.7), about his conception of what is an intellectual, summarises and embodies this textual outline with the ***attempt to align some aesthetically, chronologically and geographically heterogeneous works, from their impetus for intellectual and artistic freedom common to all of them.***

Over the last hundred years, a significant number of film productions across the world have diverged from the form and purpose of what was established as the mainstream cinema in the United States in the 1920s. The directors of such films are not film industry professionals or occasional hobbyists. They do not depend on the cinematographic activity to live, and at the same time do not exercise it as a mere pastime. The nature of their filmmaking is artistic, and rests on the impetus for the freedom to create, a primordial and non-negotiable condition for them. Perhaps the only possible terminological shelter (under which we could bring together communities of quite different filmmakers) is that of an ***amateur artistic cinema***, in which the word "amateur" is stripped of all the pejorative semantic load, accumulated over decades, and re-established in its primordial significance, as that of an individual who does a particular job exclusively for love and does it well, opposed to the negative expectation that the term may possibly raise. In this sense, ***amateur artistic cinema*** would refer to film achievements generally gathered under other terms such as Cinema Avant-Garde, Experimental Film, Underground Film, Art Film, and more recently Contemporary Contemplative Cinema and Cinema of Stasis.

INITIAL AURA AND VISUAL POETRY

In the first moments of cinematography, starting in France and then arriving in England and the United States, just when the possibility to record the movement on film and then project it to an audience arose, both the equipment and the motifs of the filmmakers were basically the same. The public reception of the early film productions, silent at first, tended to see them in the aura of Photography (REMES, 2015), which, by its way, had inherited the protocols of reception and appreciation from Fine Arts works. The 'cinema' at that particular moment, so to speak, would have probably been the act of recording, in motion pictures, *the painting of a state of mind* (ROUILLY/TUTTLE, 2007), much more than a predominantly narrative endeavour, as it quickly ended up becoming then. Especially with the addition of the sound element, no longer as a mere live background provided by musicians and musical groups *in loco*, but in the form of film-embedded dialogues, effects, sound effects and soundtracks. All these innovations mercilessly reconfigured that newly created art of picturing motion.

Not all practitioners of cinematography at that time adhered to this sonic upgrade in their productions, nor to the emphasis on narrative as a key point of their film achievements. They also rejected the guidelines and standards that began to marginalise the cinematographic achievements that would differ from the ideal scope for the emerging commercial product. Since then, *parallel to the historical trajectory of cinema as we know it nowadays, a lineage of individuals has been formed and has kept alive the tradition of conserving the use of filming as a tool to celebrate poetry and beauty* (STEINER apud MACDONALD, 2001, p71).

For these cinematography artists, it has never been a matter of fighting the industrial cinema, or even claiming the tittle of "real cinema" for their artistic films. *These art filmmakers stress the importance to bypass, to circumvent the massification of a certain aesthetic and receptive logic made by decades of mainstream cinema, in order to still be able to sensitise an audience after all. An audience that could be able, in front of a screen/monitor, to allow themselves to discover another aesthetic-cognitive experience.*

Having as predecessors films such as *Entrée de René Clair* in 1924, *Emak Bakia* by Man Ray in 1926, and *Un chien Andalou* by Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel in 1928 - and amid the growth of the entertainment film industry - filmmakers Ralph Steiner and Henwar Rodakiewicz, from the United States in the late 1920s, would be the first to take a stand against the excesses of repetitive language and aesthetic alienation present in the mass production of great american cinema.

The films H2O (by Steiner in 1929) and Portrait of a Young Man (by Rodakiewicz in 1931) mark the beginning of a lineage of productions made by individuals already aware and critical of the industrial standardisation in cinematography, something that will be resumed in the late 1940s with the end of the Second World War and carried on until today.

In a prologue to the *Film as Film Exhibition: formal experiment in film*, a 1910-1975 catalog, David Curtis and Richard Francis point out that "What unites the film-makers of the 70s with those of the 20s is a continuing insistence upon an artisanal mode of practice; their films are essentially, and often literally the work of one author" (DRUMMOND, 1979, p. 4)

ALL MEN ARE FILMMAKERS (?)

No other single factor has influenced the emergence of the new avantgarde art as much as technology, which not only fuelled the artists' imagination ..., but penetrated to the core of the work itself. The invasion of the very fabric of the art object by technology and what one may loosely call the technological imagination can best be grasped in artistic practices such as collages, assemblages, montage and photomontage; it finds its ultimate fulfilment in photography and film, art forms which cannot only be reproduced, but are in fact designed for mechanical reproducibility. (Huyssen, Andreas: After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986.)

Technological development outbreaks are always followed by a widespread consumption of products. The current technological abundance permeates the different sectors of human life, reaching, inevitably, most of the planet's population. It is safe to say that at least half of the human beings on Earth today have access to smartphone cameras and are, as to say, **potential filmmakers**.

Arts like the amateur cinematography, based fundamentally "upon an artisanal mode of practice" have always been fuelled by these waves of popularisation of equipment with lower costs compared to strictly professional pricy equipment. The current circumstance presents, unprecedented possibilities for the individual who films, such as appreciating in real time the result of her/his filming and exposing the work worldwide instantaneously. Among other things, it also makes us evaluate the nature of the amateur filmmaker today.

On the internet, video-sharing websites such as YouTube and Vimeo provide thousands of new videos every minute, uploaded from an immense variety of devices around the planet (smartphones, tablets, cameras, laptops, desktops, etc.). Unlike previous decades, when we only had access to family footage, or a few works by dedicated amateur friends (mostly from 'insiders only' circles), today there is an immeasurable number of film productions available for free to anyone interested. **How many of them are just rec-button pushers and how many are amateur filmmakers?**

After the development of the *cinematograph* in the end of the 19th century by the Lumière brothers in France, a greater popularisation of home cinema equipment only happened in the 1920s, with the spread of 16mm cameras, mainly with the development of the safety film by Kodak company, which guaranteed speed, ease and safety for the amateur artist or the hobbyist when handling the equipment. In the following decade, Kodak created the 8mm format (then called Regular 8), and Double 8 also appeared, which consisted of using both ends of the 16mm film at a time, one thing that helped popularise even more the amateur filmmaking. More and more compact and more portable cameras soon started to have colour films too.

In the middle of the 1960s, the same Kodak launched an improvement of the regular 8mm format, with innovations and novelties that would further revolutionise and popularise amateur portable filmmaking throughout the world - the company created the Super 8mm format, whose films (by that time, with more stock options, coloured, and black and white) were compartmentalised in plastic cartridges that were very easy to place and remove from the camera.

In addition, the new format brought with it a significant reduction in equipment costs - both cameras and films were much more affordable than previous models. For those filming with these Super 8 cameras though, it was necessary to have a projector to watch the movies at home after developed in laboratories. Almost all these home and amateur works produced in film media since at least 1920, were being developed in laboratories (16mm, regular 8 etc), but with the Super 8 format dissemination, those labs became even more numerous in most cities. ***Those who ventured to develop and edit their own films (celluloid-wise) had, of course, more work and costs, but in the end it was worth it - they had total control over the desired results.***

So, ***the first significant difference between the hobbyists, rec-button pushers, and the amateur artistic filmmakers is this disposition to invest in developing and editing their own films as they pleased.*** Although many of the hobbyists would actually perform the same kind of procedures, most of them would prefer the laboratories development of their films.

The last major and significant revolution in the production of the accessible audiovisual equipment that happened before our current digital age, was the introduction of the Video Home System (VHS) - in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Not only the recording gear was revolutionised with the VHS, the reproduction copy tapes created a new dimension of home entertainment worldwide through the videotape renting and selling businesses. The VHS console every family had in their living rooms would both play a videotape with a film, etc., and record whatever would be passing on TV. VHS Cameras were a little more expensive than the consoles, but still popular. With them the VHS tapes could be used several times, recording and re-recording over previous video-taping and so on.

In the early 1980s the VHS, with a much lower cost and more practical use, decreed the end of the Super 8 format's hegemony for hobby recording videos. So, ***the second significant difference between the hobbyists, rec-button pushers, and the amateur artistic filmmakers is that these artists continued to use Super 8 as much as other traditional celluloid film formats, mainly for technical quality reasons.*** The VHS was practically a disposable media. Of course, artists used VHS gear to produce works, but they didn't last. The VHS would never satisfy the aesthetic and artistic needs of the independent amateur filmmakers who continued to use the film, manipulate it, cut it, edit it - something manually impossible to be done with the VHS.

The analog medium has survived throughout the years, stoically, both through the loyalty of independent amateur filmmakers, celluloid film enthusiasts, as well as with professionals in the film industry who refuse to give up the traditional medium. The grainy image became synonymous of cinema, and, at that time, it was a symbol of resistance.

Three decades later, when the momentary intrusion of the fragile VHS media was over, and with the vertiginous development of digital imaging technology, everyone has, once again in history, access to the same technological resources for image registration. Amateurs, hobbyists and the film industry professionals.

Kodak, the major revolutionary in the world film industry, had stopped manufacturing Super 8 mm camcorders in 1982 due to the VHS dominance. Recently, Kodak surprised the world resuming its manufacturing, and launched a camera of hybrid technology, digital and analog, to meet an unceasing demand, precisely from the sector of independent artistic cinematography.

Unlike the context and purpose of 60 years ago, when the first Super 8 camcorder was launched, and its home use became more popular, today the relaunch should not have the same impact and the same domestic reach. The new Kodak Super 8 camcorder - together with the celebrated continuity of cartridge production (virgin films) and development at Kodak itself, which will lower current film costs - will mainly cover independent filmmakers and amateurs eager to differentiate, in aesthetic terms, their products from the daily filmmaking achievements posted on the web and, at the same time, create a certain aesthetic intertextuality, since the graininess of the image through the use of film inevitably refers to the visual aspect of previous productions. Despite the enormous difference in results that the film provides, ***the nature of amateur artistic films is not - at least not anymore - conditioned by this grainy characteristic of the film features.*** Today, ***it obviously represents one among many other resources for the construction of an amateur artistic film, whose nature must be sought in other aspects.***

The profusion of artistic films and home hobby films, from the popularisation of portable and affordable film equipment, in different periods over the last ninety years, ran alongside the creation and establishment of industrial conglomerates for standardised production and large-scale commercial entertainment films. The so-called block busters (films with commercial success) are industrial because they employ a large number of individuals in the process of making a single film, with several compartments, segmentations in production and financial goals to be achieved aiming at the profit of their investors.

The amateur artistic film emerged before the great industrial cinema (which always used ideas, and was fuelled by a great number of practices and techniques from amateur experimentalist productions), ***continued throughout its development, and it is still present nowadays. Today's amateur film is therefore more related to cinema in its origin than to what later became synonymous of Cinema.***

AVANT-GARDE (S), EXPERIMENTAL, UNDERGROUND

As Hans Richter suggested, the decade between the years 1921 and 1931 witnessed the crystallisation of "an artistic proposal in cinematography that became known as Avant-Garde and which was developed in parallel with movements in the Fine Arts such as Expressionism, Futurism, Cubism and Dadaism. It was noncommercial, nonrepresentational but international." (RICHTER, Hans. Apud RENAN, 1967, p. 57).

The so-called Avant-Garde Cinema proposed the exercise of the freedom to unconditionally experiment and forge an art always ahead of its time, and with that it established the fundamental feature of any amateur artistic film made from that point on. The proposal spread with great intensity and ended up guiding and naming most of the accomplishments made in that period.

According to Dick Higgins, "the avant-garde consists of those who feel sufficiently comfortable with the past to the point of not having to compete with it or repeat it" (HIGGINS apud KOSTELANETZ, 2000, p.XIII). More than that, as critic Sheldon Renan points out, the term avant-garde refers precisely to three discriminatory criteria: "it transcends current aesthetic conventions in crucial respects, establishing discernible distance between itself and the mass of current practices"; the avant-garde will also "necessarily take considerable time to find its maximum audience", and ultimately, it will also "probably inspire future, comparably advanced endeavours" (KOSTELANETZ, 2000, p.XIII).

For Phillip Drummond, in *Notions of Avant-Garde*, a definition of avant-garde will necessarily have to start from a larger and inevitable cinematic context called mainstream cinema, or dominant cinema, whose norms and values will help typify avant-garde as its opponent. According to Drummond, "the dominant and mainstream cinema is strongly marked by its alliances with concentrations of economic and social power" (DRUMMOND et alli 1979, Great Britain, p.9), and more importantly:

As industrial products, mainstream films then have direct relationships to capital and class, through their restrictive patterns of ownership coupled with their 'mass' marketing and exploitation; ... these films are 'dominant' precisely in their reproduction of dominant ideologies within this set of interests. Massive social and political implications flow from developed versions of this sketch of the cinema in dominance. (DRUMMOND, 1979, p.9.)

Something important to be considered in terms of audience formation and control, especially nowadays, in which the primacy of the high definition image is seen together with the ability to generate visual and sound effects, would become what Drummond calls a repertoire of strategies and effects that support "the aesthetic and ideological hegemony of mainstream cinema". For him, ***the great cinema does not dominate simply through "coercion, but through its formal and stylistic lures and appeals."*** (DRUMMOND, 1979, p.9).

Sheldon Renan states that "there have been three periods of exceptional achievement in this area of film-making", considered by many critics as "the three film avant-gardes" (RENAN, 1967, p. 21). It is interesting to ***note that the periods to which Renan refers coincide temporarily with the three waves of massification of portable cameras, throughout the great technological advance achieved in the period considered.*** Another point to be noted is the preference of this author for the term "underground" whose emergence dates from the 1960s in the United States, but which Renan uses to refer to the profiles of artistic and eminently personal films also classified under the avant-garde and experimental labels.

According to Renan, ***the "first film avant-garde took place in the 1920s"*** (RENAN, 1967, p.21), at the same time that cameras with 16mm films started to become popular. This first avant-garde, according to Renan, came from modern art, especially from Dada and Surrealism, and it had as main works some films that became predecessors of the underground film movement, such as *Un chien Andalou* by Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel; as well as *Entr'acte* by René Clair, and *Emak Bakia* by Man Ray.

The second moment of avant-garde film took place in the 1940s. It was an important period in several aspects, as it pointed out some of the principles according to which avant-garde films would be supported until today:

Some works made then are now called underground. When they were produced, however, they were often called "experimental" films. Originally, in the twenties, experimental was a word used to describe the montage films of the Russians. But by the forties, it was the word for works such as Deren's Meshes of the Afternoon, Anger's Fireworks, and Peterson's The Lead Shoes. Experimental means part of a logical inquiry by trial and error. These films were called experimental for trying to do things that had not been done before. But the term was not accurate, because film-makers were artists expressing themselves and not scientists conducting a logical inquiry. Many film-makers objected also to the idea that their films were experiments and not finished works of art. The term, however, is still used to describe those films and films made today. (RENAN, 1967, p. 21/22)

In the period described above, the second wave of popularisation of portable camcorders was in vogue, with 8mm film cameras (Regular 8). ***The film's third avant-garde period, according to Sheldon Renan, began in the second half of the 1950s, but it peaked precisely with the emergence of the Super 8mm format by Kodak in 1965,*** although the 16 mm and 35 mm formats (the most expensive) continued to be widely used. In this period, when the film industry had already established itself strongly, Renan points out that:

Two terms have been popular in describing the personal film during this time, independent and underground. Independent in this context means free of Hollywood. But the name has been taken by a variety of film-makers, including commercial film-makers who produce Hollywood-type films outside of the studio system. Many noncommercial independents have thus tended to dissociate themselves from the word. (RENAN, 1967, p. 21)

Avant-garde, experimental, underground and film art resulted as denominations that are still in use today. They were never synonymous terms, although somewhat equivalent, reflecting the needs of the periods in which they were carried out. In fact, regarding nomenclature and classification of a particular work, the attitude of the filmmaker, who is immersed in his artistic creation effort, will certainly be evasive or negative. The problem of nomenclature will perhaps matter to the filmmaker who feels the need to create a label that is minimally consistent with the presentation and principles of some particular work, and that can be useful to direct the reception of her/his work as she/he would like.

For many, not only were underground films born as a direct consequence of the waves of popularisation of portable camcorders, but the fact is that the making of this genre of films maintains a symbiotic relationship with the mainstream culture and the film industry with its co-optation procedures. Such is the opinion of Malte Hagener, in *Moving Forward, Looking Back: avant-garde and the invention of film*:

The avant-garde occupied the position of a minesweeper in relation to the culture at large: it tested territory, marked out dangerous spots and cleared the way for the larger cohorts of mainstream culture to follow. The positioning of the avant-garde vis-à-vis these broader cultural trends is as interdependent as it is paradoxical: mainstream culture needs the avant-garde as a pathfinder and scout to explore unknown regions while the avant-garde in turn simultaneously needed the mainstream as an opposition to distinguish itself from(...) (HAGENER, 2007, p. 13.)

For Hagener, the avant-garde would be irresistibly trapped in a kind of two-option trap: "either it would lose contact with the mainstream and become obscure and esoteric or it would move too slowly for the culture at large and become stale and dated" (HAGENER, 2007, p. 14). In either situation, Hagener suggests, this would mean the end of the movement(s). Still on the issue, Hagener brings the words of the film critic Lotte Eisner (1896-1983), in a more insubstantial tone:

If the avant-garde is no longer the privilege of the truly brave pioneers, the danger might occur that it becomes a common basis for the slowly moving masses. ... The avant-garde needs to sound out its own rows; it must free itself from those, who may harm it. ... The avant-garde has to be aware of remaining avant-garde. It has to know its friends and accept criticism from its own. Otherwise it will become, despite its name, yesterday's news (EISNER apud HAGENER: Avantgarde - Achtung! In: Film-Kurier, vol. 10, no. 126, 06.25.1928.).

In this sense, the status of the avant-garde to which it refers, but by extension the status of all films with related profiles, therefore, either by the nature of its symbiotic relationship with the film industry, or by the contexts that it has crossed, always were marked by instability. They have never known a full and consensual institution of their profile, nor a consensus regarding nomenclatures. This is probably due to the fact ***that there are countless ways to make an experimental, underground or art film. And many times, each director has peculiarities and preferences that are too specific to be generalised to fit into a trend or school.***

STASIS CINEMA AND CONTEMPLATIVE CINEMA

Some more recent theoretical understandings within the universe of artistic cinematography have proposed new perspectives and nomenclatures for a number of works from different eras. However, the great merit of these efforts is the fact that they are in full operation nowadays, cataloging recently released films and filmmakers, producing critical reviews about the most varied works, classifying and categorising them, but also making available articles and job listings.

Some of these main current theoretical headings in use are **Cinema of Stasis** and **Contemporary Contemplative Cinema**, for which the films in question are not merely passing stylistic trends or innovative techniques that sooner or later end up co-opted by the film industry. Before, such productions, to use an expression by Paul Schrader, would be more like ***a distinct line of filmic achievements.***

Two authors whose efforts stand out, due to the breath of their textual productions and the range of works reached, are **Justin Remes** and **Benoit Rouilly**. Remes is the author of the book ***Motion [less] pictures: the cinema of stasis***, of 2015, by Columbia University Press (USA), and Rouilly (with part of his production under the pseudonym Harry Tuttle) is editor of the long-lived and highly praised blog ***Unspoken Cinema***, active since 2006, which strictly deals with the **Contemporary Contemplative Cinema** and it is a constant reference in academic works in recent years.

Based on the parameters proposed by these two authors, any attempt to understand what the contemplative cinema or the cinema of stasis, within the scope of cinematography, will have to ***take into account the idea of stasis (stagnation, stop) and that of contemplation, which implies problematising the notions of movement (of the camera, and / or what appears, or not, on screen) and duration (the time spent in the scene [s] and / or in the film as one all).***

For Justin Remes, the Stasis Films "are ostensibly motion pictures without motion", films that "generally feature no camera movement and little or no movement within the frame" (REMES, p.3), even the understanding of some critics and filmmakers, mentioned by Remes, such as Peter Wollen, for whom "movement is not a necessary feature of film" (when referring to Chris Marker's film *La Jetée*). Others like Douglass Crockwell problematise "the assumed centrality of movement to cinematic practice", and affirms that "visually, the motion picture is sequential art ... Motion is but one of the incidental byproducts". With the same understanding, Peter Kubelka points out that "cinema is not movement. Cinema is the projection of stills". (REMES, p. 6 and 7)

Justin Remes expands the discussion based on the understanding of the director and writer Paul Schrader on the subject, for whom stasis films are "a different breed of film altogether" (REMES, p.8), but emphasising that "even in traditional motion pictures, stasis is deeply embedded in the ontology of film" (REMES, p.6). In other words, stasis as a resource is not a privilege of the cinema of stasis, as it has always been in the repertoire of cinematography tools since its conception. Remes points out that his interest lies in films in which stasis is the standard element (REMES p.8). Grades of stasis use can be found in commercial films. One film in this circuit may contain several scenes with stasis, while another may contain only one scene, but that does not make them worthy of being included in a list of stasis films.

The use of stasis as a creative atmosphere provides significant changes in the protocols for receiving films, which now rely on the activity of the viewer as a willing co-creator, much more than with his passivity. In other words, it invites one to participate, filling in the gaps that the work has to offer, building his/her understanding of artistic achievement in front of him/her.

For Remes, such films "foreground stasis and consequently blur the lines between traditional visual art and motion pictures" [REMES, p. 3]. ***Resonating the oppositionist spirit to mainstream cinema characteristic of filmmakers of the 1920s, both Cinema of Stasis and Contemplative Cinema constitute art forms that seek to discard the centrality of narration as an artistic north, making it much closer to photography and poetry than literature and drama.***

The definition of ***Contemplative***, in this context, becomes very familiar to the understanding of, for example, ***co-related terms such as Slow Cinema***, sometimes considered synonyms, as Benoit Rouilly points out: "***Slow cinema doesn't modify time, it restores the perception of time we usually have in real life***" (ROUILLY/TUTTLE, 2010).

In the same path, ***Contemplative Cinema*** would be "***the kind that rejects conventional narration to develop almost essentially through minimalistic visual language and atmosphere, without the help of music, dialogue, melodrama, action-montage, and star system***" (ROUILLY/TUTTLE, 2006). ***Most importantly, for Rouilly, therefore, is to emphasise that "the point of these films is not to tell us a story, but to paint a state of mind"*** (ROUILLY/TUTTLE, 2006).

This is an art that has consciously placed itself in opposition to the modus faciendi of the commercial works from the traditional cinema. Ralph Steiner foresaw it in the 1920s, drawing attention to the superficial approaches, the mushy themes, the linear narrative drenched in suspense, the freneticism os very fast scenes, also to the aesthetics of the scare and the happy ending (RENAN, 1967).

Generally silent, Contemplative Cinema films have long shots (sometimes only one big shot is the entire film), they have no audio (or there is minimal audio, or even ambient), they are usually films of spontaneous realisation, without predetermined scripts. Contemplative Films try ***to let the viewer activate themselves, to consider themselves, subtly encouraging them to understand what is around them, to focus on the uniqueness of each moment. Finally, to assume the "ability to contemplate art through itself"*** [TUTTLE, 2011], without the need for tutelage.

For the perception of this oneness of the moment, duration will have a preponderant role. As in a dedicated appreciation of a sculpture, a painting or a photograph, the time spent using the parameters of the composition of such a line of films becomes a more propitious element for insights, discoveries and interpretations. In the opinion of Justin Remes, "if the cinema has any indispensable component, this must be the duration", because "the experience of duration is one of the main concerns of stasis cinema" [p. 12 and 13].

Maya Deren goes further when she affirms that "cinema - although composed of images concerning the notion of space - is primarily a form-time" (REMES, p12). The proposal to film "non-movement", such as elapsed time and "nothing" happening in front of the camera, causes the viewer to discover (often uncomfortable) the duration.

Provided by the potentiation of the resources peculiar to the Stasis and Contemplative films, the perception of duration, often with the strangeness while watching the film, being attentive to the passage of time, in short, the critical awakening before an artistic object, so to speak, unconventional, it constitutes a relevant pedagogical device for the construction of intellectual autonomy.

It is salutary that the amateur filmmaker allows his viewers to "***hear the language out of power***", as Roland Barthes in *Aula* would say (BARTHES, 2002, p. 16), ***outside the great discursive order [Foucault] of industrial cinematography.*** Or even, ***that your film/video encourages your audience to try to be, also, "the author of their own language"*** (SAID, 2005, p. 15). May she/he play for her/himself, pay to see and for others to see her/his work and be minimally touched, or even urged to produce, also, her/his own material, her own speech.

THE AMATEUR FILMMAKER AS AN INTELLECTUAL

The opposition to mainstream cinema of a given line of films over the decades is not only an opposition of terminology and of a technical-creative order (a resource quickly rendered ineffective by appropriations by large-budget film productions), but an affirmation of personal character that impregnates their production and constitutes a feeling common to all these filmmakers.

It is significant to note that this opposition to mainstream cinema begins as soon as the consequences of its commercial development begin to appear. In an article entitled *Peter Hutton: The Filmmaker as Luminist*, American professor and critic Scott MacDonald points out that

*By the late 1920s, however, as filmmakers began to reflect on cinema's high-speed commercial development, premonitions of a more meditative sensibility are evident in Ralph Steiner's *H2O* (1929) and, even more clearly, in Henwar Rodakiewicz's *Portrait of a Young Man* (1931). In these two films, and particularly in *Portrait*, a sensibility close to what would later inform Peter Hutton's work, is already in evidence. (MACDONALD, 2001, p. 69.)*

In the words of photographer and filmmaker Ralf Steiner (1899-1986), from a 1935 interview with *New Theatre* magazine, one can see in more detail his discontent with the great film industry:

During the 1920s we grew disgusted with the philistinism of the commercial film product, its superficial approach, trivial themes, and its standardisation of film treatment: the straight-line progressing from event to event on a pure suspense basis, unmarred by any imaginative use of the camera ... The important thing, we felt, was to do those things the film was capable of, but which the commercial film didn't and couldn't possibly do. There seemed unbounded possibilities for the use of film as a visual poetry of formal beauty. (STEINER apud MACDONALD, 2001, p. 70)

Steiner's discontent is not due to merely technical issues or the film industry's choice of a no-go path with the reduction of creative activity to formulas and recipes used to exhaustion, signifying a concern with the cultural and social role of art, so to speak, cinematographic as a whole. For MacDonald, "his interest [in Steiner] was in help citizens to see more of what surrounds them" (MACDONALD, 2001, p. 71). **Steiner's concern for the viewing public contrasts with the mere commitment to profit in the film business. These are contrasts of principles: the personal versus the business.**

An intellectual, in fact, is an amateur - he is free, he has intellectual autonomy and moral confidence to expose what he thinks, without fear of external pressure, seeking whatever is within his reach to achieve his intent. In general, the intellectual is defined as an individual who "possesses gifts of spirit, of intelligence" and also "a person who has a predominant taste or inclination towards things of the spirit, of intelligence" (GRAMSCI, 1968, p.7). Political scientist **Antonio Gramsci** (1891-1937), in his book *The intellectuals and the organisation of culture*, argues that **intellectual activity is something inherent to all men, with the exception that, for some of them, intellectuality constitutes an function:**

"All men are intellectuals, one could say then; but not all men play the role of intellectuals in society"(GRAMSCI, 1968, p.7). One cannot refer to someone as an intellectual simply because that person performs an intellectual activity in his ordinary daily work. Antonio Gramsci explains that "in the same way, due to the fact that someone may at some point fry two eggs or sew a hole in his jacket, it does not mean that everyone is a cook or tailor" (GRAMSCI, 1968, p.7).

When dealing with the same theme, Michel Foucault emphasises the change in the extension of the intellectual's range of action as an important data in understanding the issue. Michel Foucault concludes that the figure of the "universal" intellectual, as an individual who speaks to the masses, ceased to exist: "being an intellectual was rather to be the conscience of everyone" (FOUCAULT, 2003, p. 8), mainly in the Marxist molds however, the universal intellectual has given way to what he calls **the "specific" intellectual**. In Edward Said's opinion on this understanding of Foucault, **the intellectual would then be someone used to "work not in the 'universal', in the 'exemplary', in the just-and-true-for-all, but in certain sectors"** (SAID, 2005, p. 24). [emphasis added]

Edward Said notes contemporary examples of Antonio Gramsci's prediction of the diffusion of the organic intellectual, and uses Julien Benda's definitions to stipulate a certain number of actions and skills that should be expected of an intellectual today. According to **Edward Said, "today, everyone who works in any field, whether linked to the production or distribution of knowledge, is an intellectual** in Gramsci's sense." SAID, 2005, p. 26).

On the other hand, Edward Said highlights some of Julien Benda's main definitions, recalling that *intellectuals "must be in a state of almost permanent opposition to the status quo", or "risk being burned at the stake, ostracised or crucified."* (SAID, 2005, p. 27). In Edward Said's conception, the intellectual is, therefore, *an individual "as a representative figure - someone who visibly represents any point of view, someone who articulates representations to an audience, despite all kinds of barriers"* (SAID, 2000, p. 27). For him, *the intellectual should use his personal inflection and sensitivity to make sense of what is said and said, and even, whenever necessary, to be "embarrassing, against, even unpleasant"* (SAID, 2005, p. 27). The intellectual for Said *must always be an outsider, as the amateur by nature is*. His envied freedom puts him in a "solitary condition, yes, but it is always better than a gregarious tolerance for the state of affairs" (SAID, 2005, p. 17).

For Sheldon Renan, the underground filmmaker is "the artist who makes his personal statement without compromise" (RENAN, 1967, p. 6), that is, without any subordination or commitment to a higher order, nor to deadlines and budgets. And your film is "conceived and made essentially by one person and is a personal statement by that person. It is a film that dissents radically in form, or in technique, or in content, or perhaps in all three. "(RENAN, 1967, p. 17).

The great asset of popularisation, the ease of acquisition and handling of diverse filming equipment, disseminated over the decades, was undoubtedly the freedom of expression by its users, as shown by Renan:

The accessibility and portability of film has resulted in freedom. This means not just freedom to make films, but freedom to make them for purely personal satisfaction and to purely aesthetic standards. It means freedom to make complex films, intimate films, films close to life or made of dreams, films like poems and films like paintings. This is what the underground is all about." (RENAN, 1967, p. 18).

For Renan, the level of intimacy, variety and life that is present in the works that he classifies as underground, are very rarely reached by commercial films. For him, what matters is that "Underground described an attitude: the determination that the films should be made and should be seen despite all economic and legal barriers." (RENAN, 1967, p. 22).

Already in the mid-1960s, Sheldon Renan asserted that a large contingent of people produced art films and that "and at least a hundred of these are of known significance. Some are students. Some are artists known for work in other fields." (RENAN, 1967, p. 18).

As a large portion of the so-called "amateur", "experimental", "underground" or "art" productions do not constitute (neither by their nature nor their aesthetic profile) in profitable commercial activities, those who carry them out do not survive them, and seek a goal that will distinguish them both from simple video makers and from sophisticated image business makers. The goal is in the middle path, without hitting either side. This desire to affirm his "personal statement" to the status quo, is equivalent to the position of the contemporary intellectual who uses representations (SAID, 2005), one who surrounds himself with the possible means around him so that his message is disseminated.

A filmmaker hired from a major film studio or a major production company certainly does not enjoy freedom of expression (neither verbal nor creative) and the courage to assert certain personal positions, because industry films are the work of hundreds of hands (and million dollars) and even for fear of having his contract terminated. Whether the director of the film or a member of his production, he will be subject to the same conditions and commitments to budgets and contractual guidelines. ***The value of the filmmaker's position as an "amateur" lies in this possibility that his industry equivalent does not have.***

Because they are from "other fields" of activity, that is, they are not professionals in the field of film production, but artists. These writers, as well as teachers, architects, among others, such individuals (contemporary independent intellectuals) will always make use of one more tool (and not just the video), to make themselves heard. The subject coming from another field of activity when he makes a foray, in his own way, for making films, he is on the sidelines of the so-called professional process, but he is isolated and happy to be doing something with which he is intellectually and emotionally connected. Something that only he gets his hand on.

According to Edward Said, in *Representations of the Intellectual* (2005):

the main duty of the intellectual is the search for relative independence in the face of such pressures. Hence my characterisations of the intellectual as an exile and marginal, as an amateur and author of a language that tries to speak truth to power. (SAID, 2005, p. 15).

In this understanding, ***the term "amateur", therefore, is a positive indicator of a sober and meaningful option, made by someone who is not concerned with the pejorative semantic load that the same term has garnered over the decades and, in fact, makes the your part helping to reframe it.***

Maya Deren (1917-1961), a recognised American underground filmmaker of Ukrainian origin, stated that:

*The major obstacle for amateur film-makers is their own sense of inferiority vis-a-vis professional productions. The very classification "amateur" has an apologetic ring. But that very word - from the Latin "amateur" - "lover" means one who does something for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons or necessity. And this is the meaning from which the amateur film-maker should take his clue. Instead of envying the script and dialogue writers, the trained actors, the elaborate staffs and sets, the enormous production budgets of the professional film, the amateur should make use of the one great advantage which all professionals envy him, namely, freedom - both artistic and physical . (DEREN, *Film Culture* n. 39, 1965, p. 45-46.)*

The opinions of Said and Deren are harmonised because they provide a sense of justice and rehabilitation to the term "amateur". They reveal the dishonest semantic shift that term has suffered through the years, with stigmatization of artistic works that are not guided by the logic of the great cultural marketing authorities.

Editor and critic **Broderick Fox**, in *Rethinking the Amateur: a dirty word - acts of media production in the Digital Age*, questions whether with all the development brought by the digital revolution that made "every desktop computer a potential site for film/video editing, web and CD/DVD-ROM design, and routes of alternative distribution, **are traditional amateur/professional divides being blurred, or rendered obsolete?**" (FOX, 2004, p. 5).

The answer to this question would be no. To put it aside is to ignore the history and meaning of Amateur Film Arts. This amateur/professional opposition must be reframed. The artistic film achievements themselves and their "amateur" discursive productions, as well as their expert reviews must show clearly that "professional" is not simply synonymous of "the best", and that "sophisticated image" in extremely high definition does not guarantee the credibility of what is conveyed and also that the "reality" that is displayed through these "perfect" images is just one version among countless possible "realities". It is a version edited by professionals who strictly comply with guidelines prepared according to the ideological-financial guidelines of their companies. Anyway, the amateur/professional opposition would be obsolete only in a situation, something unthinkable, in which all film achievements (provided by today's information technology facility, as Fox wants) were absorbed by the market.

There are certainly some ways available to identify filmic achievements that may appear on the list of Arts in Amateur Film, although all of these ways end up being arbitrary, due to the very different nature of the films in question. But one of the possible ways is precisely to explore this two-way street: **amateur-intellectual; intellectual-amateur.**

The amateur filmmaker, in his personal work to articulate his principles and worldview through his film/video - from the initial idea, through filming and editing until the moment of dissemination in his own way, alone and with what he has his reach - throughout this process he is a contemporary intellectual. Very different from the organic intellectual, who responds and reports to his organisation, obeying his agenda, the amateur filmmaker will remain an intellectual as long as his works are guided by these terms, as long as they represent this function that gives him meaning and as long as he can and wants to exercise their creative freedom and intellectual autonomy.

ARTHUR CARIA (AUGUST 2020)

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