

# Interview with Alexander Horwath: On Programming and Comparative Cinema

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## ABSTRACT

In this interview (realised in collaboration with Olaf Möller), Alexander Horwath takes Jean-Luc Godard's text 'Les Cinémathèques et l'histoire du cinéma' (1979) and his film *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98) as a point of departure to discuss: programming as a form of comparative cinema; the Cinémathèques as a place of production; different forms of criticism and writing on film; spatial vs. temporal (or consecutive) comparison; video as a tool to create a form different to cinema itself; programming as a form of historiography in the context of a Cinémathèque; and different programming methods (examples discussed include Peter Kubelka's programme 'Was ist Film' ['What is Film?'] or Horwath's own programme for *documenta 12* in Kassel in 2007). Finally, Horwath discusses the 1984 Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), celebrated in Vienna and dedicated to 'non-industrial' films; the existence of an 'ethical-realist' critical tradition in France vis-à-vis the 'experimental' tradition; the role of the most important film-makers of the Austrian avant-garde in relation to the Austrian Film Museum in 1968; the work of film curator Nicole Brenez; and the so-called 'expanded cinema', which he distinguishes from current museum practices or the new digital formats that prevail today.

## KEYWORDS

Jean-Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, programming, Austrian Film Museum, Peter Kubelka, 'Was Ist Film', *documenta 12*, comparative cinema, Austrian avant-garde, expanded cinema, Nicole Brenez.

**For this first issue of the journal *Comparative Cinema* we have decided to take Godard's text as a point of departure for a series of discussions with film curators on their task as programmers. We would like to start this conversation by asking you whether you share Godard's view on the role of the cinematheques. Was there a similar impulse behind your directorship of the Austrian Film Museum?**

AH: I should start by saying that I don't think I fully understand this text by Godard. But one of the things that he highlights and that I *do* understand is that meaning is created through the comparison of two things. Bringing together two films also produces something new, and this is obviously meaningful for every type of programming. However, I believe it would be wrong to reduce it to the meeting of two; a meeting of ten or twenty – in a programme of short films or in a longer series – can be equally productive, and in a different way.

I also share the view that a cinematheque or film museum, any museum actually, should understand itself as a place of production, which is what Godard's text comes down to. But there are two specific aspects of his notion of history-writing and criticism that I find worthy of closer inspection because they seem to be at odds with each other – his historiographical ideal and his idea of comparison.

His implicit model for history-writing and criticism seems to be literary criticism and the historiography of literature. Because there we use the same form of expression as the works that we are critically engaging with, i.e. written language. Judging from Godard's disinterest in written histories of film and his interest in film production as film historiography, it is evident that he strives for this model in film as well. The 'regular' types of criticism and history-writing – writing about music, painting,

film, etc. – *do not* use the same medium as the works they are engaging with. This hasn't stopped them from turning into important intellectual traditions, but they've always had to deal with the nagging problem of trying to convey a certain medium in terms of another. Thus, there are people who say that "writing about music" or "writing about film" is just as limited or just as impossible as "dancing about architecture". Nicole Brenez once said that the best criticism of a film is another film, which means that the best film critics and historians would be the film-makers themselves – at least those who place their film-making in relation to cinema as such. And this is also how Godard sees it when he says that "there is no difference between making cinema and writing the history of cinema", that „cinema writes its own history as it is being made“.

On the issue of comparison, however, he uses a different model – one that is based on painting and art history, more or less. When he discusses the comparison of films, he thinks of two images next to each other, like in an exhibition of paintings, in order "to indicate certain relations in the moment when they are seen". He thinks that in cinema we need to arrive at the same type of comparison – for instance, to have an image by Sergej Eisenstein and one by D.W. Griffith next to each other. He does admit that "placing one film theatre next to the other is rather difficult", but we're in the late 1970s and Godard has just discovered a new medium, video, where films can now be placed next to one another „and be compared.“ What he doesn't see, as far as I can tell, is that a temporal medium such as cinema produces its own and completely different form of comparison. If we accept the integrity of works, the only way of comparing cinematic works is *consecutively* – not "next to each other", but *after* one another. We need to compare "in time", not in space. And that's why memory simply cannot be dismissed; it's the basis for comparing one thing *after* the

other. When he gives examples from his courses in Montreal, it's exactly that – one film after the other. But he finds it somehow limiting, so video becomes a sort of saviour without being acknowledged as a very different form of expression and *dispositif* than cinema...

Also, the example of “Eisenstein image next to Griffith image” reduces cinema to the aspect of images, and static images at that. Issues of temporality, rhythm or sound would have to be omitted; and we'd arrive exactly where those who “write about music” or “dance about architecture” are located. If you think of music and how two musical works can be critically compared, it's immediately evident that this can only happen consecutively and not by putting them “next to each other” – maybe excepting those few works where different “musics” really run parallel or against each other, as in contemporary mash-up practices or in some works by the American composer Charles Ives in the early 20th century. Two works of music cannot really be co-present, and it's the same with cinema. The tiniest fraction of music or cinema becomes memory as soon as it passes, and to me that is one of the essential things to consider when thinking about a “comparative historiography” that really wants to remain true to the medium it deals with.

Personally I'm also OK with all the other, non-cinematic, ways of comparing and of “writing about”... *Of course* we can productively present films side by side on two monitors or create useful written texts about cinema. And *of course* we can use the video medium or the internet to discuss cinema, even very poetically. Godard's own *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998), which he developed out of his Montreal experiences, are a perfect case in point. And we see many websites or multiscreen installations today where several moving images are co-present. I'm just trying to point out that this is not cinema, it is another form of expression.

### **So you would argue that the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are not cinema in themselves...**

A.H.: *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has cinema as its subject, but it is a video work. A truly fantastic video work, I might add. A lot of what Godard does here became possible for him through specific means and working methods that are directly related to video. Even if his ideas about confronting and reworking a multiplicity of film excerpts, words, still images, writings, etc., are much older, they only became a concrete practice for him through this new medium – he could have pondered the options of experimental, found-footage film, too, of course, but he never did. The mere existence of video as a set of tools made him think that way. Certain ways of bringing together images, overlaying different sources and mutating them, blending one into the other. Interestingly, in the *Histoire(s)* he doesn't use the “images side-by-side” approach as often as one would think after reading the 1979 text. It is all mostly argued consecutively, as far as the images are concerned.

OM: But everything he does could have been done using cinema as well.

AH: I don't think so. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is full of specific aesthetic moves that only the video machine allows him to do, certain types of colouring, for instance, playing with colour.

OM. But we've seen it in avant-garde films! I mean, it's more complicated to do it on film, it's much more time consuming.

AH: Yes, but if you think of a Len Lye film, for instance, it always “talks about” its own specific methods of creation; the colour play in Len Lye is also a discourse about printing with analogue film. And it's the same with *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, only in a different medium. On a thematic level, this work may speak about cinema, but like any self-aware work of art it also speaks about its

own tools, its own being-created-by-these tools. In the end, this means that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* speaks about the transformation or remediation of film/cinema into another set of media. The image of Godard sitting at the electronic typewriter, which is relatively prominent at the beginning, together with the specific sound it makes, seems to me like an allegory of this remediation. For Godard, the ‘video method’ takes over from the cumbersome work on the analogue editing table. Video for him becomes something like the modern-day ‘caméra stylo’ – a pretty flexible electronic writing-machine that is at the author’s command in a much more direct manner than he ever thought possible with film.

There is a wide range of misunderstandings and lack of knowledge today when people see experimental works. Certain film-makers like Peter Tscherkassky, for instance, very specifically use the properties of analogue film – and only those – in their works. Nevertheless, Tscherkassky’s audiences today often ask him which digital tools, which software, he uses for the effects he achieves. Today, it is taken for granted that one would work with digital means. I think a lot of this has to do with the fact that we are not learning the history of cinema and other moving image media in nearly the same thorough fashion as we learn the history of art. There is still almost no materialist history of moving images, except in some cinematheques, because we are still fixated on notions of “content” and transparency when we think of film. In painting and art history, it is very common to discuss the *dispositif* and the material properties of the work as a central aspect of its theme. We are taught about the ways in which the production process imprints itself on the product, how an understanding of the product is inseparable from the materials and ‘machines’ that brought it into being. And this is not taught at all in relation to moving images. But I am digressing...

OM: I think in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* you have Godard looking at video through the eyes of cinema. Rather than going through the particularities of video to watch cinema.

AH: Let’s just say that we’re in the middle of a remediation phase, and according to Bolter and Grusin who wrote a book about this, there is always a lot of mimicry going on when one medium stages its slow ‘split’ from older media, just like cinema did during its own beginnings. Digital Cinema today, apart from its self-promotional claims of being “better” than analogue film, obviously strives to imitate the basic shapes and effects of film. It would risk losing an inbuilt global cinema audience if it staged the much more forceful split that it is potentially capable of. I think, though, that with Godard it’s a different issue. He wants to look at the history of cinema but, as he makes clear in the 1979 text, he felt he did not yet have the right tools. He was not satisfied with how it worked in Montreal. Whereas I actually think that the situation he had there was pretty ideal, in terms of the basic elements necessary to speak *about* cinema *with* cinema. I see the whole Montreal project as an important example for the educational or historiographical capacities of a film museum or film archive. But it seems that he didn’t fully believe in what these institutions can do – or are willing to do. With video, he no longer needs an institution; he assumes the role of the individual poet-history writer of moving images. It is what he wanted to do in the first place; the institution was only a necessary evil for him, and only for a brief moment.

I partly agree with Olaf that, in the *Histoire(s)*, Godard is not *that* interested in turning the unique capacities of video into a theme of its own – not explicitly at least; he is much too occupied with cinema and its relation to the classical arts and the history of the 20th century. The new medium becomes one of the main subjects only implicitly. That’s why it’s a

melancholic or 'late' work: its main energies are directed towards revisiting the traces of his lifetime, his cinephilic socialisation, his understanding of half a century of cinema. The fact that he uses a 'post-cinematic' technology and a 'para-cinematic' approach to do so, may be more of a practical thing for him. But for me, as a viewer, it is still one of the most fascinating aspects of the work.

OM: I think he did this with video because it was a less intensive and an easier task than doing it using cinema itself and because for him this is closer to an immediate form of writing. It's not only a matter of texture but also a matter of labour.

AH: In my own practice, I think I found out that programming as film historiography, as an 'enactment' of film historical reflection, can definitely be done in a cinemathèque context. As I said, it may even be the *only* place where this can be done – as long as you look for a discourse that articulates itself in the same 'language' as the thing that you're engaging with. For this, you need a certain number of elements, including a number of film prints but also technology, a certain type of space and a certain amount of time. With such a working system you can create something that is not just a *simulation* or an indirect *reference*, but an actual *example* of cinematic articulation. You may show complete works, but also, for purposes of concentration, you can present an excerpt or one reel of a film. You can structure the terms of the discourse by either presenting several films in a row, film after film, or alternate excerpts and films, or you can break it up and speak or sing in-between... The space of this experience is mostly fixed, but temporally the experience is up the curator. Of course, each individual film has its own fixed time, too, but the comparison or argument that you want to make leads you to very different temporal solutions. I feel that this is the basis of my work, and if I understand

him correctly it's also the basis of how Godard wanted to approach film history before he fell in love with video.

OM: We should say that film history likes to articulate itself through dichotomies: Méliès versus Lumière, Eisenstein versus Vertov, etc, etc. But I think it's quite a limited idea to say the least. The idea of doing double features is extremely attractive, but what I find even more attractive is building a whole programme of ten double features. So that not only two films can reflect upon each other; I'm more interested in force fields creating intellectual spaces. Not really just one film and the other, that's too limited. I am interested in everything that has some kind of storytelling, since I'm interested in history and reflecting on that history. This is something that you cannot do properly with only two films, as it will lead you to a simplified observation.

AH: Which is probably the reason why the short film programme has become the preferred medium of expression for film curators. There is not a lot of literature out there about film programming, but in most instances when programmers attempt to reflect on their own practice, they talk about the model of 90-minute or two-hour-programming – with not just two but eight or ten or fifteen short works that come into play and create a discourse between them. What is generally not considered in regard to the challenges, and the attraction, of film programming is that the same discursive potential applies to a series of longer films – it's only that audiences and curators need to be fully aware of the amounts of time involved. We usually think in blocks of 90' or 120' of leisure time – it's more or less the same 'time format' that structures your visit to an art museum, a concert or a film screening. So in order to seriously do what Olaf says, with films of all lengths, one has to consider the massively different time demands that are involved. If

we think of eight or ten double features, we must also think of roughly 30 hours of film viewing... This is the unspoken and dark secret of all these comparisons between different art forms and curatorial practices. It may sound trivial, but it explains why a full film series or retrospective will never have the type of 'blockbuster' attendance that an art museum exhibition can have.

OM: It actually takes much more time – you have to consider not only the screening time, but also the time that it takes to go to the screening room and then go back home, and then – hopefully – the time to think about it, so it's a massive memory work to basically look at a programme focus for weeks. In the end you even have to be able to remember the first film you saw, as it connects to the last one. So to a certain degree you have to keep intellectually active for three weeks for one programme only – it's quite demanding, which is a good thing.

AH: You're starting to address a totally different type of audience when you formulate needs like these. It's the opposite of the way many art institutions function today. They like to address a mass, and often tourist, audience by announcing that in a matter of only two hours you'll get the full load of French Impressionism or the works of Vermeer...

So there is obviously a different logic to the exhibition of film history. But as we said before, there are also other, more concentrated ways of experiencing a film historical argument – educational formats that work with excerpts, or programmes of short works, or the model of simply having two films speak to each other. We showed *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962) and *Deja vú* (Tony Scott, 2006) yesterday, in one screening. One could say that the aesthetic and intellectual surplus gained from this meeting of two works is pretty limited. On the other hand, focused programmes like this one may

also be essential for an understanding of larger and more ambitious ones. If you only have the large 'programmes of comparison', without a smaller, focused 'nucleus' programme, you will have a much harder time in making yourself understood to more than a few people.

There is also the case of Peter Kubelka's cycle 'Was ist Film' which consists of 63 programmes and runs for a year and a half, one programme each week. The most talked-about of these 63 programmes is Kubelka's combination of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935) and Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963). It is the most extreme case in his cycle of two works 'hitting' each other so hard that sparks may fly and new, unexpected thoughts may arise. It's a very visible example of how Kubelka likes to look at the film medium, so it could function as a somewhat easy nucleus. At the same time, it is not at all typical of the cycle in general. It may work quite well on its own, but it doesn't represent the whole project. Our five screenings of films by Tony Scott and Chris Marker, representing one chapter in the «Utopie Film» series, are a much simpler case. We wanted to pay tribute to two very interesting filmmakers who had both passed away this summer. The idea was not to say that their works are similar, but that it might be productive to pick up on a sad coincidence and look at these two filmmakers 'side by side', with three films each, even though general movie talk places them at different ends of the cinema spectrum. And I felt lucky – or supported – by the fact that *La Jetée* and *Deja vú* actually cross paths in their thematic interests, namely time travel or the vertigo of time. Which is already enough. So our work is often like an interplay between smaller and larger programming cells. And then there is also the educational work which addresses a different, more specified public than our evening programmes do – for instance, while we speak, there is a program for school kids dealing with *anime*. I like to see

these elements as another parallel track which, over time, might connect viewers with what we do in our ‘regular’ programmes. I guess that’s the idealistic hope of anyone who is active in an educational context – that some 14- or 16-year-old who, during such a morning school screening, is first introduced to the concept of consecutively comparing different films in projection, might return and study other elements of the programme. Or that they might even begin to study film seriously when they’re 18 or 20, either as makers or critics. It will always be only very few of these pupils, of course, but after eleven years of working here, I think I can say that each year there are some who are really ‘infected’ by cinema through these school or university programmes and turn out to become professional members of the film cultural scene in Vienna.

**This leads us to another text that functions as the conceptual basis for the first issue of the journal, where Langlois explains how he reconsidered his views on Ozu and discovered new values in his work, upon screening his films Turing his classes next to those of Mizoguchi and Kurosawa: thanks to that contrast he could better appreciate the style and reach of Ozu’s films.**

OM: Yes, we should also remember that this happened upon a time when there was a lesser knowledge about cinema; we should not forget that there was a false dichotomy between Mizoguchi and Kurosawa and the appreciation of Japanese cinema was burdened by clichés such as this one. So again you put Ozu in the middle and something fundamental changes; however I’m sure this observation would only really work in certain historical contexts.

AH: I also think it’s important to keep in mind that that was a particular historical moment. Cinematheques and museums should try out different models such as the one you

mention, but at the same time it’s important to understand that around 1961 – which is probably when this ‘Langlois scene’ plays out – cinematheques were almost the only place of actually experiencing film history, in addition to reading books and magazines. One cannot disregard the fact that today we are confronted with a completely different situation. There is the notion, even among a wider audience, that we are now surrounded by all the materials and knowledge of film history. This is not necessarily accurate, but there is the feeling that after television, video, DVD, and now the internet, we really have everything at our fingertips... If I want to see ‘what a Mizoguchi film looks like’ I need just a few seconds; I’ll go to Youtube and will find several excerpts to choose from. You see a certain camera movement, you read that this is a ‘Mizoguchi shot’, and you feel informed; that’s the belief that you get from the internet. So what about, let’s say, the 1971 generation? What did they have at their disposal in the German-speaking world? There were a few more institutions than in 1961, but not that many: the Austrian Film Museum for instance, the Arsenal in Berlin, the Munich Film Museum, that’s about it. But you also had German Television, which offered an amazing range of curated film historical programmes, especially the third channels, in the regions – so that’s where most opportunities for comparison and information came from. Another ten years later, another ‘channel’ became available. I might be a good example for this generation because I was 16 in 1981, and I learned about film history not only in places like this, the Austrian Film Museum, and not only through TV broadcasts, but also – to a major degree – through video tapes, recording stuff myself, exchanging and copying tapes with my friends, finding and renting rare video releases, etc. Which means that these ‘Langlois-type experiences’ cannot be directly transcribed into current experiences with film history. The audiences, curators, writers, teachers who are active today come

from completely different positions in terms of their practical cinephilia. The idea of a consecutive ‘meeting’ of Mizoguchi, Ozu and Kurosawa produces meaning, yes; but it would work very differently today since everyone already brings their own idea of M., O., K. to the table, a ‘knowledge’ received during each individual’s cinephile socialisation, through multiple moving-image sources other than the actual cinema screening.

In a way, people are now aware of what Film History is, of what a certain director’s work is, which relations one era or stylistic movement has to another. And to disregard that makes no sense. But as Olaf said, one also shouldn’t stop doing it the way they did it. Let’s keep in mind what Langlois did, but let’s not assume that in 2012 the results will be the same.

OM: Television didn’t only show the films. Actually they really related Film History. They didn’t just – to put one example – a Jack Arnold retrospective. They actually made films with and about Jack Arnold to accompany each and film, plus a documentary only about him. So to give a really big arch so to speak they used to do this and also with a lot of directors.

AH: I’m not sure exactly what the French situation was like, but I guess the *Cinéastes de notre temps* model played an important role. I like this series a lot, but it’s less analytical. They invited contemporary filmmakers to create film portraits of older directors, and they were always based on interviews with those artists. What Olaf just described about Germany was a different direction – maybe it was very “Germanic”, but from the 60s to the early 90s they did understand public television as a mass education institution. It was their widely accepted role. Today this approach has been almost forgotten, because in order to compete with private television, which was introduced in the late 1980s, the whole model of public

TV changed. Before, television was seen as a school for the nation – and at some point the subject of cinema and its history entered this ‘school’, because there were so few film cultural institutions around. Institutions such as cinematheques and the tradition of repertory screenings of classical films in regular theaters were not nearly as widespread in Germany than in France. So Germany belatedly caught up with this via television – at least to a certain degree. Even today, the difference is quite big. The Berlin Film Museum Berlin for instance is a place that focuses on exhibitions of objects and artifacts, they publish books and so on, but they don’t have a real film program, except for one retrospective a year, during the Berlinale. There is another institution in Berlin called “Arsenal, Institut für Film und Videokunst” which takes up some of the job that you would expect from a cinematheque. And there is the Munich Film Museum. But not many other institutions that you could compare to a typical French cinematheque.

OM: *Cinéastes de notre temps* and *Cinéma de notre temps* gained celebrity thanks to the connection to the Nouvelle Vague and *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Our model would be more like the *Cinéma Cinémas* (1982-1990) the stuff that Claude Ventura did, something more related to famous names. The other thing is that, of course, Germans have an extremely neurotic relationship to cinema. Due to very clear historical reasons, plus in contrast to the *froggies*, we’re not centralized. If you think about Germany you’ve got all these five major cities. France, you’ve got Paris. That’s it. Politically speaking and in a cultural way it’s much trickier. Germany functions all through this decentralized thing, we’re really a Federation. And every state, for better or worse has to take care of itself in a lot of ways. So television is a strange mix of federal and national. While the big educational stuff was done on a federal level, these programs wandered around. For example for me a very important

thing was a Giuseppe de Santis program that was originated in Bavaria but then it started to go through the different regional channels and ended up in North Rhine-Westphalia, my state. So that's how it worked. Television could function as an intermediate in ways that the rest of institutions, due to different problems were not really able to function. Back in my younger days my "film cultural teacher", so to speak, actually went more often to Luxemburg, or to Brussels to watch films than anywhere else. Because actually they are closer to Koln. Even Frankfurt, not to mention Hamburg, or specially Berlin which back there was fucking pressure...

**There's another wide subject to comment on with plenty branches (as we sit and talk in the office of the head of the Austrian Film Museum). Something related to its history in the late 60's, and the radical movements that led this institution to be occupied in January 1969 by the second generation of avant-garde filmmakers, those of the so called "Expanded Cinema". Apparently the co-director of the Film Museum, Peter Kubelka, refused to program their films at the expense of American avant-garde programs, as Peter Tscherkassky's wrote in *Film Unframed. A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema* (TSCHERKASSY, 2012: 24-25). Almost thirty later Kubelka did eventually include their films in his *Was ist Film* program, a particular narration of the whole history of cinema. And also, on the other hand these reconciled avant-garde filmmakers of the so called "Expanded Cinema" shine proudly being compared with, say, Dreyer, Siodmak or Buñuel. But there's also the obvious absence of any Hollywood film in the *Was ist Film* cycle. So we would also like you to comment on this. We wonder if Kubelka's is a radical gesture that you can understand. We saw your program for the dOCUMENTA Kassel**

**and there the history of cinema can also convey Hollywood, experimental and popular works...**

The «Was ist Film» cycle still looks like it did 16 years ago when it started. It was a conscious choice on my part to continue presenting it like this – as a specific historical statement. And Kubelka would not have wanted to change it anyway. The cycle was realized in 1995/96, at the centenary of cinema, because on this occasion the Film Museum received some special government funding, so new prints could be acquired and preservations could be made of prints that were already in the collection. Kubelka's selection began its first run at the end of 1996. Since then, there have only been two small additions. The first one was a program he added in 2005, because he became interested in Fassbinder as an 'untrained', un-deformed narrative filmmaker. I told Kubelka which Fassbinder films we had in the collection, and he chose *Katzelmacher* (1969). And he combined it with *Outer Space* (1999), because he also wanted to represent Peter Tscherkassky's work in the cycle, as one of the important positions in the Austrian avant-garde tradition. I don't know the specific reasons why he combined these two films. The second addition, in 2009, was made with the aim of highlighting 8mm film, small-gauge filmmaking, as a specific art form. For this, Kubelka chose the work of one of his former students in Frankfurt, Günter Zehetner, whose 8mm work is quite unique and which he admires a lot. Zehetner also works with video and 16 mm, but his primary focus is Super-8 film. The choice was to honor both a younger filmmaker, a specific film author, *and* the specific potentials of 8mm-filmmaking. Apart from these two additions, he consciously wanted to keep the cycle as it was from the start – and I took up this notion: that it's a historical position and a personal statement, based on a lifetime of thinking through film. It is two things at once: I would always recommend it to every student of

the film medium as a very worthwhile way of pondering the essential capacities of film over the course of 63 programmes. But the cycle is also already a subject for history-writing, meaning the history of film canons, of film curatorship, of the various modernist attempts to define cinema through a film selection. For this reason we also edited a book about the cycle, including an extended conversation with Peter Kubelka. It is clearly a poetic-curatorial position tied to this man, and I didn't want it to assume the role of a 'dogma' as proposed by this institution. There is no single 'cinema truth', so I tried to set the cycle in some kind of relation to another series. This other series, «Utopie Film», is much simpler, more flexible and not as 'crystalline' a thing as *Was ist Film*. I didn't want to produce a 'counter-list' of 200 works that is set in stone and that would structurally be the same as Kubelka's program; that's why the «Utopie Film» is 'lighter on its feet', and organized in chapters, with each month bringing a new constellation of films. Both series are showing each Tuesday, so you have two ongoing 'exhibitions' which look at film history in general, and they work quite differently. I can see why Kubelka wanted the strict regularity of the cyclical model, and why today it is even more of a gesture of resistance to say that one should follow the cycle on a weekly basis. Considering how our society and the 'economy of attention' function today, such a committed behavior on the part of the audience is definitely rare. But those who do follow the cycle in a continuous fashion certainly receive a rich antidote to the consumption-oriented idea of 'sampling film history' as it is common today – and also a rich antidote to the conventional wisdom as far as the 'canon of cinema' is concerned. This is one of the reasons why we need cinematheques.

This brings me to the dOCUMENTA program I did in 2007. It's a very different thing, of course, than structuring a long-term museum program, but there are similarities. Both models

are about creating a sort of 'spiderweb', and about the sparks that can fly when two lines or energies in this web meet head-on. On the most basic level, this idea is not only present in the parallelism of *Was ist Film* and «Utopie Film», but also sometimes in the way I set up the 'headlines' of one monthly program, or the 'starring' artists that define one calendar, like the month when we had retrospectives of Val Lewton, Andrej Tarkovskij and Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and they became so connected for me that I added the line "Ghost Stories" as an arc that would encompass all three... The dOCUMENTA program was a dream, or hope, or attempt, to do a lot of these things over one summer, in a big arc of 100 days and 50 programs – many of which, in themselves, would be smaller arcs, leading to echoes on various levels. Like in the case of the *Was ist Film* cycle, I sometimes played with the crazy assumption that in order to completely 'get' the program you'd need to see all 50 shows. You would more or less have to live in Kassel and go to the Gloria cinema each second evening, for more than three months. As far as I know, several people from Kassel actually went a lot, but I fear that the number of those who saw *everything* was between 0 and 3. Most people visit the Documenta for two or three days, of course, so you also have to think of those who can only see one or two or three programs. Which is why I tried to look at each individual program as a potential 'messenger' of the whole. That was not really possible, of course...

As opposed to Peter Kubelka, I do feel that the 'commodity form' of cinema, its industrial side, is as valid as its 'high art form' when it comes to defining or describing the medium. But it's important to see that Kubelka is not solely interested in the 'high art form' aspect either; he often talks about – and shows – things like advertising film, home movies, newsreels, etc. ... He did a great thing, for instance, at the 1984 FIAF Congress in Vienna.

FIAF is the International Federation of Film Archives, *Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film* – and all FIAF members meet once a year, in a different city each time, for a congress, including a two-day symposium on a specific topic. As the host archive in 1984, Kubelka and the Austrian Film Museum decided on the topic of “non-industrial film”. This was the first time that things like amateur film, scientific film, or film used in sports, as a training tool, became the subject of a FIAF congress; avant-garde films, diary films, personal filmmaking were also part of this idea of “non-industrial cinema”. So you had all these film archive and film museum people from around the world and their hegemonic notion of what constitutes ‘our film heritage’ listening to doctors and athletics coaches and Jonas Mekas about the incredibly wide-ranging uses of film, its manifold social functions, etc. – except the one function that these archivists and curators usually identify cinema with: commercial, feature-length films for ‘entertainment’.

But whenever Kubelka was invited to curate or co-curate large programmes, the main force of his argument was always in the direction of personal and avant-garde film; that’s what I mean with the notion of film as ‘high art’ which he mostly goes for when representing the ‘essence’ of film. It is an obvious characteristic in all three of his major programs – the 1970-75 «Essential Cinema» project for Anthology Film Archives, where he was one in a small group of curators; his mid-1970s commission to create the basic film collection for the Centre Pompidou when it opened; and the 1995/96 «Was ist Film» cycle in Vienna. In the interview for our book on «Was ist Film», he says that there were some elements he would have liked to include, but because of certain rights issues this was impossible. He mentions, for instance, that *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925) should have been included, and maybe he would also have

wanted to include some of the American silent comedies. In general, however, it was always a very clear choice to stay away from so-called commercial cinema.

To say that the cinema should be viewed as a ‘fine art’ is not necessarily wrong or bad. But I think it limits our understanding of this medium if we reduce it to this one function. Just as it seriously limits cinema to reduce it – as 99 % of the population do – to its entertainment industry function. In some small way, that was what I hoped to illustrate in the DOCUMENTA program. The special place of cinema in cultural history, its richness and its strange newness, has a lot to do with its multiple force fields. And the one hegemonic understanding – cinema as an evening’s entertainment – is only that: one of many. It’s also not enough to define film by its capacity to serve as our historical witness and to focus on cinema’s ‘bond with the real’. This idea of cinema is very dominant in the French cinephile tradition, from Bazin to Daney and beyond. In the *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, this is a highly visible mode of reflection, and importantly so, because in the wider social arena there is far too little awareness of the important ‘inter-spaces’ between history and film. But because of this strong ‘ethical-realist’ tradition in French criticism and filmmaking, it also seems that French film culture has a massive problem with the opposing tradition – a cinema that starts by looking at its own material reality, that is skeptical of all ‘realisms’, and that belongs more to the genealogy of modern art. I’m speaking of a tradition that is usually termed ‘experimental’ or ‘avant-garde’ film. There are exceptions, of course, if you think of Nicole Brenez or Raymond Bellour. But if you read Christian Metz, for instance, avant-garde filmmaking is anathema to him. And Godard was never much interested in this rich field either. The canons of French cinephilia can seem oppressive if you look at what they exclude.

For me, there is a horizon – maybe a ‘utopian’ one – where all these things actually have to do with each other and are not split up into separate discourses and cinephile ‘lifestyles’. I am imagining a viewer who comes to watch the «Was ist Film» cycle each Tuesday and other avant-garde film presentations, and who is also interested in following a William Wellman show, just to pick an example; plus a presentation of amateur films in the context of urbanism; and so on. Basically, this full horizon is my vis-a-vis when I think of a larger program, or a programmatic. And some aspects of this approach were hopefully represented in the DOCUMENTA selection. The first two evenings consisted of *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953, John Ford), *Jazz Dance* (1954, Roger Tilton), *Lights* (1966, Marie Menken) and *Viaggio in Italia* (1953, Roberto Rossellini). So there was, on the one hand, the idea of beginning roughly where Documenta began, the early-to-mid-Fifties – which is also the beginning of ‘the second half of cinema’ and, in tendency, the ‘time-image’ as theorized by Deleuze. And secondly, to represent cinema – right from the start of the show – through a confrontation of four ‘lines’ that are equally valid for me. Another program, just to give an example, brought together David Cronenberg’s *eXistenZ* (1999) and Stan Brakhage’s *The Act of Seeing with One’s Own Eyes* (1971). I think that my work, to a certain degree, is really dedicated to that, but not because of some overarching abstract mission, but because that has been my own ‘bodily’ experience of what the medium can do. It’s the result of watching films pretty intensely for more than 30 years, of discovering new types of film and being blind to them at first, then starting to see something in them, and so on. It’s the experience of falling in love with filmic expression, no matter if it’s ‘Hollywood storytelling’ or a ‘destructionist’ exchange with the medium like Ernst Schmidt Jr. ripping away at the film strip in 1965, or being incredibly touched by anonymous documents from a century ago, like a 3-minute Phantom Ride shot

from a tram that goes around the Ringstrasse in Vienna, in 1906. Nobody knows the individuals that were involved in this, so it’s the sheer act of filming, or the expressive act, or the ‘witnessing act’ that I identify with. It has to do with participating in events of recording and replay that are not as prescribed and pre-structured as the dominant, business side of moving-image media usually is. A younger person today would maybe see this impulse realized in the online world – traversing the jungle of moving images online and discovering echoes and surprises all along the way. For me, it’s the cinema itself and its history than does that; I didn’t grow up with the internet, I created my own ‘internet’ through film-watching.

Now, to return to the moment of 1968 that you originally asked about... It was still a confrontational moment, and confrontational modes were developed all the time. Maybe it’s a weakness of today’s film culture that we have such an accepting view of everything, and that there are very few ‘battles’ being fought in this field. We have thousands of film festivals, large and small, and everything seems to have a place to shine *somewhere*. It’s more like a constant affirmation than a questioning of the basic economic and cultural model... Anyway, in the text about 1960s Expanded Cinema that you referred to, in Peter Tscherkassky’s recent book, he reconstructs the main challenges articulated by the protagonists of this movement in Austria. On the one hand, he writes about a highly local aspect – the interesting, if short-lived confrontation between a group of avant-garde filmmakers and the Austrian Film Museum in 1969. When they staged their demonstration in front of the Film Museum, they argued that Peter Kubelka treated the Film Museum as a ‘private museum’ for the works of his New American Cinema friends and for his own works. And that he would not show the other Austrian avant-garde films, like those by Kurt Kren, Ernst Schmidt Jr., Peter Weibel,

Valie Export, Hans Scheufl, etc. This was a confrontation that had to do with inclusion and exclusion; they wanted to achieve an ‘expansion’ of the Film Museum program so that their own works would also be represented. And starting in the early 1970s this soon came to pass. The Film Museum would acquire works by these filmmakers and also show them. On the other hand, there was a larger challenge of course – attacking the hegemonic model of cinema, the ‘apparatus’ as it was later called, the relatively fixed constellation of projection-viewer-screen that exists in regular cinema and which was seen as ‘ideologically dubious’. Calling for an *Expanded* cinema was a means to participate in the general movement of attacking the Fordist post-war consensus, both in the field of politics and the economy and in the field of culture. The imperialist state, the factory as work space and the cinema as leisure space were equally addressed by this “expansionist” energy.

The group around Export, Weibel, Scheufl etc. played an important part in this international movement, as far as cinema and the arts were concerned. Politically speaking, the traditional cinema setting was seen as part of an oppressive ideological apparatus which aimed at distraction, at keeping citizens in a state of obedience and passivity – the Fordist leisure time equivalent of the way the factory, the workspace, the social state were organized. So for these ‘expansionists’, the cinema space as such, the relation of the viewer to the spectacle, and the whole notion of filmic illusion, filmic representation became a terrain for contestation: «Let us expand or explode these relations, let’s involve the viewer, let’s replace the projected illusion with real activity, let’s play with projection machinery and introduce ‘un-filmic’ elements, let us run a thread of cloth through the projector instead of a film strip», etc.

It is quite ironic, though, that this was also the historical moment when the Fordist

system itself had begun to understand that it needed to change and “expand” and become more flexible in order to survive. And it was the moment, therefore, when television took over – from the cinema – the role of the dominant cultural and leisure time apparatus, later to be supplanted or superseded by digital culture. So in a way, the fight for an Expanded Cinema quickly lost its main opponent, and many of its practitioners like Weibel and Export, for instance, turned towards a critical engagement with television and the new leisure time economies. The 70s and 80s were a time when cinema, ‘un-expanded cinema’, quickly – and happily, I think – shed its role as the main ‘apparatus of oppression’. It doesn’t really matter that today we still have ‘Hollywood’ and the global cultural industry, what’s important is that, at least since 2000, the cinema space, the cinema experience, no longer conform so easily to the dominant modes of social behavior and social control as they may have done at mid-century; Post-Fordist subjectivities and ‘governmentalities’ are no longer mirrored so much in the cinema setting, but in the flexibilized regimes of electronic or digital moving images that define our social and cultural present. And for me, the art world, the world of corporate museums and Biennials, with their relatively recent but very intense interest in moving images, has to a large degree become part of this regime. Which is why I’m always quite amused when art curators, in order to point out their ‘critical stance’ towards dominant society, tell us that moving-image museum installations today fulfill the Expanded Cinema utopia of the ‘liberated viewer’ – as if the political opponent was still the ‘fixed and passive viewer’ of traditional cinema or the Fordist economic model. For me, it’s almost the other way round: the ‘liberated’ museum flaneur, passing from one moving-image screen or installation to the next, is a perfect expression of what we undergo day in, day out anyway:

we, the ‘flexible’, ‘creative’, ‘active’ and super-‘individualized citizens of today – no longer workers, but ‘co-workers’, participants in our company’s economic strategies – are perfectly represented by and, of course, attracted by, the now-dominant, flexibilized and dispersed system of moving images. Our media habits, fluidly following the images from iPhone to iPad to public screens to the computer and maybe television now and then (but not a lot anymore) are the perfect expression of our complicit behaviour. *This* is the ‘expanded cinema’ of today – and it has nothing to do anymore with its namesake in 1968, nor with the critical impetus that energized the artists of the era.

We are no longer forced to be at the office at eight o’clock in the morning or sit there in the assembly line. We are no longer the Chaplin of *Modern Times* (1936). We work wherever we ‘please’. And we are no longer forced to sit ‘passively’ in a darkened auditorium to be part of the spectacle. No, the spectacle has expanded and it now comes to us, to the shopping malls, to our homes, to the workspace, wherever we carry our screens or displays. So, if anything, the cinema, ‘traditional, un-expanded cinema’, has potentially become a critical tool vis-a-vis this regime. I’m very interested in observing the ways in which people watch moving images, and I very often encounter this sort of ‘stress’ – at shopping malls, in museums, or if you’re on the internet – of people feeling that they cannot or should not focus on one image only, there’s always another image, and another; always something else, potentially more interesting. “Does it grab me in the first thirty seconds? No, it doesn’t really. The pulsating red thing over there looks pretty intense: let’s go there...”. I’m aware, of course, that this is a widely accepted sensibility, and I don’t want to moralize about it at all, but it has nothing to do with film or cinema.

### **Memory has no part in it...**

AH: Exactly; it’s hard to leave a trace that way. When we talk about film as a witness, which is about leaving traces, then the memory of really having seen something, and then seeing another thing, as a real confrontation, is an important factor in this process. If the aim is to produce an ‘active memory’, I don’t think the experience of passing by moving images in an exhibition or at the shopping mall, is especially useful.

### **Well as Daney summarizes, it’s the Audiovisual in relation to (and probably against) Cinema.**

AH: Yes. It’s interesting that Catherine David, in the 1997 Documenta, already printed all these Daney texts, and she also included Frieda Grafe and the *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*. But there, Daney’s ‘audiovisual’ would still mainly refer to television, of course. He died in 1992, so he’s not talking about the Internet or art world developments. Today, 15 years later, a Documenta curator who deals with Daney’s writings would also have to address the way the ‘audiovisual’ has entered the art world.

**I’d like you to comment on another two models of programming that seems an alternative (maybe a complement) to the comparative cinema curating practice we’ve been developing on (for instance Kubelka’s or yours). I mean the thematic kind of programming (grouping films by themes, you speak about it in the interview included in the *Film Curatorship* book the FilmMuseum published), and even the kind of «Permanent History of Cinema» model practiced by other cinemateques as Lisbon, Paris or even Madrid.**

AH: The institutions that you mention do both, actually. No cinemateque today presents its screenings *only* under the general heading of

«Permanent History of Cinema». Maybe in Lisbon and Paris this part occupies a larger segment of the complete program than in most other cinemateques I know. But every cinemateque highlights a number of thematic or monographical shows each month or each quarter – as headliners of the program. In our case, at the Austrian Film Museum, this notion of the “permanent collection” being on view, is represented by the Tuesday programs, «Was ist Film» and «Utopie Film». They make up about 10 to 15% percent of the total. If you switch from the temporal mode of a film museum to the spatial mode of a traditional museum. I see certain similarities: Most art museums also have a permanent collection on view, which is surrounded by various exhibitions that change regularly. A film museum, like an art museum, should have a way of representing its own collection, and make transparent its focuses and strengths. There’s a real beauty in making the collections speak, even if it may be a comparatively small collection – as in our case. That’s an essential part of film curatorship. And then you complement the collection with loans and with ways of placing certain themes or oeuvres under a different light each time you show them. Jack Smith, for instance, has been a fixture at the Austrian Film Museum for decades, but for this show now, in November 2012, we created a strongly expanded framework, through loans, through the newly available unfinished works that have now been preserved, and through Jim Hoberman’s curatorial approach, describing a ‘Smith cosmos’ which goes far beyond Smith’s own films.

I actually believe that – far from any nationalistic point-of-view – that there are specific Histories of Cinema connected to specific places, cities, film cultures. And it’s part of our job, in thinking about cinema, to become aware of these specific differences. That’s why we compare French and German relations towards cinephilia, including television. These differences have

a lot to do with individual institutions and their collections, as well as local cultures of criticism and the activities of individual people at certain points in time. So, for instance, I do see something like a ‘Vienna point of view’ towards cinema that has developed over the decades, including the work of filmmakers, of course, but also criticism and scholarship, festivals like the Viennale, institutions such as Sixpack film, the Film Museum, and so on. A certain heightened interest in the genealogies of avant-garde cinema is definitely a characteristic of Vienna film culture. But all this is usually put in relation to other, international points of view; and since Austria is a small country and Viennese film culture is a smaller “player” on the international scene, there is barely the danger of chauvinism. Some of my criticism of French cinephilia would relate to that: the issue of local genealogies, specific critical interests, etc., is just as applicable for Paris or France as it is if for Vienna or Berlin or Buenos Aires, but the insularity is actually much greater in Paris because our colleagues there are not so used to reflect on the constructedness and limits of their idea of cinema. Since it was quite ‘successful’ in terms of its global reach, at least for a certain period of time, French cinephilia has lost – or maybe it never had it – the ability to put its own ‘self-evident truths’ into perspective. Smaller countries or film cultures with a lesser ‘global force’ have this by necessity, there is less ‘self-assuredness’, if you like. And, of course, their positions, their critical traditions, their film cultures have been marginalized in the process. It also has a lot to do with the perceived importance and volume of a country’s film production, of course, which is an important reason why France and the U.S. were so dominant for a long time.

If you read Richard Roud’s *Cinema, a Critical Dictionary* (Viking Adult, 1980), in the introduction he says something like «let’s not kid ourselves, the important cinephile and

critical discourse produced today stems either from Paris, London or New York». In this case, the basic assumptions are very directly verbalized. Often it's not as direct, but you feel it everywhere between the lines. I'm not saying that there is no basis for this large role played by Paris or New York in the 'global picture', but it can definitely lead to the insular perspective I mentioned. And I think that today we should really be able to transcend it. I think today, with so much internationalization in the world of criticism and online publishing, for instance, no one would dare to write a sentence like Richard Roud's in the late 70's, because we know it's not true. Nevertheless, an important film critic such as Frieda Grafe, one of the great critics in the history of the medium, is still a more or less unknown figure on an international level, whereas Serge Daney is not. And I'm sure there are similar cases in the Spanish speaking world that I have never heard of. So it's not like we're already in an ideal situation, but maybe in a better position than 20 or 30 years ago. And in the process, the 'world standard centers' of cinephilia and their discourses have simply become less interesting, less useful, less applicable. They can even become strangely provincial.

**Don't you think that those world standard centers, as you call them, have in a way *conquered* the local ones with strong ideological ideas that outlive for generations. The most obvious one is Paris, "Cahiers du Cinéma" and their notion of *politique des auteurs* they managed to define. There's an Edgardo Cozarinsky documentary about Cahiers in which Fieschi said: «Cahiers won the battle». Quintín, the former director of BAFICI likes to quote it. Do you agree?**

AH: If we talk about which critical paradigm became hegemonic for the second half of the 20th century, I agree. The dominant prism by which film culture has looked at cinema is very

much an 'auteurist' one, even if film studies have strengthened other approaches, too. But these have not yet become as influential on a wider scale as auteurism has. On TV, they will now announce "John Ford's *Seven Women*" – and they didn't say it like that during the 60's or 70's. But it's not in any way related to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* of today; it comes from a historical moment when it was also not just the *Cahiers* but a larger confluence of critical traditions, including many other – sometimes much older – strands, that led to this canonical view. The view of all this as a 'battle' is pretty childish, though – it's like saying 'modern art' won the battle against the academic painters of 1870. So what. And if we talk about the "*Cahiers* taste" and its legacy, in regard to specific filmmakers or filmmaking ideologies, I don't think I agree with the above statement. This taste has become pretty irrelevant, actually.

**To finish, please develop your ideas about mutant colleague French critic Nicole Brenez and her «Jeune, Dure et Pure!» extremely personal retrospective on history of cinema. She is based in Paris and teaches there but is not centralized, is she? What would be the contrasts between yours and her programs of experimental and avant-garde cinema?**

AH: If you look at the work of Nicole, but also that of Raymond Bellour, for instance, you see interests that differ from the norm, at least in France. Nicole is a great example of someone who is highly critical with certain 'Parisian genealogies'. And she promotes different kinds of cinema. She's very interested in militant cinema, but she also engages with certain auteurs of narrative filmmaking that are usually left aside, like Abel Ferrara. She's not working monolithically. But it's hard for me to compare her work with what I do here, not only because we're friends. We work in very different constellations. First of all, she is a university

teacher, plus: she's a super-active writer; and the programs she organizes take place in very different institutions and cities. Whereas I am much more bound to this one institution, the Film Museum, and really bound-up in all its details, including many administrative ones. I think she structures her activities according to a 'counterpoint' ideal, which is something that I don't feel capable of doing in my present job. Maybe Nicole's interests shifted somewhat between the time I got to know her, the mid-90s, and today. But Godard for instance remained an important baseline for her all through these years. What she focused on more and more, however – and I admire her for that – are all the film practices that run counter to the cinephile standard, such as the militant, experimental, underground practices which have almost no place in the general film culture. She does it much more forcefully than I do. Again, maybe that's a weakness on my part, but whenever I'm in a position of 'public responsibility' or accountability – as director of the Film Museum, for instance, or when I ran the Viennale [1992-97] – I first try to find out which basic obligations this institution is meant to fulfill. These institutions exist because civil society, cultural politics, tax-payers have – more or less willingly – come to the conclusion that it serves a common good to finance them. Now, of course it always needs activists to bring such institutions into being in the first place – and they will prove (or not) that the institution they founded serves a common purpose for society; that it is not just a "private museum", but a place where certain legitimate cultural and educational aims are met for various groups in society. If these institutions survive their establishing phase, they become more than a personal or group activity, because they have already involved society on several levels. Which is how a general 'mission' comes to be formed. So when you start your work in such place, I think it's important to analyze what this mission has been, what the general understanding of

the institution's role in society is, what your predecessors did and how they did it, which aspects they focused on and which other aspects they did not care about so much. And then to implement the changes that you feel are necessary – but you always do this on the basis of an existing model, not out of thin air.

In the field of film preservation and archival work, for instance, many things didn't happen at the Film Museum during the 1990s – for budgetary reasons. So one of the main issues we tried to deal with here in the last eleven years was to strengthen that area. To expand the staff in the archive, to work more on the collections, to bring the great Vertov collection to fruition, because it is a real treasure in the Film Museum collections, and to initiate related research projects. In addition, book publications were re-started again, and we also began to publish DVDs. In terms of 'content' and approach, this was all strongly based on what the Film Museum had started in the past, what had been achieved by my predecessors. Another ongoing part of the responsibilities of such an institution is to give the people in this country – via exhibition, retrospectives, etc. – a substantial historical overview of what the medium could and can do. And you have to develop a relation to what is supposed to be 'important' in film history and what is not – for the students-viewers of today. I usually think of generations here, meaning that each person who starts to seriously study the medium should have the chance, in a framework of 10 to 15 years, to experience all relevant aspects of cinema, including the major artists, forms of expression, genres etc. This is also the rough timeframe that I think a chief curator or director of such an institution should be responsible. You can really put your notions of the medium on the map over such a period, hopefully in the service of those who want to learn as intensely as possible. So this already means that my outlook needs to be somewhat different than Nicole's, for instance. Maybe the

films of Santiago Álvarez are a good example of this: I'm pretty sure that Nicole works with his oeuvre – in the framework of her projects on revolutionary or militant cinema, but maybe she would not think of Robert Mitchum in this context! And why should she... Whereas in our case, I put Álvarez next to Mitchum on our program headline last December because, as I explained earlier, these types of tension seem fitting to me for a film museum that has to take an “all-over” point of view. Now, we very rarely present shows on actors, but as I recently became more interested in the idea of the actor as *auteur*, I thought Mitchum would be a great example; in many ways his career and his deep-down approach to cinema show clear signs of authorship via acting. The fact that both he and Álvarez are from the same generation, and more importantly, that they both spent their formative years travelling around the U.S. during the Depression and working in odd jobs, with one ending up as a member of the Cuban Communist Party and the other signing up to Hollywood (both at almost the same time) made it easy for me to see them as two sides of one ‘LP’ that we offered to our audiences in December 2011.

There is something else: Today, the chief curators of cinemathèques are mostly not identical anymore with the directors/administrators. I think I'm one of the few exceptions. Haden Guest at the Harvard Film Archive also comes to mind, he's one the great director-curators who ever ran a film archive or cinemathèque. I *do* like the fact that there are still these few people left who have both responsibilities, administrative and programmatic. It's becoming rarer by the day. As these types of institutions grew, over the 1970s, 80s and 90s, they also often became more bureaucratic. The ‘cultural management’ model is now the dominant ‘directorial’ one, and there is a separate program department, often on the same level as ‘marketing’ or “communication” – sometimes even lower in hierarchy than those.

Whereas I feel closer to an ‘author model’ – typically, of course, because I come from that background, from writing and curatorship, and not from a classical managerial background.

Returning to your question about Nicole, I guess there are also differences in how one has ‘grown up with the cinema’. I am simply too enamoured with too many sides of cinema to be capable of focusing only one one or a few of those; I think I need these multiple relationships with cinema for my own well-being... As much as I love the traditions of radical filmmaking, be it formal or political, from Robert Kramer and Straub/Huillet to Owen Land or Santiago Álvarez, it would be too much of an intellectual or emotional loss, personally, if I had stop engaging with the ‘dirty commercialism’ side of the movies, for instance.

**But it wouldn't exist without the *other* cinema, or it wouldn't be like it is.**

AH: Exactly! Neither can really exist without the other. Certain crazy and radical things can exist because some uneducated immigrant entrepreneurs decided to go west, to Hollywood, in 1910. Because of the stupidity, greed and the probably not very humane ways in which “cinema” came to exist as a global force; and even because of the way religion and propaganda and the dictatorial State played their major roles in all this, because of all these ‘impurities’... So I guess I'll have to complement Nicole's title with another: «Jeune, impure et dure!». And ‘soft’ is also OK, of course, as is ‘old’ or even ‘very old’! I know, of course, what Nicole meant with her title, in relation to the French experimental tradition – it's a super title. And I should say that I always love it when I can speak with her about films, because she is easily as ‘wild’ as I am in connecting things that are usually kept separate – I couldn't believe it when I met her, 15 or 20 years ago, that there is another person who, without any irony, can voice a sequence of

words such as «Brakhage-Mizoguchi-amateurs-terrorists-Epstein-DePalma» in one and the same sentence. So she's easily as 'impure' as I am!

**These relations you make are a kind of *montage* again, to go back to the Godard text. So you said you try to make an contribution as an author in a way to this institution, so what you make in a way is creating new thoughts.**

AH I hope so, but it's on a very simple level only. I'm not enough of a theorist of film to be capable of developing such thoughts much further. There is a real difference between a great curator and a great theorist of cinema. I also wouldn't say – as some conceive of it in the fine art world – that curators and artists are more or less the same. I think they're quite different, even though I also don't think that one is 'better' than the other. I see these kinds of activity as different practices or professions, with different aims, but with enough 'authorial' overlap that it makes sense – as you did at the beginning of our talk – to say: “OK, let's see how Godard the filmmaker-philosopher talks

about the idea of montage and comparison and programming, and then let's see how curators relate to that.” You will find some similarities and still you won't be able to say it's the same. There is a film I like very much, Gustav Deutsch's *Welt Spiegel Kino* (2005), and I show it often in our 'Film Curatorship' courses for university students, because there is an interesting element of curatorship in it. As there is in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. At the same time, it is something else entirely. If I wanted to speak about Lisbon in 1929 or Vienna in the 1910's like Deutsch does in *Welt Spiegel Kino*, I would also pick some of the films that he chose as excerpts, but I would definitely not treat them the way he does. He thinks of music, of 'composition', of playing with temporality and parts of the image, etc., in other ways than I would do as a curator. I like this field of difference *and* overlap. And if I gave the impression at the beginning that I'm against what Godard says in the text you showed me, I'm not at all against it. I see a shared basic preoccupation, but it's in the details that he goes into – what and how films should be compared and how cinema should do it – where the interesting differences begin. ●

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