

POINT OF VIEW

Dara Friedman, 1989–91

Notes taken by the artist as a student of filmmaker Peter Kubelka at the Städelschule in Frankfurt.

Portions of this text comprise the script for the film *Talk Show* (1997).

SEEING

Life with a work of art is the same as life with nature.

(Everything we experience is “reality.” It is false to assume that art exists in a different reality than everyday life. It is all the same. It is we who approach the reality differently. We assume that the reality is different, when in fact it is we who have altered our person to perceive the same reality.)

We experience works of art in the same reality as we do “everyday” reality on the street. It is not a distorted or higher reality.

Film does not capture reality. It can only give forth a symbol. But the recorded images are accepted as reality. Every representation is experienced emotionally as if it were a reality.

Film is a reporting medium, and not a duplicating one. A film is not merely a document of that which we see. It can also document that which we do not see.

We must try to let people see through our heads, the history of our eyes.

Advice: Do not look through the camera. Tape the viewfinder shut, because when you look through the camera, all of film history dictates how you will compose your pictures, as well as the length of time a certain thing is shown/filmed.

You must be able to discover and decide what film can do for you, not merely accept that which has been discovered by Hollywood.

“Experimental Film” is experimental insofar as old principles are ignored, with research and discovery of new ones. To consciously forget accepted beliefs in film, and consciously create new ones.

Everything that we do not know, that which is unfamiliar, makes us sick at first. Usually sick to our stomachs. That doesn’t mean that the unfamiliar way of seeing is bad, we merely need time to adjust to it. To get our sea legs.

Film diaries: Derivative of literature, derivative of a written journal, not a pure film form.

Not an anonymous camera. The camera as a guest that is simply invited along.

The written word is akin to visual listening. Why must all art be reduced to written word? As if the word was an ultimate authority on image? The written word is no closer to truth than anything else.

The image is independent of the word. In fact, it is entirely separate. The screenplay is absurd and dilutes the power of cinema by first translating it into an inappropriate language.

Hollywood film is derivative of theater and opera and the novel. To use film as only film can be used is to be truthful to the medium. A poem, perhaps, is the closest thing in form to film. Although this is also merely an analogy.

The oiled tripod: we feel the entire weight of Hollywood behind a single camera movement of its kind.

—
The more contact that the camera has with the body, the more it reveals about the maker of the film.

Turning the camera on and leaving it running simply on a tripod represents having made only one decision.

—
A small, light Super 8 camera that can be held in one hand extends the physical limitations of our eyes. It is like having an eyeball in the palm of our hand.

—
A movie does not actually move. All the individual pictures are still. We assume that an object has moved when first we see it in one place, and in the next moment in a different place. The power of assumption.

—
Content must dictate form. For some subjects video could be perfect. Hierarchy of film formats, from 8 mm to 35 mm is nonsense.

The different emulsions also create content and need to be taken into account.

—
Time defines movement. Movement is always defined through a row of short static elements.

—
Fluorescent light is a lot of singular flashes. Because these single light flashes are so close together, we experience them as a continuum—as a continuous light experience. The same goes for music with the individual tones. Or of course also in geometry with points that become a line.

—
We understand speed anthropocentrically. Everything is relative to the speed and size of the human body. Everything that is faster than we can run is fast. Everything smaller than us is small.

—
There are 24 possibilities in one second for sound and picture to relate.

—
The cosmic significance of one frame of film ($\frac{1}{24}$ second):

Light travels at the speed of 300,000,000 kilometers per second.

The circumference of the Earth measures 40,000,000 kilometers.

When seen from the moon, the Earth appears, or can appear flat.

It takes $\frac{1}{24}$ sec. for light to cross the diameter of the Earth.

Ergo the cosmic significance of one film frame = $\frac{1}{24}$ second.

The math is approximate.

—
The minimum that is necessary for a film is one frame.

If there is a one frame flash, and then black, then we have time to think about what we just saw.

How much resting time does a brain need between one frame flash to understand what it has seen? That would depend on how complex the information in the one frame flash was.

We sleep and dream at night in order to be able to process and understand the information that we received during the day. When watching a film it is often helpful to have periods of black in order to be able to rest and understand that which was just seen.

—
Now he says a film is not composed of 24 pictures per second, but rather that each $\frac{1}{24}$ second is actually $\frac{1}{48}$ light + $\frac{1}{48}$ dark.

—
If you surround a single image in black, then you are giving the brain time to think about what it has seen.

Sleep and dreaming are part of this gestation period in life. We digest the happenings of the day during the period of the night.

So when we see a movie, a concentration of reality, then we sleep on it; we are able to talk about the digested information in the morning.

—
If you see 24 different pictures in one second, then you can't possibly remember and understand all 24. If you only see one or two pictures per second, then you are more likely to see, understand, and remember them.

—
A compounded word, a compounded action, a double exposure, is always

weaker than a single word, action, or exposure. Simplicity is power, strength.

The more you cut and knot a rope, or cut and sew fabric, the weaker it becomes. The simpler, the stronger.

In order to make a film one must have a point of view from which to view.

The fact that a film has a purpose is pertinent to its existence. We want to learn something. It is a communication medium. Information.

A film is good if I have learned something by watching it.

Human thinking is a process of comparisons.

The more you know, the more comparisons you are capable of making.

More information does not make something better. Good information makes something better. Not more information.

There are two ways of looking at a work of art/film. This first is: What do I personally get and understand from this film? What inspires me, what of my personal history is involved? The second way is: What did the artist/filmmaker set out to do in their work, and how successful were they in this endeavor? The former is subjective, the latter is objective. A combination of the two is most desirable.

Form or rhythm without content is nothing. And you can't have content without any sort of form. The form would at least be the material (the actual "stuff"—paper, film, magnetic tape, etc.) and the process by which the content can be perceived and shared with others.



HEARING

Two Sense Cinema: Sight and Sound.
All other arts must serve only one sense.
Music, only hearing. Cooking maybe
has more: tasting, seeing, and smelling.

The picture shows what is there. The
sound says how it is there. The sound
interprets and arrests the picture.

In music one can stress a single tone by
repeating it. Repetition of that which has
been specifically extracted becomes an
important thing. Ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba.

We call attention to something by
repeating it. If you say or show something
just once, it is possible that it will pass
unnoticed. The same principle holds for
music. A whole note says, "listen," but
four quarter notes say, "pay attention, pay
attention, pay attention, pay attention."

Eye and ear organs function indepen-
dently, as sight and sound do in film.

However, when sight and sound are in
accordance with one another, then that is
the present, and everything is OK. If
hands come together and there is no clap,
but rather a bark, then that is not OK,
not in order. Disorder.

Continuity of sound means continuity of
presence. If I hear something and then I
see it, and then I don't see it, but I still hear
it... then I know the thing is still there.

Sound in film does not need to adhere to
the laws of the nature police. In a film,
nature does not dictate the relationship
between sound and picture.

Good sound does not need pictures, just
as good pictures do not need sound.
Silent film is on par with nonvisual audio.

Audio/visual relationship is no simple
matter, nor one to be taken for granted..
Nonvisual audio can supplement/
extend silent film because it basically adds
more pictures.

Musical recording: One cannot learn what a
thing is from a replica of that thing. I cannot
know a person by their photo. I cannot

know music through a recording either.
The replica creates a false impression.

We need oxygen to be able to hear.

Wind on the microphone. We do not hear
wind on our ears. This is because what is
heard by us is selected by our brains.
We can concentrate on one thing, and cut
out another with our will.

Through speech, voice, one can determine
much more about a person than from
clothing, housing, car, etc. It's all in the
voice, judgement.

Recital of a written text without giving
it personal information. For example:
The Hebrew recitation of the Bible in
monotone. Monotone eliminates personal
"mood" and personal history, which have
no bearing on the actual text.

Distance and focus are also necessary
when recording sound. Except that there
is no such thing as zoom when recording
sound.

Sound: Sound needs to be adjusted
according to what is being recorded just
as light needs to be constantly adjusted
and accounted for when taking pictures.

Electric sound can amplify "Hush,
my baby" until it destroys a building.

Volume is tied to emotion. If something
is very loud, we can no longer concentrate
on what it is. There exists an emotional
reaction toward threat. Something very
loud tells us that something very bad
is happening. If it is too quiet we have to
concentrate to hear. But because this is
exhausting, we can only listen for a short
while. Somewhere in the middle is
therefore, of course, on duration, most
easily understood.

WATCHING

Presentation is important. As a matter of
fact, it is that which decides the outcome
of the work.

If you have made a masterpiece, but there are hairs in the projector when you present it to an audience, the audience will see the hair and not the masterpiece. You will have made a film about hairs in the projection gate.

—

Prerequisites for ideal film projection:
Watch and know the films before they are projected.

Darkened room = completely dark, no light leaks from windows, if possible, and no exit markings, if possible.
The rectangular projection should be the only light in the room.

No music before, after, or between viewings.

No pictures on the walls in the viewing space.

Clean the projector beforehand.

Room as empty as possible. Only the necessary elements: people, chairs, projector.

No more than a 10-minute pause between segments if there is more than one part to the showing.

Wait for silence in the room before starting the actual projection. This is very important, otherwise the beginnings of films are lost. If a film is 3 minutes long, and the beginning is missed, one third of the film is missing.

Entrance and exit doors must remain closed so that people do not come and go during the viewing. Lock the doors if necessary.

Between separate, short films, turn the projector off briefly (ca. 15 seconds), but do not turn the lights on.

Focus the film before the actual, formal viewing.

Have replacement bulbs and splicer handy.

—

Titles: They can either add information, and help the observer with an interpretation (a date, place, feeling...), or they can simply identify (a thing) that which will be seen anyway.

With a thing we have the thing itself, and the name, along with all the connotations that we give that name.

—

When we make art, we are competing with nature. A competition that cannot possibly be won. Therefore, eliminate all competition with nature by completely blocking it out when projecting film.

Looking out a window is more seductive than looking at a film. Cover the window.

A fly on a screen is death for a film. Nature has won.

A black room for film projection is essential.

—

Leaving out detail, as in an unfocused image, is the same as leaving out Fate. "Blurriness beautifies."

—

On concept: In a concept piece, once the concept is understood, the piece is of no particular interest.

A concept piece's charm is in its mystery. But people pick up the rules of the game quite quickly. Then they want to play the game and not be read the rules over and over. Once the concept is understood, the whole thing is over.

—

Projecting a film backward is not the same as walking backward.

—

Nature is the first generation. A person is nature = first generation. A film about a person is a second generation away from nature. Sculpture also. To make a film about something in a second generation is to create a third generation. A film about sculpture or architecture is third generation.

The farther away a thing gets from nature, the weaker it will be.

Therefore, it is difficult to make a strong film about architecture, but it can be done.

—

The body's own symmetry, nature's symmetry, has formed the four-sided rooms in which we live. Because of human symmetry, it is completely natural that we project a film so that the screen is parallel to the walls, and the light perpendicular to the screen. We are not really comfortable, for an extended period of time, with diagonals.

—



Horizon and Gravity are determined by the cosmos. Therefore, it is not a random or willful occurrence that a projection screen has four sides that are parallel and at right angles. It is determined by the cosmos.

—

On watching film: If the projectionist has waited until the room is quiet before turning on the projector, you can focus your attention to where the film image will appear.

Do not eat.

Do not drink.

Do not talk.

Do not smoke.

—

Concentrate on the event of seeing.

—

A short film may have to be watched two or three times consecutively.

A short film is generally under five

minutes long, or a very rapidly edited piece of film.

—

It will have to be seen two or three times in order to be able to take in the many images that will disappear so quickly.

—

A good film is one that can be watched 5, 50, 90 times without becoming dull.

In a good film there are always new relationships to discover between: picture and sound, form and content, and the order of individual pictures.

—

In order to be able to talk about a film after you have watched it, it is necessary to memorize the film.

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An immediate comment about a film is often a thoughtless one. If someone blurts out, "What a great film!" immediately after the lights go up, then they might be lying. Because anything



which we believe to be great, is also emotionally moving. And when truly moved, it is difficult to speak.

EATING

—
The bite: the smallest unit of a meal.

The single bite should be so good so as never to be forgotten.

—
Out of many sentences buildings are built. The entire sentence must be understandable. It only becomes a unit once the period (.) occurs.

A unit of food is the meal. A bite of food is like a frame of film is like a note of music.

—
Music, Language, Film, Cooking: Arts consisting of the measuring of time with static units. (Notes, sentences, frames, vegetables...)

Gatherers (Searchers/Collectors)—an intensification of single elements, a bundling of energies. Hunters—a compounding of knowledge.

Sometimes we cast a big fishing net out into the sea, and are surprised by what we catch. At other times we see the exact fish that we want to catch, and spear him directly.

—
In telling a story describe the story as a hunter. Do not fall in love with the steps that are on the way. The goal is to kill the buffalo, not to look at the flowers.

You should be able to tell the story bam bam bam bam bam.

—
The strength to imagine. You have to be able to imagine how you want something to taste. What you want something to look like.

—
Senses are earthly phenomena. But sight is the least credible, as it is farthest away from our bodies, physically.

We can see farther than we can hear.
We can smell farther than we can touch.
We can touch farther than we can taste. The phrase "seeing is believing" is a falsehood. Tasting is believing.

There is a hierarchy of credibility among the senses. The closer it comes—sight, sound, smell, touch, taste—the closer the message is to the body, the more credible it is.

—
Be-greifen (to grasp, with the mind) hands around; to under-stand, stand on top of.

We do not understand something until we've had it in our hands, or in our mouths.

—
A baby knows something by putting it in his mouth. Everything that we know by sight, we know how it feels in our mouth, how it tastes. We desire to put an unfamiliar thing in our mouth.

THE ARTIST

—
Do not work merely for the sake of working. Be as economical with energy as possible.

Learn from nature. Nature exerts exactly the right amount of energy to make a certain thing. No excess. No working for the sake of working.

The bureaucrat works for the sake of working. The artist never.

No one will say that you are a bad photographer if the image you have photographed is shaky and somewhat out of focus, if that image is a close-up of a bomb exploding in a battlefield.

However, that same technique applied to photographing a rock implies poor technical skills. Bad photography.

On in-camera editing: Every time you pull the trigger, each shot taken is meant to hit its mark. To kill, and not to fire in the air. This promotes concentration and minimizes waste.

It means that everything counts, there is no room for rehearsal, every shot is fatal. Fate.

A great deal of work, physical or mental, is always impressive. To bring energy into a thing. It is very easy to find an American who is at work all day long, but they are too superficial. They don't stick to one subject for more than three years.

Hand embroidery as opposed to machine embroidery. The energy invested in the task is always evident in the end. Evident and impressive.

—
Creating a significant or "good" work of art has a lot to do with how many decisions the artist has (successfully) made. A work is created by the outcome of a string of decisions.

—
Making a single decision to play a song over a series of images reduces the role of the artist to that of the disc jockey. It represents having made only a singular decision in terms of sound to picture.

Although sometimes this singular decision can be a very good one. But not generally because it ignores too many possibilities.

—
Only the artist has the luxury of giving in to mood = acting purely intuitively. This can look like following a mood, and is antilogical, but if something is boring, then it is wrong to doggedly continue doing that thing. Although in science this method would be inconsequent.

—
Mood: the artist has to be moody. The artist has to do things only when she feels like doing them. And must immediately stop when she no longer feels like it. This is the only way to ensure not making a boring work.

—
On feeling left out: A natural state of feeling left out exists, otherwise no one would have an interest in anything.

—
Basically people are not randomly interested in one another. They are only interested if they can get some sort of use (butcher, wife, cook, mother) out of them—pity, sex, food, money, etc. We would go crazy if we were interested in absolutely everything and everybody.

Ants need to understand different things than humans do.

We can only see, understand, feel that which has some sense of purpose for us to understand.

The time period of an occurrence has, for a person, no objective length. Instead it lasts as long as one thinks of the occurrence.

How long does an event last?

If I have fallen in love with someone as they are putting on their shoes, and I never forget it, then the shoe-putting-on event lasts a whole lifetime, the lifespan of the memory. The horrible earthquake in Lithuania that I read about in the newspaper therefore lasts a much shorter time for me than putting on shoes.

Something occurs only as long as we think of it.

You can't always hold your hat in your hand; ergo the existence of the hat rack, You can't always hold your ideas in your head; ergo works of art. We "hang up" an idea that we have in an artwork so that we can have a new idea and don't keep on having to remember the old one.

Manipulation and Deceit are the duties of the artist. They do not have to be something negative. Using the powers of seduction.

There are two types of manipulation. One has to be able to differentiate.

The banal and the essential look very much the same. It is important to be able to differentiate.

Life is like a cosmic sky, blackness, blackness, blackness, with only a few brilliant stars in between the blackness. The stars are like the highlights in our life. Intense, singular situations. Like giving birth and dying. A few bright points amid the darkness.

Seeing as a thinking person, not merely as a politically correct person who only cares about the equality of the classes.

A thinking person sees red and green and movement and dizziness, and takes things as they are. Independent of human organization and mechanism.

Form and Content: People are so worried about content, and the fact that one has to be concerned with the world and moral problems, etc. Through the fascination with content, form has been neglected. But without form there would be no content, and that is clear. They need to be equally important.

On politics: Something done by everyone is bad. Everyone should do their own thing. Not what everyone else does. Not that what everyone is doing is bad, it merely lacks perspective.

One should not support something that is bad. If you vote, you are encouraging the government. They should do their job, nothing more.

There can be no absolute truth, because no absolute perspectives exist. There is only personal perspective and singular views that attempt at having an overview.

Being truthful. Getting to the state of "what is." Referring to nothing. Having all meaning contained in the film. Non-referential.

If we found out information about a film that is more interesting than the actual film, then the film is not very good. The story about the film is good. All pertinent information about the thing needs to be contained within the thing.

Displaying sexual prowess, Erotica: Everything that the artist makes is erotica. The artist is an eroticist, because somehow she is coming on to the world.

The man living in the street is the only person who doesn't have to compromise. He is the only person who can say, "I don't have to listen to anybody, and I don't have to answer to anybody."

A queen is the person who must make the most compromises. It is important to compromise in order to get things done.

Don't make films for other people.
Only make films for yourself, and don't
try to please.

That's not what making art is about.
You never really please anybody with it
anyway. Probably only a few people, and
they rarely tell you that they're pleased.
Maybe 30 years later they tell you.

Never work with anyone else on a film
as a collection or team. This will only
dilute and confuse your ideas. Perhaps
only in a mechanical sense is this alright.
If a button is out of your reach.

It is you who must struggle with your
own problems as a filmmaker, or cease
being a filmmaker.

This is not a democratic procedure.

If you work for television, that is also an
honest way of making a living... as honest
as a chemist working for Bayer making
poisons. What is an honest living these
days anyway?

The greater the rational powers of a
human being are developed, the greater
the irrational potential must be.