

FILMMAKER WITHOUT THE CAMERA

CLASS III

Class breakdown

1. Theory
2. Practical exercise (indoors/outdoors)
3. Pitch, reflection and critical discussion
4. Screening

Technical requirements / materials for the classes

Auditorium, projector, sound system, MacBook Air adaptor (thunderbolt)

Other materials: Notebook, pen, phone, magazines/newspapers, Internet (*The suggested materials listed above are neither exhaustive nor mandatory*)

Bibliography:

Barthes, R. (1967) *The Death of the Author*, Ubuweb Papers

Ranciere, J. (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator*, ed. Verso

Smiers, J. (2007) *Copyrights: a choice of no choice for artists and third world Countries; the public domain is loosing anyway*

Tzara.T (1920) *To make a Dadaist Poem, 7 Dada Manifestos*

Recommended bibliography:

Foster, H. (2004) *Archival Impulse*, October, vol. 110, p. 3-32, ed. MIT Press

Frampton, H. (2009). *On the camera arts and consecutive matters: the writings of Hollis Frampton*, ed. MIT Press.

Latour, B. (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*, ed. Harvard University Press.

Minh-Ha, T. T. *Documentary is/not a Name*. *October*, vol. 52 p. 76-98, ed. MIT Press

Foucault, M. (1994) *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth, The essential works of Foucault 1954-1984*

The act of stealing

Can a text be read in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other texts?
Can an image be seen in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other images? Can a sound be listened in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other sounds?

Esthetics of plagiarism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-vzO-UAmB4>

On his 1998 album *Fabrication Defect* the Brazilian composer-performer Tom Zé articulates the discourses of postmodernity and post colonialism. More than simply touching on various aspects of “post-ness,” Zé forges from them an updated manifesto premised on Oswald de Andrade's 1928 “Manifesto Antropófago.”

The former Tropicália musician proposes an “Esthetics of Plagiarism” as a way to appropriate and then reformulate the products of Western techno-capitalism.

The composer reconfigures the modernist and colonial tropes of primitivism and cannibalism in a subversively technophilic postmodern and postcolonial fashion—an oppositionality embodied in the album's “defective android” figure.

Esthetics of plagiarism: “The esthetic of the *Fabrication Defect* will re-utilize the sonorous civilized trash (Everyday Symphony), be they conventional or unconventional instruments (for example: toys, cars, whistles, saws, Hertz Orchestra, street noises, etc.) – all of this put into a rhythmic or dance music format, with choruses, and within the parameters of popular music.

It will recycle an alphabet of emotions contained in songs and musical symbols of the First World, that sealed each marked step of our affective and emotional life. They will be put to use in small “cells” of “plagiarized” material. This deliberate practice unleashes an esthetic of plagiarism, an esthetic of *arrastão** that ambushes the universe of the well-known and traditional music. We are at the end, thus, of the composer’s era, inaugurating the *plagi-combinator* era.

Fabrication defect: The Third World has a huge and rapidly increasing population. These people have been converted into a kind of “androids,” almost always illiterate. It has happened here in Brazil – in the slums of Rio, São Paulo and the Northeast of Brazil, and in the Third World in general. But these “androids” reveal some inborn “defects”: they think, dance and dream – things that are very dangerous to the First World Bosses.

Let me explain: In the eyes of the First World, we in the Third World who think these things, and who explore our reality on the planet are like “androids” who are essentially defective.

To have ideas – to compose, for instance – is to dare. In the dawn of history, the idea of gathering vegetable fibers and inventing the art of weaving took great courage. To think will always be considered an affront.

* *ARRASTÃO* – A dragnet; technique used in urban robbery. A small group fan out and then run furiously through a crowd, taking people’s money, jewelry, bags, sometimes even clothes. *translator’s note:* A type of “wilding” with a purpose, i.e. robbery.

Ready-made

Seeking an alternative to representing objects in paint, Duchamp began presenting objects themselves as art. He selected mass-produced, commercially available, often utilitarian objects, designating them as art and giving them titles. “Readymades,” as he called them, disrupted centuries of thinking about the artist’s role as a skilled creator of original handmade objects. Instead, Duchamp argued, “An ordinary object [could be] elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist.”

Duchamp created the first ready-made, *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), which consisted of a wheel mounted on a stool, as a protest against the excessive importance attached to works of art.

Duchamp and his ready-mades were embraced by the artists who formed the nihilistic Dada movement from 1916 to the 1920s Duchamp became Dada's main proponent in the United States.

The ready-made continued to be an influential concept in Western art for much of the 20th century. It provided a major basis for the Pop art movement of the 1950s and '60s, which took as its subject matter commonplace objects from popular culture. The intellectual emphasis of ready-mades also influenced the Conceptual art movement that emerged in the 1960s, which considers the artist's idea more important than the final product.

The cut up technique

The cut-up technique (or *découpé* in French) is an aleatory literary technique in which a written text is cut up and rearranged to create a new text. The concept can be traced to at least the Dadaists of the 1920s. Tristan Tzara describes the technique in his short text *To make a Dadaist Poem* (1920).

But was popularized in the late 1950s and early 1960s by writer William S. Burroughs (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc2yU7OUMcl>) and has since been used in a wide variety of contexts.

David Bowie on the technique <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1InCrzGIPU>

Brothers and sisters

Quoting T.S. Eliot "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists."

Walter Benjamin also makes a point in his writings about the critique. Let us stand in front of an enigmatic work. Being inaccessible in its essence the work doesn't allow us any proximity. The wisest procedure is to search the surroundings, look for the "brothers and sisters" of the work of art that are less demanding and more manageable. All authentic works have their relatives. It is the critic's task to reveal and to extract what is deeply closed in a work of art.

Walter Benjamin never completed his opus magnum, the *Arcades project* written between 1927-1940 and published by Harvard's University Press in 1999 after years of difficult work. But from what he left at the time of his death in 1940, it is clear that Benjamin aimed at developing collage and montage as constructive principles for a progressive form of writing.

"Method of this work: Literary montage. I have nothing to say. Only to show. I will make off with nothing valuable and allow myself no clever turns of phrase. Only the refuse and waste: which I will not inventory but instead allow to come into their own in the only way possible: I will make use of them.

This work must raise the art of citing without quotation marks to the highest level. Its theory is most intimately linked to that of montage."

"Collage [...] is direct quotation, literal repetition or citation of something taken out of its context and placed in another. Montage is the cutting and reassembling of these fragments of meanings, images, things, quotations, and borrowing, to create new juxtapositions. Collage is a simple questioning of the notion of representation as finding some correspondence with an exterior reality. [...] The aim is to construct something new out of old, to connect what may appear dissimilar in order to achieve

new insights and understanding. [...] not reducing the things found to the general (theory, process, classification etc.)" (Shanks 1992)

2018 – Fatamorgana (project)

2018 – Fatamorgana

HD video, 2:39, color, dolby 5.1 sound, 120 min, Portugal-France-Lebanon

HD video installation, 2:39, color, Dolby 5.1 sound, 130 min, in a loop, Portugal-France-Lebanon

2018 – Affektenlehre

Sound installation, Dolby 5.1 sound, 20 min, in a loop, neon 25 x 188.4 cm

In collaboration with Miguel Martins

2018 – What do we talk about when we talk about Fatamorgana

HD video, 2:39, b&w, dolby 5.1 sound, 40 min, Portugal-France-Lebanon

Production: BoCA Bienal de Arte Contemporânea, Les Films du Bal, Colectivo 84, Curtas Metragens CRL / Solar - Galeria de Arte Cinemática, Lamaland

Development Support: CNAP Centre National de Arts Plastiques, 2017 Faliro I

Sundance Mediterranean Screenwriters Workshop

Additional support: Marra.tein, Ashkal Alwan, Screen Miguel Nabinho, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Universidade Católica de Portugal – Porto, Coleção António Cachola, The MacDowell Colony, Terratrema

Support: CCB – Centro Cultural de Belém, Ministerio da Cultura, DGARTES – Direção Geral das Artes, Instituto do Cinema e Audiovisual (ICA), Culturgest – Caixa Geral de Depósitos

Synopsis

Fatamorgana is a political parody, where historical and contemporary personalities are given voice in an ironic way – explicit references are drawn from post WWII world history and geopolitics. Hanan – a muslim cousin of Molly Bloom – finds herself, not sure how, in Beirut's Hall of Fame, after its closing hours; like the most virtuous Penelope, this woman waits for her husband; she appears to have set a date with him; but he has not arrived; where can he be?

Epigraph

The concept of the progress of the human race in history is not to be separated from the concept of its progression through a homogenous and empty time. The critique of the concept of this progress must ground the basis of its critique on the concept of progress itself.

It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic - images. The image that is read – which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability - bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all language is founded. Awakening. | Walter Benjamin

Intention note (excerpt)

[...] The words and in most cases their arrangement were intentionally stolen and appropriated from non-fiction sources made available to the viewer underlining the intertextuality of the project, one of its multiple aims. It not only borrows text from innumerable authors but also from the historical figures. Besides the non-fiction references *Fatamorgana* also appropriates multiple fiction sources raging from

novels to romances, myths, soap operas, TV series, music, commercials, films, it steals text, image and sound with pride and prejudice.

The sources can be explicit or hidden riddles, comforting or frustrating, clashing or coherent, objective or evasive. It is rather disturbing to the viewer realizing that there is no hierarchy among them, that all have the same value let it be lowbrow or highbrow culture, there are no untouchables nor Gods to praise.

Referring Roland Barthes on *The Death of the Author*, *Fatamorgana* is a multidimensional space in which a variety of sources, none of them original, blend and clash intentionally.

The project takes postmodern critiques seriously, yet it foregrounds the construction of contingent truths. The post-structuralist view of the project as process or productive activity is found to be compatible with historical criticism. Since historical contexts are inexhaustible and of necessity textualised, the methodological field of the intertext is advanced as the site of interaction between text, image, context (genetic and citational), and the critic's strategic re-citing of the text.

Fatamorgana heaves a dazzling fabric of references to history and culture – predominantly after WWII – a teasing manifold of sophisticated allusions to numerous intertexts where the cognitive principles, abilities and operations that underlie the phenomenon are put at stake in the viewers' mind.

It is not just the non/fiction sources that are leveled also the events. The events cut from history (who's history, who's written this history) depicted in *Fatamorgana* could be others instead, as they would show the same dramatic function. *Fatamorgana* plays openly with both the sources and events catapulting them against each other. Balancing religions, politics and cultures going beyond conventions, always becoming, or simply teasing the viewer for the sake of its own aesthetic delight.

It shows its game up front since the start relying on an active viewer for whom the project is overwhelming and frustrating. The viewer must weave together the collection of intertextual references and events; stimulating mental connections and articulating them with personal memories and experience. This act involves recognizing conventions (academic types call these "codes") and is something we do naturally, it goes into our memory bank and shapes our responses. [...]

Postface

The project was developed and produced between 2016 and 2018. | During this period it was constantly being updated. | The transformation of the world is illusory. | The world is to be deciphered. | The only existing history is the history of problems. | History demonstrates the chaos of human life. | Humanity has never been different from what it is. | The future is an expectation unfulfilled. | There is no historical difference. | Redemption can only be found in repetition. | Exhausted from its autophagy. | The project will remain unfinished.

The inherent possibility of a continuous metamorphosis or the never-ending work

Raul Brandão wrote three versions of the same novel-monologue (1914-1918) published in 1917. – *Húmus*. Each of the versions was written in the light of the precedent version – the inherent possibility of a continuous metamorphosis.

It was the refusal of the literary conventions and the conscience of writing as something never finalized that definitively took Raul Brandão away from the textual practices of the time in which it wrote.

The existence of three versions of *Húmus* puts us, according to the author, "before a discontinuous process of written enunciation, of great complexity, in which each of them presents itself as a variation of the same work, as a testimony of the mobility of writing, which feeds the utopia of the total Book.

Ruled by a perfectly modern principle of indetermination, Raul Brandão set in his work a process of "destruction-reconstruction (of rewriting), practiced in the course of rereading, which reactivates an overall project and determines the metamorphoses of the aesthetic object.

This metamorphosis continues in Herberto Helder's text, and it is this project of a never-ending work that legitimizes Helder's poem, its "freedom" to recover it, re-doing it.

The death of the author

As Roland Barthes points out at the *Death of the Author*: "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture. [...]"

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing."

The emancipated spectator

The theorists of art and film commonly depict the modern audience as aesthetically and politically passive. In response, both artists and thinkers have sought to transform the spectator into an active agent and the spectacle into a communal performance.

In this follow-up to the acclaimed *The Future of the Image*, Jacques Rancière takes a radically different approach to this attempted emancipation – the reader as the author. First asking exactly what we mean by political art or the politics of art, he goes on to look at what the tradition of critical art, and the desire to insert art into life, has achieved. Has the militant critique of the consumption of images and commodities become, ironically, a sad affirmation of its omnipotence?

Piracy and copywriting

Joost Smiers in his conference for the exhibition *Through the Surface*, on the issue of copywriting and copyright laws, at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, argues that art feeds on art.

Practical exercise: The act of stealing

Materials: Notebook, pen, phone, magazines/newspapers, Internet

(The suggested materials listed above are neither exhaustive nor mandatory)

Introduction to exercise: "Method of this work: Literary montage. I have nothing to say. Only to show. I will make off with nothing valuable and allow myself no clever turns of phrase. Only the refuse and waste: which I will not inventory but instead allow to come into their own in the only way possible: I will make use of them.

This work must raise the art of citing without quotation marks to the highest level. Its theory is most intimately linked to that of montage."

Walter Benjamin.

“We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture. [...]

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.”

Roland Barthes

“No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.”

T. S. Eliot

Can a text be read in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other texts?
Can an image be seen in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other images? Can a sound be listened in isolation or do we need to look at how it relates to other sounds?

The act of stealing is a group exercise, structured in phases, which will allow students of a pre-intermediate level up to an advanced level to build narratives with elements collected out of multiple sources while reflecting on the examples discussed in class.

Exercise synopsis: In phase I, the students organize themselves into groups of three. The students brainstorm, delegate work and collect elements both indoors and outdoors from the most diverse sources.

In phase II, the students develop and write the narrative with the multiple elements collected.

In phase III, the students prepare a POP and a pitch to present in class.

Duration: 24h

Objectives and briefing: In the act of stealing the students will be guided by a group exercise structured by phases.

The exercise takes place both indoors and outdoors.

The progression, structured by phases, provides the students with strict guidelines (describing a modus operandi) on how to address the exercise in order to achieve effective results.

The student is expected to experience several different constraints and levels of freedom while performing the exercise.

The student is expected to engage actively within the group showing motivation, participation and intention.

In phase I, the students organize themselves in groups of three. The students brainstorm, delegate work and collect elements using diverse stealing

methodologies. This can be as eclectic as, excerpts from phone calls personal or anonymous, a sound bit on the street, cut up technique applied to newspapers and others, elements from copyright law protected products, ready-mades, the reformulation of products of Western techno-capitalism, collage, montage, plagiarism previous works and other examples discussed in class. There is no limit or rule.

In phase II, the students should show capacity to develop and to write a narrative with the multiple elements collected. The students should show organization and method in the execution of the exercise.

In phase III, the students should show agency and independence in preparing a pitch and writing a POP.

The students should be able to associate these experiences to former experiences and to share them in class.

The students are expected to share their previous experiences and their experience at the end of the exercise and to compare it with the exercises of the other students. The students to participate, on a critical level, in the class discussion, the higher the level of the student, the higher the level of discussion and reflection will be expected of them in class.

Pitch for open discussion:

(To be presented in class after the exercise. The students are expected to answer according to their level. The students are expected to associate this experience with former experiences. The students can select the most adequate form of pitching both on paper and on the oral presentation.)

Guidelines

1. Pitch on paper

1.1 To each group a POP – pitch on paper is requested.

1.2 Thus, the POP must, necessarily, contain:

a) Project title incl. explanation (2 lines)

b) Storyline (max. 3 lines)

c) Synopsis (max. 25 lines)

d) Dramatic explanation that can articulate together narrative and visual concept. Please provide description of the visual and artistic universe of the exercise here. (max. 25 lines)

1.3 POPs must be extremely concise, clear and objective. Information is compressed but dynamically interconnected. There is no use of images and the descriptions should be as visual and sensorial as possible.

2. Pitch

- 2.1 To each group a 10 min. pitch is requested.
- 2.2 The pitch consists of an oral group presentation.
- 2.3 Please follow the guidelines for POP in the oral group presentation.
- 2.4 Please include a list of sources collected, indicating the elements that were used in the development and in the writing of the narratives, in correlation with the techniques explored.
- 2.5 Please share your previous experience and your experience at the end of the exercise.

A film reclaimed

By Ana Vaz & Tristan Bera

2015 | 19' | HD | 5.1

Synopsis

The ecologic crisis is a political, economic and social crisis. It is also cinematographic, as cinema coincides historically and in a critical and descriptive way with the development of the Anthropocene. "A Film, Reclaimed" is a conversation, an essay that reads the terrestrial crisis under the influence and with the help of the beautiful and terrible films which have accompanied it.