

CHARACTERISTICS OF TOMISLAV GOTOVAC'S FILMS

1. GOTOVAC is an unusually consistent artist, his works showing a clarity of form and firmness of direction. The basic characteristics of his films make themselves quickly and forcefully evident. In the first place, GOTOVAC's films are »empoverished«, i.e. the actions are *reduced*.

Further, they are minutely *planned*, firmly thought out in advance and such a concept is extremely prominent and evident in his films.

At the same time it seems to be the only organisational intervention on the part of the author. The rest of the film seems to be left to *chance*, to the influence of the special conditions during the shooting and production of the film.

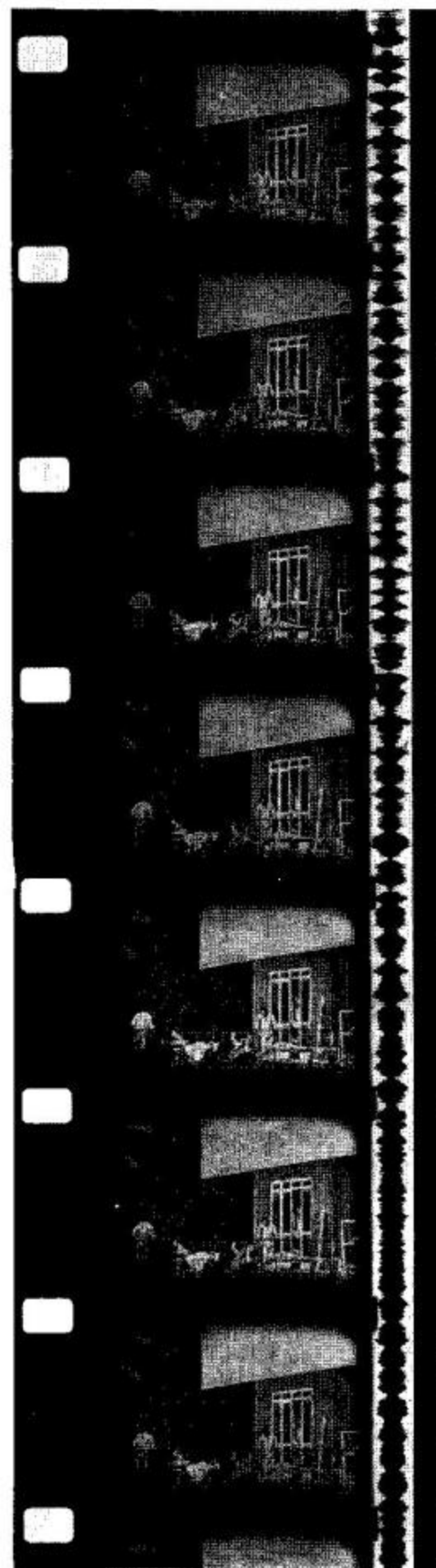
And finally, the films last longer than is necessary for one to notice the concept behind them. Attention is faithfully transferred from the concept to the information offered by the »arrested« case.

Let us take a closer look at these characteristics:

2. GOTOVAC's selective reduction of actions works as follows:

GOTOVAC endeavours to select one or a number of cinematic forms, giving them prominence while neutralising the others. These forms will then constantly weave in and out for the duration of the film giving it something quite unique. For example, in the film PRIJE PODNE JEDNOG FAUNA (1963) /THE MORNING OF A FAUN/ the camera is static so that a change of camera position at the same time means a new sequence in the film. The film consists of three sequences, the first of which is filmed with a fixed objective while for the other two he makes continuous use of the zoom. In his film PRAVAC /STEVENS-DUKE/ (1964) /STRAIGHT LINE (STEVENS-DUKE)/ the camera travels forward most of the time, in KRUŽNICA /JUTKEVIĆ-COUNT/ (1964) /CIRCLE (JUTKEVIĆ-COUNT)/ the dominant camera angle is a panorama in always the same direction with the camera slowly rising, while in PLAVI JAHAC /GODARD-ART/ (1964) /THE BLUE RIDER (GODARD-ART)/ and in film »S« (1966) the scenes were shot with a shaky hand-held camera.

Another aspect of this reduction is the selection of just one scene or a few scenes on which he concentrates by means of selected cinematic procedures. For example in PRIJE PODNE JEDNOG FAUNA we are dealing with three scenes: a hospital terrace, a wall and a crossroads. In PRAVAC we have a tram line as seen from a moving tram. In KRUŽNICA we have the terrace of a multi-storey building and its surroundings. In PLAVI JAHAC we see the interiors of inns and the people in them. In GLENN MILLER I. /HIGH SCHOOL BACKYARD I./ (1977) /GLENN MILLER I. (SREDNJOŠKOLSKO IGRALIŠTE I.)/ it is a secondary school playground and its surroundings which dominate, etc.

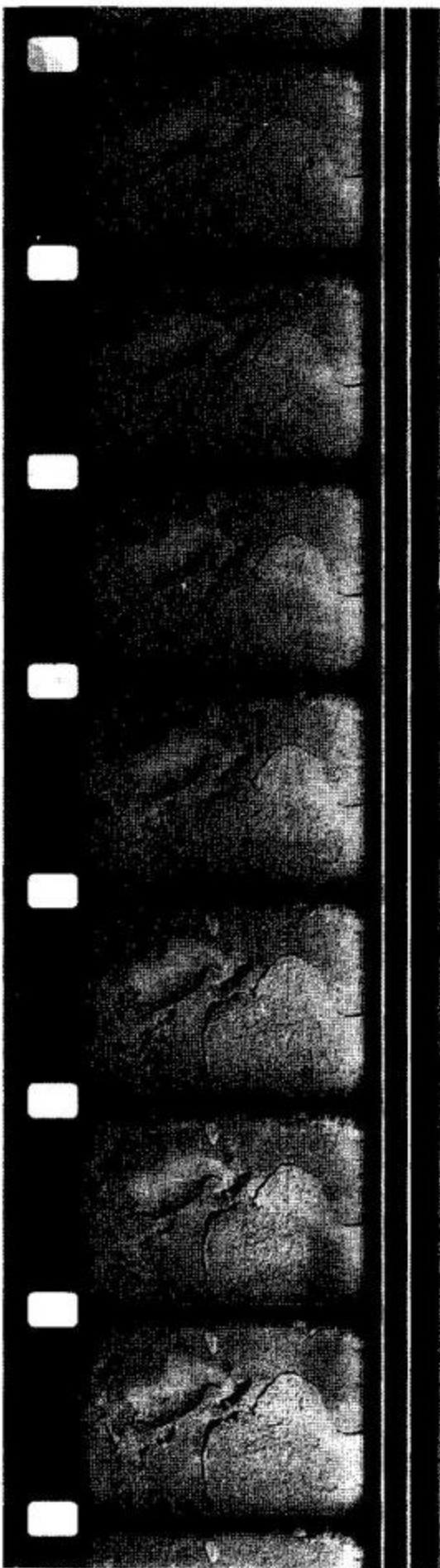


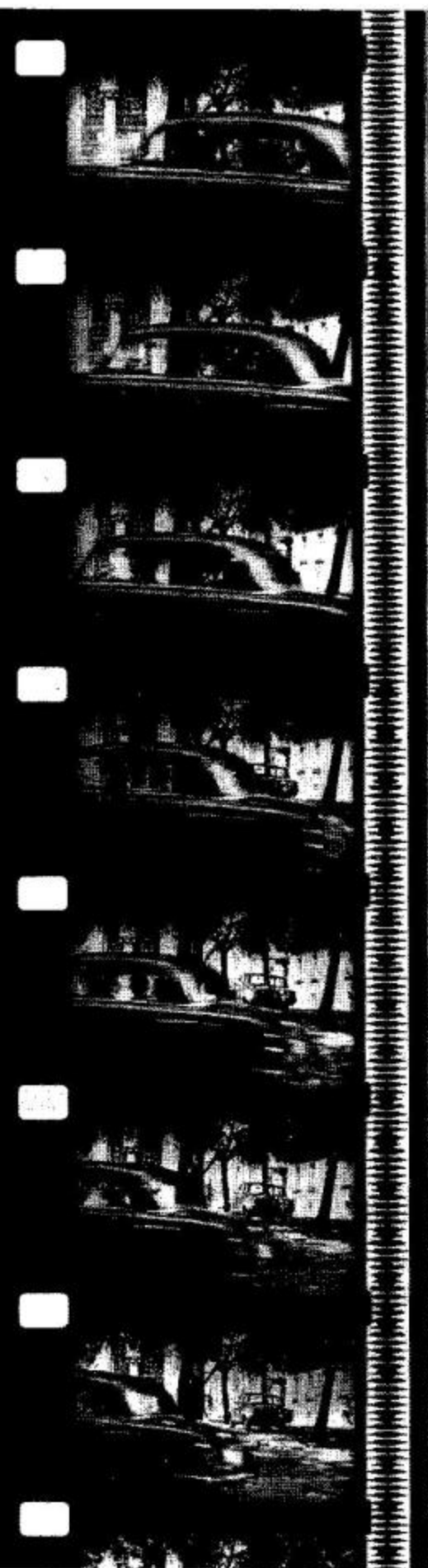
This feeling of reduction would, however, hardly be noticed if it were not for the fact that the selected procedure runs through the film in continuous variations or with frequent repetitions. The films are usually quite long so that the repetition and continuity of a certain procedure or scene is in no way ambiguous.

3. Both the reduction and the variable repetitions point quite clearly to that prominent feature in GOTOVAC's films: their *well-planned quality*. Both the cinematic approach and the subject are firmly determined in advance and as they are usually quite easily distinguishable once the film has been running for a few minutes, the viewer is easily able to work out the plan according to which the film was shot.

By virtue of the planned reduction and variation in his films GOTOVAC's work constitutes an original contribution to the genre known as »structuralistic film«, A.P. Sitney having called them thus. However, there is quite an emphatic difference between certain makers of structuralistic films. On the one hand we have those whose basic aim it is to find the complex structures themselves: their every new film strikes us with the novelty of its structure (Frampton, Kubelka, for example). On the other hand there are the filmmakers for whom the discovery of different structural principles is just a means to an end. TOMISLAV GOTOVAC belongs to this second group. That is to say, the structural planning of his films is not intended to amaze us with its complexity and novelty, but to *encourage the unforeseen, to provoke coincidence* within the planned pointers. The planned quality of GOTOVAC's films is in fact a means of conditioning the appearance of a certain kind of coincidence, of centering attention upon those features of the scene and of the actual process of filming which are not directly connected with the plan, which are, from the point of view of the plan, dysfunctional. From the cognitive point of view they are not in the least dysfunctional, they enrich us with details to which in a differently structured film we would give no attention at all. As a result of this participation and importance of coincidence, GOTOVAC's films leave us with an impression of fascinating realism, of a total document, both on what he is filming and on the actual process of shooting and producing a film.

4. All of this is not without its worldview implications. It is this very ability to find a system which will point to accidental phenomena, and which will make it possible to give to accidental phenomena an unexpected systemic value constitutes GOTOVAC's unusual talent. It is in this that we find GOTOVAC's general attitude – to the world, the way in which he cognitively experiences and orders the world, and this is equally evident both in his films and in his meditations about the world, in his

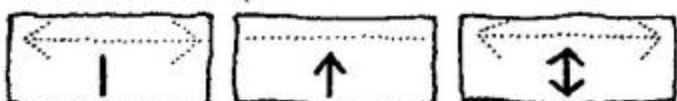




artistic and photographic searchings, as well as in the way he sees film as a whole, including traditional film. Contrary to the culturally standardised forms and ways of explaining phenomena, GOTOVAC centres attention upon dispersed, »accidental« details, finding that they can be more important, richer and more varied than the intentionally drawn details generally accepted as being important, and to which our attention is usually drawn. According to him it is this personal principle of structuring information which makes a true understanding of the world possible, and which makes one more sensitive to phenomena which, in the conventional system, we would find it difficult to centre upon with such sensibility.

Zagreb, 1977.

Hrvoje Turković



THE MORNING OF A FAUN (1963.)

Prije podne jednog fauna

16 mm, b&w, sound, 8 min, 24 phot./sec.

Director: Tomislav Gotovac

Photography: Vladimir Petek & Tomislav Gotovac

Production: Tomislav Gotovac

One should live self-confidently watching, watching...

The film consists of three sequences-three blocks.

1. The first block is shot with a camera attached to tripod, while the tripod is attached to the ground, a still shot, through a telephoto lense. The whole block is one scene, but in place 2-3 photograms are taken out.

Scene: The terrace of the surgical ward of a hospital, one summer morning. The patients are resting, moving about the terrace, joking with each other.

2. The second block is shot with a camera attached to a tripod, and the tripod to the ground, zoom forward (from normal lense to telephoto). The whole block is one scene and one shot.

Scene: A wall with highly textured plaster, which has fallen off in places, and is swollen in one spot.

3. The third block is shot with a camera, which is attached to a tripod, while the tripod is attached to the ground, zoom back and forth countless times, but at different speeds. The whole block is one scene, but consists of countless shots of the same scene, and black and white blocks.

Scene: A square with a small chapel and a parked car. A street may be seen before the camera with the odd vehicle passing by (parallel with the surface of the lense). In the background one can also see a street narrowing into the distance along which a few vehicles also pass (vertically on the surface of the lense).

Thus, all three blocks are shot from one camera position each, in the first block the shot is a still one, in the second block is zoom forward and in the third block is zoom back and forth countless times (the focal distance of the lense changes).

Sound: 

In the first block the sound is taken from one of the scenes in the film *VIVRE SA VIE* by Jean-Luc Godard, in the second block the sound is silence and in the third block the sound is taken from one of the scenes in the film *THE TIME MACHINE* by George Pal.



STRAIGHT LINE (STEVENS-DUKE) (1964.)

Pravac (Stevens-Duke)

16 mm, b&w, sound, 8 min, 24 phot./sec.

Director: Tomislav Gotovac

Photography: Petar Blagojević-Arandelović

Production: T. Gotovac. & P. B. Arandelović

The film is shot with a camera attached to a tripod, the tripod is attached to the front platform of a tram carriage, behind the driver. The whole film is shot from one camera position using a wide-angle lense. The whole film is one scene in which are introduced titles mentioning the word »straight line« and a photograph. The film is a static shot (as compared to the windows of the tram), as compared to the tram, while travelling forward in comparison to the surroundings of the tram and the tracks along which it is moving.

Scene: Through the window frames in front of the driver of the tram we see the street with the tram tracks, avenues of trees, cars, people, houses, etc. The boulevard along which the tram is moving is straight, the travelling is repeated a number of times.

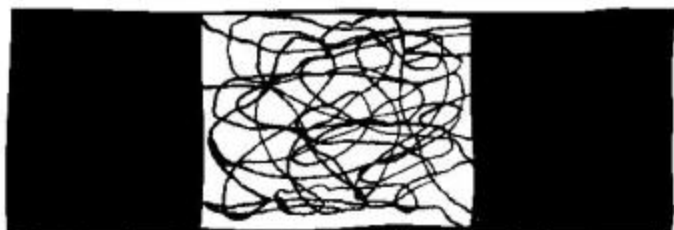
Sound: The Creole Love Call by Duke Ellington and his orchestra, repeated countless times. Female vocals by Kay Davis (without words). The recording is from 1. 9. 1949.

The film is dedicated to George Stevens and his film *A Place in The Sun*.

The film includes a photograph, a portrait of Georges Braque at home in Paris, D-Day, 1944, by H. Cartier-Bresson.

The film is the first part of a trilogy *Straight Line* (Stevens-Duke), *Blue Rider* (Godard-Art), *Circle* (Jutkević-Count).





BLUE RIDER (GODARD-ART) (1964.)

Plavi jahač (Godard-Art)

16 mm, b&w, sound, 12 min, 24 phot./sec.

Director: **Tomislav Gotovac**

Photography: **Petar Blagojević-Arandelović**

Production: **T. Gotovac & P. B. Arandelović**

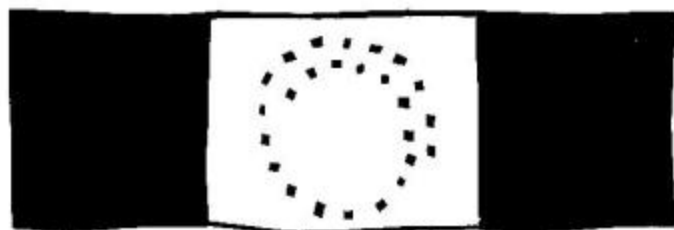
The film is shot with a hand-held camera in the hands of **Petar Blagojević-Arandelović** using a normal and wide-angle lense. The film is full of pans and travellings and static parts of individual shots.

Scenes: The centre of attention in each shot are human beings: human faces, human figures, static or moving, one Saturday evening in the coffee houses, restaurants and inns of a town. We entered these places with a camera loaded with highly sensitive film stock (3×). **Petar** filmed the people whom he thought interesting, he panned along following a man walking through the place, sometimes I pulled his sleeve to point out a certain scene, sometimes I led him about the place, while at other times he again continued searching for motives. The people ate, drank, smoked, chatted, moved about, stood around, etc. Some people did not even notice us, while others became excited, still others »acted« and »posed« before the camera.

Sound: The edited sound track from one of the episodes of *Bonanza*.

The film is dedicated to **Jean-Luc Godard**; **Art Blakey** and his record *The African Beat* and to the *Der Blaue Reiter* group of artists.

*This film is the second part of the trilogy *Straight Line* (Stevens-Duke), *Blue Rider* (Godard-Art), *Circle* (Jutkević-Count).*



CIRCLE (JUTKEVIČ-COUNT) (1964.)

Kružnica (Jutkević-Count)

16 mm, b&w, sound, 12 min, 24 phot./sec.

Director: **Tomislav Gotovac**

Photography: **Petar Blagojević-Arandelović**

Production: **T. Gotovac & P. B. Arandelović**

The film was shot with a hand-held camera, with one camera position. The cameraman filmed around himself, turning on his own axis. The whole film consists of constant pans (360°) from the spot on which the cameraman is standing and a gradual lifting (spirally) of his head up to the sky above his head. The cameraman was standing on the edge of the terrace on the top of the highest building in the town. Introduced into the film are titles which mention the word »circle« and a photograph.

Scenes: We first see the terrace upon which the cameraman is standing with the film crew, who are holding on to a thick rope attached to the cameraman so that he does not fall off. Gradually we see the surrounding streets, houses, courtyards, roofs and a view of the town, suburbs, rivers, fields and finally of the sky itself slowly opens up.

Sound: Sent for you Yesterday And Here you Come Today by Count Basie and his orchestra, repeated countless times. Male Vocals (with words) by Jimmy Rushing. Recording of 1. 9. 1939.

The film is dedicated to Sergei Yutkevich and his films: Golden Mountains, Counterplan and The Man with a Gun.

Included in the film is the photograph entitled *Nude Woman in a Deserted House* by Wynn Bullock.

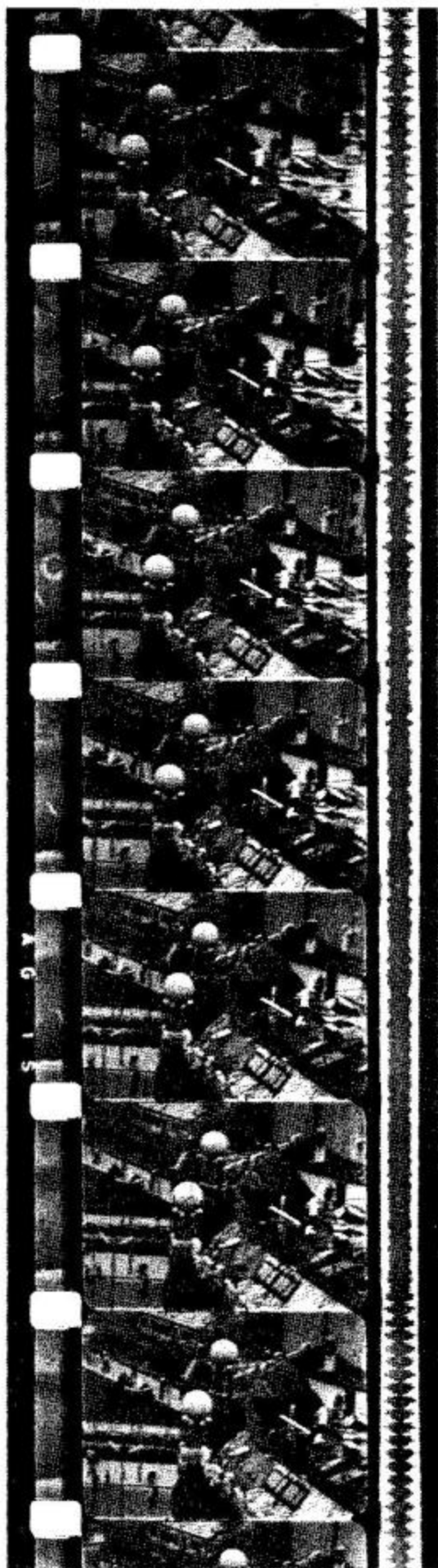
This film is the third part of the trilogy Straight Line (Stevens-Duke), Blue Rider (Godard-Art), Circle (Jutkevič-Count).



»T« (1969.)

8 mm, col., silent, 15 min, 18 phot./sec.
Director & Photography: Tomislav Gotovac
Production: Tomislav Gotovac

The film is shot with a hand-held camera. The film consists of countless static shots, close ups, which are edited inside the camera at the time of shooting.





The film consists of five blocks:

In the first block there are countless close ups, full faces, one profile, another profile, a back view of my mother's head (E. G.). The whole block is shot in one spot in the same room.

In the second block there are countless close ups of my sister A. G. They are also shot in one spot in the same room.

In the third block there are countless close ups, shot on the same spot and in the same room, of my girl-friend D. M.

In the fourth block there are countless close ups, shot on one spot of my girl-friend Z. B.

In the fifth block there are countless close ups, of countless chance passers-by in countless places around the town.

The film is dedicated to Carl Theodor Dreyer, Rudolph Matè, Jean-Luc Godard and George Stevens.



GLENN MILLER I. (HIGH SCHOOL BACKYARD I.) (1977.)

Glenn Miller I. (Srednjoškolsko igralište I.)

16 mm, b&w, sound, 45 min, 24 phot./sec.

Director: **Tomislav Gotovac**

Photography: **Ljubo Becić**

Production: **MM Centar Zagreb**

The film was shot with a camera attached to a tripod, while the tripod was in a car, moving at 20 kms/hr, along the running track in a school backyard.

The whole film is one shot; with parallel travelling, panning vertically down onto the earth's surface, using a wide-angle lense.

Scene: The surroundings of the running track can gradually be seen and little by little we notice young boys and girls engaging in sports on the playing field. We notice houses, the high school building, a hotel, trees, chimneys, the sky, clouds, branches of trees, and when the pan is about 180°, we again see the houses beside the playing field, the young boys and girls and finally the running track.

Sound: The sound track from the film *My Darling Clementine* by John Ford.

The film is dedicated to Glenn Miller and to his search for the characteristic sound of his big band, and to the whole work of John Ford.

The movies were shown in:
LUBLIN (Galeria sztuki LDK Labirynt)
ŁODZ (Warsztat Formy Filmowej)
WARSZAWA (Dziekanka, Galeria Remont)
LONDON (National Film Theatre-Third International Avant-Garde Film Festival)
AMSTERDAM (Stedelijk museum – Works and Words, Experiment '79. De Appel – Works and Words. Nederlands Filmmuseum – Works and Words. Shaffy theatre)
DEN HAAG (Haags Gemeentemuseum)
GRONINGEN (Akademie Minerva)
PARIS (Centre Georges Pompidou, Salle de cinéma du Musée)
OTTERLO (Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller)
LONDON (London Film Makers' Co-op Cinema 42. London College of Printing. Slade School of Fine Art-University College London)
GENOVA (Il Gergo Inquieto-Nuovi aspetti del cinema sperimentale Europeo)
OXFORD – G.B. (Museum of Modern Art Oxford-New Screenings)
BUDAPEST (Fészek Art Club-Balázs Béla Studio)
BERGAMO (Ex Chiesa S. Agostino-Mostra Deserto) **ZAGREB, BEOGRAD, LJUBLJANA, OSIJEK, SPLIT, PULA, DUBROVNIK.**

TOMISLAV GOTOVAC

Tomislav Gotovac was born February 9th. 1937 in Sombor, Yugoslavia. From 1940 to 1967 he lived in Zagreb. In the period between 1967–1977 he lived in Belgrade. End 1977 he returned to live in Zagreb.

He started his first actions in '56; his first photographic series in '60; his first films were made in '62; his first collages in '64 and his first sound-object in '78. He is a graduate of the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts (Fakultet dramskih umetnosti u Beogradu) in film direction.

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