

IT'S ALL A MOVIE

A conversation with Tomislav Gotovac

FILMS DURING CHILDHOOD

Film: Which film do you remember as your first?

Gotovac: The first film I remember is *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

• Where did you see it? In Zagreb?

- Yes. In an army barracks. It was a screening for the army, a copy left over from old Yugoslavia. A 16mm copy.

• How old were you then?

- Four years old. *Mutiny on the Bounty* with Clark Gable.

• And do you remember anything from the film?

- How could I not remember! I remember a sailing vessel, and guys lying around on their backs under a tree picking... were those bananas?... Just reaches out a hand, grabs a banana, peels it, eats it and throws the peel by his feet and looks out to the open sea. I remembered this film only when I watched it again. I figured out then that this was a *movie* I had watched long, long ago... The film rights had been repurchased.

• That was during the war. Did people even go to the cinema then?

- Well, I remember the first screenings where I noticed film as being film. That was on Jelac (ed. note: today's Ban Jelačić Square), those newsreels which were shown evenings to the nation.

• War newsreels?

- Those were war newsreels, there were also some short feature films, German ones.

• And these short feature films were of an ideological nature or...

- I can't remember now. I know that there was some sort of entertainment, that we laughed there. One can assume what played there. There were German newsreels, Ustasha ones and short films. I know that there was also something entertaining. My father would take me there.

• When did you begin to go more frequently to the cinema?

- I began to go more frequently when we moved with the elementary school to the St. Blaise Home, near the St. Blaise Church, above the Prosvjeta Cinema. After the liberation. And then there were mass screenings of American films, English ones and the occasional French one, and Russian. Considering that the cinema was in the same house where I went to school, I began to spend all my allowance there.

• And your parents let you?

- My parents didn't know that I was going to the movies. It was 1945. They had other worries, and not whether they thought I

was going to the cinema or not. And so it happened that I went to the Prosvjeta Cinema a lot, which is today's Kinoteka.

• Kinoteka?

- Above it was a school, Krajiška, which was still an army hospital back then. It was converted into an army barracks immediately after the war started, and during the war into a hospital. And it remained a hospital even after the war. We would go to various locations during elementary school; we would go up to where the observatory is now, and then to some Pekarski dom to school, and finally, after the war, we went to school at the St. Blaise Home. Where it was good for us - we would go to the cinema non-stop.

• What kind of rhythm was there for the film projections? Were they regularly rotated or did they run while there was an audience, as today?

- Well, I really can't say for sure. Later, some films lasted as long as they did, because the film had to be on the repertoire. It would happen that a film would have one or two viewers per screening. They would say, for example, that Kurosawa's *Rashomon* would play for twenty days, somewhere back in 1952, and I would end up watching that film with two other viewers. I watched it ten times. In the Prosvjeta Cinema, we would go to see films regularly, at least as a kid it seemed a lot to me. I mainly got used to watching films in that cinema, I watched *all* the films.

EARLY FILMS

• Which films were those?

- I think that those were films whose rights had been purchased before the war, and then they were left behind in bunkers, in film distribution warehouses and then they were shown right after the war. And some new films would show up on occasion. I know that John Ford's *Stagecoach* was playing then under the title *Three Against One*.

• And when was this?

- In 1945. And I know that a lot of films were shown in Prosvjeta Cinema. When I think back on it now, those were films which had been filmed and shipped to Yugoslavia before the war, they were waylaid by the war, they then lay dormant through the war and then resurfaced...

• Yes, so the old people say, if it was only German films that were being shown during the war...

- I don't really remember those German films. After the war it was a very good situation, as far as newsreels go. They would show one of our newsreels, a Russian one, an English one and an American one. So that we would end up watching up to four newsreels before a film. That's how I remember an American newsreel from that time showing the trial against war criminals in Nürnberg. I remember the complete execution of all those bigwigs. The team that carried out the execution was British. Execution by hanging.

• They showed all that?

- Everything. I remember that quite well because it was so very interesting. They showed the way an execution is carried out. They showed the preparation and the hanging itself, but from

beneath. They would put a black hood over a guy's head, soak the noose, tighten it, push aside the floor, he would fall through the hole, and then they would yank him so that they broke his spine.

• **And they would only show the yanking?**

- Yes, only that. And then they would show him dead.

• **Did you watch this alone, or in a group?**

- More or less in a group. I loved watching all those newsreels, as it had to do with documents. This was, in fact, a window to the world. I couldn't learn much by reading, as I had just started to read. Newspapers; what could I learn from newspapers? But here everything was shown, black on white.

• **Did you read anything at all then?**

- You have to know how old I was; when the war ended, I was eight years old, I had just learned to write, I didn't read much at that age.

COMIC STRIPS

• **That wasn't a question without a reason, because kids today learn from comic strips, journals which didn't exist back then...**

- Of course there were comics back then, hold on... During the war there was that *Zabavnik* by the Neugebauer brothers. There were also the *Maurović* comic books (about *Mačak* [Cat]), and then there were entire series of strips which comic fans would collect from old Yugoslavia. This was collected, it would circulate around the school.

• **You did this at elementary school?**

- Yes, yes, in elementary school. Besides that, my buddies from the street, the neighbourhood, from my home, we all exchanged comics. So that as far as comic strips go we were quite well-supplied. Now there were strips from old Yugoslavia, *Mika Miš* [Mika Mouse], *Tri ugursuza* [Three Rascals], *Fantom* [Phantom], then those by *Maurović*, and during the war there was the *Zabavnik*... Then there were the *Karl May* novels, published by *Vošicki* from Koprivnica, who had printed works by *Miroslav Krleža* before the war. And the *Zane Grey* novels. So that we were quite well stocked.

• **These were all editions from before the liberation, was anything published after?**

- Well, I can't remember that anything was published after the war.

• **Of course there was, what about *Politikin Zabavnik*?**

- That came out later. What I just named off is what I know I had had in my hands. What had circulated. For other things I don't know. Then there were books made from newspaper clippings, as a series. Those were huge digests which we would flip through. That literally passed right through my hands. I had it for maybe two, three hours and then I had to return it. I also remember that strip *Snjeguljica i sedam patuljaka* [Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs] by *Walter* and *Norbert Neugebauer*. A porno-Snow White.

• **That was published officially?**

- Well, it was printed. And that also circulated among us kids.

• **Was there any comic strip that you particularly enjoyed?**

- Well, those were the *Maurović* ones. And I also really liked *Fantom* a lot. I don't know who illustrated it.

FOCUSING ON FILMS

- Somehow at that time I slowly began to abandon these things and threw myself into film. One of my friends was very much responsible for some of these things. That was *Vladimir Konić*, a childhood friend from *Klaićeva Street*.

• **A peer?**

- A little older than me. Somewhere around that time, around 1946 or something like that, he began to keep track of the films he had seen. And I think that even to this day he keeps records.

• **He was around ten then?**

- Yes, around ten. He would write down the title of the film, the director's name, actors, when the film was made... I think that that notebook still exists.

• **Even the director's name?**

- Yes, even the director's. He was ten and I was eight. And he in fact, was some kind of initiator...

• **He got you interested?**

- Not that, but thanks to him I began to pay more attention to those things. Basically, what ties me to him are our early film experiences, you see?

• **What does he do?**

- He's a chemical engineer.

• **And he still goes to the movies?**

- He still goes, regularly. Basically, that *Vlado Konić*, who lived in *Klaićeva Street*, and I in *Krajiška Street*, we did some things that were very strange. The two of us would make film magazines.

• **How?**

- From all the newspapers we could lay our hands on - from *Vjesnik*, from *Ilustrirani Vjesnik*, from *Borba*, from *Narodni list*; we would cut out articles on film. Then from magazines which began to be published around that time, 1948/9, popular magazines on film. And, as the most important thing, we would cause quite the commotion in the English reading room. From the magazines there, from newspapers, we would cut out film advertisements which were being shown in London. So by using razors we would destroy...

• **Nothing's changed since then, they still do that now.**

- ... we would destroy newspapers, then magazines like *The London Illustrated* and *The Illustrated* (the first was more serious, the second more popular), we would cut out film reviews and photographs. And then at home, both he and I, we would design the magazines which we would then call, I don't know, *Film-1*, *Film-2*...

• **Our magazine predecessors!**

- Somehow from 1949 and up to 1952/3 **Vlado Konić** and I made about ten of these magazines. We would glue all the materials with carpenter's glue. I designed my own magazine. Using Indian ink I would spray those parts where there was no text. I did the whole layout and design of the magazine. Through that we were kept informed about the entire international production, considering that films that were being shown in London were also being shown in America at the same time. So we knew what was being shown in the world and we waited for these films to come to Yugoslavia.

• **Did they come?**

- The majority did. From 1950 and on the majority of them did come. And then there were those little ads which featured actors, the producer, director and screenwriter, let's say. So that - when we were twelve, thirteen - we talked to each other about a certain director's films. Also, the older films by those same directors would come here, and we would wait for the new ones to arrive as well.

• **Do you have preserved copies of those magazines?**

- Unfortunately, I don't have mine. **Vlado** might still have his.

• **Did you divide them up, or how?**

- No, we each did our own. They were not the same magazines. He would grab one thing and I would do another, so that we would sometimes trade.

FIRST SYSTEMATIC VIEWING EXPERIENCE

- Right around then, around the 1950s, things began to happen, I mean, in the sense of new things. In '51 the Yugoslavian *Kinoteka* began to show its set of films at the JNA Home. So that I managed to see a lot of **Buster Keaton's** short films, *Citizen Kane*, two **Mahati** films, and then **Eisenstein's** *Old and New*. In 1952 the *Kinoteka* began to give some of its films to the Balkan Cinema and Zagreb Cinema. And in 1953 it began to show the Ten Best Films series, so that I was able to see *The Battleship Potemkin*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Mati*, *Stagecoach*.

• **That means when you went to see these films, you no longer went randomly, but with a purpose...**

- In 1950 the magazine *Film* began to be published by **Vicko Raspor**. So that at twelve I was already reading about **Maya Deren**, close-ups, editing, silent film, about the three canvases by **Abel Gance**. And in Zagreb *Filmska revija* was being published, and I think that one of the editors-in-chief was **Branko Belan**, and the editors were **Rudolf Sremec** and **Fedor Hanžeković**. I think. That was a pretty solid review. I remember one article by **Ive Mihovilović** from that review, who was intensively involved in film reviews at that time. In that article, **Mihovilović** described Italian neorealism, but it wasn't so much what he was writing as it was the publication of photos from those films accompanying his text. One photo from **Visconti's** *Obsession* had me obsessed for years until I finally saw the film in 1959. And I wasn't disappointed. Exactly that what I had envisioned when I saw that picture in *Filmska revija*, it was exactly

like that. And **Rossellini's** *Paisàn*. You know, you see a picture of a scene from a film, and it's your obsession for years, and you have to see the film, you just have to see it.

• **Did you go to the cinema by yourself or with a friend?**

- Well, I usually went to the cinema by myself because at the time I began to watch individual films ten to fifteen times...

• **You're exaggerating surely, or are those real numbers?**

- No, no, they're real. I saw **Kurosawa's** *Rashomon* I don't know how many times. It was incredible.

And now you can very well ask where did I get money for all this? Listen, I had very little money. But in those days there was something called *financial tickets* which were good for all cinemas, and the current tickets, tickets for seats, they used to be that you would get a seat but they weren't torn off. These *financial tickets* (in the amounts of nine-and-a-half, twelve-and-a-half and twenty-and-a-half dinars) were the same for all cinemas. If there was a larger group of us going to the cinema, we would turn the first ticket right side up, and the others we would put the other way, and then on the part of the torn off piece we would tape more paper, and the next time we would go to the cinema we would hold the torn part in our hands, and the part for tearing off we would give to the ticket-taker. And keeping in mind that some films would show for really long, I managed to see all that was being shown.

WAY OF WATCHING FILMS

• **What motivated you to watch a certain film more than once? Back then you couldn't have known, but today...?**

- I knew even back then. That was my life. I did not make a distinction between life and film. I don't know if I can explain this... I am now watching, I am watching a movie...



• **How did you watch films back then, what did you notice when you would watch one again?**

- Up to today absolutely nothing has changed. The same obsession with certain things has remained ... I know only one thing. I spoke a lot about directors, about individual directors whom I liked, and this was not random at all. I knew about **Hawks** and adored him way before those French *monkeys* started to write about him: *I Was a Male War Bride*, *Monkey Business*, *The Big Sky*...

• **Did you seek out films by directors, or did you watch them as they were shown, and you would just link them up?**

- Well, at the beginning they would arrive, and being that I was always going to the cinema, I began to notice some things. Some of them satisfied me. For instance, **Hawks** satisfied me as soon as I saw his first film. I think that it was *I Was a Male War Bride*.

• **How long ago was that?**

- That was in 1952, when they imported the film, I think. Later *The Big Sky* came, which was playing as *Indian Secrets*. And then *Red River* and *Monkey Business*, which I watched, I think, twenty times.

• **Then, or all at once?**

- Then, then. Later I watched it many more times. In high school I was telling the boys what a great movie it was, a master-piece. You know! I mean, a fuckin' master-piece, no?

• **What arguments were there for it being a master-piece?**

- I never had any arguments. My arguments were that I shouted. In other respects, this was my characteristic that I didn't know how to explain what it was. Some of my friends would believe because of my passion. They understood the *explanation*. When I said: Ah, that's..., they knew how much I valued that film. There was one more film that had me obsessed during those years, **Milestone's** *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

SPREADING INTEREST

- Now my interest began to expand extremely. During those years, **Branko Janjić** alerted me to **Willis Canover**. That was a man who had a two-hour show on American music on *Voice of America*. From eleven onwards it was *Music of the USA* and from twelve to one it was *The Jazz Hour*. First came music from musicals, shows and hit songs, and then jazz, so that in those years I was well-informed as to what was currently being played in jazz and of the tradition.

• **What year was that?**

- 1951. And it lasted up to 1960. Then almost every night from eleven to one I would listen to jazz, that is, music from the US and jazz. That was about the time that I started to go to concerts. I would go to concerts with more serious music, and somewhere around '53, '54 I began to go to the theatre. I saw all the premieres in Zagreb. Those years were crazy. I was working then - that was work for me, not fun.

• **You were going to high school then.**

- Yes, I was close to finishing high school. Every Sunday I would go to the Modern Gallery and view exhibits from their holdings. It was a small circular room, where every Sunday they would change pictures from the holdings.

• **Is there anyone who you remember especially?**

- Yes, **Junek**, **Leo Junek**. Then some things from **Trepša**, from **Tartaglija**; but mostly **Junek**. Everything they had in the Gallery they would bring out. In 1954 **Gavella** founded the Zagreb Drama Theater, and **Stupica** came to the National (Croatian National Theatre) so that there were two competing theatre houses. **Stupica** was given free reign so that there were many fine things. And, normally, **Gavella** in Zagreb's Drama Theater. I would go to all the premieres, or to the first repeat performance, and there weren't any performances those years in Zagreb that I did not attend. And this was all tied in with movies. I'm not mentioning books at all. I read very little, and what I did read was **John Dos Passos**, his works began to appear during those years. There was *Manhattan Transfer*, *Trilogy USA* and others.

• **How did you reconcile this with school?**

- We had a lot of time. It was seventh, eighth grade after all, that was already... We were almost finished then. Mainly, back then I was working a lot and intensively - all this had to be reconciled, have a schedule non-stop...

• **How did you make yourself a schedule, according to advertisements or by newspapers?**

- By newspapers. Listen, there weren't that many events in Zagreb. I wanted to cover all the events, I wanted to be completely informed, about all things, I was interested in everything.

• **You did this fairly individually, you didn't have a specific crowd?**

- Well I did have a crowd with whom I talked to about these things. Otherwise I did these things alone.

• **You had a crowd then?**

ARTISTIC SHOCKS

- Well, yes. There weren't a lot of people, so that a lot of what I assimilated I would store inside myself. There were a lot of shocks for me then. The exhibit featuring works by **Kožarić** and **Vaništa** ... when I was blown away by **Kožarić's** plaster sculptures and **Vaništa's** pictures. Those rooms, some kind of wardrobes, everything in some purple-grey-blue colour, you see. Wardrobes, on oil paintings.

• **Where was that, what year?**

- That was in 1954, at the Museum of Arts and Crafts. That was one of the things that, you know, took my breath away... That, and the guest performance by the **Peking Opera**. That was one of the things that made my head swirl.

• **What did that look like?**

- I'll tell you about that now. Circus, vaudeville, acrobats, exercising, opera, pantomime and drama. All in one. You can only

imagine all a person can experience when an opera prima-donna sings and above her head there are guys flying into somersaults. Jumping over the fortress. She's in the fortress, and they are conquering the fortress. And when conquering the fortress these guys fly three centimetres above her head and then fall. Then, for example, you have an empty window, and this is a dinghy on a yellow river. There's nothing, just a guy and a woman, he's rowing and the woman is singing. It's just the two of them, there's no boat, there's nothing, an empty stage. What craziness...

• **Where was this performance?**

- At the National. At the Croatian National Theatre. And then, a guest performance by the black troupe **Porgy and Bess**. What a show that was.

• **When was that?**

- Around the same time. 1954, somewhere like that, those years. What a shock that was. Realism to the core. That what you can see in their films, that stage design... with that dampness, with that toilet, approximately that level... and blacks in full swing there, yeah... directly from Harlem on stage at the National. That, and then **Marcel Marceau**. It was like he had dropped in from another planet. He was in his prime then. And then **Peter Brook** with *Titus Andronicus*, when heads rolled, when the crowd screamed in the theatre. And there was also *Villar* with **Gerard Philip**.

• **When we listen to you like this, we have the feeling that Zagreb was quite the cosmopolitan city then...**

- If you only knew what all happened during those years!

• **But that only took place in about a five-year period.**

- No, Yugoslavia was opening up then, opening up quite a lot. You can only imagine the madness then. Everything that was good would come here. It wasn't just the current hits but those already tried and true. But the **Peking Opera**, now that was beautiful. You know how that is, it can be turned 180 degrees. Just that combination of opera and circus performers... Then drama, pantomime, ballet... all in one place.

GRADUATION, UNIVERSITY

• **You were incredibly active, you participated, watched, and... did you do anything yourself?**

- Yes, yes I did, but those were things in life itself.

• **How, an intervention in life?**

- Yes... In 1955 I graduated from high school, at eighteen, and considering that I was a good illustrator and mathematician in high school, not only in high school but also throughout my entire schooling, my parents concluded that I should enrol in architecture. And that is how I ended up in the architecture program. At the time, around three hundred of us had enrolled in the program, and the selection was such that around ten percent passed into the second year. And we listened to descriptive geometry along with the civil engineers and geodesy students in the large auditorium of the Technical Faculty. There

were some six-hundred, seven-hundred of us. Imagine, listening to descriptive geometry - seven hundred people!

I completed my first year, handed in all my assignments. **Kamilo Tompa** and **Vaništa** were very pleased with my works in free drawing. And then I said to myself: Enough is enough, I am starting my life now, and I left architecture and got a job as a clerk.

• **Did you draw anything else except for what you had to for class?**

- No. In all likelihood I was just lazy. For all the things that I did, my professor, **Lahovski**, would say that those were the real thing... It wasn't just what was assigned, but I would expand (on the assignment). I am thankful to that professor of drawing, **Lahovski**, for visiting galleries and exhibitions, he has remained in my fond memories. A grey-haired fellow... I actually wanted to go the School of Applied Arts but my folks wouldn't let me.

EMPLOYMENT

- I left architecture and found a job. I could call that *Employment Action*. That lasted from '56 to '67 - ten years and one month.

• **You worked that long?**

- That's how many years of work service I have.

• **When did you decide on employment, what were your main reasons?**

- Artistic.

• **Are you sure? You can say that today, but was it really like that then?**

- Certainly. I was aware that it would be something else.

• **Okay, what did you want exactly? Can you be more specific about your thoughts back then?**

- I can. I will go to work. I will earn some money so that I can pursue film. And actually what... What I simply wanted to do was to do everything on my own. I had had enough of 'directing' from school, from my parents, from others. I wanted to make my own movement. I consider that to be very, very significant...

• **That means it was a gesture of becoming independent? Against your parents?**

- No, not against my parents. Your parents, when you're a kid, are your life, your company, there's no difference there. Parent-no parent, there's always someone keeping you in line.

The cut came as a result of my dissatisfaction with my existing social context. That is, I didn't want to do some things - for instance, that architecture which I would have to work like crazy for four, five years, and I wasn't even sure that that was what I loved. Even though in some other circumstances I would have finished it normally... if I had, let's say, money. But then I didn't have anything. I had to work like a dog, and I couldn't even satisfy my need to watch films, and that was everything to me. I tried to get closer to film. I wanted to be with it non-stop, yet it was as financially far from me as Mars. I tried to

resolve this rather murkily, and the first thing I did was drastically severe the cord. And watch, at the same time I knew, in all likelihood, that I wasn't a clerk. I first got a job where my father worked, around two months. I worked in the Army Post Office where he worked until I got a job at the National Bank in Jurišičeva. I was a clerk at the bank.

• **What did you work on?**

- I worked on some budget entries.

• **You didn't have to work with customers?**

- No, I didn't. Later I went to some accounts department which was involved in payment transactions. And there I handled the archive... That was one life, and film and my other interests another.

• **Then you worked parallel and continued with all your other interests?**

ANALYSING FILMS

- Most normally. That life was one sculpture. During my architecture studies I had met a person who meant a lot to me and to whom I meant a lot. That was **Ivan Martinac**. '55. That year the two of us began to talk in our own way about film, we began to create our own world of film, what the world would say at all.

• **What kind of conversations were those?**

- We began to talk about film in a way in which it was not officially written. Back then it was **Rudolf Sremec** in *Narodni list*, I think, and **Mira Boglič** in *Vjesnik*, **Ive Mihovilović** in *Ilustrirani vjesnik*, **Vicko Raspor**, **Vlada Petrić**, **Vladimir Pogačić** in some Belgrade papers... who were writing. They mostly wrote about sociology, psychology and the message, and we talked more, not only about more, but also about how. It seemed that we were only talking about technique...

• **Can you remember one example?**

- Let's say, a film that we really liked at that time was **Hitch's** (Hitchcock) film *Rear Window*, which we watched many times. We speculated about the structure of that film. **Jimmy Stewart** was always in close-ups or close shots, and what he sees is filmed in long shots or full shots.

There's one thing which cannot be explained easily, that is, I can't explain it well ... It was that we started to recognize - not the content of the films and not their genres, but the rhythm which every individual person brings, the lifeblood and breathing which that person gives to each film. You feel that behind every film stands - if the film is good - a person who is, for example, nervous, who enjoys pans, tracking shots, who is keen on close-ups, who has a certain rhythm of cuts ... we talked about these things. The content interested us only in relation to a procedure.

• **Let's return to the beginning of your intensive viewing of films. Do you remember when you stopped following only the content and when you started to turn your attention to what you are now talking about?**

- I have to say one awful and trite thing, but I really did enjoy watching films. I, let's say, really enjoyed those tracking shots from **Kurosawa's** film *Rashomon*. I was entranced by this one tracking shot: the sun penetrating through the leaves, and the track just goes on and on. I'm not talking in vain about that film - *Rashomon* is a small story told four times. The way *Rashomon* was made, explains, in a way, the way in which I viewed some things during that period. That story could still be told a hundred different ways. One more thing is important. **Kurosawa** used **Ravel's Bolero** as his basis, and he even placed music in the film which is very similar to *Bolero*. And *Bolero* is the same as what *Rashomon* is, **Ravel** varies the theme to bring one to a climax...

• **Did you notice these things every time you watched a film, or did you confirm that which you had seen before?**

- Things happened, as it was, only in my head. I simply enjoyed myself - I would be reborn every time I entered a movie theatre! And if something appealed to me, I would then watch it a hundred times... I had no idea why.... no, I mean, listen... it's true that things came together in my head, that a computer was assembling them in the right places. My arguments at the time were *that's good, and this is shit*. I had an unmistakable sense whether a film was OK or not OK.

• **For kids it's common that they go watch movies for content, for actors, some characters, or because of the genre. It seems, from what you've been saying, that this was not crucial for you.**

- I was fascinated non-stop by the image.

• **But you said that you had discovered directors quite early, which was not very usual...**

- Well, I knew that **Hawks'** first film was very good, that it was also like that with the second, third... so that the fifth couldn't be bad. Therefore, I remember him and I went to watch his films because I knew that I would be satisfied.

• **The picture has now turned out to be a little one-sided, you, however, also followed both actors and producers...**

- Yes, yes... When you see a film twenty times, then the tenth time you see the credits, no? And seeing as I was watching the picture, then I remembered everything - screenwriters, trademark, producers, cameramen, actors right down to the last episode writer. I didn't know the names of everyone, because some weren't listed on the credits, but I knew them all. I simply felt this irresistible need to go to the movies. I simply wasn't interested in the content anymore, all at once the content flew out. After the tenth viewing of *Rashomon* you no longer have anything to say about content. It was at that time that I began to look at **Michelangelo's** sculptures and all at once you realize that **Kurosawa** was a European child inspired by **Debussy**, **Ravel**, someone who knows Italian Renaissance painting and sculpture, who knows film... All at once you can see that this is a chap who was educated in Europe. You see... when **Toshiro Mifune** lies down, you notice that it's **Michelangelo's** sculpture - *Awakening*, literally interpreted. Later it runs through your head... What kind of things those are!?

• **Did you talk to your colleagues at work about that?**

- As they spoke about anything and everything, I saw that it would be pretty stupid if I started talking about some pictures, *Rashomons*, and some masters etc, that I was showing off.

FIRST CONTACT WITH THE KINOKLUB: PHOTOGRAPHY

- In 1954 **Branko Janjić** took me to a small gathering at the Kinoklub Zagreb [Cine Club Zagreb], in what are today's premises of the *Društvo filmskih radnika* [Film Artist's Association]. One man brought **Pabst's** *Paracelsus* on 16mm, a film that was shot in 1943. **Pabst** went to France when **Hitler** came into power and there he directed until I don't know what year, and then he went to Switzerland; in '43 at the height of the utter confusion, **Pabst** returned to *Führer's* Germany to shoot a film on *Paracelsus*. **Bergman** later saw this film and made *The Seventh Seal*. Literally copied. *Paracelsus* inspired one more type - **Orson Welles** in his film *Othello*.

• **And what kind of ties did Janjić have with the Cine Club?**

- I know that he was filming some short feature films at the Club. That was, like, a seed planted in my mind and it inspired me to begin thinking about the possibilities of filming. Then I disappeared from the Club. I don't know what happened. **Janjić** actually invited me, but there was some kind of strange atmosphere there, there were some "scary" types, some hunters, who turned me off with their talk. These were people, who, in comparison to me, had heaps of money, some kind of hobbyists. So that the atmosphere was pretty much gloomy, and I took off then...

Branko Janjić was otherwise a very interesting figure. He introduced me to *Lifer*, that is, to the photography in *Life* those years. Those years the photography in *Life* was fantastic.

• **Those were basically done by Magnum photographers.**

- I only learned that later, but what those boys in *Life* did those years, that was '49, '50...

• **Where did you buy that magazine?**

- Normally, on Jelac, it was sold there. Let's say, I remember one fantastic report, I don't know who did it, but it was shot with a wide-angle lens, showing North Koreans and Americans gathering their dead in a no-man's territory. Guys with those white masks on their faces gathering the dead from the ground into some sheets, from the clay.

STEVENS, MILESTONE, BRESSON

- 1952 was when I first watched a film which I was completely absorbed with, and that was *A Place in the Sun* by **George Stevens**. I believe that that was the moment of my rebirth. That film, along with **Milestone's** film *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In **Milestone's** film there were two scenes which I fiercely underline. Two soldiers on a break between two battles come to some French bar, and stand before a pre-war poster, both holding beer-mugs and they begin to talk about the poster. The scene shows the poster and their shadows. And nothing else.

And the scene lasts, lasts, five-six minutes... I remember it as a scene of fifteen minutes, but in all likelihood it was probably three-four minutes long. Do you know what that means, when you see a poster on the wall, hear the noise from a café and see the shadow of those two men - or are they also visible? - and they're talking about the poster. That's one scene from that film, and the second scene is when the lead character, I don't know what he's called, finds some French girl and comes to her house. And now they're lying in bed, one of those double beds, and you only see his corner and you see the shadow of the rest of the bed on the wall, and you hear the conversation (she's speaking French, he German) and that scene stands still, stands there, stands there... And there's a third scene - a shot from that film: through the broken glass of some station in France you see a small town in ruins, there's an army convoy with an ambulance, and that scene lasts, lasts, lasts.... All at once the bombing starts, the crowd scatters, some end up wounded, dead, and the bombing continues. When it stops, the crowd comes, gathers up the dead, takes away the wounded, and that jugular vein begins to beat again, that convoy, and then fadeout. **George Stevens** is basically all my reflections on film. It seems to me that with his help I'd be able to explain everything about film, every single point. That film contains everything... I don't like those kinds of words, they make me sick, but... I started watching *A Place in the Sun* in '52, and I could watch it every day. **Bresson** wrote an essay about that film, and it was *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou Le vent souffle où il vent* [A Man Escaped]. Since we've come to **Bresson**, I think he's a guy who's just the greatest.

• **When was the first time you watched Bresson?**

- I watched **Bresson** somewhere around '55 or '56. That was *A Man Escaped*. I went crazy over that film back then. In *Pick-pocket* the main thief has a tremendous similarity to **Monty Clift**, so that **Bresson**, it seems to me, cannot free himself from **Stevens' A Place in the Sun**. While *A Man Escaped* was a film about **Stevens' methods** in the film *A Place in the Sun*, *Pick-pocket* is in addition to that an essay on actors in the film *A Place in the Sun*. **Bresson** probably never said as much anywhere, but to me it's clear what he was thinking of when he made those two films.

BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE CINE CLUB ZAGREB

• **You mentioned that you went to the Cine Club for the first time in 1954. When did you come back to the Club, under what circumstances?**

- **Martinac** and I met **Hrvoje Šercar** and his brother **Tvrtko** at the Kinoteka in 1957. We were always hanging around Kinoteka's ticket-booth, in today's Jadran Cinema, I watched all the shows, from '57 to '60, when I went into the army. There wasn't anything I hadn't watched at Kinoteka. All those shows. **Zlatko Vranjican**, who was performing in SEK then, was a schoolmate of **Hrvoje** and **Tvrtko Šercar**. And **Zlatko Vranjican** knew **Zlatko Sudović** who was the president of Cine Club Zagreb. Then **Vranjican** told us: "Listen, boys, you are enthusiastic about film, why don't you write a screenplay, and I can play

your lead actor, and **Sudović** will provide the film, money and will find a cameraman and that's how we'll make a film which might be successful." And so **Ivan Martinac**, **Tvrtko** and **Hrvoje Šercar** went to write a shooting script. And we called the film **Z** for that **Klee** head. (That's a picture of a head in which the eyes, nose and mouth form the letter **Z**.) I don't remember what the film was about, all I do know is that with that shooting script, which was in outline, we had all the scenes described in detail, we would go to the Cine Club and there we began to explain to the stunned public at the Cine Club, on the Žrtava Fašizma Square, about our film. First we became members. I don't remember everyone who was around us then, mainly we were met with reservation, they saw us as four young boys, we were twenty (plus **Zlatko Vranjican**, who was our age). **Zlatko Sudović** secured us a good supply of tape and a cameraman, **Vladimir Hoholač**. However, as the great star of Cine Club Zagreb at the time and Yugoslavian amateur film, dr. **Mihovil Pansini** was filming his "master-piece", *U jednoj maloj tihoj kavani* [In a Small, Quiet Café], where **Vlado Petek** was playing the lead role, **Vlado Hoholač**, who was the cinematographer on that film, was constantly telling us that he had a lot of work and that he would have little time for us. We managed to film one roll of 30m, which was lost somewhere in the Cine Club... Everything ended up on that one roll, and all at once we heard that there was no more film. **Hoholač** did not want to film anymore, he said that there was no satisfaction there, **Zlatko Vranjican** then said: "Listen boys, you're doing this quite slow," and **Ivan Martinac** left for Belgrade, **Tvrtko** began to study philosophy, **Hrvoje** became involved in graphics and only I remained. They co-opted me immediately as treasurer at the Cine Club and they began to tell me how nice those things I was saying about film were, but that... That was how I began to go to the Cine Club, and some strange things began to happen there.

• What was the structure of the Cine Club like then?

- The only person who was worth any attention was **Mihovil Pansini**. But that gentleman was so caught up in the creation of his films that he did not pay attention to anyone else. He was filming an educational film for Narodna tehnika about a young man who becomes a cine-amateur, and the main role was played by **Vlado Petek**. He wrote a textbook for amateur film-makers (this was really important) so that problems about real film in the Cine Club were never discussed.

BEGINNING OF WORK

- However, there was one guy, **Vladimir Petek**, who was very quiet. Considering that I would go over there, I attached myself to him. And seeing as absolutely nothing could be pulled out of him, I would talk and he would listen. That was pretty good, no? And that is how I became friendly with **Vladimir Petek**. I don't know if it was the same for him, but basically he listened to me. One day someone brought some old war news-reels to the Cine Club. And then I said that it would be a good idea to make a film out of them. **Petek** did just that. That was around '58 or '59. I never even considered making a film, be-

cause I was terrified of technology. I felt some kind of aversion towards technology. **Petek** filmed some of his earlier stuff and then both of us went into the army. The two of us came back at the same time, he came at the end of '61 and I returned at the beginning of '62. Somehow during that time we began to hang out together again, and only thanks to his persistence - when he said to me: "When are we finally going to shoot your film?" - did I dare, literally dare to say to him: "Well, okay, let's go make one." Anyway, I didn't have anything specific in that head of mine. I said: "Considering that I am interested in photography, let's go make a film by photographs."

• You had no specific thoughts?

- I had a mass of ideas in my head, but it was all linked together with some explanation, with some direction, and I simply did not have the courage to get myself into that ... I was scared of a lot of things.

Basically: it's '62 and **Petek** who insists that I shoot my first author film. And considering that I was caught off guard a bit: now I have to work, now I have to explicate some of my own things, who had ever asked this of me before, I was only an observer, what was this now... someone was insisting that I participate actively. I have **Petek** to be thankful for this. His encouragement was crucial, he was responsible for my crossing over the Rubicon.

DEATH

- I took two annuals: *ASMP* (American Society of Magazine Photographers), which featured renowned names: **Ernst Has**, **Dorothea Lange**, **Henri Cartier-Bresson**, **Cornell Capa**, **Richard Avedon**, **Andreas Feininger**, **Gjon Mill** and others. Then I took two Swedish erotic magazines and one monograph on **H. Cartier-Bresson**.

• Erotic or pornographic?

- Erotic, as pornography was banned. There were these sexy girls showing their muffs, which was unthinkable here.

• Therefore, that would be pornography to us, in our context.

- Yes, back then, yes, today it's ordinary. And then we started to film photographs. They would pan shots over the photos, and then be static and so on... I would simply place a photograph in front of the camera, tell **Petek** what to shoot: pan, frame. And when the shooting was over, then **Petek** and I put it together. I gave rhythm to it and created content on the spot. Considering that I was still obsessed with death then, I called my first film *Death*. Besides, there was something in that, in a clearly literary sense, because we were filming photographs which we were attempting to reanimate.

• Wasn't sound-negative used for that film?

- Essentially, sound-negative film was brought to the Cine Club Zagreb by **Ivo Lukas**. And then he infected **Petek**, then me. **Lukas** had shot a film using sound-negative which to me was one of the best films ever to be made in the Cine Club, about some guy going crazy all over Zagreb, by the Sava river bank, etc.

• **Sound-negative - that's a slightly sensitive film in which the contrasts are strong, there are no tonal transitions, right?**

- Yes. If you are shooting outside, then the sky is completely faded, and the ground is black: as if an atomic bomb exploded. It's fantasy. And sound-negative is great for shooting in a studio, for shooting photographs.

THE FORENOON OF A FAUN

- That's right, that was that first film - *Death*. And again, thanks to **Petek** and his intervention, in '63 I shot the film *The Forenoon of a Faun*. It was conceived to be in three segments, of one scene each. All three parts were filmed with a camera which was fixed on a tripod. In the first part there is no change in the focal length; while in the second and third parts the focal length changes - in the second part it goes only in one direction, and in the third part it goes back-forth; zoom. In the first segment something is happening in the scene, and the camera is static. In the second segment there is nothing happening in the scene, a wall is being filmed but there is a change in the focal length, a light zoom-in on the wall. And in the third part there is action in the space, and it comes to a change in the focal length. And to chaos. In the first version titles were used in the first part: "It's necessary to live...self-confidently...", and then it also appeared in front of the second segment and in front of the third. But considering that the titles from the original version were destroyed, I deleted them from this new version, so that the film is now without titles.

• **And sound?**

- Sound accompanies the first and third parts, the second part doesn't have sound. I'll get to that now, I just want to finish about the picture first. The closings of the picture. At the closings of zooms there are, in the third part, white and black blanks, depending on the impulse I felt. When it goes towards the zoom, then it's a black blank, and when it goes towards the wide-angle, then it's a white blank.

In the first part the music is from **Godard's** film *Vivre sa vie* [My Life to Live] from that scene when **Anna Karina** inserts a coin in a machine and is waiting by the billiards table. And in the last part, the sound track is from **George Pal's** film *Time Machine* (it was translated as *Flight to the Future* here), from that scene when **Rod Taylor** goes back to the future so that he could save a woman from the **Morlocks** who feed on some yellow types. These **Morlocks** live in darkness, and they raise some blonde-haired and blue-eyed people out in the sun, and when they get hungry, they open the gate, set off the sirens, and these blonde types enter the underground and there the **Morlocks** kill them and devour them. The sound bite is from that devouring scene, when **Rod Taylor** comes, saves his beloved, blows up the city and returns to his own time, to the past.

• **Sound in your films was separate, on a recording tape.**

- Yes, but it was set up so that we knew what was coming, so that we would press the buttons on the recorder, and that's how we would catch important points.

GODARD

- *The Forenoon of a Faun* had the meaning of a manifest for me.

• **How did you come up with the idea for *The Forenoon of a Faun*? In your first film *Death* you were just finding your bearings and here you already had a firm idea.**

- It was like this... Things were such that at that time, '63, I was watching **Godard's** film *My Life to Live* [*Vivre sa Vie*] which was also like one of those thunderbolts to the head. The main impetus for this was the compilation of three scenes from that film. Roughly, what *A Place in the Sun* was for **Bresson**, so was **Godard's** film *My Life to Live* for me. The opening scenes of the film were incredibly important for me; *en face*, profile 1, profile 2 and the back of **Anna Karina's** head. So that at the beginning of every scene the music starts and from the middle of the duration of the scene it disappears. There is one moment in the film that is incredibly similar to *Faun*. That is the scene in which **Nana** stands leaning against the wall, in a small street in Paris awaiting a client. The structure of *Faun* was inspired by this film by **Godard**. But, keeping in mind that I know **Godard**, that I know that neither *My Life to Live* nor *Les Carabiniers* nor *À bout de souffle* [*Breathless*] nor that any one of his films are films which serve a purpose onto themselves, rather they are **Godard's** emptying of all those accumulated things which he had till then... These films were filled with the horrors of memory.

• **Cinematically?**

- I don't know what kind... It's such a shock, when you watch his films. When I was watching *Les Carabiniers* I had the feeling that in that hour and a half I had overturned all my memory storages, as if all my memory drawers had been opened. He would link **Lang** with **Griffith**, **Rossellini** with **Stevens**, **Renoir** with **Shengela** and **Ford**, **Dziga Vertov** with **Vidor**. Those were such combinations that my head was spinning. *Les Carabiniers* cannot be explained with words. You have a scene there with two luscious babes and one of them has this American letterbox on a post where letters and newspapers are left, and she's always going to check if it - the post - has arrived. The person who had watched *A Place in the Sun* when **Shelley Winters** is always going to see if a letter from **Monty** has arrived for her... I don't know how to explain this, but *Les Carabiniers* was shot in such a way that for me that was in fact **Shelley Winters**. And not to mention all those other things... Let's say in *Les Carabiniers* it was **Miklós Jancsó** who literally emerged from this. Do you recall how those two guys were acting in *Les Carabiniers*? Do you remember that scene when that kid enters a room and is explaining to the woman what to do: lift this, now look here... And do you know how **Miklós Jancsó** looks in his best things: actors do not express any kind of ideas, but only give directions, you go there, can I ask that you please come here, you go over there, lie down, undress... This is the only dialogue which is found in the films of **Miklós Jancsó**. *Les Carabiniers* are a pretty scary thing, it's like one of those hydrochloric acids that eat away to the core. I was very happy when I had the chance to read **Jean-Luc Godard's** interview with **Bresson**. That combination to me was somehow... That conversation was roughly everything what I think about movies, and

not just film, but of reality. That's what all those boys also think, from Hitchcock, Murnau, Dreyer, Kurosawa, Dovzhenka from *Shchors*, Yutkevich and *Man with a gun*, Hawks, Ford from *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *The Last Patrol*.

FAUN AS A MANIFEST

- The structure of *Faun* was programmatic. It was like a Jonas Mekas manifest of the underground, as a manifest offers... to make something which would be like a flag. I gave it the title *The Forenoon of a Faun* so that it could be that, but so that it was considerably different from Mallarmé's and Debussy's *The Forenoon of a Faun* which I loved. It was, in fact, a remembrance of them. And to show that it was nothing more than a movie which I watch in cinemas, I put Godard's sound track in the first part, and George Pal's sound track in the third part. And the author was in fact thinking of the film. And by putting morning, that in fact was longing, desire as at that time I couldn't go out into the city in the mornings on ordinary working days, because I was working from seven to two in the afternoon. So that I didn't even know Zagreb during those hours. My Zagreb was the afternoon, evening, night.

• Does that mean that you interpreted yourself as a faun?

- Ha, ha... I don't get that, but I doubt that I knew that connotation. I knew of a faun as a mythological creature, but... The fact that the film is conceptualised in three parts, that number three is tied in with Howard Hawks. Watching his films, the number three is imposed non-stop. For instance, in *Rio Bravo*, in the middle of the film, the guys in the sheriff's office sing three songs one after another. Later, when he's forming a scene, somehow he prefers to have three actors in it, and then three emotions appear. Mainly, I have the feeling, when I watch his films, as if his every film is a triangle, that it has the solidity of a triangle, the solidity of the number three. His films are very strictly planned out, and yet they are so breezy... no, no I can't explain it.

I know that Godard's film *Bande à Part* [Band of Outsiders] is an essay on Hawks. I was happy to see that even in that film the number three appeared, so strongly.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TECHNIQUES IN FAUN

• With this film you therefore express your relation to the films of others. But the film itself contains an analysis of the means itself which you make use of. Is that analysis conscious?

- Completely conscious.

• How did you decide on those particular techniques that you apply, that static camera, zoom, why not something else?

- In *Faun* it was one procedure, and already in the second trilogy (*Straight Line*, *Blue Rider* and *Circle*) I use other techniques.

• Does that mean that already with *The Forenoon of a Faun* you determined the repertoire of possible techniques which you will use, or did that come later; you simply noticed what was left and then used it?

- Look, to me that film is a program in the sense of finding

myself. I'm not claiming that *Faun* is something - what it is is a stepping stone for that what I really want.

• That means, with that film you defined the path, the thought system which you later made use of.

- See, it had to be different and yet the same. I am constantly intrigued by what there is in the relation between my eyes and what it is I am looking at. What makes one thing one way, another a different way? What determines this? That is why I made this distinction: this scene, that scene, that scene. In all likelihood other things also existed. On the one hand I am expressing my awe towards the rhythm of things which I recognize among others, but at the same time it is struggling within me: well, where are you?! And it is not enough for me to be my own movie, that as soon as I open my eyes in the morning, I am watching a film. No, I mean, look... that may seem funny but to me that is the greatest thing, that: a movie. But considering that I cannot present my eyes to the crowd and say look, that has to come out somehow. That is why I am against psychology, sociology... no, look, that exists without me... that is why I am against a message as it disfigures that in itself. I can't explain it.

• This what you are saying that you want to destroy the message, psychology and sociology... it seems that something else is at the centre. It's not that you want to completely remove it, because you don't even remove it in your commentaries of films. It seems that you would just like to relativize this, so that in your viewing of films and in your shooting of films the message appears only as one among equal elements, together with the lights, with the zoom... The message isn't the dominant element, but rather one possible element which is equal with all other elements. And you so very much talk about the message of the film, about how it is dark, like this or like that...

APPEARING BEFORE OTHERS: EXPRESSING

- But those are my by-products... Because, see, those things which I want to discuss for themselves, for the masses it's more or less boring. One more question arises here: Why do I want to appear before the public? The crowd won't accept you, you are boring, after all you are sufficient only to yourself. You don't need cinema, nothing, you go out and watch a movie. I try to answer myself, what exactly is happening here, and what it is that I want. That is my downfall. Do I step forward, from myself, or not. I look at what is intended for wider communication. I am watching a movie. Which means, I am always included within. As soon as I enter into it, I am already watching a message, it is not made because of what I think, but in an entertaining way to uncover that what the person in question intended. And in fact, that what interests me is where I am in that whole scenario. Will I jump out from myself or not. It's a good question, why I selected those techniques...

• Well that is not so important now, but...

- But it is important, it is. Because I didn't select it just like that.

I could have selected panning left and right. But I said: stop, I have to start, and then I'll continue further. Under the condition that out of spite you specify things for yourself that it will be like this. And not that someone will come now and say: listen, this doesn't really fit here, how about if you change it... No! It's going to be like that! And I was thinking of painting, of music, of film, of Hawks, of Godard, of all that and what can be seen of all that now... poof!

• **You therefore determine one system for the people, and everything else, all your inclinations and loves... these direct you in your choices.**

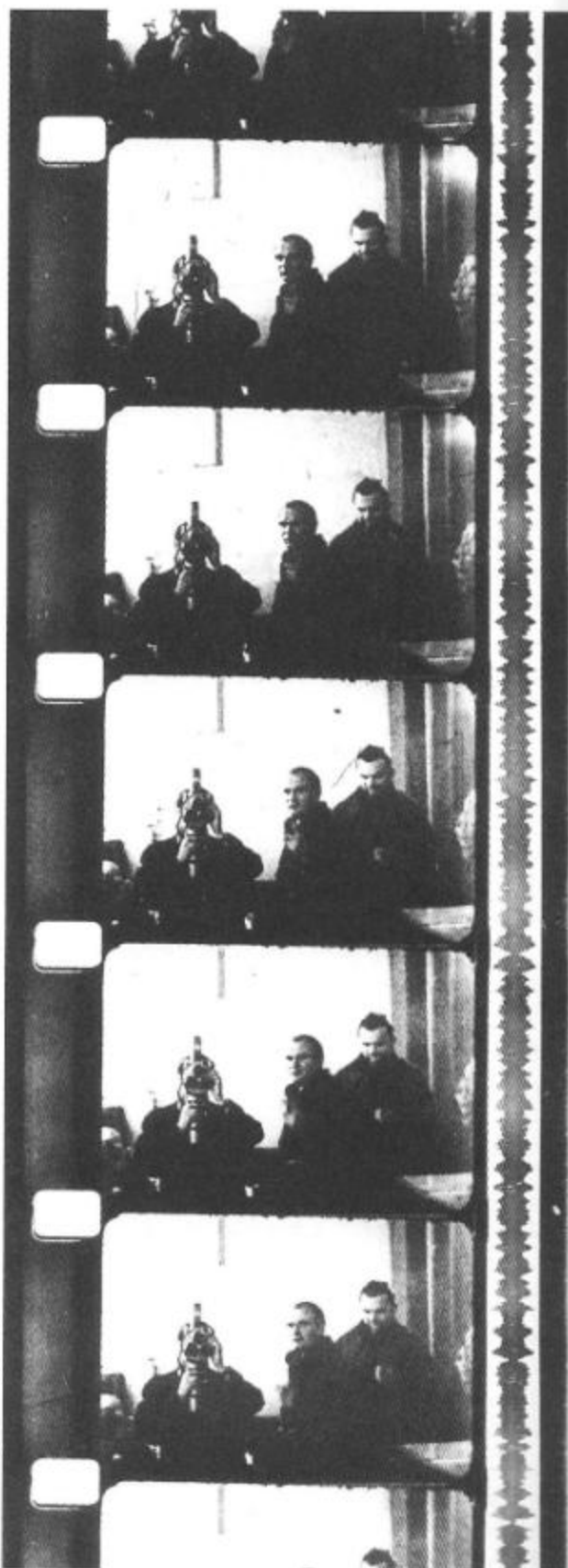
PERSONIFICATION OF FILM

- But you can't turn off psychology, sociology and the message, because you are a human being, and all these things are, in the end, of usable value. Film is more or less an applied art. More or less. It's rare to have the real thing. And look now: if you find yourself in that whole situation, you individualize the film even though this is a mistake towards all those wonderful people who work on the film, and you turn it into something human, and then you communicate with this creature whom you consider to be physiologically human. It has its smell, its span, its breathing, it's pleasant, unpleasant, it's nervous, it's sentimental... For me **Ford is Ford** even when he relates a story on aviation, and when he relates a western, and when he relates a comedy. All this is simply **Ford**. He just left and came back and told me that story. But it's always a **Ford** story. And this can be anybody else, but I know him as **Ford**. Who actually made the film, to me that is so secondary; I individualize films. And that is why, for example, I know that one man is sentimental, for instance **Ford** is that, and I accept him like that. I know that someone is obscure... You know, for instance, what music they like, whether he is neurotic or phlegmatic, does he care for something... You communicate with film as with a human being. You have to get used to it. If someone is nervous, for instance **Lester**... It took me a long time until I got used to his teasing manner and fucking around with everything. When I first encountered **Lester**, I was unusually put off by *The Knack... And How to Get It*. But after a while I said: that's that. You recognize the guy, so that it's all the same what he talks to me about, you feel his lifeblood, you know that it's his nervousness; you know it's, let's say, **Godard's** nervousness. And the message? I can only imagine everything that I receive through all those things.

PHOTOGRAPHY WORK

• **Perhaps it would be good to break off this line of conversation and to see what you did parallel to that. Because around this time you started to direct sequential photographs and make collages and you held happenings...**

- For the start of my activities in photography I again have to thank **Vladimir Petek**. Thanks to his camera I shot my first series (of photos) in 1960 and that was *Heads*. That was at the Cine Club Zagreb. Considering that I had to go to the army, I



PLAVI JANAČ (GODARD-ART) / BLUE RIDER (GODARD-ART), 1964.

was thinking about how I could leave all that. It would be the first longer, considerable departure from the parental home, from the Zagreb environment at all... You go for a year and a half - it's still a considerably great shock all the same. I then said to **Petek**, let's go shoot a series of photos. I appear in those photos in various situations in front of different backgrounds. We created a scene using some reflectors, lamps. What's important in these photographs is my face in different expressions; in one I'm pretending to make love to the bars... actually, I wasn't acting but kissing the bars; then there's one serious and it was meant to show an understanding of surrealism, on some of **Dali's** and **Buñuel's** works. I remember one photo from **Buñuel's** film *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* [That Is the Dawn], it's hanging on some wall. On that photograph you can see a statue of **Christ**, which is in fact a post for electrical wires. A post with porcelain spheres protrudes from his head. And behind my head one can see two pails for developing film, one lamp, a lightbulb, a wire which I placed behind my ear and a cigarette butt in my mouth, and the whole photograph is slightly French-like... **Prévert** with a butt, you know...

• **How did you come to the idea of making a series of photographs?**

- Listen, by all accounts, through film. Everything that I did in life were little pictures to pictures. It imposes itself. This is probably because of *movies*, that *movie* erased some things that were already ingrained... you know about painting, about all those things.

COLLAGES

• **You also do your collages and objects in a series. When did you start making collages?**

- I began to gather materials for collages around that time. In Zagreb there was an exhibition from Belgium: the **Urvater** Collection. A collection that was presented to us as being renowned. It came to Zagreb in 1959. That was the first time I saw originals by **Klee**, **Max Ernst** and **Schwitters**. And when I saw that, when I saw **Schwitters'** collages, I went crazy. From that point on I began gathering materials haphazardly assembling and assembling. Then in 1964 I spent two years working intensively on collages.

• **How did you select the materials for the collages?**

- I would gather paper waste: old tram tickets, wrappers and so on, and I was very fascinated with English-print publications at kiosks, that rustling paper, for instance *The Times*, I liked that these were large sheets, that there were no photos; in general that colour, grey colour on white paper was what I found attractive. This was great material for shaping, it was easy to work with it.

• **How did you make the rest of the series of photographs?**

- After the army I made two series on **Sljeme Mountain**, and they were recorded by **Ivica Hričko**. One was breathing in air, and the other was showing *Elle*. The problem was that I wanted to get undressed and to breathe air naked in the snow. How-

ever, there was a woman in our group, the girlfriend of one of the guys from the group, and so I wasn't able to completely undress so I stripped to the waist and that is how I showed *Elle*.

CRUCIAL TIME

• **Was your departure to the army a turning point for you?**

- It was very positive. The army meant a turning point in relation to some earlier thoughts on life; it was important in terms of my identification towards society. Towards my entry into society. It was there in fact that I began to want to show my work to the public. And so it was that my series of photographs entitled *Showing the Elle* was in some way a sort of manifest. Otherwise my stay in the army was quite good. Following the basic training I became the company copyist, and as my company senior had fallen ill, I performed his administrative duties for a quite a while.

• **What about watching films during that period?**

- Well I did find that very difficult, because it was during that time - 1960, 1961 and the beginning of 1962 that the **Kinoteka** had an interesting program and it was the beginning of the **New Wave**. I suffered like a true idiot then, but I made it all up after when I went to the cinema like crazy.

• **When you got back from the army, did you continue to follow intensively what was happening in the theatre, at exhibitions and other places?**

- I neglected theatre, the exhibitions remained. Somehow at that time I concentrated more on the effort of realizing films. I then began to think about that in that way definitely. There were actually some existential questions that needed to be resolved, there were some life problems that existed. To live alone or with a woman? Who will you live with, who will you sleep with? Where's your sexual life? These were all questions that tormented one, afterwards it's easier. You're a clerk and this happ(ening) is already up to here. In the beginning this amused me, however, you see that the crowd ignores you on a clearly social plan. As a bank clerk, who gives a damn about you. And this is how they classify you and no one counts on you seriously anymore. Everyone thinks that you're some kind of hobbyist, but even this wouldn't bother me if I had had the opportunities to make films.

• **During that time you also became a cine-amateur?**

- I didn't consider that moving around film, that reflection as amateurism, and considering that during that time I had no other opportunities to affirm myself other than through film amateurism, I shot films and I had to become involved in the circulation of these films: federation festivals, republic ones and, normally, I fell into amateur film. Here there existed a well-established classification which, in principle, I didn't like.

• **Let's get back to photography. Were the photographs a substitute for film?**

- Using the example of a series of photographs, the twelve of them, where you can see my head en face and in profile - first

with a beard and hair, and later shaved, arose from my desire to talk about film. These close-ups of mine are in fact **Dreyer** and **Joan of Arc** and **Maria Falconetti** who are cutting hair. There's also the opening scenes of *My Life to Live*. And in that film again, and not accidentally, **Anna Karina** goes to the cinema to watch **Dreyer's** *Jeanne d'Arc*. Even **Bresson** is here who comments **Dreyer** in his film *Journal d'un curé de campagne* [Diary of a Country Priest]. This also applies to **Stevens'** close-up shots in *A Place in the Sun*, I can never forget those close-ups of **Monty** and **Liz** when **Monty** announces his love to **Liz** and when she takes him out to some balcony. For his cinematographer - **William C. Malone** - you don't know where he's better, in his close-ups, in landscapes or in the long shots of the rooms. In addition to this, I think that **Godard** in his film *Breathless* was very inspired by *A Place in the Sun*.

STRAIGHT LINE, BLUE RIDER, CIRCLE

• What did you do after *The Forenoon of a Faun*?

- I came to **Petek** and told him that I wanted to shoot the films *Straight Line*, *Circle* and *Blue Rider*.

• You already had defined ideas for those films even then?

- Yes.

• Did you define the ideas while you were still working on *The Forenoon of a Faun*, or immediately after that?

- It was all part of the plan. These were all things that needed to be realized somewhere around '63 but there was no time. And '63, the end of '63, because *Faun* was first shown to the public at the end of '63, in December.

• Where?

- At the GEFF. Somewhere in the Spring of '64 I begged **Petek** for us to continue shooting. *Straight Line*, *Blue Rider* and *Circle* were to be realized in Zagreb. *Straight Line* taking the tram from Maksimir to Dubrava, *Circle* from Zagreb's Neboder, and *Blue Rider* was to have been filmed in a bar which was called *Mosor* back then and which was now called *Ivo*. This was, like this, a nice meeting place for little night owls, no? You know that place, don't you? However, when I came to **Petek**, he said: "You know what, my friend, I work as a cameraman for the television, I don't have a lot of time, you know what, why shouldn't you learn how to film on a 8mm so that you can film it yourself. However, that was the problem in that I had this incredible fear of technology. But then, at the GEFF in '63, I met **Petar Blagojević**, who was from the Cine Club Belgrade and brought films to the GEFF. He brought them there and showed them to the jury. Being as I was also hanging about then as a spectator, in that way I managed to watch the complete amateur production, got to know it better and we all became great friends. And when that happened with **Petek**, then I complained to **Petar** of my situation, and he said: "Listen, it would be best if you came to Belgrade, so that we can realize it there. And then somewhere in October of '64 I took a vacation and went to Belgrade. I had bought a ton of sound-negative in Zagreb...

• How much did that cost you?

- It was fairly expensive. And then with that material I went up, and then in exchange for the sound-negative he gave me *umkehr*, very sensitive material. And then we set forth to shoot those three films, which I hold as a whole. It's a trilogy. The second trilogy. The first was *Faun*. The preparation took about a week, and then we shot all three films in three days. On Thursday we shot *Straight Line*, *Circle* on Friday, we shot *Blue Rider* on Saturday, somewhere around six-seven in the evening to about ten, eleven.

• What makes the films a trilogy?

- In *Straight Line* the camera is placed on a vehicle, the whole object which we are filming is in motion. This is at once a static shot, in one part, and a tracking shot towards the front. Dualism of the view. I am situated in one object which is determined by the fact that you can see the windows of a tram, and the whole object is once again in motion. The whole thing goes by a strictly fixed trajectory, which is called a track, that is, the tram is moving along the tracks and one is in the middle of the shot. *Blue Rider* was shot first-hand by **Petar Blagojević**, the cameraman, according to his discretion and impulses which he received from the scene making pans and tracking shots. I told **Petar** that we'd go into bars and any man that moves out of his way, or any sight that seems interesting to him at that moment to follow them. And at some intervals I was behind him pushing him to go in one direction, or telling him: Shoot that or that. Sometimes he would shoot according to his discretion, for instance, there was one man who was moving through a space, from the bar to the exit and he caught him and followed him; then he would see some interesting babe who would be eating, and he would shoot her. Without any rules and without any order. Actually, there was some order, the order was in that in which we said that we would enter that bar and that we would tape people and situations, but only people and not spaces - people dominate the shots. That was what was assigned - and whatever else comes passing through. That was *Blue Rider*. And the third part, *Circle*, was conceived as having us climb up the highest building in Belgrade - the Albania - Let's say, I imagined the filming of that film so that the cameraman sits on a chair which would be on a revolving platform and that he begins to film starting from his feet, that I stand behind him and that I turn him around, and that he slowly lifts the camera up. The conditions, however, were such that we couldn't bring any kind of contraption up to the top of the Albania and use it precisely as some kind of device, so that a human hand pulled this off in the end. I am glad that it exists and such, because the idea which was leading me at that moment was visible: a continuous panning.

SOURCES

- And that whole thing, among others, was dedicated to some people. It carried the names of some renowned classic jazz players. In *Straight Line* the music is by **Duke Ellington**. Then, *Blue Rider* is dedicated to **Art Blacky**, and *Circle* has the music of **Count Basie**. *Straight Line* was conceived as a **Stevens**, *Blue Rider* as a **Godard** and *Circle* as a **Yutkevich**.

• What did you watch by Yutkevich?

- I liked two of Yutkevich's films with the crossing over from silent to sound film. One was called *Golden Mountains*, the second - I forgot its title. Those two films and I really liked his film *Man with a Gun* made in 1939. In the film *Golden Mountains* the panning shot was dominant and tracking shots with panning. There's one scene where a man is sitting in a deep armchair - the panning shot takes place, regardless of whether the man has moved or not, that is, regardless of whether that man gives a reason for that panned shot. The camera circles the room on its own in panning mode.

• 360°?

- Three hundred sixty degrees! Now, look, I remember it as such; what is in fact the material truth I have no idea.

• You were watching this when you were making your film?

- I watched that Yutkevich somewhere in '59, '60. But it remained like that, in my head. One man is in a recliner - that's how it remained in my mind. That man is experiencing stress and withdrawing into himself. Yutkevich shows this so that the actor is sinking into the armchair. But the camera is panning and every time the camera returns to him we see the man sinking deeper and deeper into the recliner. The camera continues to pan, it follows the wall, objects, comes back to the man and we see that he's sunk even more deeper. And that just blew my mind! There's one more thing - with Hitchcock. When he's doing a love scene, Hitchcock does a close-up tracking pan around the two who are kissing. That is his signature. Just as I did in *Glenn Miller*. He did that in *Notorious*, in *The Paradine Case*, in *Rebecca*, in *Vertigo*. *Straight Line* is related to *A Place in the Sun*. *Blue Rider* is related to Godard. To Godard in *My Life to Live*... his closing sequences. There's dialogue, and all at once, instead of a cut, he just pans to the street, the scene is played out in a café: the pimp and Anna Karina. Godard's tired of dialogue and instead of a cut he just pans to the passers-by and then fades out. Or Nana talking with someone in the room and from their close-ups Godard pans out to the street, or to the house across the way, and then a fade-out. For the most part, in those first films of his, Godard, especially in *Breathless* and *My Life to Live* makes ample use of people on the street, random passers-by. In *Breathless* when Seberg sells a *New York Herald Times*, I doubt that they were directing anything there. It was because of these things that I gave those subheadings to the films. And I wanted to mention deliberately these renowned professionals because I thought that all these things that I do are nothing more than what they do too.

INTER-TITLES IN FILMS

• In almost all your films from that period you have titles. How did you relate towards them then, what did they mean to you?

- Somehow in '51 and '53 I saw the first silent films. The first were the Buster Keaton ones; I watched them in the JNA House in 1951. The first feature-length silent film that I watched was Eisenstein's *Old and New*. That was at the Balkan Cinema in '52. And in '53 there was the *The Battleship Potemkin*. And these

films had a lot of titles. And that graphic Russian Cyrillic in the films *Old and New* and *The Battleship Potemkin* appealed to me a lot. At the time I did not hold it to be a meaningful part of the film, rather clearly artistic. And that is why, when I began to work on *Faun*, I wanted titles to be included. At that time I worshipped silent films. I love them even now. But at that time I considered the title to be an element of film visuality. When someone watches *Old and New*, then the titles, that Russian Cyrillic, truly do come across as phenomenal. For example they wanted to show that someone is yelling Fire! all the louder. Then they placed a small title card, and this would be enlarged to gigantic dimensions. It's fantastic, this animation of titles. And later, when I watched Dreyer's films, in his *Jeanne d'Arc* around 45 percent of the length of the film is titles. Those versions were either Danish, or German, or French, or Russian. Or you would see gothic script, or Latin or Cyrillic. You would watch the letters of these titles for seconds and minutes. You watch that. Whether you want to or not, this is present when you are watching silent films, you simply get used to it, and accept it as a constituent part of the visuality of that movie and history. This is why I deliberately inserted titles in my films.

• But your titles are not only visual, they're not only letters...

- Just like for Dreyer titles are not just titles. But, trust me...

• Visuality was the main motif.

- ... Yes, it was the main motif. I wanted that all things somehow remind them of the film which I see in cinemas, or which I watched at the Kinoteka, what I was talking about, what I was thinking about. There were some films that I reflected on for months, which didn't let me sleep for weeks on end. Every new viewing of a Stevens, new viewing of a Bresson, or every new viewing of a Stroheim film, or Hawks - that was for me!

• And when did you decide on the meaning, about what would be written in the title, did you have anything planned, or did you put whatever occurred to you?

- Wherever I could I planned, but I can't remember how, it's too much of a time gap.

• With *The Forenoon of a Faun*, and according to one of your statements, you threw in the maxim ("It's necessary to live self-confidently watching"), in *Straight Line* and *Circle* you have some semi-ironic comments which redirect and dash one's attention...

- Considering that I knew, that whenever I watched silent films in Kinoteka, and when the titles were translated, literally, that this always caused laughter in the audience, perhaps in that moment I wanted the titles in *Straight Line* to cause people to laugh. I actually wanted to provoke for myself that same atmosphere which I would feel watching silent films.

PEOPLE'S REACTIONS

• How did the people to whom you showed your films react at the start?

- Mainly they gave me a hard time.

• **And your colleagues?**

- Even colleagues. But they were also kind towards me.

• **They would give you a hard time because they thought that it had nothing to do with film?**

- No, but that it was, something amusing, but that it lacked any seriousness.

• **That's people messing around with you. It was said that Tom enjoys fucking around with the viewer, and that he bothers them.**

- Yes, he, he... My films were perceived like, well, good, it can be that, why not! Something like that.

• **After you went to Belgrade and shot those three films you had quite a pause.**

- I did and I didn't. In '64 I was making a lot of collages. And in '65. In '65 I spent a lot of time planning intensively. But somehow there wasn't any money. The shooting of the films had to be organized, and somehow that wasn't really happening those years. What's more, I was scraping along with film techniques, so that '65 was, actually, a pause. And in '66 I made four films.

• **Are there any ideas which you haven't realized?**

- There are a lot of them.

• **Can you describe some of them.**

- There's one thing which I thought I would film in '65. It was supposed to be one scene, one zoom. I had planned on making it on the corner of former Ljubljanska and Jagičeva Streets, near the Zapadni kolodvor (West Station). It would be a scene of twelve minutes. I searched for cameramen all over Zagreb, and two had promised me, but they didn't end up shooting.

• **And what happened with the zoom, what was supposed to happen?**

- From a wide-angle it would imperceptibly go to a zoom, actually from a wide close shot to a narrow one, so that you wouldn't even be able to feel that it's a zoom, rather one would notice the optics getting narrower only near the end of the film.

• **Do you have any more?**

- I have a notebook where I wrote down those things. But I don't want to talk about it because some things are fresh and I would like to work on them these days. Right now I would be able to make a program of two days... If I were able to realize these new ideas, there would be film for around 48 hours of showing time.

• **What else did you work on, in '66?**

- In '66 I made *Elle* (Fitzgerald).

• **How did you come by materials? In the Cine Club?**

- No. I worked on everything more or less with my money, and we shot on a friendly basis. Mainly these things which I began to work on from '66 onwards were on 8mm. They were shot by **Andelko Habazin** and **Ivo Lukas**. **Habazin** shot *Kuda idemo ne pitajte* [Don't Ask Where We're Going], *Osjećam se dobro* [I Feel

all Right], and **I. Lukas** and I shot *Elle*. In '66 I had already decided to complete my *Employment Action* and to head towards new adventures.

SEX

• **In your films and photo sequences, as well as in all other actions, the theme of sex always appears - be it leafing through erotic magazines (S), be it a happening in which a woman was supposed to be nude, be it your streaking through Terazije, the texts that you wrote and even your swearing.**

- In Belgrade I was one of the worst swearers. There was no one worse than me. The biggest profaner. Terrible.

• **And how was it with your works in which the theme of sex was always prevalent?**

- Sex is present in all the films. The sexiest fellow who was ever on film - do you know who that was? It was **Bresson**. His film, *A Man Escaped* is pure sex. That scene where those two take off, you know what that is... I am oversimplifying now, but that is... that is a spermatozoid that has succeeded in getting into the egg. That part where he escapes, that's where he's managed to pass, that's one out of a hundred million. It's the same with *Pickpocket*. **Dreyer** in *Jeanne d'Arc*, even that is pure sex, and his *Vampire*. And not to mention **Stevens**... *A Place in the Sun* - that reeks of sperm. Every good movie. Why **Hawks'** *Rio Bravo* is a first-rate fuckfest. I didn't want to talk about it, because then everything goes to hell... It would require a separate story. It's really stupid to show fucking on film, just because the film in itself is a fuckfest. For example, in *Doctor Strangelove*, when that guy passes through all barriers and throws the bomb... that's... Here's what I wrote in one text: "A good film is in fact a fuckfest, and a fuckfest is all the better the less it literally reminds one of (an individual) woman, a cunt, a cock, and more of the rhythm of fucking and its final result - satisfaction." That's why I'd rather not talk about sex.

HOW TO BEHAVE

• **When we're already speaking of texts, you even published texts. You published the text 'Group Enjoyment in Open and Closed Spaces' which was even included in the anthology collection *New Serbian Stories*, 1972. That text was written almost like an instruction for filming. Did you mean it like that or...?**

- That was in fact a project for action. It was written when I couldn't make films.

• **At the Academy did you have limited work possibilities?**

- There were very poor possibilities for work. Of the film kind. I wrote those texts in the absence of all possibilities. And the possibility for realizing films and for actions.

• **This your text can even be interpreted as a program or sample for a specific type of lifestyle.**

- I think that that is more a thing of spirit than of the realization of that for real. Because I don't know how it would be if

people really behaved like how I had written in the text.

• **How do you mean a thing of the spirit?**

- I can imagine it, and delight in the idea, but if one were to live like this... I don't know.

• **Now regardless of how it was understood, as a program or simply as one's thoughts, this what you describe in the text can be understood as a conceived, imaginative, alternative to a normal type of behaviour.**

- Well, what do I know... it's a little deviation from the normal. Besides that, I think that it is rather artificial, considerably artificial. I think that it looks good on paper, but if it were to be realized... But, the fact is, if I were the director in that case, I would like to make it like that, that in that moment the director performs. And there are a lot of directors. Almost everyone is a director, be they conscious of that or not: they want something, they want to make something that would be good for them, or to have something develop in the way in which they so wish. I doubt that I would want things to happen like that in real life. It is however a considerable twistaround. But then again, if there wasn't your life, there wouldn't be my story. It does however rely a lot on that what I know of that life. And so I count on this normal life, I don't deny it. Rather the opposite. I am for what Mao Tse Tung says 'let a thousand flowers bloom'.

• **That's how one could interpret your forms of behaviour which are discerned and which are mentioned previously. I refer to your profaneness, your beard, your style of dress, your actions... these would all be the indications of those alternative possibilities, but which do not wish to disorder this situation...**

- Yes, but rather that people see that even that exists, and that it entertains them. I actually really like people, and I love life, I love everything, but I don't like uniformity, that bothers me, and becoming a stereotype bothers me, and I am bothered by all those things that are canonized.

You see, I never really thought about that. That just came to me spontaneously. I didn't even think that my behaviour would be another type of behaviour from the ordinary. It seemed to me that this would be interesting to people, nothing more.

EIGHTS

• **The film 7 is tied in with that series of photographs?**

- Yes, it is also a film of close-ups, of my mother, my sister, a female friend and the woman I loved at that time and close-ups of people from the street.

• **It is also a film about people to whom you were connected to...**

- Yes, through the vagina...

• **And what about the people from the street?**

- Those are actually two blocks. The people from the street belong to the second block.

• **Another theme comes to mind. The question of sex in...**

- Well I think that the whole structure of *I Feel All Right* and *29*

exactly that. I mean sexual. I think that that can be felt. The thing is that both of the films are tied in with Hitchcock's aesthetic in me and with his work in *Rear Window*. That *Rear Window* is hardly a random film to me. Hitchcock takes up a vast space of my sensibility. Clearly, not Hitch the writer and creator of tense films, but Hitch the architect of space and spatial emotions. His films are, to me, quite spatial in their structure, let's say in some forms, let's say in spheres, spirals, cubes... he spatially sculpts the occurrences of the soul. And even *I Feel All Right* and *29* could be called films in memory of Hitchcock, actually an attempt to explain to myself that real Hitch. This is tied in with my claim that the film screen is a reality which I am exploring just as others explore life. I think that Resnais in his film *Last Year in Marienbad* gave one of his best essays on Hitchcock and his *Rebecca*, and he answered how one should write about Hitch: simply make a movie.

• **You mentioned that in Hitchcock you see geometric bodies: the sphere, cone, etc. Your films, however, have the titles of the characters - straight line, circle.**

- The film *Kud idemo ne pitajte* [Don't Ask Where We're Going] is one that I wanted to be a film, but also a pure plane, a plane which moves, not in that cinematic sense, but that that one-dimensionality is always visibly present. And so the triangle of the sky is seen, then you can see trees, and then the figure of a man with a hat - everything looks strange in that cinematic sense, and when we concentrate on the plane, then some other things begin to show up. These are also reflections about film. About Godard, because often when I watched his films again I had the impression that getting that plane is what's so important to him, that neither plastic nor panning was important, nor the depth of the scene, nor the story, nor anything. That we concentrate only on the screen, on the plane itself. And that this tries to establish its own rhythm, which it often achieves.

• **What Godard films are you referring to?**

- Every Godard film has that. In some of his films he took this to the... In *Les Carabiniers* you can see how a guy enters a cinema and is watching some movie. Some babe is there in a bathtub on the screen and she's taking a bath and he doesn't know if this is real or not and he tries to enter the screen. He doesn't understand that that is in fact a plane. That's what I meant when I was doing that film...

HAPPENING

• **In one series of photographs you are running naked through Belgrade. What were your motivations for that action?**

- To create an extraordinary situation for myself and for others, a drastic combination of intimacy and publicness.

• **And for the series *Ovde na ovom mestu* [Here In This Place] about memorial plaques, what were the reasons that you did that?**

- I was interested in photographically shooting frozen narrations of some torrid events. There's one plaque where it says

that in that place, in front of that house a woman was shot six times and killed by a man in the presence of her daughter. The plaque was placed there by 48 Belgrade work collectives.

• **That's fascinating...**

- Yes, that is in fact what caused me to make that series. I knew that woman. She was very beautiful and one man had fallen madly in love with her and wanted to marry her even though she was already married. He supposedly even befriended her husband and tried to 'buy' her from him. In the end he just couldn't be without her and then he killed her. I took pictures of other plaques too. All the plaques are written in Cyrillic, and the graphic quality of that script was very appealing to me. Besides that, every plaque was written with different letters. I simultaneously love and hate words. They mean something and they don't.

• **When did you make your first happening?**

- I think that my first departure for work was in fact my first happening; all those ten years of service was my happening in space and in time.

• **This wasn't a construction that emerged later?**

- No, because at that moment I had that kind of awareness about that, and we did a literal happening in 1967. Šercar, Lukas and I wrote the scenario. We performed it in the basement of Ilica 12, where there was a basement scene. The producer was Ivica Gorjup. Before the audience came, we filled the hall with dark incense, so that it was impossible to breathe, and we placed an empty snail shell on every chair. And across the floor as well. So that when the people entered, as it was dimly lit, all you could hear was crunching. There was a slide projection from *Playboy* on the wall featuring some nude fox, and the music was by Chris Connor, a famed American singer from the fifties. She was singing *Spring is Here*. The scene that was set up also featured one cabinet, two mallets of ten kilos, balls made out of newspaper, four or five chickens in a cage, instruments: a guitar, violin, and harmonica even though none of us knew how to play. We were dressed in dark suits with white shirts and ties. There was milk and bread in the cupboard, while there was a babe sitting onstage who was supposed to be nude, but we were barely able to find a woman who would even want to sit up there. The woman had a paper bag with rice and some crinkly candies in her hand, and she was supposed to interfere in the watching of what was happening by throwing rice and with the fact that she was naked. Pansini was also there with his camera which was supposed to record the action, and Pansini's wife was there too. When the public had finished coughing, we came out, drank the milk and ate the bread, walked around and talked and then we proceeded to pounce on the cabinet hitting it until it was in small pieces.

• **How long did the action last?**

- I think it lasted close to an hour, or I lost my orientation.

• **You had chickens on the scene. What happened to them?**

- I think that the public took most of them.

• **Yes? And you didn't kill the chickens?**

- They were supposed to be killed and their blood drained. We were planning on soaking our arms in the blood and to leave handprints across the white wall of the scene, but just at the moment when we were supposed to move on to that, the electricity went out. That entire crowd along with us found ourselves in complete darkness for fifteen minutes, that no one moved... So that that blank, which was so creepy that our hair stood on end, totally threw us off stride. We were standing there, the electricity came back on, and we waited five-ten minutes and no one was getting up, everyone was staring into those wrecks and then we said that it was over. Now I told you the end, but I didn't say what happened before that: we were playing, producing some sounds and we left the instruments and began to throw balls made out of newspaper at the audience. The audience started to throw them back and along the way a rapport was established, so that there ensued a thrashing by paper balls. We would aim at those closest to us and a lot of dust was kicked up and they would aim back at us. Later we took the chickens and instead of the paper balls we started throwing them. However, those were those chickens from incubators so that they were immobile and they were not giving off any sounds, they were anaemic. For some time the chickens would be returned to us but from a total of six we only got back two in the end and when we were getting ready to kill one with an axe, the lights went out again. At the persuasion of the manager of the basement scene, we made a remake of that happening even though we were aware that it wasn't the real thing. A person can't commit suicide twice.

• **What were the reactions of the public?**

- There were a lot of our acquaintances, and a lot of those whom we had no idea who they were. In general, there were about a hundred people.

• **Did it have any echoes in the press?**

- Well I think there was talk of it, but it didn't come out in the press, except for the announcement that the happening was taking place, nothing at all.

• **Isn't that same happening in the film *Slučajni život* [Accidental Life]**

- Peterić was, I think, at that second happening and he wanted to call his film *Happening*, but at that time when he was shooting his film there was an American film that came that had the same title, so he changed the title to *Accidental Life*. But I don't consider that a happening, that was acting for friends. A happ cannot be acted, it's not a theatre piece. Perhaps he intended to give a larger space to happening in the film, but he cut it in editing. He thought that to be the characteristic sign of the main character, who was also a clerk as was I at that time. During that time I socialized quite intensively with the gang: Ante Peterić, Zoran Tadić, Branko Ivanda, Vladek Vuković, and there was also Hrvoje Lisinski. They looked upon my employment with kind dispositions. They thought that this was a symbol of a specific atmosphere: a young intellectual and an office worker at that. The fact was that *Gravitacija* [Gravity] and *Slučajni život* are films about young people working as office workers.

FILM STUDIES

• In 1967 you were still an office worker?

- Until October, when I left for Belgrade. In September I had gone to give my entrance exam. I took a seven-day vacation and being that the entrance exam lasted longer than that, I asked in writing if they could extend my unpaid leave of absence for the whole month. I passed the entrance exam, came back and worked as an office worker for one more month. Before that I had planned on finishing that Zagreb office clerk service with ten years and that in 1967 I would change my social life in any which way. I had two possibilities: to either enrol in the Academy and to try to be closer to those people who work with film or to go to Germany.

• What was the entrance exam like?

- We wrote screenplays and shooting scripts, conversations, examinations. When we arrived we wrote an entrance admissions work. We could choose between a screenplay for a short film or some theoretical work. I wrote a screenplay entitled *Rupa* [Hole]. This was a story about a bunch of city boys who are involved in hunting and every weekend they go to some hunting grounds somewhere in the country and there they joke around, eat, drink and act stupid; it's no rabbit or pheasant hunting, but they get together to be alone, without their wives and kids, and to joke around. There's some kind of fence there that has a hole and through the hole they can see a small meadow with an undersized tree and their greatest kick was when they get there to peer through the hole at that meadow and tree and that no one knows why they continually go to look through that hole. At the end they pick up and go back to the city. It seems that the examinations committee liked this and I continued to work on it.

• How did you feel as an older student?

- I was thirty then. Well, it was okay, only my savings weren't all that great, so that I lived quite the minimalist life. I had a little money but a lot of time so I went to the cinema a lot and I spent a lot of time rattling on about film. So that I had my study group. Mainly, they would say that I had a destructive influence on particular classes of students. This bad influence consisted of my telling them how they should watch as many films as they could. I would tell them how one should watch films ten times and how one viewing doesn't mean anything. That genres don't mean anything, that film techniques were shit, that everyone should know how to do everything and that in the end all techniques were made for laypeople. Basically, I wanted to free people from all taboos and pressures and that they act normally. I would say that films were actually something other than what those stupid critics would blather on about, retelling film contents.

• Tell us something about the projects you worked on in school.

- There was little money. Although there were some classes which did well. We worked on 8mm and 16mm. The films I worked on at the Academy were not experimental. The films had their stories, messages, they had their actors, panning shots,

tracking shots because that is what the stories required. You needed to show that you knew the ABCs. It's only normal that I showed the way of viewing certain problems in that professional cinematography which we viewed in cinemas, that's how let's say *Villen II* was a reflection on **Visconti**, *Br. 187* [No. 187] some kind of reflection on **Hitchcock**, and *Slani kikiriki* [Salty Peanuts] was in fact a reflection on the Hollywood way of resolving *mise-en-scène* problems by, let's say: **Wyler**, **Wilder**, **Curtiz** etc. These were reflections about problems of the trade which these directors posed. The only professional film that I made was *Zdrav podmladak* [Healthy New Generation]. **Lazar Stojanović** and I reviewed fifty feature films which had been made here between 1949 and 1960 and we made a collage of sequences from those films.

WORK ON FILMS WITH A HEAD AND TAIL

• Did you ever think of making more traditionally determined films, feature lengths, documentaries...?

- I sent some projects several times to the Zagreb Fund, and every time they were, I don't know for what reasons, rejected. Therefore I did participate, but in all likelihood one needed to participate more systematically. That is what I have hesitations about. Feature films both interest me and they don't, documentary films interest me and don't interest me, because I know that this thing with film is tied in tremendously with piles of money, and a person is less independent. On the one hand I would like to do my own things, that no one interferes, and on the other I would like to work on films that someone would give me! And no one has ever offered for me to work on such films. Listen, there was a very big desire on my part to work on those kinds of films. When I wanted to make those kinds of films at the Academy, then they wouldn't let me. When I had the immense desire to work on feature films, to show that I can make a feature film that is good, one which has a head and tail, and a middle - stomach, they didn't let me. Besides, I am not even interested in drama literature. I am not the least interested in what is dramatic, those five acts. **Lessing**, **Shakespeare**... this doesn't interest me.

• But in films you watch dramas.

- The question is what I actually like... I like everything that passes through a projector, I like it all. Normally, I have a circle of interests, but I don't divide that which appeals to me into genres. I love all genres, I love documentaries, feature films. I have a small objection to animated film, not every one, but I don't like the so-called aestheticized animated film, that's detestable to me. My ideal is *Tom and Jerry* from **Quimby's** phase. That to me was a first-rate thing, that was **Bach** in animation. I like high-impact things, when the animation is a fine, finer form, when there's a lot of animation, when something is positioned well, with a point, a message, when things are both well-drawn and well-written, that's what I like, but that's not a *movie* for me, that's something completely different. Of documentary filmmakers I like **Flaherty**, **Leni von Riefenstahl**, these are things that fill me with enthusiasm. But if I wanted to make such a film, then I would have plenty to explain. I don't

want to even think about that. That would inhibit me. Then I would rather be an office worker, and I would rather write, imagine, then that...

AMATEURISM AND UNCONVENTIONAL FILM

• Tell us something about amateur film back at the time.

- I wouldn't call it amateur film, I would rather call it private, experimental, unconventional, underground film. We knew more about film than those who were proclaimed as professionals.

• Which authors and films would you like to mention from that period?

- Goran Švob and his films *Udarci* [Blows] and *Bježi* [Run]. Goran had first showed up at the Cine Club as a seventeen-year-old. The film *Blows* is, in my opinion, one of the most important film realizations in Yugoslavia. That film means a lot to me. This film was also a confirmation that Goran's long-time hanging about in cinemas was a great thing. The film *Run* proved that *Blows* was not a fluke thing and that the thought behind the film is first with Goran Švob. The films by Goran Švob are among the most beautiful that I have ever seen in my life. I make mention here of Ivan Martinac and his wide opus, I don't single out any film, but his thoughts behind the films, which was very close to me between 1955 and 1964. Martinac and I thought together. I mention Sava Trifković and his film *Ruke ljubičastih daljina* [Hands of the Purple Distance].

I make mention of my marvellous colleague Petar Blagojević-Arandelović and his films *Odjek* [Echo] and *Ekstaza* [Ecstasy]. If it wasn't for Peter, perhaps I would never have shot my trilogy: *Straight Line*, *Blue Rider* and *Circle*.

I make mention of Anđelko Habazin and his entire opus, a succession of gems, and towards which the Zagreb public reacted quite harshly. I make mention of Ivo Lukas, who introduced sound-negative to the Cine Club Zagreb and who shot his film about a youth jumping around the Sava bank, running across bridges, etc. Lukas introduced sound-negative into film amateurism in Yugoslavia.

Vjekoslav Nakić appeared in '61, and I consider his opus to be one of the most important in unconventional film.

• Are there any younger authors who are interesting to you?

- Actually, there are no conditions for unconventional film, not in the material but in the creative sense, because every guy who is even remotely talented ends up sooner or later at the academies. Back when we were resolving our aesthetic problems, the situation was a bit different than the one nowadays. Back then there was simply no acknowledgment of there being anything other than one genre, and that of the feature film. There were things that allowed something other than fables to be done, and that was animated film: but to think through film in the way Bresson, Godard, Stevens or Straub did, that could never be. Because every film had to have a message which was clear both verbally and in the dramatic sense. But I do remember that there were films which had a message, but they also had their aesthetic messages. Belan's film *Tunolovci* [Tuna Catchers] was a message that film in Yugoslavia can be made on

some other grounds. Another film that I remember is that of the late Velimir Stojanović - his *Pesme u sužnju* [Songs in Captivity]; this is a film about some walls of a fortress in the Montenegrin coastlands and the reflections of the sun off the sea's surface. The entire film is these walls and reflections. But to return to the question, in 1964 I saw Naška Križnar's film which lasts for one minute. It talks about a man who exits some door, finds a brick there, there are some demonstrators carrying flags by the door. This film literally astounded me. Then I saw Žljinović's film *Srpske freske* [Srb Frescoes] about the bathrooms in Vojvodina. Ante Verzotti appeared in '66. His films, there are about four or five, are top-quality pieces of unconventional film. That same year I became acquainted with Vinko Rozman's piece *Odmev in odziv* and *Navadno življenje, Torzo*. I met Karpo Ačimović-Godina and Jure Pervanje, authors of the films *Divljad* and *Blues br. 7*.

FOREIGN EXPERIMENTAL FILM

• When did you first see foreign experimental films?

- I was familiar with avantgarde film from before, from 1957. For example, Vorkijev's (Slavko Vorkapić) *Slučaj hollywoodskog statista br...* [The Case of Hollywood Extra No. ...]. And I was familiar with Maya Deren's work. We watched that in Kinoteka. I received the first information that some atypical work was being done at the age of thirteen from the Belgrade magazine *Film*, published by Vicko Raspor and where there were sections on experimental film. All of that which I read as a kid I later watched at the Kinoteka: Vorkapić, Maya Deren, Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* etc. And that American *underground*, which acknowledges Léger and Maya Deren as its spiritual muses, was inspired by the ever-criticized Hollywood film, which is a great treasure trove. When you watch one sequence from Anthony Mann's *Glenn Miller Story*, where the music of the American patrol is overlaid by scenes of soldiers leaving for battle, their rehabilitation in hospitals, attacks and explosions of bombs, that sequence is pure *underground* just as is the film *Cosmic Ray* by Bruce Connor. I have the impression that *Cosmic Ray* emerged from those Anthony Mann sequences, and Bruce Connor certainly saw that film, because they all went to the movies as kids. They were born in movie theatres. The fact is that so-called Hollywood is no bugaboo, but rather a treasure trove. I saw my first *real* *underground* film in 1967 in Pula in P. Adams Sitney's hotel room. Brakhage's 8mm *Poems*. After this we would watch *underground* during film youth evenings, from one o'clock after midnight to sunrise, some 40 hours worth.

• Did you ever see any film by Michael Snow?

- No, they have made mention of him to me.

• I ask this because he made a film in 1971 - *La Région Centrale* - which is very similar in idea to your *Circle*.

- I heard this from Bojana Makavejev. She watched Michael Snow's films in New York and following the projection she told Snow how there was one similar to that in Yugoslavia. I doubt what she said happened later.

• Snow has a film which is only called graphically, and not verbally, you had similar projects as well.

- Yes, I wanted to call one film by the belt buckle image **John Wayne** wore in **Howard Hawks'** *Rio Bravo*. What's interesting is that this same image is hauled through four more of **Hawks'** films in which **Wayne** stars: *Red River*, *Eldorado*, *Rio Lobo* and *Hatari*. I think that this was a belt that **Hawks** himself wore in real life.

WATCHING FILMS AND MAKING FILMS

• What is the relation between how much you love to watch films and how much you love to make them?

- I think that I get the most enjoyment out of my own films. But I think I would be the happiest then when I wouldn't have to do anything more than just watch.

• But you are always watching.

- Yes, but you have to live, that's the thing. The thing is: when I began to work, I called this my first direction; I did this simply to have them leave me alone, so that I could watch my movie non-stop. That was a table and papers, a table and papers, a table and papers... For me this was completely normal. A movie in itself. When I would go to the movies, I wouldn't go to entertain myself, I would go to work. I considered every one of my outings to the cinema as work. For me film was reality. That is why I revel in watching, that is why my every gaze is a film, as soon as I open my eyes - a film. When I look at something, I am creating once again. Here **Bresson** or **Dreyer** are no longer important, I am creating on the basis of those things which they gave to me, and I know, when I say that a film must be viewed ten times, that that is the truth because I change, and then the film changes as well. In the end, I have been watching *A Place in the Sun* for 25 years and every time I know that they are different, as were the different viewings.

• Does this mean that a person could watch only one film their whole life?

- That is what I am trying to say. This isn't something I thought up. This was said by **Faulkner**, that there are ten books that he reads constantly, his whole life. But what is most important is whether you have watched something or not. What you will say about it is unimportant. Those value systems that a person expresses verbally have no value for their mind, because it will register things itself like a computer and place them in their real places regardless of whether you will give it a plus or a minus.

• Is there any project that you would like to realize?

- I would like to make a film which begins with something and ends in something and vice versa. I don't know if I am expressing myself precisely, but I am fearful of saying it because I would like it to be said through the medium I love best, through film.