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Independent Filmmaker, Peter Kubelka, Lecture

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Sally Dixon: Mr. Kubelka was born in 1934 in Vienna. Lived there most of his life, I gather, up to a several years ago when he first came to America. In talking at dinner times, said that he then got a perspective on his life up to then-saw his country and Europe in a new way and has since then been spending about half of his time in this country and half there or travelling. Oddly enough, unfortunately enough, I have here a quote by Stan Brakhage who was here in October about Peter Kubelka's films.

It was Stan, by the way, who rang in and called and told me he was here, that we could have the possibility of having him come though he wasn't on our regular schedule. We didn't think he'd be here perhaps for another year.

We got him on the spur of the moment which was our great, good fortune. I want to read you Stan's words on him.

"Peter Kubelka is the perfectionist of the film medium. As I honor that quality above all others at this time, finding such a lack of it now elsewhere, I would simply like to say Peter Kubelka is the world's greatest filmmaker which is to say simply, see his films. By all means, above all else, et cetera."

Peter Kubelka. [applause 00:01:35]

[Inaudible 00:01:39 – 00:02:07]

[applause 00:02:15]

Peter Kubelka :I have to speak in the microphone. I don't know. I think it should be higher.

First, I want to say some things. Since I am not in show business, I will make this talk for filmmakers or for people who-I mean-I won't try to entertain you. Please, if you are not interested in the talk, feel free to leave at any time without being impolite.

Also, you see there is a difference in communication between a film on which I can work five years and the talk which I am just making up right now. There will not be this kind of precision and it'll be difficult to articulate.

I will just bring up very slowly some thoughts. They may not necessarily even make a whole-Just, I'll bring up some things which I would like to share. Also, please interrupt if you feel that something is not clear and ask anytime.

When we communicate with a material, we must-Or let's say, other thing, making art is a thing very similar to science or also to a fight over life and death. That means, either you make it or you don't. If you have a material and you have to communicate with the material, you have to know what you have got. [00:05:27]

When you have a sailing boat and you sail from point A to point B, the one who knows about the rules of the water and the wind, the one who knows about the rules of the weather who can foresee where the winds will come from and who knows his boat, he will be there first.

The other one who has the stronger dream and a big passion may not arrive at all if he misjudges his means. I bring this up very deliberately to disillusion about making art, anybody who thinks that passion alone is enough. Although without it, there is no reason to enter the whole thing.

But, when you have the passion to communicate on something and to create something, you must then be very cool. You must know what you have got. You must know exactly what you have got. That's what I was once too. Now, something-The cinema.

Let's look at the cinema. What is it? A very cruel look at the cinema. What do we have got making cinema?

We have got-Wait, a little parenthesis.

I speak about the cinema which is now all over the world, a situation. Of course, we can create different apparatuses. We could have five projectors and all that on the mixed media and all that.

I don't speak about that. I speak about this normal situation as we find it in every cinema and where our articulation will have a possibility to meet people. What have we got there?

We have a room-I speak also now of ideal situations, not of practical deficiencies.

We have a room. This room; people are coming into this room. They let themselves be conditioned in the following way: There is absolute silence and there is darkness. They are also-The people are giving to me a certain amount of their time. This is one situation.

Then I have a certain machinery. I have a screen and I have a machine up there, a projector. What does this projector do? This projector throws impulses of light at the screen. This is for the optics. Nothing else.

It throws 24 impulses of light at the screen, always in the same rhythm, the same precision. Here, we come to first point where the, let's say, classic aesthetics of cinema make the mistake because they start not at the base, they start already at the situation which is two steps away from the base, namely: They all say cinema is movement. They even call it "movie". Where is the movement? There is no movement in cinema, never. Nothing ever moves.

On the screen, never there is movement. On the screen are 24 impulses of light. I have possibility of putting a stencil in front of the light source. This stencil can give a certain form to this light on the screen. [00:10:26]

You all know I'm talking about the film. Each frame is stencil and I can exchange this stencil in front of the light source every 24th of a second. That means I have the possibility to present to you 24 different images, let's say, per second.

This is the unchangeable, iron, basic situation for every filmmaker from Peckinpah, DeMille, [speaks in foreign language 00:11:13]. Everybody has this situation.

Well, that's enough. This is for the image. This, I have gotten the image.

Then I have got, of course, a sound source right where the image is. I speak where it should be. I speak of ideal position.

Where the image comes, there is also sound coming from. I have the possibility to meet every of this visual events with a sound. That's it. That's sound cinema.

Now, the fact that you come and you give some of your time. This is now-Here comes in the survival and the passion, you see. I have other people whom I want. They come and they give me so and so much time.

Of course, I want to have as much of them or to put as much to them as I possibly can in the time. From this, follows that I will of course use the smallest possible unit.

The smallest-I will tend to put as much in my time as I can to make the most of the use of the time that I have you. What is the smallest element? It's one impulse of light. It's one image on the screen or one synch event. Here we are, synch event; the meeting of an image with a sound from the same source. I go into this later.

You see, here comes-The economy comes up. The moment I have you for half hour or so or myself, I want to pack the time as much as I can to-

Okay, that's just clear but I'll come-This is the situation of cinema. Let's stop this argument. I want to speak about time now.

It is a known fact that our civilization, that our situation right here now, is much more aware of the time and passing of time than the older civilizations were. It goes back to cultures who did not at all- Maybe they noticed the time

but they were not aware really that life is short, determined, time space. The more you're making the time, the better you're off, of course. [00:15:08]

There are many attempts to stretch the time. Many attempts including drug use or drinking or health food to get older. Anywhere, there is a need. We have a need to pack our time.

When you feel every second, you get more out of an hour than when you feel only every minute. When you feel every split second, you get more out of a minute than if it's just half minutes.

Now we come to something, why cinema is so good for us because for the first time in the history of mankind, we have the possibility to speed up our vision and to control that. That means to articulate things.

For the first time, I mean, look at all other visual arts, the painting is static. The theater depends of the rules of the nature. You have the natural laws. The actor can just walk or run or jump but he cannot change his face 24 times a second or I mean give you these things.

Or earlier attempts like processions with flags, they worked with vision. Or fireworks, you see. But now- Now, I interrupt this. I want to tell a story.

When I was in Africa, I had-You have seen my films, in chronological order. When I was in Africa, this was after the black and white film, I saw the following, early sound film.

This was like this. There was a village, it was a black population who lived in the Bronze Age or so. They were preparing for an ecstasy. Here's one thing, ecstasies, I'm out for ecstasies.

Ecstasies for civilized people who have to sit in a chair, be dressed and cannot dance for seven days and all these things. They were preparing for the ecstasy.

The whole day, they had processions and they had songs, rhythmic songs. They had no drums ever, no instruments and no dancing but just processions. The tension was mounting.

Then there was the sun. The sun sinks very rapidly in Africa. When the sun started to sink, the tension was growing and people with drums would appear.

I didn't know what was happening but I was compelled to watch these people. They looked to the sun-I also looked to the sun. Then came this moment when it grew more silent, more silent. Then the sun touched the horizon.

This moment when the sun touched the horizon, they beat the first drum, "Boom!" They wait the whole day to point out a sink event, to have a sound film, to have the sun, "Boom!"

[laughter 00:19:34]

Then the whole ecstasy started. Then they started to drum, then they sang. Then it went the whole night but they pointed this out. Who can do this 24 times a second?

The cinema can. I can have the sun rise and put down 24 times a second. [laughter 00:19:56] I can have a thunder with it 24 times a second when it goes down. I can have that all the time.

My means, of course, it's not as strong because the sun is- Oh, I come here to something because some people feel that the black and white film is strong or hurts your eyes. [00:20:24]

This is fantastic because we live in a horrible situation that-We are awake, we stand there and then comes this incredible thing. You cannot even look at it which is the sun, it comes down, burns everything out for some hours.

You, you go like this. You cannot look at it. We are now used to it for many thousand years so we know how to protect us but we live the whole day face-to-face to a horror.

You look at the sun for a minute and you're blind. Imagine that. Then the sun goes down and it gets-There's no light at all. It's a horrible situation again. We are used to that too now but our basic situation is a horror. It's good that we don't feel that all the time.

In comparison with that, my film is very subdued, pianissimo, sublimated thing. It still, is good for an ecstasy. This was the story.

I must sometimes stop a little bit because I want to find back to when I was- Yes, the synch event. Other synch events, for example, dance-Ah, yeah, the synch event is the event of a meeting of two events in two different senses at the same time such as a certain visual thing and a certain sound.

This has a very, very strong impact on human beings. This is completely, how shall I say, it's completely-There's no special reason why this is so. It came just from observing nature because when you had a certain animal and the animal [mimics snarls 00:23:23] like this. Also at the same time it [mimics growling 00:23:25]. You knew that this went together and you ran away.

Here, we come to something, to survival. It is my belief that we live-We are the same people than those who lived 200,000 years ago. I mean that-There is this long, long history of the slow growth of mankind.

Also, this year, I was in Italy, I was in Matera which is a city that has cave culture. Several valleys coming into each other. All the slopes are with caves. I also saw the findings of the [foreign language 00:24:24] in these caves.

These caves are inhabited since 200,000 years up to now. There's still a little part where they still live there. Six years ago, a big portion was still inhabited. Then the state put the people out and put them in slums nearby, newly-built slums. The caves were quite good for a long time. Here, I really saw this continuity.

To come back to my argument, we have this long history of very slow or slow development or slow changes in all that is our human life – eating, lovemaking, social relations – this is all, more or less, the same. [00:25:20]

Then comes 6,000 years of starting memory. Then comes 200 years of strange technical progress which has not changed the people really. Here is this discrepancy.

To make this short, whom am I working for with my technical things? For Stone Age people, you see, myself included, of course. That means, the following that our senses, although we don't need it anymore are still conditioned to survival.

If you think of what the senses do, they all just help to survive. You take a new fruit, you don't know it so you smell, smells good. Then maybe you risk a bite. It tastes good, it looks good and then you decide to swallow it. If it looks bad, if it tastes bad, smells bad, you throw it away.

The same things happen with a product of art. Here we are. Art must please the senses. This is a law. It must be beautiful. If it doesn't please, it will not be accepted.

Do not misunderstand. I do not mean to go an easy way and try to please people. There is another law, you must please yourself. When you make a work of art, you have the same obligation as a scientist. The scientist must get a result that stands up. He must find a right result regardless if it smells good or if his fellow people like it. He's out for a result. So is the artist. The artist must please himself alone, but really please.

If you succeed in doing that, you have a chance of pleasing others because we are all equals. The arrogant artists are those who think they please the others but must not necessarily please themselves see?

They say, "Well, it's good. It's good, they'll like it. They will love it. I don't care about myself." These are the arrogants, but you must work for your own highest level and make it clear for you and please you. Then you have a chance of getting across to the others, of getting really-I don't know because I want to fit-Getting forward but which one is forward?

Okay, a new- another thing, to come back on cinema. Now, making art is to articulate because I must get to you. How do I articulate in cinema? Let's make a comparison. How do other media articulate?

For example, language. Just to say this before I enter this speech about that, I do not believe that mankind is really able to articulate at all in any medium, anything new.

The belief that mankind is so much superior to animals is a very touching thing. We have no real possibilities of communicating things to others which they do not already know or almost know. [00:30:07]

Let's take language. You cannot really articulate with language or to tell something to somebody. Let me tell why. If I speak to you now and you think you understand me, what is the condition for that?

The condition is many, many years of study-I mean, we study-You study even if I'm not a student, many years of practicing of learning of an abstract system which, I don't know, 60,000 combinations of sounds which are the words and then a connection of images or of things which come with these words.

To guarantee this, to guarantee that you connect the same thing with this word than I, you must have the same civilizatory upbringing. That means that you must be so similar to myself having had similar experiences, having even similar interests, having read the same kinds of literature, having lived under the same laws of daily life.

Only this kind of nearness which is fantastically-It's a closeness which is incredible, enables us to lead a discussion or enables me to talk to you. This also, of course, implies that I do not know really anything which you don't know.

If I can just try to push you a little bit in one direction, a little bit-If you want to follow, in language, one of the people who really articulated language such as philosophers, you know how many years you have to put in just to read one philosopher, 5 years, 10 years, just to understand what he means with his semantics, what he means with every word.

A communication is, first of all, it's completely misunderstood. Everybody believes, well you tell them, tell them what you want. Nobody is aware of this incredible impossibility of really communicating new things.

Also, all media of communications are fractitious. We have language, music, sculpture, painting, some kinds of pantomime, some kinds of media which do not really touch each other.

I want to say, between each of this communicative media, there are gaps which they cannot cover. For example-I give you an example. I say something in language to you, I say, "I'm feeling now quite all right but it may be that the temperature would change. If it would get another 5° warmer, I would feel uncomfortable." Everybody now knows this.

Now, get this articulation to a sculpture, to a sculpturist. Let him communicate that with clay or with his medium. This will be a task almost impossible for him to do.

On the other hand, a painter comes here and paints you a green meadow. Now, let somebody describe this to somebody else especially to somebody who is blind or who has not seen a meadow.

You see that also where we can communicate. It's narrow, very narrow. On the other hand-I'll close this argument. You see now how difficult this is. On the other hand, there's not really much need to communicate much new things because there aren't any. [00:35:15]

We are here. We live after the laws that are thrown at us by, you can say by nature, we have this. We cannot get out of this world, by no means, except by making art. Let's put it simple, for me, by making a film.

I am born into this, here. I have to stand here and I wear my thing but I want out in reality because-I want out. The only thing that helps you here is to create another world with this thing, with a little sound and with a little light.

This is-The cinema is, how I see it. A mother womb which gives birth to us in another world, we can look on. Something of another world.

Now, back how to articulate. How does language articulate? You have these elements, words, and you say, "Horse". Now, everybody sees another thing, something else. Sleeping-Whatever, nobody sees the same image, really.

Then I can narrow the thing in that I say, "Horse galloping." In everybody, I have created the movement. You see a running-You see movement. You see a running horse, all of you.

Now, how does language work? It works between the words. You see, it works between the words. The word 'between', this is the important thing. Not in the word 'horse', not in the word 'galloping' but galloping horse because horse alone, the horse could do anything. Galloping alone, it could be a cow or other things. Galloping horse, between these, I have an articulation.

I'll prove this in another way. The other one says, "Horse cutlet."

You don't see a horse anymore. You see a piece of raw, a piece of meat but the word 'horse' is in both combinations. Horse galloping, horse cutlet. It's between. Between. A new thing emerges between the two elements.

This is how cinema works. The articulation emerges between the elements. What are the elements? The single frames, the single images. How many possibilities of articulation per second? 24.

24 times, I can grind one thing against another. I can present you one image against another.

Proof. The third film you have seen, *Scwechater*, where this people drink beer. This film consists practically of single images. One thing that nobody can deny is that this film is an incredibly strong visual thing. This is undeniably. It's very, very strong but what do you see? The most banal thing.

You see one person who just does this. This is what is photographed, really. Then you see a waiter who puts-pours him beer in a glass. Then another element is foam, his foam which you might remember its explosions or shells .
[00:40:00]

This film for me was the atomic explosion, you see. This where I put my finger in the units which we thought not devisable because before people said, "Film is movement."

This film is the proof that the power of cinema is not in the fact that it can imitate movement, it's in the fact that I can blow up the movement in fractions, that I have still images.

This film doesn't show you anything else than very meaningless actions. It's beer drinking. But what it really is- At this time, my model was, for example, a somewhat, tree in the wind with this millions of leaves all moving differently or a burning fire or a torrent with all these little bubbles and movements of the water. This incredible varied things. These I contemplated.

If I had a model for this film, it was this, you see immediately. Why it was made of people drinking beer was the fact that I had to pirate all my films.

When I made these films, you have read the dates and especially in Austria, there was no such thing as independent filmmaking. There was none.

I was not very strong. I always try to get films and projects and try to persuade people to let me make something independent. They would always say, "Yes, we will do so but first you make this."

When I went to these beer people, they said, "Okay." I told them what I wanted to do. They said, "Okay, yes. It's very interesting. First, you make a publicity film for us since you have the-You are said to be a talent. Then we'll-"

I started to make the beer film. They never liked it and there came quarrels. At the end they say, "Okay-" this is a much longer story but I cut it short. It was a big suffering for me involved.

They forced me in the end to film what they wanted to then they thought they had won. They say, "You will see. We rent the most expensive restaurant in Vienna then we send you an expert here, there. We give you this many cast. They have to drink. They have to do this and this. You film it."

I said, "Okay." I went there and I filmed it, then I had this material. What you would have seen is this very banal things. Then came the proof where the strength of cinema lies.

Then I blew them up because I made this film which had all the elements they had required for it. You have people drinking beer. No other element. They misjudged what cinema really is. They thought cinema was movement. They thought cinema was reported movement.

Back to the articulation. We articulate between elements. Our film is very complex. It's not only that you articulate between one 24th of a second and the next 24th of a second.

Think of the African film, the last one, where you have what in the old language is called a "shot". It's a shot which consists of many frames, maybe longest is this on the film, 48 frames, 48 images.

Here, we have also articulation but articulation which I call weak articulation because every succeeding image is very similar to the preceding, just a little bit changed.

For example, when you have a man walking, you have one image like this. The next image is completely the same just that he has -Mixes this. The next is completely the same. The background is the same, everything is the same and he makes like this. This is, I would call a weak articulation, a soft articulation.

When suddenly this man changes-The last image of this man here, then the thing changes completely on the screen and you have a sky and birds flying. Here is strong articulation.

In the *Scwechater* film, you have almost exclusively strong articulations. Very fast rhythm and it's a simple subject because it deals, in fact, really with rhythm only. [00:45:40]

Here, we come in here in this very subtle thing. If I want to imply certain thoughts in you, certain feelings, I am suddenly again bound to your mechanics. For example, when I want to create in you nostalgia.

I want to do it, for the shortest time possible. I just want you to have the idea. I seek for the shortest element to create it in you. But it needs a certain time. For example, think of the African film.

You have many things going on and then you have, "Ta-ri-ra-ra-ra-ra". You have this boat making like this. This gives you romantic feeling in maybe a quarter of a second or half a second, but I need half a second.

I cannot give you the feeling of romanticism in a 24th of a second and the next 24th, the feeling of sadness. The moment I enter in wanting to give you other things, then rhythm just rhythm, I have other laws. I have the law of your brains again, of your mechanics but let's not go into it. Let's continue the articulation.

We have articulation between light impulses of light and their form. Articulations between series of similar images. Then we have articulation between image and sound.

For example-I give you some examples of the African film. I have here an image of a man who shakes hand with these Negroes. He makes like this, shakes three hands. That's one thing.

Then I have a sound which is a thunder. In reality, it was not even a thunder, it was people who lowered iron vessels in the fountain to get water. As they fell down it makes, "Broom, broom, boom, broom, broom, broom, broom."

These elements, each separately seem -What do they do? Well, let's analyze them. The thundering, this sound is sound of a thunder. It does all what a thunder does to you, "Broom, broom, broom, broom."

The main feeling when you hear thunder is either fear, also majesty of nature. It impresses you. It's an impressive sound. Then it has a certain rhythm. That's that.

The shaking hands, you have a white man, Negroes. White man is dressed in fancy hunting suit. The Negroes are almost they have their half nude outfit. They are very unsecure against him. He is very sure. This would be the image.

Then they come together, this two elements. I have an articulation between sound and image that goes like this, "Broom, broom, broom, broom, broom, broom, broom." Exactly when he touches their hand and shakes it, the thunder is coming on. [00:50:10]

What does he do? This is translatable in language, he thunders with them. By his sureness, power, beauty, he just has to take their hands and, "Broom, broom, broom, broom, broom, broom, broom." You see?

[laughter 00:50:30]

This was an example of articulation between sound and image. Here, you see the greatness of film again. Contrary to what is believed, its greatness. People thought that the greatness of film is that you can have an illusion of movement, but you can have movement and naturalistic sounds.

You can really have the actor walking and you hear, "[Foot thudding 00:50:54]." Fine. The contrary is true. The greatness of cinema is that I can get rid of the sounds which nature has bound to the visual.

In reality, I always has this, "[Foot thud 00:51:11]" but in film I have, "[chair turns 00:51:14]" but I can use this impact of where a sound I expected and the rhythms of the visual. I can use this to articulate against my sound.

For example, if you watched the-There's this dancing girl who makes these movements. You see her all over the film appearing many, many times. Each time, she's completely different because she reacts to different sound and she articulates with a different sound.

For example, once she makes-she makes-There is this English waltz, this music which goes through the film and she makes, "Ta-ri-ra-ra-ta-ra-ra" which is the movement of abandonment and so and so.

Another time, she is with a motor of a bot starting which makes, "Tak-tak-tak-tak-tak-tak-tak-tak". Another time, she reacts with language.

There is this hunter who tells this story and she says, " But now-[Foreign language 00:52:53-57]." He says, "But now, I respect the jungle." She makes, "But now, I respect the jungle." You see, she becomes ironic. She idolizes him.

The whole film, everything you see, is made like this. The African film, you may speed up your vision and your synch sensations as much as in the *Scwechater* film. You will see that there is always something.

There is no movement on the screen ever that hasn't its thing in the sound. There are no images that would not have a specific articulative meaning. Yes?

Audience: That's very similar to Eisenstein's montage. Were you aware of his-

Peter Kubelka: No, I was completely naïve. In seeing films, I started seeing films after I made the black and white film, really.

Audience: You haven't read the [inaudible 00:54:05]?

Peter Kubelka: No. I didn't even read him now because he's so complicated. I like his work, he's a good. But he never broke up the-I don't know, he never broke up the movements.

He always stays within-Then, of course, his big weight is his enforced messages, his political enforced messages that put him into cement very often. Yes?

Audience: Are you saying that you have the same image on- its a different sequence every time you see it or different film to the same music? [00:55:01]

Peter Kubelka: It is the same image.

Audience: Same film, different kind of sound track each time?

Peter Kubelka: Yes, the same optic element gets different articulations with different sounds such as my example, horse galloping, horse cutlet. Let me give you an example of visual articulation.

For example, you have, let's keep with the hand shaking, you have the man shaking hands like this. Then I have another element where I have a leg of a zebra and the leg of the zebra shakes.

It happens so that it shook-It had the same angle, the same position as the man's hand. It shook in the same rhythm. I put these two things in a way that the man's hand shaking is continued in the zebra shaking.

What do you think? You think, "Ah, he also shakes the zebra's hand."
[laughter 00:56:24] You see, "This Negro, this negro and the zebra" [laughter 00:56:30] but in the next shot, you suddenly see the reason why the zebra's hand is shaking because you still see the shaking but you see the skin is-it's because they tear the skin off, you see.

You see how the visual articulations work. Image against image. Image against sound. Image against following sound. Sound against following image.

Audience: All of the comments in the film are taking [coughs 00:57:10] to primarily working abstractly, through the abstract elements of the film. Yet in the last film you have this element of social comment in film which is there.

I wondered, how did you feel about it, whether you feel that it's an important aspect of the film, whether it's not really a film of social comment?

Peter Kubelka: No, I don't feel-I just took here some example which may seem a social comment because they are easily translatable in language. There are many other articulations which I couldn't use for this examples. They are even the better ones.

Audience: That wasn't really referring to that. I would have said the same thing even if you hadn't mentioned the- [cross-talk 00:58:01]. I feel that there is a part of - [cross-talk 00:58:04].

Peter Kubelka: No, I have no social-I mean, there are social problems, that's fine-I mean, that's not fine. This is not the main problems in-

Audience: But before we have talked about-you talked about-

Peter Kubelka: I have.

Audience: In this film.

Peter Kubelka: Pardon?

Audience: You talked about irony in the films, right?

Peter Kubelka: Yes.

Audience: Irony in the abstract but you can't create irony in the abstract without creating social situations which [cross-talk 00:58:31]

Peter Kubelka: It must not be a social situation.

Audience: But what are the situations [cross-talk 00:58:37]

Peter Kubelka: No, I tell you something what I want. I talked about the senses being all this all kind for survival and so are the emotions. We have these emotions where we think they are something special.

In reality, they are 100% sure, chemical reactions. You have a woman, a potential mother walking here. Then you put a crying baby, in a certain age, right here. She sees it, her stomach makes, “[groans 00:59:14]” and she says, “Ah, poor child.”

Nothing special. This is like hitting somebody with a hammer and he makes, “Oww.” Everything is full or you see-We are not conditioned to pity the animals which are shot in the hunt, so it works already automatically. You see the animal, “[mimics gunshot firing 00:59:38]” and “Ahhh.”

In this film, I purposely create emotions to grind them against others. There is a whole construction because I don't want this one colored stories that they say, “I am telling you a sad story.” Not be sad from beginning of this sad, sad and when you tell a story and everyone feels sad. “This is a story where you have to laugh, it's a comical story.” [mimics laughing 01:00:19]

You see when-You have to-To get rid of this mechanism, I found you have to suspend yourself between the extremes or between, also again, between sadness and laughing. This several artists have done, for example Clive, I think he is not known here or very little. He's a poet, contemporary of Gerte very important German poet but he is not-His writing, you never know if you should laugh or if it's very serious you see.

There are some other people who maneuver between ridiculousness and being very serious. I feel this very much, then you get out of this just being an animal subjected to your mechanisms. Get out of these emotions, primitive emotions and I feel also to say as one social need, one thing which will make social life much better is when we attack these problems without emotions.

If not, we will still march in the peace march and we will scream, "Peace!" Loud and passionate for this and for that. As long as this goes on, this is the same violence.

We must get distanced to our own existence to solve these problems that come from this just, instinct to survive at all costs.

Sorry, you have?

Audience: Some would say that, on the contrary your work should be consistent in whatever framework that is should improve the images and it's one of the problems that somehow you have to use an image, sometimes anyway in *Mosaik* for instance, which is particularly relevant.

If you didn't use an image or something then you're all right but in *Mosaik* you did. I think it did call up a very distinct play. A difficult play to describe. It was a very European and forgive the pun but an almost “kitsch” Post-World War

flavor. I mean it was very strong and you had some strong images there-which I cannot reconcile with your manipulation of form but -

Peter Kubelka: This film which was my first film, was made in 1954-1955 when I was 21 years at that time. So, of course I had not the same-At that time, I was not so clear about that. I had a strong passion for several things so, of course this film is different. I was talking of the African film.

Audience: Right, if in *Mosaik* if I could carry that all the way with you -why is there any-do you whisper any intellectual kind of association with experimental film considering any kind of-

Peter Kubelka: Sure, in *Mosaik* I already was aware. My dreams are visible in *Mosaik* because, one thing I wanted to make was rich seconds. You have these short elements already coming up.

Another thing was, I didn't want to tell a story, I felt the whole film is one. The screen is the place where it happens. When they are hanging the laundry and the next image you see them standing under the door in the night. Because, I don't respect this kind of natural flow of things, so many things you see already in this first film. [01:05:02]

Yes?

Audience: In the second film absolutely. [Inaudible 01:05:14]

Peter Kubelka: Yes, this film, the black and white film, I went to the simplest possible elements in cinema which is, if you think of the conditioning of the people, light and darkness and sound and silence.

The elements are the ones given by the film, namely; 24th of a second so you have either frames completely black or frames completely transparent. Then I choose the most simple sound which corresponds to the white light which is called *White Sound*. It contains all [foreign language 01:06:08] oscillation, hertz,-frequencies. All frequencies. 16, 17, 18, 19 until 20000. This is the sound.

The sound also consists of elements this long. Same length as the image. Practically the film is made out of four stripes and cut black film, transparent film, silent tape and tape with this continuous sound. This is what it is.

What I wanted is, I have already said that, I wanted several things. In all my films, there was this that, I have to please myself. I have to fulfill a dream. There is no moment. There is no-

When I really then started to make the film preparing for the screen, I didn't care if they killed me afterwards or if it even would should show. When I made this film I didn't know if you could show it really. I wanted to have this and one thing I was out was ecstasy. Ecstasy for myself.

At that time I was becoming aware of the fantastic beauty of the life of the old civilizations. Also, then I was envious towards jazz and rock music these kind of passions, which we didn't have at the time.

It's very strange because my film anticipated the Straub scene. This was many years before this came up.

On the other hand, it was made in a reaction against what came from America. What we didn't have. Because, we were more in the old culture and as I said, had to be dressed and sit in a chair.

What I wanted was to create for myself an ecstasy with light and sound. Also then the simple rhythm of the old civilizations the drum the one, one, one, one, one, one, one, one.

Then I wanted to clean the screen from all that shit that was being shown on it all the time. Then I wanted to make a monument, a form which would stand like the pyramids, which would be so dry and even balanced that you would never get too much. This is a film you can see your whole life, I've seen it thousands of times. It gives me a great sustain.

You seem not to like it.

Audience: It seems like this causes great suffering-

Peter Kubelka: This is the beginning, he says it causes great suffering when you see. This is like your first cigar or your first-

[laughter 01:09:29]

Peter Kubelka: Sure, this is the shock of the first encounter.

Let me tell you something about this shock of the first encounter. Human beings, stone-age beings as we are, we are conditioned to get a mortal shock, mortal fear-shock at every new thing. Everything which is really new for us. Even if it's the most harmless then it turns out to be the most harmless. This may be anything you have not had before; creates this shock.

For example, my first film which you see now. I think it doesn't really matter. Did it scandalize you? Certainly not. This first film was a incredible scandal in

Vienna. I was attacked physically. They tried to throw me out of the cinema. My career was ruined, friends left me. Yes. Why? [01:10:20]

Just for formal reasons, because it was so that in the tradition in cinema at that time, at that time was so that people had to walk to a door and then you had the right to cut and then you had to see them inside the door. The fact that-Here they said, it did not do that with this film. Then you couldn't make out a story really. This was sufficient to create lynch-a little lynching.

With this film, I have explained this already. Every day, you are unafraid of this horrible sun which blinds you. Try to look. This film is 6 and a half minutes. You look in it and you walk out and you have nothing wrong with your eyes. Look 6 and a half minutes in the sun, you're blind. This is just because you see it the first time.

When you see it the tenth, twelfth time it becomes-It's quiet, it's balanced, and you must- There's also one thing, once you get shocked and you make this, then it [mimics bursting sound 01:11:34] it finishes you up. But you must slowly, open eyes and ears and then it fills you with its structure.

Yes?

Audience: You talk about the structure as though-

Peter Kubelka: The structure in this film is like architecture. There are many many elements which I tested.

When I made this film, I started to experiment. It was an experiment. I worked two years in this phase. There were many experimental phases, I wanted to know what I have. So I would make elements-

Oh thank you. I'll be finished soon.

I would make up elements, one black, one white, black-white, black-white, black-white, black would make a loop, put it in the projector, look at it. I would make, two black one white, black-black-white, black-black-white, put it in a break, look at it. I would feel myself into what I had and so on.

Then I would make balancing. You all have this beautiful poster they made. This is one of the preliminary sketches for relations between light and darkness in time. Every symbol can be read as a 24th of a second, if the symbol is white you have light flash.

Then when I made-This is very difficult to explain it would take, really some hours to go more into it, so I'll just tell you-

Another phase was to balance it out. I had a number of elements which I wanted just to be cold, put one against the other.

This film has no emotional composition. It doesn't go [mimics dramatic music 01:13:35]. Not this kind of composition, of feeling. It's built like architecture, measured. I had mathematical tables. The work seems very much if you look at it now like it was made by computer.

I could have used one but I didn't have one of course, also the *Scwechater* film was made like this. This also the thing that I wanted. Not this kind of a morph going on with my time. I wanted to have approximately the equal tension in all minutes or in all seconds. This film goes like this.

I call these films "metric films". The second the third and the fourth: *Adebar*, *Scwechater* and *Rainer*. The first of these films, my second film, has all elements are equally long or half long or double long. Such a simple thing.

Also, in cinema, like in music, this is a very important thing. When you are a musician, you are surrounded by millions of un-morphed things. In order to go ahead, what do you do? You simplify. You say the only thing that goes is "ta-ta-ta-ti-ta-ta-ti". This is what I have. All the others are eliminated. Then, construction comes up. I eliminated all these casual timing and I had monumental time things. [01:15:12]

I think I have loaded you enough for one evening. If you want, we show maybe the African film again and please, speed up your time conceptions and live with it and feel everything that happened and you will see how it grows.

Okay.

Can you help me with packing? We should put it out if not they will get it- [end of recording 01:16:04]

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