

Echoes of a Mechanical Man Dream: Creative Approaches in
Contemporary Documentary Filmmaking

by
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ECHOES OF A MECHANICAL MAN DREAM: CREATIVE APPROACHES IN
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ABSTRACT

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The MA thesis argues that contemporary tendencies in creative documentary filmmaking echoes one of the dreams of a modern man – to construct a Mechanical Man. It looks back to two examples of creatures that appeared in modernist cinema: German expressionist film “Metropolis” (1927) by Fritz Lang, and “Frankenstein” (1935) by James Whale. The thesis claims that the part of reality in creative documentary is nothing more than the reflection of the biological input into the construction of the Mechanical Man. The major power is condensed in the hands of the director -- author and creator -- who is driven by a personal dream to recreate reality and in such a way, philosophically speaking, win the competition with nature.

The term “documentary” is highly affiliated with truth. What ever is shown under this title is usually perceived by the audiences as (negotiable) “real”. This raises one of the biggest concerns – is creativity along with the media technologies contributing to the development or the construction of a creature? If this assumption is true, documentary films are contributing to the social dissociation and de-realization of reality. Such experience of “real” in psychiatry would serve as indications of disorder, which is essentially a psychological escape when physical escape is impossible. Dissociative process is the separation of perceptions, identity, memory and consciousness.

The theoretical part of the study embraces ideas in philosophy that are analysing influence and effect of media on a contemporary society. The thesis discusses theories of Marshal McLuhan, who claims media to be an extension of a man, Situationists'¹ ideas of spectacle and society and Expanded artists' thoughts on cinema. In addition, the

¹ Guy Debor, *Spektaklio Visuomene*, (Vilnius: Kitos knygos, 2006), 1- 189.

thesis is exploring the history of the idea of a Mechanical Man and mechanization, rooted in Industrial revolution. These ideas were articulated differently by artists and art groups, such as Dada and Italian Futurists.

The most widely acknowledged form of a documentary film among the audiences is still the “reportage” or television documentary. However, increasing number of creative documentaries produced effect the image of non-fiction. Novel hybrid forms of film embrace documentary footage, usage of new media technologies, clearly articulated author's perspective, and per-formative actions².

Documentary films can be created and experienced as both, visualization of facts and a form of art. Slavoj Zizek pinpoints that what is seen and what we call reality can no longer be reduced to a fact: virtualization of our daily life, understanding that we are more and more absorbed into an artificially constructed world is evoking unbearable need to come back to reality³. Documented reality is usually far beyond actuality: animated documentaries, mock-documentaries, re-contextualized documentary footage, replaced or displaced characters make the reality fictional, surreal, and dream-like. Societies are highly influenced by mediated experiences and therefore are confronting mixed feelings towards “lived real” - nostalgia and incapability to comprehend the actuality as it is.

In order to compare techniques and methods used in creative documentary production with the construction of the Mechanical Man, theoretical part of the thesis serves as a framework for qualitative analysis of the films screened in 4th International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius 2009, and 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2010. In addition, theoretical framework is applied for the analysis of two online documentary projects -- David Lynch's “Interview Project” and Jonas Mekas's “365 films” and personal artistic practice.

The **methods** used:

- construction of a theoretical framework based on comparative analysis of literature on the idea of the Mechanical Man and contemporary media theories;
- the qualitative analysis of the films;
- personal artistic practice – documentary films “All about beauty” and “Born in the USSR” – that visually and conceptually explores the above mentioned categories.

The literature review, qualitative analysis of documentary film festivals' programs, documentaries online and personal artistic practice all **lead to the following conclusions presented in the thesis**:

- philosophical theories and influential artistic ideas on media and society adopted

² Performance was part of a documentary video screening by Sam Green, while presenting project “Utopia in Four Movements”, in the “Sundance” film festival 2010, programme “New Frontier”. It was a form of “live documentary”, where the screening of the footage also embraced music performance, and author's narration.

³ Slavoj Zizek, “Tikroves pasija, regimybes pasija,” in *Viskas ka norejote suzinoti apie Zizeka, bet nedrisote paklausti Lacano*, (Vilnius:Lietuvos rasytoju sajungos leidykla, 2005), 352-366.

to the phenomenon of documentary film suggest theoretical possibility to connect the idea of production of documentary film and creation of the Mechanical Man;

- the observation of the process of the development of the the Mechanical Man and the development of a creative documentary film, demonstrates a number of similarities in terms of creator's role, conceptualization, implementation of the idea, and the effect on public;
- the analysis of literature suggests a framework for qualitative analysis of this thesis, based on similarities between the construction of a Mechanical Man and the process of production of a creative documentary film, where the processes are compared in terms of idea development, creator's vision, construction of the body and mind;
- relevant films selected and analysed from the screenings of VI International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius 2009, and 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2010 shows that there is a significant similarity in the process of creation of documentary film and the Mechanical Man;
- the framework of analysis applied to the discussion on two online documentary projects -- David Lynch's "Interview Project" and Jonas Mekas's "365 films" -- demonstrates different forms of application of concepts, and reveals a few problems of comparison between documentary and the Mechanical Man;
- the reflection on personal artistic practice – short documentary film "All About Beauty", and short animation documentary "Born in the USSR" -- based on the framework of analysis presented above, connects the theoretical and practical sides of this thesis, and shows the similarities between the production of the Mechanical Man and the creative documentary.

Keywords: creative documentary, Mechanical Man, dissociative disorder, documentary online

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INTRODUCTION

Today's world, packed with digital mediated imagery, sounds and texts, encourages social scientists, philosophers⁴, artists, and film makers to constantly question changes in human perception of reality and real. This situation effects definitions of physical and psychological human existence, where the dominant stimulus evoking experience is not lived in real, but within the media. This thesis mainly focuses on artistic production related to media. Theoreticians of New Media forecast that it will become harder and harder to draw the clear line between what is called art and what is called life⁵. It is becoming difficult to tell the difference between the creation, reality and representation. Scientists talk about media evoked experiences, such as “post-tourism” or “psycho-geography”, where in order to be exposed to places and spaces one no longer needs to leave the house as it is enough to get online or to switch on a television channel⁶. People often discuss their real lived experiences in time and space with a reference to the mediated text. It has been pointed out that media culture, based on coding and sampling also has led to an irreversible change in people's mentality⁷.

Lately it has been observed that the popularity of documentary film genre has increased. It may lead to a hypothetical discussions of whether it is related to nostalgia towards real-lived experience or not. However, the issue becomes complex as ideas on what actually stands as a documentary film is evolving and changing along with the evolution of its form, structures and constructs. This thesis rejects the idea of documentary as a non-fiction film and stands for the initial definition of this genre

⁴ Philosophers, such as Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, Slavoj Zizek, Douglas Kelner discussed the effect of media and New Media on society.

⁵ Gene Youngblood, “Part one: The Audience and the Myth of Entertainment,” in *Expanded Cinema*, (New York: P. Dutton & Co., Inc.: 1970:), 45.

⁶ Remigijus Venckus, “Filmo psichogeografija,” in *Videomeno dekonstrukcija* (Siauliai: Vsi Siauliu universiteto leidykla: 2008), 42.

⁷ Truls Lie, “The remix culture,” in *DOX 85*, (2010): 15.

coined by John Grierson: “documentary is a creative treatment of actuality”⁸. This definition, introduced back in the 30's, have never lost its relevance and still seems to be most accurate and universal. What changes, essentially, is the idea of a document and a record. This thesis also stands for the interpretation of Andre Bazin who claimed that every film is a social documentary⁹. However, paintings, animated images, photographs today are commonly used in the documentary film making along with the other footage and archival material. It expands the idea of document that has been traditionally serving as a foundation for a documentary film.

In media theories, especially journalism, it has been voiced out that what societies are expecting from the professionals in the field is no longer facts, but comments and interpretation¹⁰. The same tendency has been observed in the documentary film making as the significance of author's interpretation and conceptualization of historical past or present has increased. Documentaries that are competing for awards in world famous festivals are often the ones that articulate specific approach to the well known story¹¹.

This shows the shift from the traditional understanding of a documentary as an informational film, rooted in journalistic practices, to the one that is similar to the auteur cinema, “theory of film-making in which the director is viewed as the major creative force in a motion picture”¹². This is not a new practice in documentary filmmaking since some directors, such as Luis Bunuel (back in 1933), and Chris Marker (few decades ago) have been demonstrating similar practices. However, recently the amount of creative documentaries have increased significantly, and they are the ones to build a new reputation for the documentary films. New forms of documentary are emerging in different forms of video art, and therefore documentary theories and principles are often used in the analysis of such¹³. Another example of a new form of documentary is an online documentary project which demonstrates one more creative solution to a

⁸ Carl Plantinga, “What Documentary Is, After All?,” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63:2, (2005), 105.

⁹ Andre Bazin, “Every Film Is a Social Documentary,” in *Film Comment* 11-12 (2008), 40 - 41.

¹⁰ “Feeling Good About The Future of Journalism”, editorial in Voice of SanDiego, April 18 (2008), http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/columnists/editorials/article_0e7d931f-4177-5fd4-b834-9373519991fe.html (accessed March 2010).

¹¹ Examples: “Rabbit a la Berlin” (2009), “Cooking History” (2009), “Walk on Wire” (2008).

¹² Auteur theory, in <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/44609/auteur-theory> (accessed April 2010).

¹³ Renata Dubinskaite, “Dokumentinio Kino Kalbos Eksperimentai Lietuvos Videomene,” in *Menotyra* 15 (2), (2008): 40-49.

conventional genre¹⁴.

All these observations, based on authorship, quest of truth in relation to interpretation, and technological factors enabling differences in forms and formats, draws attention to the following issues and factors to be discussed in the thesis:

- the role of a director as a creator and the one interpreting the reality;
- the amount of real in a documentary narrative defined by a certain form, visual style and structure;

These factors imply the main **theme of the thesis**: new ways of looking at the contemporary creative documentary film and filmmaking.

It is necessary to go back in history and the beginning of cinema as such in order to define the **field of the problems** that this thesis is discussing. Birth of the cinema coincides with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the culture of individualism. This thesis argues that contemporary creative documentary making is to be seen as an echoe of auteur cinema, that is closely related to the ideas of individualism. It also stands for the idea that the first influential cinematic projections ever made were a form of documentary, such as Lumière brothers “Arrival of the train” (1895) or “Workers Leaving The Lumière Factory” (1895). The paramount paradox is that back then, after the first screenings, affected by the realness of cinematic images people ran out of the room, however, now the effect is the opposite: people are so much used to mediated imagery that in order for them to be affected authors have to use new creative treatments and effects, make reference to real and etc. Thinking of the first Eisenstein’s experiments, the ideas of Martin Heidegger on technology, effecting the physical reality, as well as referring to one of the “Film lessons” by a film maker Werner Herzog, it could be said that cinematic experience is so tempting for the audiences because of it’s mysterious ability to reproduce lived experiences and preserve them in time. However, with the rise of critical thinking, magical experiences become harder to evoke and therefore there is a need to look for new tricks and forms in order to sustain the ability to surprise the viewer. It is a constant challenge for a film-maker to follow the new paths in the application of technology in order to recreate the realness in film. It is a

¹⁴ Online documentary: a documentary film project made for online screenings of a social or artistic importance. Exaples of such projects are: “365 Films”, “Interview Project”, “Gaza/Sderod”, “Livesconnected”.

quest of human genius to create a replica of a real life. This issue has already been articulated in a modern cinema, specifically, Fritz Lang's film "Metropolis" (1927), and James Whale's "Frankenstein" (1935). These two works of cinema serve as a starting point for the main argument and the **hypothesis** of this thesis:

contemporary documentary film making tendencies echo the dream of a modern man to create a replica of a life, where the organic input of reality is no bigger than the biological input to a replica of a human, and the author is a hybrid of a scientist and an artist, trying to compete with nature.

Literature review: Historically, the first well known definition of a documentary was coined by John Grierson. Theories on the documentary film and film making were explored and developed by many practitioners and theoreticians. Bill Nichols developed theories on the documentary genre theory. Alan Rosenthal proposed the practical guidelines for writing, directing and producing documentaries. Erik Barnouw, in his book "Documentary: a History of non-fiction Film", discussed the evolution of a genre and defined different roles of the documentary film-makers¹. Along with the development of the documentary, different film-makers and artists questioned the role and the essence of a film in their manifestos and programs. Kino-eye manifesto, with Dziga Vertov ahead, theoretically and practically explored the role of camera and montage in a film making, Surrealists', such as Louis Bunuel, played with the idea of representation and its relativity, while Italian Futurists talked about the cinema as a superior art form. Furthermore, Situationists, such as Guy Debord, discussed the problem of spectacle, media and society, and Expanded Artists were the advocates of freeing the medium from its constructs with the possibility to incorporate other than visual and aural sense into cinematic experiences.

The thesis also analyses ideas articulated by philosophy in relation to media, mediated experiences and society. It refers to the ideas of M. McLuhan, who analyses media as an extension of a man, and Jean Baudrillard's theories on simulation and simulacrum. It also embraces ideas on technology and its effects on society, and its magical essence discussed by Arunas Sverdiolas in the book "Philosophy of Culture". Walter Benjamin, in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", compliments the above mentioned theories on both, – the magical nature of the technology and the role of the artist in question. Ideas of the Mechanical

Man and Mechanical Head have previously been explored by Dada artists. The theoretical framework of the thesis is also supported by the major ideas on individual and group experiences on de-realisation and de-personalization used in the science of psychiatry and discussed in the book by Robert C. Carson Robert and James, N. Butcher “Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life”. This thesis uses publications of above mentioned theoreticians and practitioners as well as related articles published in the magazines stored in Jastor, Ebsco and Oxford and Cambridge University databases.

This thesis **aims** to theoretically and practically explore new opportunities and limitations in the creative process of a documentary film making.

Main **tasks** of this thesis are:

- to adopt the philosophical theories and influential artistic ideas on media and society to the phenomenon of the documentary and the Mechanical Man;
- to compare the creative documentary film with the idea of Mechanical Man by highlighting the similarities and differences of the process of construction of the two;
- to develop a theoretical framework which would illustrate the idea of the creative documentary film-making and constitute the basis for the qualitative analysis of films and film-making processes per-se;
- in accordance with the categories developed in the theoretical part of the thesis, to discuss relevant films screened in the VI International Documentary Film Festival in Vilnius 2009, the Istanbul 1001 International Documentary Film Festival 2009, and the 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2010;
- to apply and test the framework through the analysis of two online documentary projects -- David Lynch's “Interview Project” and Jonas Mekas's “365 films”;
- to apply the theory developed to the analysis of the processes of film making of three short documentary film projects (artistic practice): “All About Beauty”, “Born in the USSR”, and “Exit”.

Research field and relevance. Despite the number of creative documentaries produced, theories on documentary film seem to be a weaker part of the chain compared to production. It could be observed, that in documentary film field theory usually follows the film and it almost never works the other way around. Theoreticians analyse

documentary films from the perspective of genre, production or criticism (see literature review). There is a lack of development of theories on a phenomenon of documentary film as such, and its effects on society and individual. One of the reasons is that documentaries are mostly perceived in terms of subject matter rather than the form or treatment. In Europe, there is only one major magazine on documentary films published by European Documentary Network -- DOX. Simultaneously, there are very few books published on production of creative documentary.

However, reputation of the documentary films is changing, especially in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, where they are no longer seen purely as a television production, and are gaining equal status with the fiction films screened in cinemas. Prestigious documentary film festivals (such as IDFA –International Documentary Film festival Amsterdam) are also contributing to the aforementioned changes. Therefore, there is a need of new insights and theories, regarding the phenomenon of documentary film and filmmaking, to be developed.

The practical, creative side of documentary film production is less problematic in terms of the amount of quality production. Although there still are a lot of television documentaries and reportage style films produced, along with them documentary film festivals screen films that are of high artistic quality. The question of documentary as an art form lately has been raised in Istanbul 1001 International Documentary Film Festival 2009¹⁵, and the 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2010¹⁶, and it will also be a topic of the main program of screenings in the 7th International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius 2010. Film-makers, such as Werner Herzog, Ulrich Seidl, Bartek Konopka, Péter Kerekes and many others, have demonstrated that documentary films can be of high artistic quality and have a public appeal at the same time.

There are also quite a few interesting online documentary projects that are produced by social initiatives, artists or film makers. This is a separate and quite independent form of documentary that yet needs to be deeper explored in terms of iteration, appeal and its artistic and documentary value. However, the examples of venturing into a virtual space with documentary projects, such as “Fluxus” artist's Jonas Mekas's and film maker's David Lynch's, illustrates that this space has a potential and

¹⁵ In the pannel discussion with directors and the conference that was a part of a parallel events

¹⁶ In informal discussion sessions “Just talking”, and against the tide: creating interactive Doc Projects Using Internet and Mobile Technologies presented by Wilma de Jong

offers alternative and unexplored forms of expression and aesthetics. Therefore, it is relevant to explore and organize these new forms of expression in documentary not only practically, but also theoretically. There are not many examples in academia, where the development of new theories goes along with the artistic practices. This thesis is an attempt to do both – to theoretically and practically enrich the field of studies in creative documentary and documentary film making, where documentaries are seen as art pieces that may be screened in cinemas or exhibited in art centres and galleries, and where theory can be applied as both, — conceptual background for the film, shaping its form and structure, and the explanation of the documentary film phenomenon.

The **objects of the empirical analysis** of the thesis are as follows:

- selected films from the 6th International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius 2009;
- selected films from the 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2010;
- two online documentary projects -- David Lynch's "Interview Project" and Jonas Mekas's "365 films";
- personal artistic practice – short documentary films "Born in the USSR" and "All About Beauty".

The following **methods** are applied in this thesis in order to complete the tasks presented above:

- construction of a theoretical framework based on the comparative analysis of literature on the idea of Mechanical Man and contemporary media theories;
- the qualitative analysis of the films;
- the personal artistic practice – documentary films "All about beauty" and "Born in the USSR" – that visually and conceptually explores the above mentioned categories.

The topic, aim, tasks and methods used in this thesis contribute to the following structure:

Chapter I – "To Beat the Nature: Documentary as a Dream of a Mechanical Man" -- focuses on the idea of a Mechanical Man that was articulated in literature, film and visual arts of Modernity, after the Industrial revolution and World War I. It explores

ideas of Romanticism that may be relevant to the analysis of documentary film, in terms of its relation to the actuality. This chapter discusses the idea of replica of Maria in Fritz Lang's "Metropolis", the creation of doctor Frankenstein in James Whale's "Frankenstein", and Dada works, especially when in 1920 the cyborg appears in the left-wing sketches and photo montages of Berlin Dada artist Raoul Hausmann. All these theories and facts are ultimately related to the documentary film, film-making and its author.

Chapter II - "The Evolution of a Documentary Film" -- provides an overview on the main documentary theories and developments of genre. It questions John Grierson's definition of documentary in a context of the contemporary practices. It also contextualizes today's documentaries within the different practices of documentation, art and film making. Moreover, it takes a look at the documentary film sub-genres and roles of the film-maker, by questioning how they might be changing in a contemporary context. While analysing these categories it makes reference to the idea of the Mechanical Man, legitimizing documentary as the echoes of a dream of its construction.

Chapter III -- "Mechanical Real: Documentary and Media Theories" -- covers the idea of reality and the experience of reality in relation to media. It talks about the ideas of M. McLuhan, Situationists, Extended Artists and Futurists. Chapter discusses their ideas on what media is and what the role of film medium in relation to arts, society and individual is. Finally, chapter considers these effects on society while drawing a parallel between the media evoked experiences and the symptoms of dissociative disorder, such as de-personalization and de-realization.

Chapter IV – "Analysis of Festival Films"-- embraces qualitative analysis of selected creative documentary films screened in the 6th International Documentary Film Festival, and the 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival.

Chapter V – "Analysis of Online Documentary Projects" – focuses on the two online documentary projects by J.Mekas and D.Lynch.

Chapter VI – "Personal Artistic Practice" – practically and theoretically explores personal artistic practice, the two documentary projects -- "All About Beauty" and "Born in the USSR".

Academic relevance and limitations: documentary films are accessible online,

during the festivals, as well as on specific television programs and channels. New documentary productions, as mentioned before, are mostly covered by journalists in magazines and papers, along with other films (in case of documentary program in a fiction film festivals, or documentary festival). However, film criticism regards documentary films just as any other films and is therefore providing mostly shallow introductory, news release type of coverage. Documentaries catch attention of critics mostly because of the subject matter (i.e., Israel-Palestine conflict, fall of Berlin Wall, Tibet – China conflict, North Korea and etc.). However at times, the space of exhibition of the documentary film also defines the type of the coverage: if film is screened in the art festival, gallery or museum – it is treated as an art work and therefore is analysed as a video art form. The only prominent magazine published by European Documentary network – DOX – also mostly covers only new releases and provides an overview on new tendencies in the field. There are as well analysis of changes in the documentary genre provided, however, they too predominantly focus on practical issues and problems. There is a lack of all-encompassing comprehensive theories and philosophies that would explain the phenomenon of documentary in today's world, the relevance of such pictures for art and film scene, the explanation on how documentary genre is changing in the context of New Media, and the new developments in the art and film field. This thesis is an endeavour to evoke scientific discussion on documentary as a phenomenon and its relevance in a contemporary society. It is also an encouragement for conceptual approach to the film making and film analysis.

Since this thesis is the first endeavour to look at the documentary film phenomenon in relation to the Mechanical Man and the dream of the author to create the replica of nature, it also encounters a number of limitations. Conceptual approach to the thesis is metaphorical and therefore artificial in its essence, yet it helps to summarize ideas on media, society and documentary making as a creative process. The qualitative analysis of the thesis is subjective, just as the method of the personal artistic practice. Therefore, conclusions of this thesis are to serve as a springboard for further analysis. Due to these limitations, this thesis is not exploring the effects of creative documentary on the audiences, it does not convey any quantitative analysis. In order to further explore the topic of this thesis, other aspects of the issue have to be examined, such as short and long time effects on the audiences and subject matters, marketing tendencies,

or influences on the genre regarding different spaces of exhibition. Methods, such as interviews, focus groups, experiments, and questioners, are yet to be applied in order to come up with comprehensive results of this theory.

CHAPTER I

To Beat the Nature: Modern Man's dream of the Mechanical Man

Introduction

In philosophy of culture there is a distinction made between non-living creations, creations that are alive, alive and moving, alive and feeling, and alive and thinking¹⁷. This structure was firstly articulated by Aristotle. If the first group just exists, like, for example, stone, the other ones consume and reproduce. The existence of the thinking creatures, such as human beings, is based on overcoming the very biological nature: it is not enough for them to be humans and extend the humanity. They also need an artificial gained identity, such as profession or occupation, in order to full-fill the essence of human nature¹⁸. It could be said that the need for a role other than the one defined by biological nature is rooted in the competitive nature of a human being. The need to explain, possess and control nature has always been one of the biggest passions of a human being. Very similar structure can be applied to the observation of things. There, on the lower part of the pyramid structure we place creations of nature, things, on the next step – creations of a human that serve a certain function, and on the third – creations of a human that embrace a certain idea (see appendix 1). In both structures there is a possibility of regression – the thinking creation may become the one that only feels or only exists, just like any conceptual creation may lose its concept in a different context. These two structures help us to understand and explain the idea of the Mechanical Man and the documentary film creation. The first one enables us to legitimize the creator as a thinking creature. The second structure refers to the creation

¹⁷ Arunas Sverdiolas, "Buviniu proderme," in *Kultūros filosofija. Bendrauniversitetinio kurso medžiaga antrosios studijų pakopos studentams*, (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2007): 44.

¹⁸ Ibid. 45.

demanding physical existence of the reality as a source,-as well as the physical action and the creative idea that would unite all the elements in harmony.

Logos helped humanity to figure out some secrets of nature, to create machines and artefacts that would imitate and even control it. Humans build houses to fight against the wind and rain, they find the way to start fire and even tame it, they build roads, in order to make travel and wars easier, they use horses in order to be faster, they erect bridges and construct boats in order to fight the waters. Man-made artefacts were imitated by man from generation to generation, with developments, as part of craft learning and producing practices¹⁹. All of these inventions and replicas suggested that human nature was actually capable to compete with nature. However, despite all developments, boost of technology over thousands of years, and even industrial revolution, humanity struggled to beat nature in creation of life via an industrial or mechanical process. Further in this chapter we will be looking at the evolution of this dream, as well as the knowledge, units, and craft required in its implementation.

1.2. The Creation of a Creature

The dream to construct a Mechanical Man was clearly articulated in arts after the industrial Revolution and World War I. The boost of technology was perceived as liberating and at the same time threatening (mass destruction weapons). If beforehand technology was dependant on nature, ultimately humanity reached the point where the technology was able to control it. Martin Heidegger talks about it by giving the example of the river, which for a long time with its flow was controlling the water mill. However, the invention of the electrical plant reversed this process, and the flow of the river became dependant of the push – pull power of technology²⁰. However, the creation of life, as something supernatural, stood out as a quest and a subject of discussion for scientists and artist. Therefore, a dream of the Mechanical Man seems to be a complex and multi-layered structure that needs to be analysed from both -- historical and philosophical perspectives.

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 19.

²⁰ Arunas Sverdiolas, “Tradicine ir modernioji technika,” in *Kultūros filosofija. Bendrauniversitetinio kurso medžiaga antrosios studijų pakopos studentams*, (Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla, 2007): 61

In times of Modernity advanced studies of human anatomy and the new machinery seemed to be promising that humanity will soon be able to figure out one of the biggest mysteries of nature – creation of an artificial life form. However, it became the issue of ethics and criticism that was aimed not only at this dream per-se, but also at the way humanity was evolving. There are three main moments noted by the scientists in the history of a mechanical creature:

„1920, when the cyborg appears in the left-wing sketches and photo-montages of Berlin Dada artist Raoul Hausmann; 1926, when the cyborg appears in a starring role in *Metropolis*, Fritz Lang's ambiguous but ultimately authoritarian science fiction film; and 1933, when the cyborg emerges as one of the controlling images in *The Transformed World*, a book of photo-montage designed by conservative revolutionary Ernst Jiinger to popularize is totalitarian account of technological modernity”²¹.

Around the same time cyborg emerged in *The Transformed World* as the film “Frankenstein” was released. It was based on the novel “Frankenstein” or “Modern Prometheus” originally written by 18-year old Mary Shelley, and published one year later – in 1818. However, it was a story of Romantic period, influenced by Gothic, and the creature created in the film had significant human characteristics – such as emotions and feelings. Still, the mechanical process of the production of doctor Frankenstein allows us to categorize it as the example of the Mechanical Man. Comparing creatures produced in a film “Frankenstein” and in “Metropolis” the following similarities can be observed (see Figure 1.):

replica of Maria from “Metropolis” just like Frankenstein's creature is composed of
biological and technological parts;
the anatomical input into a mechanical human is essential; technology just like biology
alone are of no sufficient power to create a life form;
there is a need of a miracle -- electrical or physio-chemical reaction;
there is a need of creator – human genius behind the creature, driven by passion and
obsession;
creator at some point loses the power over his own creation. Creatures are destructive

²¹ Matthew Biro, “The New Man as Cyborg: Figures of Technology in Weimar Visual Culture,” *New German Critique* 62 (1994): 71.

and not self-aware: Maria is destructive in terms of female sexuality, Frankenstein's creature – in terms of aggression;
in both cases characters are affecting public and environment directly, due to their active participation in the social life.



Figure 1. “Frankenstein.” *Boris Karloff in J. Whale's film, 1931*; “Metropolis.” *Brigitte Helm in F. Lang's film, 1927*. Photographs, www.filmreference.com.

There are two important elements to be notified about the creation process of the Mechanical Man (human replica) that are applicable to the documentary films. They are - appropriation (heart or brain stolen from someone who once had been a human being) and montage/assemblage techniques. Appropriation is more of a feature of post-modernism, articulated in arts, especially around 1980s and 1990s. Weimar²² artists of cybernetic imagery also used them in their practices as “a fund of real life material which some of them attempted to critically de-construct”²³. Because of these two essential techniques of construction, it is possible to draw the line between the tendencies and the relevance of a cyborg in a contemporary world, and in the case of

²² Weimar: Republic and culture between 1919-1933. Fritz Lang is said to be part of this culture.

²³ Matthew Biro, “The New Man as Cyborg: Figures of Technology in Weimar Visual Culture,” *New German Critique* 62 (1994): 72-73.

this thesis – art and film practices. “The cyborg was, in many ways, a creature of the new montage media. <...> This creature - itself a montage of human and technological elements - was also a figure through which the activity of montage itself came to self-consciousness”²⁴. However, even if montage lives within its own very logic and structure, it does imply total independence and self-generating effect. Montage is a result of one's physical and mental effort, usually driven by emotional flow. As a result it creates and articulates rhythm, story and emotion. Indeed due to a technological exposure these capacities are also changing, just like human perception. In other words, as M. McLuhan puts it: „the restructuring of human work and association was shaped by the technique of fragmentation that is the essence of machine technology”²⁵.

Cyborgs are in between humans and technology. They embrace the features and elements of a human, just as they incorporate elements of mechanics: “at certain moments, the cyborg becomes both subject and object, bearer and example of a new and mechanized mode of vision”²⁶. The problem related to such creation (especially when talking about models from „Metropolis“ and „Frankenstein“) is that it usually has no real purpose or social mission, and serves as creators ambition to articulate his own thoughts, materialize vision, bring back the past, and (or) concur the future. In that respect the dream to produce the Mechanical Man resembles the passion to create a documentary film of a certain form. This genre „after a time <...> takes on enough identity to behave as a nearly independent organism that grows to maturity and eventually decays largely on its own momentum”²⁷, just like the mechanical creature produced.

These ideas provides an overview on the similarities between the processes of creation of the Mechanical Man and the creative documentary film. The creature created, just like the documentary film, gains certain independence and starts living its own life in a social environment, where the effects of interaction are no longer under the control of the creator. Technically, just like the Mechanical Man, documentary requires a certain input of reality and the intervention of technology. In that respect both

²⁴ Ibid. 73.

²⁵ Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message,” in *Understanding Media: the Extention of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001): 9-10.

²⁶ Matthew Biro, “The New Man as Cyborg: Figures of Technology in Weimar Visual Culture,” *New German Critique* 62 (1994): 73.

²⁷ Dudley Andrew, “Foreword to the 2004 Edition,” in *What is Cinema?* Vol. II, ed. Hugh Gary (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): Xviii.

products are objects created by the application of montage and appropriation. Further in this chapter we will be discussing issues of copying and sampling of reality as well as the importance of conceptual and physical activity in the creative process.

1.3. Replica as a Death Mask for Reality

Photographs lie in a midway between the handmade image and the reality itself. They are traces. Therefore they are able to affect us more than handmade pictures. Traces of things bear particularly direct relations to those things they trace²⁸. Subsequently, video ability to prevail those traces is even bigger than that of photography, since it embraces 24-25 frames per second. The input of the creator here is defined by the choices of angle, perspective and juxtaposition. The processing is defined by technology. Photography is dealing with sampling of reality, and therefore, as any sort of other kind of reproduction, resembles the death mask²⁹. The creator behind the photography or video is involved in an intimate relationship with the dead “now”. Cyborg, or a human-like robot, could also be seen in the same way: the creature is a usually a zombie-like – being here and now, directed to the future, but composed of dead pieces of the living past. The creator is building up a cyborg as a death mask for the past in order to keep it within the historical “now”, and trying to resurrect its relevance. This process embraces the artistic and the scientific action. The idea of a fusion of the two was articulated in the manifesto of Italian Futurists':

“Chemistry, physics, continuous and unexpected pyrotechnics all incorporated into a new creature, a creature that will speak, shout and dance automatically. We Futurists, Balla and Depero, will construct millions of metallic animals for the greatest war (conflagration of all the creative energies of Europe, Asia, Africa and America, which will undoubtedly follow the current marvellous little human conflagration)”³⁰.

Such definition of conveying is suitable for both— documentary making process

²⁸ Gregory Currie, “Visible traces: Documentary and the contents of photographs,” *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 57 (3) (1999): 285.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Giacomo Balla, Fortunato Depero manifesto “The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe,” <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/reconstruction.html> (accessed 5 March 2010).

and cyborg making. Logic is never enough in order to construct the replica. In addition, replica itself would also be of no interest if it had no specific features differentiating it from real or defining it as replica. It is rooted in nature of a creator that replica should be realistic enough to be convincing, and at the same time, something not to be mixed up with the real. This idea perhaps comes mythologies – the idea of God (gods) who is human-like, however, not human, but God. The question that could be asked is to what extent the re-creator of reality is aware of his actions. Most probably artist-scientists of film making just like the inventors of the cyborg “are the most un-self-conscious artists in the world <...> as they see themselves as heroic truth-tellers with a mission to make a powerful "humanizing" statement in any way that works. Most don't examine their techniques in theoretical or methodological terms”³¹. In other words, techniques and methodologies are applied as much as it is necessary to maintain the technical elements and form. Therefore, the result of a cyborg creation, just like the result of documentary, might be groundbreaking and directly related to the reality on the ground. It may generate effects and actions that fiction film would hardly be able to evoke. If fiction stands for a fairy tale, documentary can be seen as a historical truth. Though, as mentioned before, this can be a misleading notion that is changing along with the idea of documentary and its evolution. Therefore, “documentaries can mislead, and they often do because their makers either have mistaken beliefs about the events being documented, or actively wish to mislead us about them”³².

Even when working with reproduction and replicas, the ego of the creator pushes him or her to invent rather than just copy. A good illustrative example of such passion is the misunderstanding between the film-maker W. Herzog and a film critic Roger Ebert. After the première of W. Herzog's film “Bells from the deep” R. Ebert was enthralled and therefore talked about it for a while. W. Herzog ventured to say: “But you know, Roger, it is all made up”. The film critic could not understand and then W. Herzog clarified it: “It is not real. I invented it”. At this point Mr. Ebert recalled director's talk about “ecstatic truth, of a truth beyond the merely factual, a truth that records not the

³¹ Jill Godmilow, Ann-Louise Shapiro, “How Real is the Reality in Documentary Film?,” *History and Theory* 36 (4) (1997): 87.

³² Gregory Currie, “Visible traces: Documentary and the contents of photographs,” *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 57 (3) (1999): 285.

real world but the world as we dream it”³³. The same applies for the creators of the cyborgs: doctor Frankenstein just as a mad scientist in “Metropolis”, was striving not to repeat the actuality, but rather to create a living dream of his own. This discussion has to be followed by a deeper analysis of the definition of the author as an artist and author as a scientist in the process of copying reality and producing human replica or creative documentary film. It is also necessary to explore how different approaches – artistic and scientific – influence the final product.

1.4. The Creator: Artist vs Scientist

The collision between the author as a scientist (managing the technology and conducting the research, preparing a plan and the model of his or her creation) and the author as an artist (conceptual developments, attention to the aesthetics) in both — documentary film and cyborg making — result in a creative tension.

“The relationship between the artistic and the scientific is one source of the creative tension between humanities and social science. The merging of art and science is questioned both inside and outside the scientific milieu. “The artistic” is associated by many people with single works of art that appeal to emotions, supposed to bring out emotional experiences. It is often understood in contrast to science, which is supposed to produce generalizable knowledge that appeals to reason and explains the world. In art, the subjective power of creation is elevated; in science, the subjective influence must be minimized”³⁴.

Therefore, the creation conceived in the case of narrative on a specific story of actuality as well as the creature that is created according to the image of reality, but yet is a product of an author, embraces both objective and subjective inputs that, most of the time, result in a dramatic nature of an object produced. The audience, or the social environment within which film or cyborg functions, is reacting to the specific characters of the product. The environment of the dream is not the reality, and therefore, the encounter with materialized dream may cause different and unexpected effects. The idea of cinema is rooted much more in a dream than in a lived- real, just like the Mechanical

³³ Dick Staub, “Art and ‘the one true myth,’” *National Catholic Reporter* 44 (8) (2007): 19 – 20.

³⁴ Toril Synnøve Jenssen, “Cool and Crazy: Anthropological Film at the Point of Convergence between Humanities and Social Science,” *Visual Anthropology* 18 (2005): 293.

Man is much more of a fictional and fantastic creature: “being a dream, cinema hides its ultimate reality behind appearances that are nothing but symbols. As in a dream, nothing in cinema is completely accidental, and at the same time nothing is completely fake either. It is a sociological psychoanalysis rather than a critical analysis that can best reveal cinema's secret reality³⁵. Therefore, just like the film, the Mechanical Man remains a symbol of the society and era, and the author's psychology rather than an objective truth. Therefore objects created are always different.

Creatures in “Metropolis” and “Frankenstein” are different. In the first one, woman cyborg is attractive and sexual. Female sexuality in film theories, especially science fiction and alien films is often related to fear (“Vagina Dentata”), mainly of a patriarchal society, since it is something that is impossible to understand and especially – to control. The mail version of it, —creature of Frankenstein, is the opposite. It is destructive because it is violent, and it is violent because it is displaced and lost. In contrast to the replica of Maria from Metropolis – Frankenstein's creature looks like a monster, and is scary looking. It could be said that the very nature that is associated with social fears is articulated in both creatures. Here the arising question is whether the subject matter dictates the form and the character of the film, or whether it works the other way around – and the subject meets the requirements of the format. A. Bazin countered that “the subject matter, rather than the properties of the medium, should dictate the style of any film. The only property inherent to cinema, he argued, is its photographic base, which keeps the subject (or referent) hovering like a ghost around its image”³⁶. Unfortunately, this is often the case with documentary films that are produced for television. Most of them are made in an “easy to watch” reportage manner. However, it is different with the creative documentary production, where the subject actually dictates the form and visual solutions, at times – even the distribution. This problem is also very much related to the media, director's relation to media and reality captured, and will be discussed in the following chapters.

Since the first films about the Mechanical Man were created and screened, this topic has remained relevant and has been profoundly articulated in a mainstream

³⁵ Andre Bazin, “Every Film Is a Social Documentary,” *Film Comment* 11-12 (2008): 41.

³⁶ Dudley Andrew, “Foreword to the 2004 Edition,” in *What is Cinema?* Vol. II, ed. Hugh Gary (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): Xvi.

cinema³⁷. The idea of a robot, a human replica in a society, has also transformed with the improvements in engineering and technology. Nowadays scientists are estimating that within 10 years, at least in the United States, every household will have a social robot. Even though it is quite distant from the idea of the Mechanical Man, it is relevant to give an overview of a social robot vision within this thesis. Engineers, along with social scientists, are working on different models of “natural” and socially engaging robots. The ones that would be not standing out, but totally embraced by society and its micro-cosmic units. Such process, just like the process of the creation of the Mechanical Man in Modernist cinema, embraces careful research and design process.

“To accomplish this aim, they seek to endow robots with various combinations of traits: the capacity to express and perceive emotion, the skill to engage in high-level dialogue, the aptitude to learn and recognize models held by other agents, the development and maintenance of social relationships, the learning and use of social competencies and natural social cues (gaze, gestures, etc.), and the capability to exhibit distinctive personality and character”³⁸.

In a way, this demonstrates the attempt to humanize robots, by enabling them to act adequately and to feel. The ability of film to directly interact with the viewer (both – physically and emotionally), can be observed in interactive online documentary projects. It would still be a challenge for the film to act according to the viewer’s emotion, however interaction and changeability due to specifics of the internet and various applications might be and actually has already been achieved. Nevertheless, documentary films still require the intervention of the director, most commonly – in a form of discussion or performance³⁹.

In other words, it seems that the dream to create the perfect replica of a human, who would still be a distinguishable replica, has not changed that much over the last few hundred years. “The idea of a “science for society” combines the scientific dream of developing ever more advanced, human-like technologies with the engineer’s

³⁷ Examples: “Blade Runner”, “Transformer”, to some extent -- “Superman”, and “Spiderman”.

³⁸ Selma Sabanovic, Marek P. Michalowski et. al, “Making friends: Building social robots through interdisciplinary collaboration” (paper presented an AAAI Spring Symposium, March 2007).

³⁹ “Q and A” session is a common form of interaction with the creator of a documentary film in film festivals. There is also a rising culture of blogging and online discussions. Finally, some documentaries balance on a line of instalation art and film. In case of the first, as it has already been mentioned when talking about “Sundance” film festival and programme “New Frontiers”.

commitment to producing functional objects that are useful to and desired by society. Technoscientific imaginaries, as embodied in social robotic artefacts and in the practices of social robotics, go beyond envisioning a technology and function as “social paradigms.” By the 20th century, both the USA and Japan had developed as “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983) in which technological advancement was seen as a major factor in the survival, growth, and prosperity of society⁴⁰. This signifies the major change in the way society perceives technology. If back in 19th and 20th century it was seen as something that is a threat and may cause inferiority, now it is perceived as something with delegated power to lead a society of human beings. It is a form of extension of human ego and logos, a form of combination of technology and life that would be able to interact and yet exist dependably on a creator.

In this case the idea of a documentary as a social robot might be evaluated in terms of cause – effect relationship. If the role of a documentary beforehand was seen as a form of social activism, now it feels that, contrary to the increase of interest in the creative documentary production, it is diminishing. It could be said that in the context of social robotics documentaries are going the other way around and are trying to meet the needs of a nostalgic and romantic essence of a viewer rather than encouraging him or her towards any social interaction or activity. Therefore, it could be ventured to say that the two graphical curves of the evolution of the Mechanical Man and documentary are intersecting and are opposite.

Summary of the Chapter I

- The history of the Mechanical Man and the creation of a cyborg as a replica of a human being was first articulated in arts 19th - 20th century. As a form of a dream it has many layers that embrace philosophies and practicality. The Mechanical Man is a product of media samples, appropriation and montage. Therefore, it remains relevant in Post-modern and post-Post-modern set-ups. Documentary film shares many things in common with the dream of the Mechanical Man, since both are stuck in between actuality, lived real and technologies. Moreover, the close parallel between the creation of the Mechanical Man and the creation

⁴⁰ Selma Sabanovic, “Automatic for the people: Engineering cultures and imagining communities through social robotics in US and Japan” (papaer presented at AAA, San Francisco, Ca, USA, November 21, 2008).

of a documentary film can be drawn in terms of production that embraces montage and appropriation.

- The reproduction of real, especially in a form of stopped frame, resembles a death mask. It embraces traces of real while actually being fictional. It looks like real while acquiring the features of the artificially and technologically made. Therefore, the photograph or a stopped frame is never under any circumstances replacing the real. It is not a substitute, it is rather a representation, created by a force behind technology and by technology per se. The creator of the replica of reality just like the creator of the Mechanical Man becomes similar in his/her essence to technology itself.
- There is a creative tension between the creator as a scientist and the creator as an artist. While it is generally perceived that science and scientists strive for objectivity and calculated results, artistic essence is rooted in the emotional and illogical. In addition, it is worth notifying that the correlation of science and art is overlapping when talking about documentary film making and the creation of the Mechanical Man. Nowadays social robotics is moving towards the integrity of machines within the social environment, while documentaries are moving towards the reconstruction and recreation of reality, diminishing the importance of a social message.

CHAPTER II

The Evolution of a Documentary Film

Introduction

Documentary films have a long history which seems to coincide with the beginning of the cinema history. However, as a separate genre it emerged around 30s when a film-maker and theoretician J. Grierson coined the definition of it. The first documentary films, such as “Nanook from the North” by Robert Flaherty (1922), were considered to be ethnographic films, and their creators were seen as scientists rather than film-makers or artists. Despite this fact, even “Nanook from the North”, the first feature length documentary, demonstrated how thin was the line between representation of reality and fiction. In this film many scenes were set, consciously created by the film-maker to please the eye of the Western viewer. It is also a good example to illustrate how the cultural background and personality of the author is playing a role in the treatment of the story subject.

It is now necessary to make reference to Erik Barnouw's categorization of the documentary film-makers, based on specific roles that they occupy when making films. In the book “Documentary: The History of Non-fiction Film” he talks about documentary film maker as a prophet, explorer, reporter, painter, advocate, bugler, prosecutor, poet, chronicler, promoter, observer and catalyst⁴¹. These roles were crystallized by looking back at the development of the documentary film, and by discussing examples of how such different films served society in different historical circumstances. Art history, in that respect, witnesses similar developments in visual arts: it was used for religious purposes, political propaganda, social criticism and finally – art for its own sake. It could be said that only in the last decades documentary films reached the point of liberation which visual arts embraced in the 20th century, by

⁴¹ Eric Barnouw, *Documentary: a history of non-fiction film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3 – 262.

liberating themselves in terms of form and subject matter⁴². Further in this chapter we will be looking at the development of the documentary genre, its evolution and changes, in regards to its relationship with reality and its treatment.

2.2. Development of Modes and Forms

Documentary, as every film, aims to tell the story, but the idea of representation is the axis of it⁴³. When talking about creative documentary it is important to make a distinction between what is referred to as fiction, imaginary and reality⁴⁴. Fiction starts in imaginary, while imaginary is in its turn rooted in reality. Documentary films lie in between all of these categories as they are said to mystify the reality. Even the very first definition of documentary illustrated it. There have been many alternative definitions formulated later on, trying to clarify the relationship between reality and representation. For example, scholar of film studies, Dirk Eitzen, talked about documentary films as a dramatized representation of the human relation to his or her institutional life, „film with the message“, or „communication of real, not fictional things“⁴⁵. All these definitions refer to a specific sub-genre of documentary films rather than actually providing a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon. Therefore, it is useful to notify two types of films that Bill Nichols, the theoretician of documentary film, has pointed out: documentary of social representation, and documentary of dream fulfilment. This thesis mainly focuses on the second type of films, though it would be misleading to think that they have no characteristics of social representation as well. Just like it has been argued that every film is a social documentary, it could be argued that every representation is a social representation since it was made possible because of a human power behind it.

B. Nicols categorizes documentary films into six main modes: poetic, expository, participatory, observational, reflexive and per-formative. Poetic mode is rooted in modernists avant-garde. It stands for an opening up for alternative forms of

⁴² Film-maker W.Herzog had made a number of films that illustrate this fact. Perhaps the most extreme way to treat the subject matter was demonstrated in film “Wide Blue Yonder”, where stories on human travels to space are narrated by an alien (actor).

⁴³ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), 5.

⁴⁴ Wolfgang, Iser, *Fiktyvumas ir įsivaizdavimas* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2002), 17.

⁴⁵ Dirk Eitzen, “When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception,” in *Cinema Journal* 35 (1) (1995): 81.

knowledge. It stresses the mood, tone and effect much more than the display of knowledge or acts of persuasion. Films in this mode have been made by such film-makers as Joris Ivens, Laszo Moholy-Nagy, Jean Mitry⁴⁶. Expository mode attempts to establish direct relationship with the viewer, it encompasses inter-titles and voice-overs that compliment the persuasiveness of the film. Good examples of such mode are film series “Why We Fight”, and documentary “Blood of the Beasts” (1949)⁴⁷. The observational mode poses a series of ethical considerations that involve act of observing others going about their affairs. Films “Titicut Follies”, and “Don't Look Back” illustrate the application of this documentary sub-genre in practice⁴⁸. Participatory mode, as the title suggests, involves both – processes of observation and participation. One of the examples could be Dziga Vertov's “Man with the Movie Camera”⁴⁹. Reflexive mode calls for an answer to the question of what to do with people, the focus point shifts to the negotiation between the film-maker and the viewer, it often concedes the quality of the documentary itself. Rather than being engaged with social actors, film-maker becomes engaged with the audience. It brings into question subjects of how we represent historical world along with what is being represented. It asks viewer to see documentary for what it is – representation. Examples of this mode are “Re-assemblage”, and “Far from Poland” (1984)⁵⁰. The per-formative mode questions what knowledge is, and what counts as understanding and comprehension, like in films “Tongues Untied” (1989), and “Forest of Bliss” (1985). “Per-formative documentary endorses the latter position and sets out to demonstrate how embodied knowledge provides entry into an understanding of the more general processes at work in society”⁵¹. However, it is hard to find documentary that would exist in a pure form of a certain mode. Most of them are referred to as mix-mode documentary films.

However, the purpose of this thesis is to look at documentary not from the perspective of a genre or definition, but rather – at it as a meaningful and intentional creation of the author. Therefore, the understanding of documentary should be shifted from the relevance of its social message or mode as an independent and structure

⁴⁶ Bill Nichols, “What Types of Documentary Are There?,” in *Introduction to Documentary*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), 102 – 103.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 105.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 110.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 116-117.

⁵⁰ Ibid 125.

⁵¹ Ibid. 130 – 131.

defining element. Documentary in this case is seen as an artistic production that contains representational, fictional and imaginary elements. Documentary is inevitably affiliated with the issues of human intervention into situation, social constructs or historical events. This intervention might be seen as both — social and technological.

“Real events take place in front of the lens and the microphone; digital recorders create files that can be copied, dispatched around the world and extensively manipulated, subject only to the vagaries of software design and availability of internet access. From the outset, this is a doubly double process: it involves human activity and a technology in the creation of an artefact from real events”⁵².

The idea of the technological intervention needs to be discussed in more detail. Just like the idea of the Mechanical Man refers to a certain object, certain him or her, certain “thisness” —

“the photographic and the phonographic provide an immediate effect of ‘thereness’. <...> ‘Thereness’ is a felt effect, an almost involuntary response to seeing lifelike moving images with synchronized sound; and yet we know that these recordings have been willed into existence through human activity”⁵³.

The same applies to the Mechanical Man — it is presented as a man, has almost all characteristics needed to be persuasive, and therefore we perceive the Mechanical Man, identify with the creature the same way we identify with the living creatures — via emotional affiliation. The logical part also plays a role in this perception — we know it is mechanical, constructed and more of a representation and replica with the author behind it. Ultimately, both— documentary film and the Mechanical Man are to be referred to as design products.

“A documentary also deals with pre-stylized reality. The documentary film-maker shifts and reorganizes un-stylized material into a narrative form that explains that reality to the viewer. Thus a documentary is not an explanation of reality, but

⁵² John Ellis, “What are we expected to feel? Witness, textuality and the audiovisual,” in *Screen* 50 (1) (2009): 67.

⁵³ Ibid. 68.

rather the reality of an explanation”⁵⁴.

The Mechanical Man is a combination of bits and parts of reality – such as human body and mechanical structures. The role of Frankenstein as well as the role of the creator of Maria's replica is to organize these details in accordance with a human sample, by applying certain knowledge and structures to a fully designed product. Since the aim of the creation of these creatures is to experiment and prove human capacity and ability, products of such a creative process are also standing for a reality of the explanation, and the evidence. M. McLuhan observed that “all media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms. The spoken word was the first technology by which man was able to let go of his environment in order to grasp it in a new way”⁵⁵. However, modern and post modern man moved far from it and developed new forms of such translation. Documentaries, therefore, can be seen as Indexical Record (DIR) -- films comprised predominantly of moving photographic images that are indexical records or traces of the pro-filmic scene(s): an indexical sign as one that bears a relationship of causality or proximity to that which it represents. He distinguishes the index from the icon, which resembles its referent, and the symbol, which bears an arbitrary or purely conventional relationship with its referent⁵⁶. However, this may also change depending on a form of a documentary film. In the documentary film “Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story” (1987) main actors are Barbie dolls. This film is not categorized as a documentary in the Internet Movie Data Base (IMDb), however, considering today's tendencies in the documentary film making it could be characterized as one. Therefore, the qualities of a documentary regarding the traces of reality and the testimonies of the author are further to be analysed in this thesis.

2.3. Traces and Testimonies of Reality

The difference between an icon and an index in a documentary film is very much

⁵⁴ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, (New York: P. Dutton & Co., Inc.: 1970), 106.

⁵⁵ Marshall McLuhan, “Media as translators,” in *Understanding Media: the Extension of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 69.

⁵⁶ Carl Plantiga, “What documentary is after all?,” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63 (2) (2005): 106.

related to the distortion of the image. It could be said that, for example, animated documentary films, such as “Waltz With Bahsir” (2008), are still more of an indexial nature since they maintain the traces of real characters. However, the usage of symbols and icons is also very common in the documentary film making, especially when it comes to contemporary scene and experimentation with form (for example “Blind Loves” (2008) by Juraj Lehotsky, where he tells the love stories of blind people, and incorporates even fantastic elements of animation into a film narrative).

The nature of the Mechanical Man can also be examined in a context of iconic and indexial representation. Since there are different types of humanoid robots developed, they are differently attached to the idea of human as well. While some of them in terms of form and structure might seem closer to the index (such as creatures created in “Frankenstein” and “Metropolis”), the others are purely iconic (robots of social application, engaging in daily human activities and clearly distinguishable from people). However, since categories of index and icon are affiliated with the idea of tracing, distinction between what we refer to as a “trace” and a “testimony” should be discussed in more detail:

“...testimonies, unlike traces, are thoroughly mediated by the producer’s intentions. Moreover, persons are capable of giving testimony about all kinds of things that might never have existed, while only real things can leave traces of themselves”⁵⁷.

It is clear that traces of reality are inevitable in both— contemporary documentary and production of the Mechanical Man. However, since both of them are the products of the processes of mediation, re-mediation, and both also embrace the idea of dream or imaginary, that might be very personal, rooted in social consciousness, and yet might have never really existed as a real or physical form, the moment of a testimony also becomes significant. Therefore, there is a need to trace the non-documentary elements within the documentary. Yet, we are exposed to- the problem of finding an initial standing-point: “we are caught in a hermeneutic circle: we cannot define the parts of documentary without reference to the whole, nor the whole without reference to the parts. So we have to define both in one go, and say what it is for

⁵⁷ Ibid.

something to be a documentary part of a documentary whole”⁵⁸. Thus, instead of analysing any specific case, the process of intervention and treatment should be taken into consideration. That inevitably involves the formal elements of film, such as visual and conceptual form, rhythm, and sound. With the intervention to a homogeneous reality author already creates a certain artificial set up. Depending on the approach, he or she might choose to spend a lot of time in the environment, with protagonists, in order to reduce the artificiality of the situation. On the other hand, the choice of the author might be totally different and the artificiality might become the issue that he or she chooses to articulate. The author constructs the film from bits and pieces of decisively chosen shots and images. Furthermore, during the process of post-production editor creates the rhythm and the tempo of the film which, most of the time, stands in contradiction with the reality on the ground. All elements that are not part of the film diegesis, such as music, inter-titles and titles are also elements of fiction rather than documentary. Even if they provide information and facts, they refer to a personal point of view, summaries of the events or history that are always subjective. Looking at the documentary film in that way, it could be concluded that hardly anything within the documentary film stands for the idea of the document. It all depends on how loose or tight the definition is.

“Each ethical act is a confrontation with the abyss of freedom (i.e., the Real), and as such is a symbolic suicide. Indeed, the definition of the act as the subject’s withdrawal from reality <...>. Aesthetic representations are like any ethical act in that they “suspend” constituted reality and re-establish its relation to the Real, projecting the deed within a symbolic fiction”⁵⁹.

The issues of aesthetics and ethics bring this discussion to another level: is aesthetics actually a violation of ethics when it comes to documentary film making and the construction of the Mechanical Man? And is it actually a symbolic suicide or a murder? In a creative documentary film making the concept dictates the form, visual and aural choices. That ultimately leads to the distortion of actuality. The idea of art

⁵⁸ Gregory Currie, “Visible traces: Documentary and the contents of photographs,” in *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 57 (3) (1999): 285.

⁵⁹ Robert Bird, “The Suspended Aesthetics: Slavoj Žižek on Eastern European Film,” in *Studies in East European Thought* 56 (4) (2004): 365.

since modern times is closely related to author's choices and concepts, and creative documentary film-making today is closer to the idea of the creation of art than providing objective representation of actual events. Therefore, it could be suggested that ethical norms need to be violated to a certain extent in order to achieve the artistic effect.

The same methods apply to the process of construction of the Mechanical Man. The usage of human organs and parts is the violation of ethics. That was the reason why doctor Frankenstein was working in a remote mill and the crazy scientist from "Metropolis" had a secret underground laboratory. Anything that goes beyond legislation, norms and laws, just like any criticism towards them, is a violation of a certain degree and therefore often conceived "under cover" or "underground". At the same time it refers to both – encounter of author's limitation, i.e., the suicide, and the destruction of the established norms, i.e., the murder. On the other hand, realism, especially as an effect, can only be achieved via artificial and chemical constructs.

"Every form of aesthetic must necessarily choose between what is worth preserving and what should be discarded, and what should not even be considered. But when this aesthetic aims in essence at creating the illusion of reality, as does the cinema, this choice sets up a fundamental contradiction which is at once unacceptable and necessary : necessary because art can only exist when such a choice is made. Without it, supposing total cinema was here and now technically -possible, we would go back purely to reality"⁶⁰.

Talking about the issue of the Mechanical Man production in "Frankenstein" and "Metropolis" the distinctive aesthetic choices of the two creators is to be emphasized. While ethical issues were not much of the concern for either of them, aesthetic appearance of the creature was clearly much more relevant in "Metropolis". The creator of the replica of Maria was looking for a female model in order to replicate her body. That was a final step in the creation of a replica, and therefore played an important role in the finishing process, meanwhile, in "Frankenstein", the outlook did not play an important role at all. The creature looked like a monster, but that was of no concern for doctor Frankenstein. His goal was not to create an exact not distinguishable human being, but rather to create life. The answers to the question "why?" might be only

⁶⁰ Andre Bazin, *What is cinema? Vol II*, ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 26.

hypothetical. Most probably it had to do with the general cultural mindset of people and authors back in the beginning of the 20th century. The strength of a woman derives from her beauty and sexuality that is hard to understand and control, and the power of a man is rooted in his physical power. The same tendency might be observed in a documentary making, as it is left to the prerogative of the creator to decide to what extent it is important for him/her to create a comprehensive aesthetic form for the subject matter. This decision is often related to the goals of the production, such as to motivate people for social initiatives, to criticize current political or economical situation or to provide a personal interpretation of reality. The reasons behind the decision of making or not making aesthetic choices of a certain type are to be further discussed in this chapter.

2.4. The Physical and Chemical Action

Aesthetic choices of the film depend on the idea to be articulated. Even the absence of aesthetics is a type of a certain teleological choice. That is especially true when talking about the documentary footage that resembles amateur videos. For example, film “To Shoot an Elephant” (2010), portraying the reality of Gaza, is very much based on visuals shot without the tripod and it embraces a lot of visual noise. However, given the reality on the ground and the subject matter of the film, such aesthetics is the most suitable as it is representing the tension, insecurity and chaos. Just like “ugly” or “unpleasant” visual language, rapid editing may make the idea of the film stronger.

“At the conclusion of this inevitable and necessary "chemical" action, for the initial reality there has been substituted an illusion of reality composed of a complex of abstraction (black and white, plane surface), of conventions (the rules of montage, for example), and of authentic reality. It is a necessary illusion but it quickly induces a loss of awareness of the reality itself, which becomes identified in the mind of the spectator with its cinematographic representation”⁶¹.

The audience is constantly exposed to the mediated imagery and therefore is normally aware of logics and rules of cinema and montage. As a result, when reality is

⁶¹ Ibid. 27.

represented as real, for example in real time, it might even seem disturbing, boring or torturous. The time and space in film condenses. Spectators are ready for that even before the screening starts, therefore they have certain expectations. If these expectations are not met, the film is considered to be a failure, and that is ultimately also a failure of the film-maker. The audience is starving for the spectacle, for the magical experience that goes beyond the mundane. The film-maker, as a part of media society, is aware of these expectations. He or she not only tries to meet them, but also lives the process of modification of reality in the process of production and post-production.

“As for the film maker, the moment he has secured this unwitting complicity of the public, he is increasingly tempted to ignore reality. From habit and laziness he reaches the point when he himself is no longer able to tell where lies begin or end. There could never be any question of calling him a liar because his art consists in lying. He is just no longer in control of his art. He is its dupe, and hence he is held-back from any further conquest of reality”⁶².

However, it is still questionable if the idea of a lie describes this process best. Rather, the film-maker could be seen as an illusionist or a magician, as the essence of the film as a mediums, and therefore the cinema, is magical.

“Film has the possibility of creating new magic worlds according to its own inner laws, which, <...> are closer to those of music than any comparable realm of cultural history. <...> signals of a film blend with each other, in a necessary contiguity and sequentiality, how they correspond horizontally and vertically, bring together beginning and end, in a labyrinthine mathematics, of optical and acoustic interweaving of emotion and spirit”⁶³.

So far, when discussing the process of creation of a film and its aesthetics, just like comparing creation of the film to the one of the Mechanical Man, we assumed that it is purely the product of one person – the creator. This might indeed be the case quite often, as modern technologies, tools, equipment and software makes it easier to handle the whole process on your own. It is quite a widespread practice, especially in a

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Hans Jurgen Syberberg, *Syberberg's Filmbuch* (Munchen : Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1976), 63.

documentary film making, where teams are not big, and sometimes consist only of one person who does cinematography, directing, editing, sound editing, and even production all by him or herself. However, it is not always the case, and in order for professional standards to be met these roles should be separated. M. McLuhan observed that film actually differs from any sort of a single medium, such as, for example, written word, and is rather a collective art form that requires team, hierarchies and collaboration.

“Prior to the movies, the most obvious example of such corporate artistic action had occurred early in the industrialized world, with the large new symphony orchestras of the nineteenth century. <...> The symphony orchestra became a major expression of the ensuing power of such coordinated effort, though for the players themselves this effect was lost, both in the symphony and in industry⁶⁴.

If we discuss film as a corporate artistic action, it brings up the contradiction with the idea of the creator of the Mechanical Man. In that respect, production of a film, such as documentary, involves many artists, or rather – artists-scientists, who unite their power for the creative and industrial purposes. Film industry is functioning legally and openly, while such openness (in “Frankenstein” and “Metropolis”) would entirely destroy the idea of a production of the Mechanical Man. However, the exception can be made to the film “Frankenstein”, where mad scientist had an assistant that served doctor as a blue-collar worker. However, talking about documentary films that are the focus of this thesis it is necessary to emphasize that most of them are produced rather independently, and therefore are not strictly bound to any bigger industry. That is to say that documentary film industry, that is mainly television, can be only compared to mechatronics and the actual industry of robotics. However, none of these are of the major concern of this thesis. Further in the argumentation we hold on to the idea that documentary is an artistic production of a director, since he or she is a major creative power, deciding on the treatment, conceptualization, visual language and narrative structure. We assume that the creation of a documentary film, just like the creation of the Mechanical Man, is purely rooted in the passion of the creator to articulate the idea of a choice.

⁶⁴ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extention of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 323.

Summary of the Chapter II

- Documentary, as an intentional message of the author, shifts above the relevance of the social message, and ventures to emphasize the relevance of the interpretation of the history. Such films are artistic productions that embrace not only representational elements, but also – fiction and imaginary. There is a necessity of two intervention forms – human and technological -- in order for the documentary film to be made. The process of intervention creates a distance where “this” transforms to “that” and “here” to “there”. The created product, such as a documentary film or the Mechanical Man, in terms of its relationship with the audience, seems to be going through the same process backwards: “thereness” is experienced as “hereness” and “thatness” as “thisness”. This completes the inner and outer life circle of the documentary film. Testimonies on reality are playing not any less important role in today's documentary film making than traces. Testimonies are more subjective and not bound to the actual lived, while traces serve as the death masks of reality.
- The issue of clash of aesthetics and ethics in documentary film making leads to a symbolic suicidal action, and at the same time – murder. In the creative documentary film making this concept suggests the form, visual and aural choices. That leads to the distortion of actuality. Today creative documentary film making is closer to the idea of art than the objective representation of actual events. Therefore, artistic qualities of the work often increase proportionally to that distortion level, as subjective beats objective. The same applies to the process of the construction of the Mechanical Man. The usage of human organs and parts is the violation of ethics for the sake of the creation of a new form and even aesthetics. As an encounter with author's limitations documentary film making is suicidal. On the other hand, since it is destructive towards norms and forms established – it also is murderous.
- Looking at the documentary film as a production, it is not literally true that it is a product of one creator, director, though documentary film teams have a tendency to be relatively small compared to those of the fiction films. However, since

director is the main creative force, embracing and summarizing ideas of other contributors, this thesis emphasizes his role as the most significant. As a result, it is assumed that his or her work, especially, during conceptualization process, is a struggle with reality. In a creative process of film making the director tends to ignore reality, by creating a new subjective narrative based on the documentary material and observations. Because of this involvement, his attitude resembles lying, and the behaviour – playing magic tricks. However, he/she is consist in this process, and often has no conscious control over his/her art. The creator is like a child involved in a role-play game aware of the creative process, but not necessarily of the end result.

CHAPTER III

Mechanical Real: Documentary and Media Theories

Introduction

Seeking to complete the theoretical framework based on a parallel between documentary and the Mechanical Man, it is necessary to give a tribute to the medium used. M.McLuhan's theory claims medium to be a message⁶⁵. Medium extending our bodies, and, therefore, capacities. However, „these same technologies can be dangerously dehumanizing“⁶⁶. In our day and age these extensions became almost invisible and merged with our everyday environment⁶⁷. Any non-living extension are complimentary, increasing human capacity, however they are not independent and therefore -- not sensual. Camera is a tool that extends seeing, but alike the the screen, functions as such only if there is a sensitive receiver behind it. The emplacement of artificial extension also means adjustment of one's own senses cording to the qualities and specifics of the media. Ultimately, the senses of a living receiver behind the camera or the screen become mixed – combined of biological and mechanical experiences: „a technological extension of our bodies designed to alleviate physical stress can bring on psychic stress that may be much worse“⁶⁸. The result of it, at least partly, might be the feeling of disintegration with our own selves. M.McLuhan claims that, in our conscious inner lives the interplay with different senses constitutes one single sense, such as the

⁶⁵ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extention of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 9.

⁶⁶ Julie H. Wosk, „The Impact of Technology on the Human Image in Art,” *Leonardo* 19 (2) (1986): 145.

⁶⁷ David Burmester, „Electronic Media: Media Probes,” in *The English Journal* 72 (4) (1983): 95.

⁶⁸ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extention of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 79.

sense of touch, that actually is more than skin contact with the material⁶⁹.

“The Greeks had the notion of a consensus or a faculty of "common sense" that translated each sense into each other sense, and conferred consciousness on man. Today, when we have extended all parts of our bodies and senses by technology, we are haunted by the need for an outer consensus of technology and experience that would raise our communal lives to the level of a world-wide consensus. When we have achieved a world-wide fragmentation, it is not unnatural to think about a world-wide integration consciousness electrically ordered, however, is a private subconsciousness or individual "point of view" rigorously imposed by older mechanical technology”⁷⁰.

Such thoughts resembles the idea of new chaos that is being created in order to be reunited in new cosmical order that will bring entire humanity to another level where way of thinking, feeling and perceiving is different. However, it is not easy to comprehend the effects of technology that is evolving faster and faster and therefore is demanding faster adjustments of human consciousness. The time and the space have condensed. It is a question if with our mental and emotional capacities to experience the world we are able to process the whole, as oppose to bits, pieces and samples which we are struggling to put together in a logical sequence. However, any chaos is a source for creativity as it's has no defined and finite structure.

Expanded Cinema theories stand for the idea that synaesthetic cinema is actually the only aesthetic language that is suitable for contemporary life⁷¹. M.McLuhan was questioning, weather it is true that humanity is giving preference to a spoken word rather than written, as the existence of television and radio mediums imply⁷². However, computer as a medium, actually seems to bring this discussion to an end, as it embraces visual, aural and written word together, by creating an environment for symbiosis for the three. The same, although on a different level, applies to film. By uniting different units and different forms of expression it becomes a unit on it's own, a representation and product of creator's nervous system.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 122.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, (New York: P. Dutton & Co., Inc.: 1970), 82.

⁷² Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extention of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 94.

“It (synaesthetic film) can function as a conditioning force to unite us with the living present, not separate us from it. <...> use of the term synaesthetic is meant only as a way of understanding the historical significance of a phenomenon without historical precedent. Actually the most descriptive term for the new cinema is "personal" because it's only an extension of the film maker's central nervous system. The reader should not interpret "synaesthetic" as an attempt to categorize or label a phenomenon that has no definition. There's no single film that could be called typical of the new cinema because it is defined anew by each individual film-maker”⁷³.

Still it is hard to answer whether synaesthetic cinema is suitable because of its representational value of today's life, or because of human capacity to comprehend its products. As it has been discussed before, extensions of human senses seem to disbalance the functioning of different human sensory faculties. It is a hypothetical idea, but possible, that the depression that became one of the most common illnesses of post-modern man comes up as a defence mechanism against this speed and multi-layered reality we are living within. M.McLuhan observed that:

„...lack of homogeneity in speed of information movement creates diversity of patterns in organization. It is quite predictable, then, that any new means of moving information will alter any power structure whatever. So long as the new means is everywhere available at the same time, there is a possibility that the structure may be changed without breakdown. Where there are great discrepancies in speeds of movement, as between air and road travel or between telephone and typewriter, serious conflicts occur within organizations”⁷⁴.

Further in this chapter we will be looking at how kinetic nature of cinema affects human perception, experience of reality, and subjects of memory, and how these effects are related to documentary films and the idea of Mechanical Man.

⁷³ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, (New York: P. Dutton & Co., Inc.: 1970), 82.

⁷⁴ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extension of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 104.

3.2. Kinetic Cinema

If, as a starting point, we perceive the nature of cinema as kinetic, there is a need to discuss specific tools applied in its creative processes, as well as the methods and the abilities enhanced by those tools and technology.

“The term kinetic generally indicates motion of material bodies and the forces and energies associated with it. Thus to isolate a certain type of film as kinetic and therefore different from other films means we're talking more about forces and energies than about matter. <...> Kinaesthetic, therefore, is the manner of experiencing a thing through the forces and energies associated with its motion. This is called kinaesthesia, the experience of sensory perception. One who is keenly aware of kinetic qualities is said to possess a kinaesthetic sense⁷⁵.

The idea of cinema as kinetic example is interesting, since despite its „cold“ and rather emotionless nature it enables to produce impulses that evoke strong emotional reactions within the audience and subject matters. Therefore it is to say that medium has a capacity to produce signals that are evoking emotions that, at times, are even stronger than those evoked within natural environment. It is obvious, for example, that close-up shots are more emotionally appealing than the long ones, since it offers a close look, that is cleaned out from all informational noises.

“With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject⁷⁶.

This suggests that the exposure to mediated image expands our senses to rather subconscious level of experiencing. Just like „the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses⁷⁷. This also effects our

⁷⁵ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, (New York: P. Dutton & Co., Inc.: 1970), 97.

⁷⁶ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extension of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 245.

⁷⁷ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 31.

perception of not mediated reality. Once perception is trained for mediated encounters it inevitably looks for the same thing in natural surroundings. This experience is directly related to the idea of reproduction, which „detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition”⁷⁸.

Talking about cinema and cinematic tools in the process of creation of such reality and evoking new sensuality the idea of camera needs to be taken into consideration. Perhaps the best example of it is Dziga Vertov's documentary film „Man With the Movie Camera“. By exposing the film making process, and to the camera, it reveals magical tricks, and, therefore, de-mystifies cinema, but on the other hand, it glorifies camera and montage for their very qualities of constructing that magic. It also illustrates visually the ideas stated in „Kino-eye“ manifesto.

„...we take as a point of departure the use of camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than human eye, for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills space. The kino-eye lives and moves in space; it gathers and records impressions in a manner wholly different from that of the human eye. The position of our bodies while observing or our perception of a certain number of features of a visual phenomenon in a given instant are by no means obligatory limitations for the camera, which, since it is perfect, perceives more and better. We can not improve the making of our eyes, but we can endlessly perfect the camera”⁷⁹.

The idea of the imperfection of the body pushes human being to extend himself in media, which would widen his ability and capacity. The idea of „transformer“ and „transformation“ becomes essential. By acknowledging the limitation of human brain and body, we are looking for the artificial improvements. However, we are also denying our nature by abandoning senses. Since Antiquity we are exposed to a culture of visualisation that attempts to please and attract the eye. In Renaissance this culture of seeing went through major transformations, and turned individual into „a spectator, the world into a spectacle, and the body an object or specimen”⁸⁰. The other senses, especially the touch and the smell have been played to not that much importance. Though

⁷⁸ Ibid. 21.

⁷⁹ Mark Cousins, Kevin MacDonald, *Imagining Reality, The Faber Book of Documentary*, (Oxford: Faber and Faber, 1997), 53.

⁸⁰ John Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness: The Failure of Symbolic Thought* (The Anarchist Library, 2009), 6.

it may seem that digital age is very much about touching (typing, screen-touch and etc.), but in sensual terms it is very much the same experience. It could be ventured to say that instead of training senses, humanity chose to train its mental capital and institutes. Since the essence of a mental development is logics (new logics), the idea of invention and development of external and artificial becomes leading to that one of internal and natural.

“The primacy of the visual is no accident, for an undue elevation of sight not only situates the viewer outside what he or she sees, but enables the principle of control or domination at base. Sound or hearing as the acme of the senses would be much less adequate to domestication because it surrounds and penetrates the speaker as well as the listener. Other sensual faculties are discounted far more. Smell, which loses its importance only when suppressed by culture, was once a vital means of connection with the world”⁸¹.

The idea of showing is directly related with the faculty of seeing. The contemporary society, is also referred to as a society of spectacle or, to be more precise, – „Media Spectacle“⁸². It is all about „showing how“, „showing that“, „showing why“. Coming back to the idea of the Mechanical Man, it can be notified that such creature was also a part of the spectacle. It was created to show that the human being is able to do that. In fact, that the creator, a mad scientist, who does not despise any rules, is able to go beyond all what has been seen so far. Such seeing experiences that show what is beyond known and familiar brings us to two other issues of this thesis – experiences and demonstration of de-realization and de-personalisation.

3.3. De-realization of Reality

The creator in documentary film also aims „to show“, but might have different reasoning behind it (truth, justice, opinion, observation and etc.). Increased interest in reality genre (reality shows, documentary films) suggest that perhaps beforehand reality was much more of a natural apportionment and therefore needed not to be seen. Since the idea of reality is expanding, the relationship with what we assumed to be reality is

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle* (London, New York: Routledge: Francis and Taylor, 2003), 1-192.

changing as well. Reality that refers to all natural environments becomes distant and exotic and, therefore, to be shown and exhibited. In a way, such showing of reality may remind to shamanism, where the symbols becomes tools in objectification of reality. Cinema, as an art form, achieves similar effect.

“Art turns the subject into object, into symbol. The shaman’s role was to objectify reality; this happened to outer nature and to subjectivity alike because alienated life demanded it. Art provided the medium of conceptual transformation by which the individual was separated from nature and dominated, at the deepest level, socially”⁸³.

Going even further in comparison of art and ritual action, it is necessary to point out that the objectification of reality is achieved via the structure of subjective interpretation (social, cultural and etc.). Shaman, or in our case -- artist or film-maker, takes a lead part in the ritual. It shows the way to mystify the reality, and therefore – turn it into a fictional, theatre like experience.

“Cinematic fiction should be understood as prestylized or manufactured reality that did not exist prior to the making of the film. The only true reality that remains in the finished film is the objective awareness of the stylization itself. <...> Not only is this not objective reality; it's not even the cohesive, unique reality of one artist's perception”⁸⁴.

These media and magic evoked experiences leads the argument to another discussion – experiences of de-realization and depersonalization. In psychiatry these experiences of individual would be characterised as symptoms of a mental disorder. Though the rituals, just like magic, drugs, alcohol⁸⁵ and films at times may evoke similar experiences. „An episode of depersonalization or de-realization is characterized by the experience of unreality with regard to the self or surroundings, respectively”⁸⁶. It is the experience of otherness, alienation from the environment or perception of it as

⁸³ John Zerzan, *The Case Against Art*, (The Anarchyst Library, 2009), 3.

⁸⁴ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, (New York: P. Dutton & Co., Inc.: 1970), 106.

⁸⁵ Karen Armstrong, *Trumpa mito istorija* (Vilnius:Alma Littera 2007), 164.

⁸⁶ James Lickel, Elizabeth Nelson et al., “Interoceptive Exposure Exercises for Evoking Depersonalization and Derealization: A Pilot Study,” in *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly* 22 (4) (2008): 321.

surreal, illusionary. That is similar to what Gene Youngblood defined as a synaesthetic cinema⁸⁷.

„The oceanic effect of synaesthetic cinema is similar to the mystical allure of the natural elements: we stare in mindless wonder at the ocean or a lake or river. We are drawn almost hypnotically to fire, gazing as though spellbound. We see cathedrals in clouds, not thinking anything in particular but feeling somehow secure and content. It is similar to the concept of no-mindedness in Zen, which also is the state of mantra and mandala consciousness, the widest range of consciousness“⁸⁸.

Another extreme – the perception of cinema by Italian Futurist artists. If the idea of synaesthetic cinema evolves around the idea of abstraction and immaterial, Futurists' vision of cinema was more directed to celebrating the dynamism and its mechanics. They claim the formula of their cinema is „painting + sculpture + plastic dynamism + words-in-freedom + composed noises [*intonarumori*] + architecture + synthetic theatre = Futurist cinema“⁸⁹. In „Futurists' Cinema“ manifesto it is stated that their films will be based on analogies, and reality would serve only as one part of it. There also will be additional and external elements added, for example, representing a man who is saying to a woman “You’re as lovely as a gazelle,” they would show the gazelle. This idea resembles to the expository mode of documentary film or any reportage made by a TV journalist. However that does not mean that Futurists despise lyricism. They were „for“ adding „cinematic poems, speeches, and poetry” to the body of their films. However part of the lyricism derives from „cinematic simultaneity and interpenetration of different times and places”⁹⁰ which is based on juxtapositions. Just like extended artists, they made reference to music as a „cinematic researches” that would include dissonances, harmonies, symphonies of gestures, events, colours, lines, etc. They discussed the dramatization of the film, therefore freeing it from mere photographic logic. Objects were also seen as drama elements: „ animated, humanized, baffled, dressed up, impassioned, civilized, dancing”, „removed from their normal surroundings and put into an abnormal state that, by contrast, throws into relief their amazing

⁸⁷ Examples: Stan Brakhage, Will Hindle, Andy Warhol, Carolee Schneeman.

⁸⁸ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, (New York: P. Dutton & Co., Inc.: 1970), 92.

⁸⁹ F.T. Marinetti, Bruno Corra, Emilio Settimelli, Arnaldo Ginna, Giacomo Balla, Remo Chiti manifesto “The Futurist Cinema,” <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/cinema.html> (accessed 5 March 2010).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

construction and non-human life”⁹¹. Ultimately, they pointed out the axis of this thesis – the parallel between human re-construction and construction of film „unreal reconstructions of the human body”, “potential dramas and strategic plans of filmed feelings”, and „linear, plastic, chromatic equivalences”⁹². Their vision of cinema, just like the overall perception of the future arts was very much related to dynamism, movement, and machinery. Machinery not necessary literally, but rather in terms of method they were seeing to be applied in order to achieve desired effect. Their idea of reconstruction very much resembles the process of creation of the Mechanical Man.

„We will give skeleton and flesh to the invisible, the impalpable, the imponderable and the imperceptible. We will find abstract equivalents for every form and element in the universe, and then we will combine them according to the caprice of our inspiration, creating plastic complexes which we will set in motion”⁹³.

Translated into the context of documentary film making, the invisible, the impalpable, the imponderable and imperceptible is the history. It is not any different from the idea since the history by itself is ephemeral. The only legacy of it is the document – visual traces, memories, records. The skeleton of any history in documentary film is the structure of the film. The flesh, though, is the author's concept and treatment. In order to construct a an organism of documentary film, the way Futurists' cinema vision suggests, author of the film needs to find abstract equivalents for the elements of the universe – elements of human universe – with the shield of the specific ideas or metaphors. All these elements of film create the effect of de-realization and de-personalisation not only when talking about the experiences of the viewer, but also the reality and people that are acting within the film. Once the subject of the documentary is turned into an object, it exists within the film reality, where only part of it's, his or her qualities are present. Further in this chapter we will discuss the issues of memory, as they are directly related with the demonstration and experience of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero manifesto “The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe,” <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/reconstruction.html> (accessed 5 March 2010).

dissociation.

3.4. Archival Reality

Documentary film maker in his creative activities ultimately deals with the evidence of death, dissolve and memory. Such history is resurrected by film-maker, an author, a creator, and therefore, to some extent divine figure that has illusionary control over reality but over the traces and pieces of it. It remains a question, whether documentary as any other sort of reality based production, helps to mend the fragmented and sampled world, or rather contributes its deconstruction.

“In a world that has become fragmented and violent, this art functions as a mean of survival. It reformulates the nature of viewing, memory, and archival logic through the self-representation of everyday people, places, and events. These representations engender anomic archives, counter to "official" historical archives and narratives that preserve, in memory, the everyday human subject ensnared within the life-atrophying conjunction of occupation and geo-political struggle”⁹⁴.

Generally, it has been observed that there is a tendency in contemporary documentary film making to use archival material⁹⁵, and recreate history in a form of creative interpretation⁹⁶. This almost literally illustrates the idea of Walter Benjamin's, who “posits a reconsideration of the historiographical project, arguing for (and demonstrating in his writing technique) a montage approach to history”⁹⁷. He was also calling for the form of history that would “redeem the past by yanking it into the present”⁹⁸. To some extent it is a reference to a documentary film and film-maker who can make the film about the past only within the historical present. Therefore, the understanding of documentary as an archive could be interpreted as “a reconstruction--a

⁹⁴ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Gerhard Richter's 'Atlas' : The Anomic Archive,” in *October* (88) (1999): 137.

⁹⁵ Wilma de Jong, “Against the Tide: Creating Interactive Doc Projects Using Internet and Mobile Technologies” (workshop presented in 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, Thessaloniki, Greece, March 15, 2010).

⁹⁶ Bartek Konopka, “How to Find a Surprising Narration for your Documentary Story” (lecture presented in workshop “Summer Media Studio”, Vilnius, Lithuania, June 20 - July 6, 2009).

⁹⁷ Ryan Watson, “Art Under Occupation: Documentary, Archive, and the Radically Banal,” in *Afterimage* 36 (5) (2009), 6.

⁹⁸ Paula Rabinowitz, “Wreckage upon wreckage: History, documentary and the ruins of memory,” in *History & Theory* 32, (2), (1993): 119.

re-enactment of another time or place for a different audience--a graphing of history, in and through the cinematic image and taped sound, onto the present”⁹⁹. However, the historical present is changing every time the film is screened for different audience or in a different context. Documentary films, more than any other type of films are multi-layered and therefore, open to different ways of reading. So the documentary, even if structured and organized into one clear narrative about historical past is not prevented from gaps and cracks that arose during the encounters with different spaces, time and people. Michel Foucault, stresses the importance of the incomplete fragments and traces of history, that shifts the axis of archive from a very centre and in a way de-stabilizes it.

“This de-centring of the archive begets a de-centred subjectivity. In this unstable position, we stand within the ever-emerging, dynamic archive in a place of difference, rather than in a stable position before a linear and continuous mode of history”¹⁰⁰.

This suggests the idea of archive as something that is dynamic rather than static, that penetrates the present and changes the form due to new encounters. It rather reminds of a chemical or physical reaction than the formula. However, this multidimensionality and dynamism is rooted into today's societies' tendency to archive “self” and “personal”, ordinary and daily, giving it equal importance to all “specials”.

“The emphasis on the personal experiences of the everyday gestures toward a mode of self-archivization, a recording of one's experiences that relays the visceral within a specific space and temporality. The production of individual stories, revolving around specific lives or local events, works to represent the subject within a transmissible, visual mode--an archival trace of history that elicits the response of others”¹⁰¹.

In a way, documentary cinema resembles the mirror effect. If in aboriginal tribes the mirror reflection perceived frightening, in societies that are used to it for centuries love to see self in reflection. The same effect applies to film – first encounter seems scary and violent, though in the long round humanity started to enjoy mediated

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London: Pantheon, 1972), 34.

¹⁰¹ Ryan Watson, “Art Under Occupation: Documentary, Archive, and radical Banal,” in *Afterimage* 36 (5) (2009): 6.

reflection of self to an enormous extent. The difference between the two is that mirror, on the contrary to film, does not preserve the image. The question of concern here might be compared to a mirror effect. Placed wrongly, without frames on the wall it creates an illusion effect that confuses the viewer about the actual space. Almost everyone have experienced the feeling of hitting the huge mirror with the head due to spacial confusion of extended space. It can be said, that self-archivization, rewinding and fast -far-warding of the history, has a similar effect, just rather than extending the space, it creates the illusion of time. This effect is achieved via identification with the image of self distanced in time.

Since the beginning of Modernity, with the increase of new production, the feeling of artificiality of “now” have increased. Therefore, all that is preserved and archived is perceived as 'authentic'. That lead to an “externalisation of memory” of a 'prosthetic' nature: “the intensified mediation of memory by films and television programmes, the selling of 'authentic' as nostalgic commodities, and the repackaging of 'historic’¹⁰².

There is a major difference between history and memory. History is a “distanced practice based in the archive and its documentary evidence and relics of another era, is always about analysis and critical discourse reconstructing and representing the past”¹⁰³. On the contrary, memory is associated with loss, ephemeral and interpretation. Some scholars, such as Pierre Nora, claim that memory, to be more specific -- collective memory, – is no longer existing. Instead we are left with *lieux de memoire* – sites of memory – entities of material or non-material nature – “because memory has been eradicated by history and the bonds of identity are broken”¹⁰⁴. This explains the passion of contemporary society to extend the memory in other forms, such as documentary films, while the 'prosthetic' nature of such memories shows the direct relation of it with the Mechanical Man symbol.

Summary of the Chapter III

- Even if New Media is a contributor to the processes of fragmentation and

¹⁰² Tim Edensor, *Industrial ruins: Spaces, Aesthetics, and Materiality* (New York: Berg, 2009), 126-127.

¹⁰³ Mark Crinson, *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City*, (London: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2009), xiv.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

sampling of reality, it may also serve as a tool to reunite these pieces on a different level. This process resembles of a chemical reaction, where structural details of atoms need to be separated in order to reunite again in new homogenised structures. However, for this reaction to happen the catalysator is needed. Human capacity and creativity along with the New Media itself may serve as the power enabling creation of new reality, where experience, perception, attitude and participation of real have new qualities.

- Cinema is rooted in kinaesthetic nature, which is based on sensory perception. Cinema tools, as media, are extensions of human kinaesthetic organs, such as eyes and ears. Media expands human experience (motion, seeing, hearing). Once trained in such new perception, humanly sensors are unconsciously seeking for similar experiences in real life. Therefore, there is a need to look for analogies between experiences in mediated reality and reality. Since exposure to media almost dominates human experience, it becomes even more easily readable than what is really lived. Humans become detached from physical reality, and as a result it becomes exotic source for media show in the loop of forgetting and remembering. Humans regain interest in reality once it is translated to media language and showed explicitly. Therefore, it may seem that already now humanly perception trusts media experience more than the physical one.
- Mediated reality have penetrated the physical reality. What humanity is experiencing now is the mixture of the two. The physical reality have become the issue of history in context of the loss of collective memory. In documentary film, any subject of reality is turned into the object. It is stylized and adjusted to fit the rules of media. Such process was discussed by Italian Futurists, who attempted to find ways and methods to articulate analogies, and even abstract elements of reality. Such exposure evokes cinematic experience which can be defined as de -- realization and de—personalization. Modern men's attachment to the mediated reality is signified by the obsession of one's self archivisation process. It enables individual to travelling in time, and to some extent – space. The same individual history, just not in terms of experience, but in terms of story telling, is often applied in contemporary documentary film making.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: CREATION OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM AS THE MECHANICAL MAN

I. materialization of the idea

- **concepts and ideas articulated** – what is the main idea of the film? How is it articulated? How it is related to the visual and narrative style, structure, what are the secondary ideas of the film and how do they contribute to the main concept?
- **defining director's vision** – what was directors intention and why? What role is he playing in the process (artist vs scientist)? To what level author is present in his/her film? How the idea is implemented and articulated visually, aurally and structurally?
- **structure** – how many parts film has? How are they joined together and what is the basis for the structure chosen?
- **visual and narrative style** – how the story is told in terms of visuals and sound? What materials are used? How it contributes to the overall aesthetics and structure of the creative documentary film?

II. construction of the body and spirit

- **modes and forms** – which mode is most explicit in the film and how does it contribute to the overall construction of the piece? What form is chosen and what is significant about it?
- **traces and testimonies** --- to what extent the reality represented in the film resembles the actuality? How it is modified and used, to what extent it is imaginary and fictional?
- **physical and chemical artistic action** – how effects, special effects and manipulations are used? What is the purpose and what it helps to achieve?

III. construction of mind

- **senses evoked** -- what is the general mood of the film, what is the rythm like and how is it reflected in motion? What senses of the viewer are evoked and how?
- **de-realization and de-personalization** – how the reality evoked by cinematic

experience differ to the physical reality that film is referring to? How, if any, effects of de-realization and de-personalization are evoked? What is the world-view created in the film like? Who's perspective is presented in the film?

- **archival of reality** -- how is the archival material used and to what extent? What are the documents that film embraces, how the idea of record is understood and articulated? What is in focus of archivization process and how is it implemented? Is this archival based on personal or social history? Is it articulated in subjective or objective way?

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Festival films

Introduction

Vilnius Documentary Film Festival is a relatively young. It is organized by cinema centre “Skalvija” that started working in 1993, after re-organization of the cinema “Planeta” opened in 1962. In 2002 the concept of “Skalvija” cinema centre has been revised, it is now a member of international organizations “Europa Cinemas” and “CICEA”. The aims of “Skalvija” cinema centre are to introduce viewers to non-commercial films, with emphasis on European cinema, promote Lithuanian cinema, organize meetings with Film makers, educational programs with the emphasis on per-school and school children education on film¹⁰⁵.

The 6th International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius took place between October 9th and 18th 2009, in “Skalvija” cinema centre, and National Gallery of Arts¹⁰⁶. Festival was dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – one of the symbols of the Cold War. The festival consists out of few programs – the Competition Program – 12 films; the Main Program --9 films; Special Program Berlin Wall – 7 films; Retrospective – 4 films; and the Generation of the Break Through – 7 films. It was a special program dedicated to the documentary works of Lithuanian film makers, as it has been notified that after the revolution in 1989, when the country was liberated from Soviet block, the documentary tradition took an entire new direction. During these years the young generation of film-makers manifested a new perspective to cinema, which

¹⁰⁵ Skalvijos Kino Centras, “Apie mus,” http://www.skalvija.lt/index.php/apie_mus/apie_kino_centra/75 (accessed June 10, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ National Gallery of Arts, “About National Gallery of Arts,” <http://www.ndg.lt/index.php?id=104&L=1> (accessed June 10, 2010).

was much more in – depth, sincere and less declarative¹⁰⁷. The winners of the competition program are usually selected by the members of the international jury.

The 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival is organized by the Thessaloniki International Film Festival¹⁰⁸. Documentary Festival consists not only from screenings, but also events, such as master-classes, conferences, documentary screenings for kids, exhibitions, concerts and parties, regional events. There are also events for press and film makers, such as “Just talking” where film makers and press representatives discuss various issues, and reflect on screenings in informal environment. The festival is followed by pitching sessions and documentary film market events. The program of the festival has entire different structure: in 2010, between March 12 and 21 there were 11 main segments of the festival screenings: Views of the World -- 17 films focusing on contemporary issues of a social and historical content; Stories to Tell -- 19 films, personal stories that stand out in terms of aesthetic approach and the subject matter; Recording Memory – 9 films on history and its record in film; Portraits – Human Journeys – 17 films focusing on human life and everyday life; Planet in Peril – 7 documentaries that focuses on the destruction of ecosystem; Habitat – 13 films that focus on natural and social environment; Human Rights – 7 documentaries on human rights and violations; Music – 6 films on music; Hybrid Docs -- 4 films which used dramatization in the presentation and narration of the story; African Stories – 6 documentaries on African realities; Greek Panorama -- 21 new Greek documentaries that differ in subject matters and topics.

There were also a number of retrospectives screened -- tributes: Joris Ivens – 20 films; Krzysztof Kieslowski -- 18 films; Polish Doc's Spotlight – 5 films; Andrzej Fidyk – 4 films; Docs on North Korea – 3 films; Aegean Stories – 13 films. The winners in this festival are selected by public votes, all films are included in the competition program, aside from tributes. The screenings were held in three main venues: Olympion Cinemas, Warehouse 1 Cinemas, and Warehouse D Cinemas.

The selection of these two festivals was chosen for the part of qualitative analysis as it embraces both – Eastern European and East-Western European perspective on contemporary documentary films. The selection of the films for the analysis was

¹⁰⁷ “Introduction,” in *6th International Documentary Film festival Vilnius Festival Program*, 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Thessaloniki International Film Festival, “Organizers,” <http://www.filmfestival.gr/default.aspx?lang=en-US&loc=1&page=586> (accessed June 10, 2010).

subjective, based on observations, authors intentions and motivation behind, with emphasis on deliberately chosen form for the articulation of the subject matter. They are picked from different segments and programs of the festivals. The criteria was – clear auteur perspective represented, logical and creative usage of visual language and sound in articulation of the issue within the documentary film. This does not suggest that the other films in the festival were not suitable for the following analysis, which, at the end is limited by the defined size of content and structure. The following selections were made intentionally seeking to provide different illustrative examples of conceptualization and treatment of actuality, and understanding of actuality itself. The films selected for the analysis are as follows:

The 6th Vilnius Documentary Film festival:

- “Rabbit a la Berlin” by Bartek Konopka, Poland, Germany, 51 min., 2009;
- “Cooking History”, by Peter Kerekes, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria, 88 min., 2009;
- “Fleeting Memory”, by Amaury Brumauld, France, 52 min., 2008;

The 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival:

- “The Edge of Dreaming”, by Amy Hardie, UK, 73 min., 2009;
- “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy”, by Pieter Liechti, Switzerland, 88 min., 2009;
- “Yodok Stories”, by Andrzej Fidyk, Norway, 83 min, 2009.

About the films. Film “Rabbit a la Berlin”¹⁰⁹ by Bartek Konopka tells of wild rabbits that used to live in cracks of a Berlin Wall. For almost 28 years the “Death Zone” of people used to serve as a secure environment for these wild animals. It was protected by guards from people, dangerous animals, and it was surrounded by the thick grass. They were feeling safe while living in the closed environment. Then they got obviously overpopulated guards started to hunt them. But rabbits survived. However the day of a fall of a Berlin Wall forced rabbits to flee from their secure and habitat. They moved to the Western side of the city and still lives there in few colonies. They had to adjust to the life in freedom just like a big part of Eastern European inhabitants¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ “Rabbit a la Berlin,” <http://www.rabbitalaberlin.com/> (accessed June 3, 2010).

¹¹⁰ 6th International Documentary Film festival Vilnius Festival Program, 2010.

“Cooking History”¹¹¹, by Peter Kerekas narrates stories of cooks that were serving different armies in 20th century wars in Europe. They provide a very personal view to a well known historical events. They reveal facts that are beyond those written in history books. They have a sentimental relationship towards the dishes that they mayed and the symbolism of those. At the same time, the effect of war, death and life encounter is very present at each and every narrative of the protagonist's¹¹².

“Fleeting Memory”, by Amaury Brumauld is a personal narrative. The son is visiting his mother, painter, in her studio, who is suffering from Alzheimer, but tries her best to paint in a way she used to do beforehand. They decide to paint together and takes the viewer on a trip that is in between of a documentary and imagination, past an future, sketch and daily events. This reveals a paradox of human to human relationship, where the illness brings people closer together, however takes away the ability to communicate¹¹³.

“The Edge of Dreaming”¹¹⁴, by Amy Hardie is another personal story, this time -- of a rational, sceptical woman, a mother and wife, who does not normally remember her dreams. But then one night she dreamt of a death of her horse. She woke up and went outside to check it. She found the horse dead. The next dream told her she would die at the age of 48. The drama of the film starts with her birthday. “The Edge of Dreaming” follows every step of her year. The film explores life and death in the context of a loving family, whose happiness is increasingly threatened as the dream seems to come true¹¹⁵.

“The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy”¹¹⁶, by Pieter Liechti tells a story of how mummified corpse of a 40 year old man was discovered by hunter in one of the most remote parts of the country. The dead man's detailed notes chronicle how he committed suicide through self-imposed starvation only the summer before. Peter Liechti's film is a fictional text based upon the reconstruction of a true event¹¹⁷.

¹¹¹ “Cooking History,” <http://www.cookinghistory.net/> (accessed June 6, 2010).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “The Edge of Dreaming,” <http://www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk/synopsis.htm> (accessed June 3, 2010).

¹¹⁵ “The Edge of Dreaming,” in *12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival Program*, 2010, 48.

¹¹⁶ “The Sounds of Insects – Record of a Mummy,” <http://www.peterliechti.ch/page.php?en.0.16.0> (accessed June 15).

¹¹⁷ “The Sounds of Insects – Record of a Mummy,” in *12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival Program*, 2010, 82.

“Yodok Stories”¹¹⁸, by Andrzej Fidyk is a comment on the fact that today, in North Korean concentration camps there are more than 200 000 men, women and children. They are exposed to systematic torture, murder and starvation. There are few survivals, but the population of the camp is constantly renewed with new “enemies of the class”. Few people have managed to escape from these camps and also North Korea. They got together in South Korea and created a musical based on their experience in Yodok concentration camp. Rehearsals and play becomes an environment for them to share their experiences and a form of resistance and protest against existing political and military system in their motherland¹¹⁹.

5.2. 6th Documentary Film Festival Vilnius

Concepts and ideas articulated. The main idea of the documentary film “Rabbit a la Berlin” is to tell a well known story of a fall of a “Berlin Wall” in a surprising and different manner. The main concept is a parallel between the rabbits that lived around the Berlin Wall (see Figure 2.) and the people who were living on different sides of it.

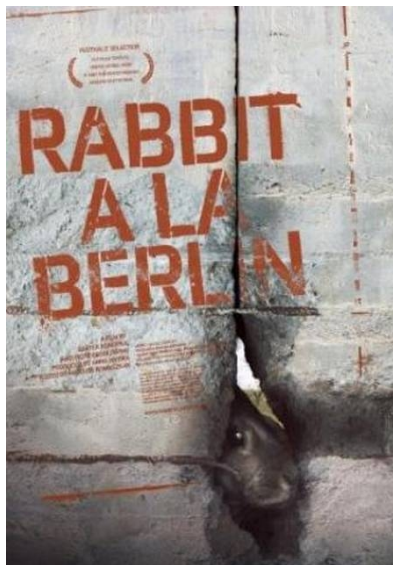


Figure 2. “Rabbit a la Berlin,” Film poster, 2009, www.rabbitalaberlin.com.

While narrating the story of the rabbits, film-maker actually tells the story of the

¹¹⁸ “Yodok Stories,” <http://www.yodokfilm.com/#/english/the-movie/about> (accessed June 15).

¹¹⁹ “Yodok Stories,” in *12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival Program*, 2010, 89.

collapse of the Eastern block, and people, who just like the rabbits had to adjust to life in freedom and embrace new emerging political and economical situations. One of the film interviewees remembers the huge colonies of rabbits living around the Berlin Wall, he comments on their peaceful life for 28 years and assures the viewer: “no one was killing them. Rabbits of-course”. “Rabbit a la Berlin” examines the perspective of the animal on an issue of human history of a great importance. It is not a unique case that the line between animals and people is drew when talking about the history. Another well known case is the novel by George Orwell -- “Animal Farm”, that also deals with the issue of Communism and Eastern block.

The title “Cooking History” can be interpreted in two different ways – as a way to cook history, and as a history of cooking. In fact, the first interpretation brings discussion much closer to what the film is articulating. The kitchen of war, the recipes, ingredients, tools, people – they are all used in metaphorical manner to retell a well known story of wars, that, as a history itself, has many different versions and interpretations. The story of war via the kitchen realities (see Figure 3.) is one of the important parts of it. There are already many allegories about war and cuisine. For example, Soviet army, especially in some wars is referred to as a “cannon meat” since the soldiers were send out to the front without proper equipment and clothing.



Figure 3. “Cooking History.” *Preparation of meat balls*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

Eating almost every-time refers to someone killing. Philosophically, eating is a creation of one's physical and biological existence. The war is the arena where only the basic instincts, such as survival and fight, are alerted. It is a field of natural selection, in

darwinistic terms. In order to survive and take over army has to maintain physical and psychological strength. Food and feeding becomes an inevitable part of it. In addition to this, instruments that are used in the war, such as guns, knives, fire, are also playing a role in the kitchen. Their purpose is different, but at the same alike. These are tools used for survival.

In a way the two above analysed films are dealing with the issue of memory and forgetfulness. The same topic is articulated in “Fleeting Memory”. Making record is a way to keep the past. However, visual references are not always helpful. The film talks about the illness of the mother of a film-maker and his effort to bring it back. It is a film about the relationship that even if assumability unquestionable – between the mother and the child – turns out to be so fragile and rooted in biological essence of human being. The subject that connects the mother and the son even more than the tights of birth is art (see Figure 4.). Mother used to be a painter, son is a film-maker. They meet in between of video and painting.



Figure 4. “Fleeting Memory.” *Son and mother are generating visuals in computer environment*, 2008. Videostill from the film.

They create a narrative, they draw and paint together. They tell the story of their relationship while actually exploring it and checking it's limits. The action of film-making, even though it is obvious from the film that the son got his mothers permission to shoot, seems to contain a voyeuristic manner. The drawing is the thing that binds the

two characters and the video is what reveals that the film-maker is conscious and the mother is only one foot there. This brings about a certain sadness and nostalgia, hope and disappointment, but above all celebrates a courage of a human being.

Defining director's vision. Bartek Konopka had a few versions of how to make a film. Since there were barely any witnesses and archival material left on rabbits living in between of the two walls, the crew had to come up with creative solutions for the story. In the lecture that he gave in Lithuania, Vilnius, he was discussing different options that he had in mind. First was to tell it as a diary of Esterhazy, a rabbit from Berlin, famous character of a German book, and to use animation to show his story combining it with archival and documentary material. The other idea was to begin the narration with rabbits, but then shift to human protagonists. There was also an idea of a documentary fairy tale, lead by the commentary, expressed by the actor. Finally, the crew decided to work on a nature film's convention build upon archives and fake archives, where rabbits are watching humans (see Figure 5.), as a ridiculous race¹²⁰.



Figure 5. “Rabbit a la Berlin.” *Rabbits are watching humans*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

In the interview of “Cineuropa” P.Kerekes tells the story how he came across the idea of war cuisine for his film narrative. The idea for the project came to the director quite spontaneously, while he was cooking together with his father. They started

¹²⁰ Bartek Konopka, “How to Find a Surprising Narration for your Documentary Story” (lecture presented in workshop “Summer Media Studio”, Vilnius, Lithuania, June 20 - July 6, 2009).

speaking about military cooks, and contemplated how hard it should have been to cook something special in large amounts¹²¹. It is also important to cook some good food for the soldiers of the army as it actually encourages and motivates them. Finally, they started to “think about how a cook can affect a battle through his cooking and how a battle can change history”¹²². In the film director time to time comes up with the question to protagonist, and therefore reveals his presence. These questions are rhetorical and hypocritical and not always end up with the answer, but director leaves them in the cut on purpose. This reveals the actual historical and cultural gap between the film-maker and protagonists, and therefore ends as funny and paradoxical narrative solutions. P.Kerekes has a humorous approach to the cooking. He is not ironic, not sceptical, humour rather derives from the infantile and exposed fakes (show off of the chiefs, exaggerated role of a director, special effects) (see Figure 6.).



Figure 6. “Cooking History.” *Jewish backer tells the story of how he worked at the concentration camp*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

Humour is one of the defence mechanisms used by human beings when dealing with heavy topics and situations. This narrative – is a good illustrative example of this issue.

In “Fleeting Memory” A.Brumauld turns a viewer into a witness. Film-maker is also a protagonist of the film, who is not playing cool or victim, he is just being “naked”

¹²¹ Theo Schwinke, “Peter Herkes,” Cineuropa <http://cineuropa.org/interview.aspx?documentID=108257> (accessed July 3, 2010).

¹²² Ibid.

and exposed in the encounter with his mother's illness. The film-maker is a witness and a participant of the process. In a way, being a participant is even helpful for him in order to keep the balance and not to get over personal limits. Film-maker is creating the film from within and outside of the film (he is in the frame, but also outside of it). It is a tradition of French “Cinema Verite”, however, it is negotiated in the form of the film. The film-maker is not hiding himself, his identity, but also his role as a son in the film is much stronger than that one of a film-maker (see Figure 7.).



Figure 7. “Fleeting Memory.” *Filmmaker and protagonist in film is playing a role of a son and of an artist*, 2008. Videostill from the film.

For him the film, just like the relationship with the mother seem to be part of creation and creative processes. Creativity is a tool and a method to approach a painful subject matter.

Structure. “Rabbit a la Berlin” starts as an animal documentary, but it narrates a metaphorical story of human beings that were effected by the Berlin wall and it's fall. The main protagonist of the film is a rabbit. Film embraces the structure of a docudrama. The nature film's convention was chosen by the authors as a frame for the film deliberately. It is “build upon archives and fake archives with rabbits reacting on situations. It also embraces a voice-over narration by a woman. The voice is cold and detached, in a way – objective. The story covers the 28-year condense history of rabbits

living next to the Berlin Wall. Narration embraces interviews and ready-found footage as well as fictional shots.

“Cooking history” structure is based on 6 wars, 10 war cuisine recipes and, and, in a way, 60 361 024 deaths. It is constructed out of different episodes that are shot in similar visual manner. At the end of each episode there is an inter title that introduces the viewer to the recipe that is latter on told by one of the cooks – protagonists.

They are telling the story of war that they witnessed from the war kitchen while preparing the dish that they used to serve soldiers with. Each recipe in the opening of the episode is written in a native language of a cook – Russian, French, German and etc. The film embraces interviews, dramatized actions and set ups along with the archival footage. While revealing the secrets of the cuisine, protagonists are actually revealing personal and even war secrets (see Figure 8.).

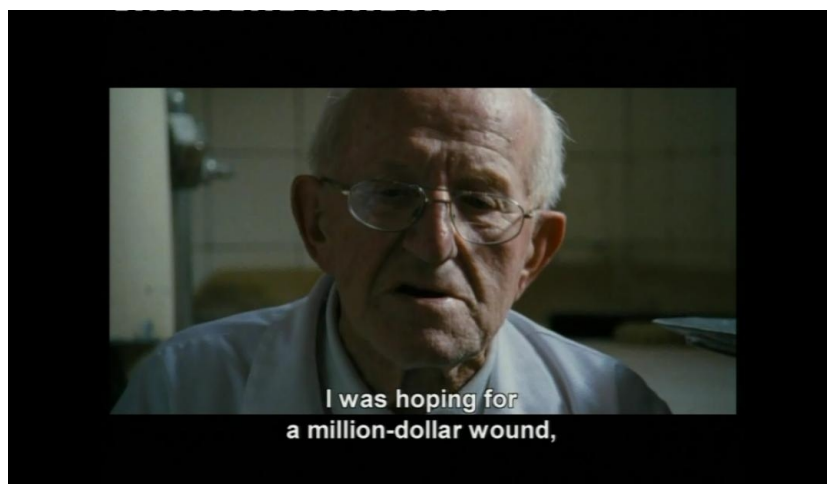


Figure 8. “Cooking History.” *Cook is sharing his personal story*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

“Fleeting memory” is a personal narrative based on a road trip. It opens up with the image of and from the car (see Figure 9.) that is latter on replaced with computer generated drawing -- image on the same point of view.



Figure 9. “Fleeting Memory.” *Film opens up with the shot from the car*, 2008.
Videostill from the film.

It is a travel that embraces real lived encounters, home made video extracts from the past, photography. The road trip motif remains present through the film and is constantly manipulated into a drawing. It also shows the process of drawing. The communication between mother and son via drawing and painting, as well as a road, the trip that they are taking together are the main concepts that helps to build the consistent structure of the film. The main protagonists of the film are son and his mother.

Visual and narrative style. The mood of the three films is very different. “Rabbit a la Berlin” is mixing archival footage with the footage shot for the film, mainly, where the rabbits are present, as well those with interviews. The footage with the rabbits seems to be archival just like the documentary shots with the Berlin Wall. This is a deliberately chosen aesthetics that create the consistency between real and fake archival material. The mood of the film is not aggressive, it is rather peaceful and floating, to some extent even romantic (see Figure 10.).



Figure 10. “Rabbit a la Berlin.” *Film romanticises the life of wild rabbits in between of two Berlin Walls*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

This effect is achieved via sounds and music. However, drama is created via interruption of real archival footage and generated sound, such as gun shots. It is also an aesthetic choice of a crew to leave the interviews with “experts” and “witnesses” coloured. It stands out of entire film and creates certain illusion and fictional line between the past and present. So even if most of the footage of the film, that is that one with the rabbits, is shot for the film, it creates an illusion that it actually is taken from the archive.

When it comes to “Cooking History”, the dominant material is explicitly shot for the film. There is also some archival material used, but it rather serves as a tool to create the context and drama. It is also easy to make a distinction between what is archival, what is not since the archival is black and white, and the footage of the film is shot in colour. There are also some set ups used, such as the explosion while the cook is lighting his pipe, and narrating the story of a real event – the explosion of the stove, behind the frame. There are also shots where the toy tank is entering the field of crops. They are used as metaphors and humour to soften the weight of real events. The scenes take part in a destroyed kitchen, posh French kitchen, bakery, at home of the cook, out door in the field (see Figure 11.), and even in the forest where the woman is picking up mushrooms.



Figure 11. “Cooking History.” *The cook is lighting his pipe*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

The details shot in close up, such as knife, slaughtering of a pig, dead rooster, have strong parallels with the reality of the war. The sound helps to dramatize the action, it embraces gun shots, missiles and planes along with the sounds that are part of the digesis, such as cutting or putting a fire on.

“Fleeting Memory” is a film of a personal history. Therefore, logically, it embraces both – footage shot for the film that mainly focuses on the interaction of the son and his mother that is becoming less and less aware of her actions, surroundings and relationships. The archival used in the film is personal – it is a home video footage from family meetings. The frame of the film resembles the old films where the black part of the screen would embrace and frame the picture (see Figure 12.).

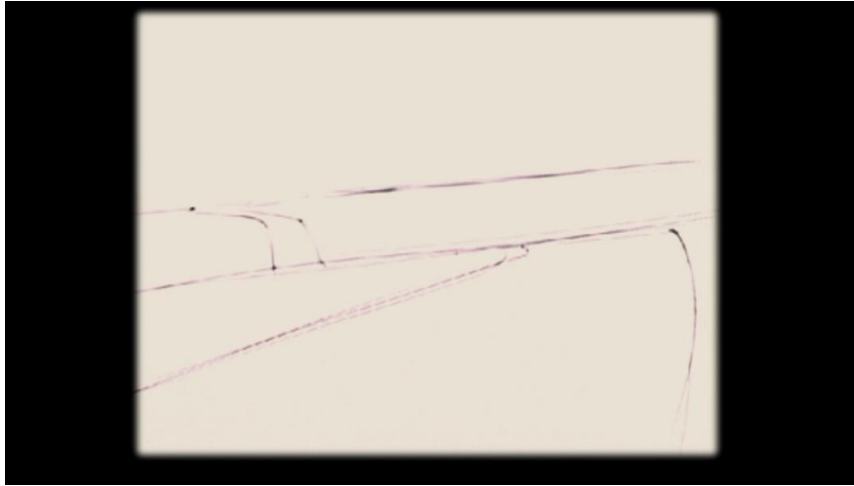


Figure 12. “Fleeting Memory.” *Film footage is presented in black, old-cinema style frame*, 2008. Videostill from the film.

Film is stuck in between of film and animation since quite a big part of it is drawn. The real scenes, still shots, are being coloured by the film-maker and his mother with the help of tablet. The film creates an illusion of soft, dream like vision that, in a way, blurs the edge between the reality and dream.

Modes and forms. The three films that are in focus of this analysis are shot, edited and narrated in a very different manner. The mode here serves as a formal element that not necessarily meets it's real purposes but helps to create the specific poetic of the films. For example “Rabbit a la Berlin” embraces an expository mode with the voice-over narration, and in a way, standard docu-drama structure. Even the format of the film in terms of length reminds a television documentary. However, methods used in creation of a narration serve for different purposes than usually. The “voice of god” of a woman functions in a similar way as it did in the film of Louis Bunuel's “Land Without Bread”. It narrates one certain narrative that actually explicitly covers the stronger message of the film. It creates a metaphorical story and makes the viewer feel trapped in between of meanings.

“Cooking History” is another dramatized documentary film. It is a mixed mode film, which in terms of set up scenes and fictional elements remind of Erol Morris's “Thin Blue Line”. However, the two films different in subject matter, narration style

and purpose. It has some elements that are observational (camera follows the object or protagonist without interfering), per-formative (re-enactment) (see Figure 13.), participatory, where the interviewer interacts with protagonists.



Figure 13. “Cooking History.” *Set up scene of tank entering corn field*, 2009.

Videostill from the film.

However, it could be said that the most explicit is the reflexive mode: it questions documentary form and de-familiarizes the other modes¹²³. In the film, the main subject matter is hidden behind the form and treatment in a very similar manner as in “Rabbits a la Berlin”.

Film “Fleeting Memory” is a good example of French 'Cinema Verite' and participatory mode. The film-maker is also a participant and a character of the film. The method resembles Jean Rouch's and Edgar Morin's “Chronicles of a Summer”. However, the per-formative element of the film is also strong, since a big part of it is actually a performance of drawing of a son and the mother (see Figure 14.).

¹²³ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), 138.



Figure 14. “Fleeting Memory.” *Son is helping mother to paint*, 2009.

Videostill from the film.

This film, just like the other two deals with the sensitive issue that requires a well thought of artistic form in order to be explained and understood better. Even if the subject here is addressed directly, it is analysed via artistic actions.

Traces and testimonies. Documentary films with clearly articulated concept usually demonstrate the indirect story telling. They address the issues of concern and the subject matter in a multi-layered manner. This is a case in all three films that are in focus of this analysis. For example, in “Rabbit a la Berlin” is distant from the actuality for a few reasons. First of all, it talks about the past, significant historical moment which effected today's life. Secondly, it brings up known, but not articulated subject matter – the life of rabbits in between of the two walls of Berlin. This, normally, in context of a bigger picture, would be seen as an insignificant piece of sub-history that is of not much of a human concern. However, the film-maker combines the two narratives by providing a new infantile but at the same time – dramatic picture of a story. The film traces the history, especially when it comes to real, ready -found archival material, however fictional elements serve as testimonies in “was it really or was it not” manner. It provides an imaginary, however fact based perspective of the rabbits.

“Cooking History” is a similar case. It depicts an aspect of a history of war that is not much discussed and talked about, and then articulates it. The distance from reality

in this film is similar to the one in “Rabbit a la Berlin”. War, especially after the witnesses had passed away, or are getting old, turns more into a story of a human interest, since the conflict is dipping into the horizon of forgetfulness. On the other hand, the stories from the war kitchen are all real, just like the protagonists are. It is not fictional, people are sharing their knowledge and experience. It is imaginary only when it comes to a re-enactment of scenes. The re-enactment per se does not attempt to represent the historical truth either – it seeks to dramatize and humour the actuality back then and back there (see Figure 15.). However, nothing here seems to be totally fictional – stories and narratives are based on true facts.



Figure 15. “Cooking History.” *Scene of slaughter of a pig with inter-titles of war recipe, 2009. Videostill from the film.*

The film-maker, however, does not share the experience with the interviewees. He is representing a younger generation that has lost a direct connection with the war and only lived the aftermath effects of it. Therefore, his narration seem to be more testimony based. If his focus would be the life of these chefs and cooks after the war it would much more resemble the process of tracing of actuality. That is to say that as an overall structure with the focus on memory, “Cooking History” provides a testimony of a director that is articulated via the stories of protagonists, at the same time tracing the aftermath of the war history.

“Fleeting Memory” is a contrary example. It is tracing the present and the actuality. The history in this film is present and lived, it does not have a clear starting or

ending point, no clear resolution or solution to the story. It is an extract from film-maker's and his mother's "now". It evokes a feeling of actual communication between the two main protagonists and their ways of dealing with the fleeting memory. The film is a record, a constructed and beautified form of memory – before it is too late. On the other hand, while witnessing the fleeting memory of the mother, film-maker tries to make sure that he does not lose the last bits of it's pulsing (mother's memory), and does not lose his own remembering. It is not a testimony, not a statement, but exploration. There is nothing literally imaginary or fictional, unless we take the scenes of the son trying to evoke the imagination of the mother as an imaginary element. However, that is of a methodological concern of a film-maker in terms of his communication with the mother and has not so much to do with the film as a whole.

Physical and chemical artistic action. Manipulations and effects stylize films and help to create the overall aesthetic form for the film. B.Konopka openly talks about usage of fake archival material in his documentary "Rabbit a la Berlin". Since the subject matter required a bunch of footage or archive that was impossible to find, the team shot rabbits separately and modified it into black and white footage that would resemble the archival material covering stories of building and demolition of the Berlin Wall (see Figure 16.).



Figure 16. "Rabbit a la Berlin." *Workers are building Berlin Wall*, 2009.

Videostill from the film.

In addition, the issue of modification becomes complicated when it comes to a discussion what counts as modification, and what does not. For example, voice-over narration that is written specifically for a film narrative. The question at hand here is, should it actually count as manipulation or not? On one hand it in-frames the visual narrative and builds up the story, on the other hand, it is a chemical insert that is not part of the original footage. Overall it could be said that manipulations, such as those of sound (voice-over, sound design and compositions) along with the fake archival material, construct a very personal auteur story that stands as the strength of the film, and does not feel artificial to a viewer.

“Cooking History”, as it was discussed before, also embraces elements of manipulation. Scenes are set up for camera, some of them are re-enacted. However, nothing that is not of an archival material here is shown as archival. One strong element that helps to build up a drama is sound. Mashing rhythms, gun shots and pretty direct juxtapositions stand out of the film footage and create a rough humorous approach to the subject matter. For example, one of the last episodes in film shows the cook of a submarine that is standing in the water and tells the story of the ship that had sank (see Figure 17.).



Figure 17. “Cooking History.” *Cook is telling a story of a sunk submarine*, 2009.
Videostill, www.cookinghistory.com.

The cook, just like his table, is in the water and the water rises as he is telling the

story. It is a theatrical scene, a humorous and yet symbolic re-creation of a tragic story. The artificial elements of the film also helps to articulate the artificial nature of the war, evoked by individuals or group's passion that ultimately results in involvement and tragedy of masses.

“Fleeting Memory” also embraces manipulations in terms of sound and visuals. There are musical compositions used, designed sound emphasizes the sound of pencil colouring the visual. However the most obvious manipulations are those of visuals. Starting with non-traditional frame of the screen – soft edged large black frame that embraces the actual visual in an old TV or video projection manner, and finishing with the process of drawing (see Figure 18.).



Figure 18. “Fleeting memory.” *The photographic image of a car within the film is turning into a graphical representation*, 2008. Videostill from the film.

At times the frame is stopped and the process revealed in the shot is that one of turning a photographic image into a drawing. It is the process of re-mediation, re-creation and intervention to what is documentary. Conceptually the same applies to the idea of memory, that is temporary, selective and easily manipulated.

Senses evoked. The mood of the film is a choice of the director. All three films illustrate that despite the initial mood associate with the subject matter, director in his documentary film narrative manages to change the course of it according to his personal choice. “Rabbits a la Berlin” evoke a nostalgic and rather melancholic mood. It is a

sensitive narrative about animals and their misfortune. The rhythm of the film is rather slow paste, especially the visual part of it. The sense of empathy and sympathy towards the rabbits is evoked in the consciousness of a viewer. Rabbits, soft and gentle, cute creatures that lived in an artificial utopian world between the two walls of Berlin finally get displaced and forced to flee looking for an alternative space and place to live.

The first idea that strikes thinking about “Cooking History” is humour. The author makes the viewer laugh, but not because of the way film's protagonists are pictured, but rather their often absurd perspective on the war reality. There are many strong metaphors, such as backer, who tells the recipe of bread and talks about how he served Jewish concentration camps (see Figure 19.).



Figure 19. “Cooking History.” *The scene of bread baking with Hebrew inter-titles of a bread recipe*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

Humorous approach helps to handle the heaviness of facts and also makes a clear line of distinction between the historical past and lived present. The other feeling that film evokes is empathy and sadness. It partly has to do with the stories of the elder people who once had been indirectly involved in big historical events and ended up ageing just like all the rest. The vapidness of memories makes them create the picture bigger than it really was, just like the presence of camera and attention to their profession. In a way, they feel faltered and noticed, remembered and interesting. They act for the camera trying to create the reasoning for their presence within the film. It evokes ambivalent feelings, such as empathy and sympathy.

The story told in “Fleeting Memory” is least artificial, and least humorous from all of the three films analysed. Story evokes empathy, especially, with the film-maker. He is exposing himself and his confusion, the solitude of his naked awareness and consciousness. He is stuck between the role of the son and, in a way, father, for his own mother, who is losing traits with the actuality. He makes his mother paint, but she is no longer able to do that, he pushes and insists her to build up emotional relationship towards her work, tries to evoke the passion that she had lost. Witnessing the loss of a film-maker in the fight for the relationship, and the resurrection of death in a living creature creates a sad and almost tragic atmosphere, where the hands are tight, and one has to face the limitations. This feeling evoked via the scenes of miss-communication, miss-understanding. Film-maker's struggle be the son, to act strong and play conscious inevitably strikes the viewer.

De-realization and de-personalization. The film always evokes de-realization as it condenses the time and space. It evokes de-personalization as it makes the viewer identify with the protagonist(s). In “Rabbit a la Berlin” the reality reflected is the one of rabbits, therefore ultimately it leads to viewer's the identification with the non – human protagonist. However, since the issue of coverage is living, existence, co-existence and survival, at the same time it talks about human experience. The world reflected in the film is the one of rabbits even if it is narrated by a human to a human. The viewer does not lose his human identity while watching, but is forced to evaluate the events from the perspective of a wild and relatively stupid creatures. All political, economical realities of the film, seem absurd and detractive. In addition to that, the reality, such as the presents of the Berlin Wall seem to be positive and friendly to the rabbits, while it actually is commonly perceived as destructing and artificial, when looking from human perspective.

“Cooking History” is diminishing the reality of the war by bringing the layer of the cuisine to the front. Here the war becomes a context but not the centre or focus or action. Film is referring to the reality of the kitchen, where the main concerns is how and when to make food, what are the ingredients, and what is the final result of it. It brings back the memory of cooking, not a battle field, while illustrating the process of the food production for the army (see Figure 20.). Just like the subject matter is the one

of a micro importance, the quantity of the food prepared within the screen is also nothing more than a sample.



Figure 20. “Cooking History.” *A woman is picking mushrooms while narrating a story of a war cuisine*, 2008. Videostill from the film.

It reminds of a culinary television show, where the chef is talking about life, ingredients, and ingredients of life. Film also reveals ingredients of war while showing ingredients of war dishes. The de-personalization is evoked by making the viewer to identify with the cooks, forgetting about one's own comfortable situation and position in life. It also de-personalizes the cook as it shows them just as chefs, not as anything less or more.

“Fleeting Memory” is evolving the viewer to a road trip to the finite horizons of memory. The spectator is lost after he or she identifies with the position of a film-maker, a son, a role of a child, that each and everyone can relate to. Then the viewer is challenged to stand in the shoes of the mother – a person losing personality and identity (see Figure 21.).



Figure 21. “Fleeting Memory.” *Mother of the film-maker*, 2008. Videostill from the film.

It is a dramatic process, since the essence of a human being is based on the attempt to go beyond biological existence and to become something more than one actually is – a painter, creator, doctor, in other words – personality, critical and conscious human being. The processes of de-personalization and de-realization are directly reflected in the film and also in the form of the film, where what is real becomes modified into artificial (real life image into representation). The viewer of the film is a captive between the story told and story visualized: just as the story tells the loss of the seance of reality, the imagery illustrates a questioning, what is more real – what is shot, or what is drawn and generated?

Archival of reality. “Rabbits a la Berlin” seem to be a film based on archival footage whereas actually big part of it is a fake archive. There is also a big part of a real archival footage used in the film showing the guards of the wall, people trying to cross the wall separating East and West illegally, and killings at the wall (see Figure 22.).



Figure 22. “Rabbit a la Berlin,” *Woman trying to cross the Berlin Wall illegally*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

Archival material is used to provide a context for the story of the rabbit narrative. Film does not play around much with written documents, which is often a case in historical films. By faking the archival it also talks about the relativity of the document concept, and possibility of its falsification. The film itself is not recording any history, it makes a comment and re-creates the story that was totally forgotten when embraced by bigger events. The real archival is based on human history, journalistic, and in a way – objective. However, while constructing the film narrative, director chooses a subjective approach and talks about the perspective of rabbits, which, in real life he also has not much to do with.

“Cooking History” is using archival to draw the parallel between the two realities – the war and cooking. The archival used is not of a great historical importance, but it reveals the moments from the war ground, such as army entering the city, talks and shootings (see Figure 23.).



Figure 23. “Cooking History.” *Archival footage with soldiers*, 2009. Videostill from the film.

These shots are juxtaposed with the footage shot for the film, such as chasing the rooster, killing of a pig. The film itself records the history of cooks and cooking that otherwise could have gone forgotten after witnesses die. It is a subjective narrative, articulating very personal point of view of a director, but it talks about objective reality – its past and present.

“Fleeting Memory” is emphasizing archivization. It is a narrative of a process of the recording of the last bits of memory, relationship and personality remains. There are few shots of family meetings (see Figure 24.) that suggest the aesthetics of amateur video, some photographies. It is used in order to illustrate how in time memory fades, gains new forms and unfolds in different contexts. Archival is both – being made and used.



Figure 24. “Sleeting memory.” *A snapshot of personal archive within the film*, 2008. Videostill from the film.

Film-maker sees it as a form and a way to freeze the moment and encounters with last bits of mother's memory. The history told in the film is personal and it is narrated in a subjective way. That is the reason why this story is so convincing and involving.

Finally, it could be said that every film embraces a certain type of archival material, at the same time creating an archive for a social or personal history that otherwise could have been easily forgotten.

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Concepts and ideas articulated. Film-maker A.Hardie claims that her film actually started a decade ago when she was first exposed to a sudden loss of her mother. That was her initial point to start thinking about the death. To contemplate and work on the issue of death she decided to get enrolled to a PhD program in Edinburgh College of Art. Here she immersed herself into “the history, biology and social mores of death”¹²⁴. She claims that normally she would not remember her dreams, however, once she

¹²⁴ “The Edge of Dreaming,” <http://www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk/Production/Amy.htm> (accessed July 1, 2010).

dreamt of her horse (see Figure 25.) dying, and when she woke up it turned out to be true.



Figure 25. “The Edge of Dreaming.” *Director with the horse*, 2009. Photograph, www.theedgeofdreaming.co.uk.

Afterwards she had a second dream that forecast her own death. In her production notes film-maker writes:

Because of the dreams, the material offered itself as a gripping narrative. To confound this tendency, I began by making a silent 30 minutes movie. This encouraged a purely visual exploration, which helped to create the meditative film space needed to recreate emotional states and insights from research¹²⁵.

Dreams and her own experience helped film-maker to conceptualize her research filed – death, the idea of dream offered the form, and the content of it suggested a narrative.

Documentary “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy” articulates different idea of death. If in the first film death discussed seems to be of a film-makers destiny, something that is out of control, in the second one it is a suicide, therefore – a matter of personal choice. P.Liechti claims:

“X's lack of origin and history, his *anonymity* is analogous to

¹²⁵ Ibid.

the general alienation of the human being in a global world; the interchangeability of the negligible "characteristics" of his personality corresponds with the attitude towards life in an out-and-out materialistic society. He only becomes a vital, tangible *individual* – for himself as well – with his extraordinary capacity for suffering and the monstrous masochism of his act. Suicide by self-imposed starvation is an extremely intimate way to die, X wrote in his diary, because one is preoccupied with oneself for such a long time”¹²⁶.

It has nothing to do with dream, unless the suicidal person starts hallucinating. It is conceptualized according to the book, the diary of the suicidal. Since the story is narrated by the first person, shots POV shots compliment the narration and helps to articulate it. It is a trip to a death of a personal choice, a journey that is embracing doubts and determination, philosophy and very down to earth daily experience.

The main concept that is articulated in film “Yodok Stories” is the reality in isolated North Korea. The second one is the musical and art. Documentary as an art form is used to narrate a story that is surrounded by rumours and prejudices, secrets and tragic experiences of survivals.

The musical as a form was chosen by the director as a reference to well known shows of North Korea (see Figure 26.). These spectacles meant for glorifying the leader



¹²⁶ “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy,” <http://www.peterliechti.ch/page.php?en,0,16,3> (accessed June 12, 2010).

Figure 26. “Yodok Stories.” *Scene from the musical “Yodok Stories,”* 2009.

Photograph, www.freerepublic.com.

of the country amaze the World by their scale and perfection. A.Fidyk noticed that North Koreans must be great in performing arts and directing. He found a director and refugee from North Korea, and convinced him to build a musical.

Documentary film follows the process of preparation, personal dramas of actors and the director of the performance. For the crew, the musical stands out as both – therapy, healing process and hysterical scream about tragic reality in North Korea. Documentary film also serves as a research material for the musical: film-maker interviews witnesses (prisoners and guards of Yodok concentration camp). These memories are used to recreate and stylize scenes of the musical.

Defining director's vision. Director of the film “The Edge of Dreaming” made this film for a couple of reasons. First of all she had a very personal and experience based reasoning – death of her mother, death of the father of her oldest child, her practice based research PhD program, and finally – dreams. A.Hardie writes: “I knew I needed to learn about death. As a documentary film-maker specialising in science docs, I began investigating death. I needed time to take on such a huge topic, at once personal and of course, universal”¹²⁷. However, close affiliation with death became threatening after her dreams. After the second dream director “got shaken”:

“I committed myself to filming every aspect of my investigation. I began to work in a hospice, and joined trainings about death and dying aimed at nurses and counsellors. <..> I thought I had been spending too much time thinking about death, and that it had taken an unhealthy hold of my imagination. It also presented itself as a good set up to test a hypothesis: either there were spirits, and I would be dead within a year, or there were not, and I would be fine. The year rocked my scientific reductionism, and expanded my sense of what science really is. I filmed almost everything that happened to me”¹²⁸.

¹²⁷ “The Edge of Dreaming,” <http://www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk/Production/Amy.htm> (accessed June 12, 2010).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

The film seemed to be a therapy and the research, a thing to hold on too, a hook that perhaps could even save the film-maker from her destiny. It is a fight between logical and illogical, objective and subjective reality. The role of the director in this film also illustrates the idea of creator being trapped in between the role of the artist and the role of scientist. The presence of A.Hardie is explicit and emphasized in the film. Her participation creates the narrative and the story. If the author was not visible – there would be no film (see Figure 27.).



Figure 27. “The Edge of Dreaming.” *A.Hardie and her family members are present in the film, 2009. Photograph, www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk*

Even though “The Edge of dreaming” and “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy” demonstrate many formal and conceptual similarities, when it comes to author's role – they seem to be completely different. Director of the second piece in his statement writes that the film “is not a film adaptation of literature, but rather the cinematic rapprochement of a fictional text”¹²⁹. The fact that documentary film may be based on a recreation of a fictional text which, again, is rooted in a true story, demonstrates innovative approach to genre. It could be said that the director sees his film as a documentary of the ideas and concepts, rather than events.

“Ultimately, the nameless man’s manner of dying also

¹²⁹ “The Sound of Insects -- Record of a Mummy,” <http://www.peterliechti.ch/page.php?en,0,16,3> (accessed June 13 2010).

constitutes the most radical form of renouncement: a total retreat from the hustle and bustle in an achievement-oriented society, the unmitigated refusal to consume, to partake in the haste of this life. The underlying criticism of today's materialism is palpable. <...> The absence of any comment on the part of the author offers no solace or reconciliation whatsoever, leaving instead the answers to such vexing questions entirely to the viewer"¹³⁰.

Director is not visible in the film, he is making no claims and no comments about the story. There are no morals and no conclusions. Everything is left for the viewer's judgement. This film, therefore, becomes not a statement about the story, but rather about the documentary itself. The film-maker turns into a philosopher and artist, articulating his ideas and emotions via visual and aural metaphors (see Figure 28.).



Figure 28. "The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy." *Sunset scene*, 2009.
Videostill, www.peterleichti.ch.

In "Yodok Stories" the presence of a film-maker is obvious. Even if he is not participating in a visual part of the story, he is always present behind the screen – narrating the story of North Korea. At the opening of the story he shares his initial struggle with the form of the film, thinking what would be the best way to articulate the reality in North Korea. The show and the performance, the musical came as a solution and an answer. However, he was a director of the film, not a performance. Therefore, during the research period that took him a couple of years, he had found a person, theatre director and refugee from North Korea, who finally agreed to build up a musical.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

A. Fidyk is known for his thought-provoking documentary films¹³¹. This approach is also obvious in the “Yodok Stories”. He wants witnesses to speak, tries to extract the realness of their memories from a concentration camp. He finds characters that would fit in the roles needed for the musical (see Figure 29.). The protagonists end up playing a double role – actors of the film and actors of the musical.



Figure 29. “Yodok Stories.” *Soldier in the scene of the musical*, 2009.
Photograph, www.freerepublic.com.

Structure. Film “The Edge of Dreaming” structurally is not divided into pieces. However, it is clear that the film is constructed on the three act structure. The first part is the state of equilibriums, where the main protagonist, a film-maker, introduces herself as a mother, as an artist and as a sceptical woman who almost never dreams. The equilibrium is detracted by her dream of her dead horse which comes out to be true. Then she sees another dream, this time – her own death at the age of 48.

The plot of the film follows film-makers journey through this year, signs of her approaching death and also efforts to fight it. Film ends up with the resolution to the story. Semantically film's action starts with the dream and birthday, and ends with another birthday. Since the film follows the story of the main protagonist, it is pretty consistent and based on a linear structure. Therefore, there is no need to divide film

¹³¹ “Yodok Stories,” <http://www.yodokfilm.com/#/english/filmmakers/andrzej-fidyk> (accessed June 12, 2010).

into separate parts and then re-join them together.

Film “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy” is based on a text of Japanese writer Shimada Masahiko – “Miira ni Narumade”, which is based on a true story. It tells a story of a 40-year old suicidal man who decides to go deep into the forest and kill himself with starvation. While implementing his plan the protagonist is writing notes. The narrative structure of the film is based on that diary. Film reveals day by day process of suicide. Film is consistent in terms of form, there is again only one protagonist, only one story to follow, intense, however slow in action. In a way, film has some similarities with “The Edge of Dreaming”: both are about the process of dying, heading towards the real or assumable encounter with the other world. However, this time film is not based on the three act scene. It is a very basic liner story that leads the viewer along with the protagonist towards the encounter with the death.

Film “Yodok Stories” is a documentary musical. It reveals the process of finding a director for the musical, casting the actors, rehearsing and finally – the premier of a musical. Film starts with director's intention to tell the story of North Korea, where almost no one is allowed to enter and hardly anyone leaves. It has no artificial structure except from the conceptual framework. The musical becomes a stage for documentary story, a scene to disclose the secrets of characters and to share their experiences. Documentary becomes a form of a making – of film about the process of staging of the musical. However, the documentary film-maker was actual reason for the musical about the concentration Yodok camp to be made.

Visual and narrative styles. The visuals language of the film “The Edge of Dreaming” creates a dream like aesthetics. Beautiful shots are combined with the archival material from director's family life, small inserts of animation and graphics. The visuals itself would create a stream of consciousness narration, where dialogues, talks, remarks, reportage, fantasy and illusion mends it all together (see Figure 30.). A very crucial component of the story is a voice-over narration that actually builds up a story. It is an autobiographical documentary told from a first person's perspective. There is also music and sounds that are not part of the diegesis. They help to sustain the flow of the story, and to dramatize it.



Figure 30. “The Edge of Dreaming.” *Film-maker and the horse*, 2009.

Photograph, www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk.

“The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy” to some extent resembles “The Edge of Dreaming” in terms of visuals and sound narration. It embraces shots of the forest, shades (woman paddling the boat), abstract portraits and symbols (such as skeleton – symbol of death). Most of the film is shot from the protagonist's point of view. Visuals not always compliment the narration (see Figure 31.), partly because most



Figure 31. “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy.” *Visual metaphor –*

white horse, 2009. Videostill, www.peterliechti.ch.

of the footage of the film is abstract and dream like, in between of documentary and fiction. Film starts with the scene where the mummy is found and moved from the hut.

Then the story shifts to a first person narration. P.Liechti in his statement on the film emphasizes that the monologue of the protagonist X is:

“not addressed to anyone in particular. It is neither descriptive nor retrospective, but deals entirely with the moment. There is no lamentation, no self-pity, no sentimentality. On the contrary, a subliminal self-irony even emerges at times. The text is unobtrusive; it suggests no morals and refrains from measuring value, thereby rendering its impact very direct”¹³².

There are also many external sounds, such as the sound of insects, breathing, and even music used. It is a re-creation of the event. The voice-over is distant from the image as his voice is not part of the digesis but is recorded in the studio. Each day of living of the protagonist starts with the inter-title, reminding viewer of the date and the number of days of starvation.

Film “Yodok Stories” is a different case, however, in terms of using visuals and sound for the narration, also shares some similarities with the other films. For example, film starts with the personal narration of the director, A.Fidyk, who explains to the viewer his effort and approach to make a documentary about North Korea, when there are almost no visual material about it. His voice enters the film every now and then in order to support the narrative. Indeed there are also some artificial sounds used within the film narrative, songs of North Korea and those made up for the musical (see Figure 32).

¹³² “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy,” <http://www.peterliechti.ch/page.php?en,0,16,3> (accessed June15, 2010).



Figure 32. “Yodok Stories.” *Scenes from the musical embraced by the film*, 2009.

Photograph, [www. freerepublic.com](http://www.freerepublic.com)

However, there are also interviews and stories of the people. Film shows more than one protagonist, which creates the main difference from the other two films analysed. The visuals are mostly shot for the film, however there are inserts from the official propaganda and show performances of North Korea. The film is not shot as a musical, it is shot as a film about the Yodok concentration camp via the framework of the musical.

Modes and forms. Documentary “The Edge of Dreaming” is close to what is referred too as a reflexive mode. It is a mode spread in the 80's, questioning documentary form and dramatizing other modes. It is abstract, embraces loose sight of actual issues¹³³. On the other hand film also includes elements of a per-formative mode, which stresses the subjective aspect of a classically objective documentary. Performative mode and participation creates the intimate ground for the film. The performance is based on daily life of the author, and invites the viewer at times even to such intimate places as the bedroom of a film-maker. Reflexivity in documentary is expressed via associative and symbolic representation of the story narrated behind the screen. The mix of personal performance, based on participation and the documentation of the daily, is juxtaposed with the images that are observational and of associative

¹³³ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), 138.

nature. A pattern created in narration resembles the logic of dream. The viewer, just like the narrator, seems to be trapped between real experiences and imagination, association, fear and superstition.

P.Liechti's film is a mix of a reflexive mode and mock-documentary. Visual story is abstract and loose, however, well dramatized, and is presenting author's very personal recreation of event. On the other hand, the film is based on fictional text, which again, is based on true event, and therefore creates a certain loop between what is considered to be actuality, fiction and imaginary. Mock-documentaries are films that seem to embrace documentary qualities and aesthetics, but actually are based on fictional script. "The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy", in that respect, is to be defined as mock-documentary. On the other hand, thinking about the idea of B.Nicols that every film is a documentary film, it could be said that film actually questions the idea and the definition of documentary itself. The images are shot for the film, there is no character, therefore -- no one to show, the film has no social actors, and the main invisible protagonist is simply referred to as an "X". There is no other reference to the document, apart from the book written by M.Shimada. The text of the book is used to tell the story. It is a reconstruction of events, but not exactly a re-enactment.

"Yodok Stories" is an example of a performative mode. It resembles a film made by Marlon Riggs, made back in 1989, titled "Tongues Untied", which talked about black gay community in the U.S. In film, just like in "Yodok Stories", actors were performing in order to physically and visually express the underlying message of the film. "Yodok Stories" uses social actors that are both – actors in the musical and protagonists of the film. It is a story of sorrow and torture, loss and oppression, narrated and lead by the film-maker. Performance is often a way to express what is beyond verbal communication abilities (see Figure 33.).



Figure 33. “Yodok Stories.” *Characters in the film express their stories through acting*, 2009. Videostill, www.freerepublic.com.

Traces and testimonies. A.Hardie in the documentary film observes herself, her emotional and physical well being. Film is based on almost daily documentation of the life thought the year of 48. That suggests that what is within the screen is resembling actuality. All the beautiful close-ups, such as those of the flowers, grass and etc. were shot by a film-maker herself. During the “Q and A” session in 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival she told, that her own very fear of death and the idea of making the film on it effected her daily life. She would wake up early to make beautiful shots that would enrich the visual narration of the film. Her personal way of seeing things and experiencing them reveals the personal point of view of the protagonist and director onto the world she was living in. They are not modified, however, incorporated in the film in order to support a dream, memory-like aesthetic approach. It would be hard to call them fictional or imaginary, since they are not such by their essence, but within the film structure they serve as the illusionary and associative. Therefore, the film embraces both – traces of personal history as well as testimonies, especially, in form sharing fears and insecurities of the author (see Figure 34.).



Figure 34. “The Edge of Dreaming.” *A.Hardie and her daughter*, 2009.

Videostill, www.edgeofdreaming.com.

Since “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy” is a speculation of the recreation of true events, it could also be only a speculation to discuss the level of realness of the film narrative. There are no real archival materials used, there are no real records of “X” or his body. Therefore, it could be said that the reality of the film as such is openly presented, there are no attempts from the film-maker's side to cheat on the viewer, his or her perception. Director re-makes the fictional story into a visual narration, bringing it back to what could the real character, who inspired the writer, go through. It is all modified, since nothing within the film footage is real in a conventional sense. It encloses the imaginary imagery of the director as well as a fictional text (see Figure 35.). Therefore it is much closer to a testimony than to any traces of reality.



Figure 35. “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy.” *Abstract shadow of the woman illustrating hallucination of X*, 2009. Videostill, www.peterliechti.ch.

The case of “Yodok Stories” is different. Formally, the actuality that is in focus of the film is existing. There is such country as North Korea, with its own reality and stories. However, it is not really accessible to an outsider due to political reasons. The film-maker finds traces of that meta -narrative about the mysterious North Korea in stories of refugees. From bits and pieces of their testimonies he traces the reality of the country. Instead of applying his own imagination to the structure and narrative of the film, A.Fidyk suggests the idea of the musical and, in a way, uses the artistic recreation of the reality in the Yodok concentration camp. Therefore, film is much more of an imaginary nature than the fictional. It is the act of tracing the memory, and providing a testimony about it in a per-formative manner.

Physical and chemical artistic action. As a scientist concerned with facts and logical explanation for the phenomena, A.Hardie in her story includes parts of her research on death. At times it is presented in form of the interview with the expert, at times – in form of her notes and working process. The chemical action, the magic, starts when she puts all these bits together in the editing room. Some images seem not to be manipulated at all – such as the shot of her conversation with the son in the car, while others, such as animation of the impulses to the neurones, are generated artificially.

Stylization of the images is often used in science documentaries that the author is specializing in. therefore “The Edge of Dreaming” combines styles and approaches used in television industries along with the ones used in fiction and essay films. It helps to articulate the main struggle of the film-maker – to find the path between the logical and illogical.

P.Liechti in his narrative is using a lot of manipulations. Those of duration and speed, colours and sound. Since it is a documentary based on fictional text, the imagery and sounds of the also seem fictional. From the very beginning till the very end it seems set and constructed. Director recreates the story of the “X” that has been recorded only in a form of a fictional text. Finally, film narrative creates the illusion of reality of the protagonist, in form of recreation of his conscious and unconscious experience. It is a cinematic approach to a fictional text (see Figure 36.).



Figure 36. “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy.” *The narrative of the film is illustrated with fiction-like images*, 2009. Videostill, www.peterliechti.ch.

A.Fidyk as an artists starts out with the idea, a metaphor, that seems to be defining remoted and isolated country best. He is documenting what is real and what is en-acted. A certain manipulation is involved in terms of the film-makers attitude towards characters. His role is similar to drama therapist, where protagonists are not asked to share their stories behind the camera, but rather – are encouraged to enact them. After the initial stage, gathering the crew for the musical, A.Fidyk becomes an observer and a follower, who accurately and precisely looks for moments to document, when the birth of the musical turns into a self-generating process. Therefore, directors

attitude and behaviour in “Yodok Stories” is inverse if compared to A.Hardie's. A.Fidyk starts of with the idea and chemistry – reaction and action, and then just observes the reaction and action through the viewfinder.

Senses evoked. Perhaps the best way to describe the mood of a documentary “The Edge of Dreaming” is its title. The viewer is drawn into a narrative that is balancing on the thin line between the dream and the reality. Along with the main protagonist, viewer is experiencing lived and dreamed. Spectator is invited to the dream of A.Hardie's, where she or he encounters the dead husband of her's, or the horse. The viewer is experiencing the relativity (visually and aurally) between experiences generated by consciousness and sub-consciences. It is a cross-section of a human mind and emotions. If there was no voice-over applied in a film narrative, it would resemble the memory of a human being, where real events can be juxtaposed with symbols and references, where jumps of the idea and vision are allowed, and does not cause any chaos. However, the voice-over of the film-maker is the axis of it and, therefore, assures that the viewer, once hooked up, will entirely devote his emotions and mind to narrator's demands. The voice--over dramatizes the vision, suggests the viewer what to feel and what to think. However, every now and then it makes the viewer burst out laughing because of self – critical tone of the narrator, and paradoxes revealed. The film has a rhythm of a year condensed, since the time protagonist turns 48, up to the celebration on her 49. The memory is floating over the time, stopping by at some points, and slowing down at the most significant encounters.

P.Liechti's film, at the introduction part, exposes the viewer to the resolution to a narrative – finding the body of a suicidal “X”. However, that is also a hook, since the only record about the corpse is his diary. The voice-over enters the narrative and starts telling the story of a suicidal, starting with the preparation process. Thorough the film, viewer is kept as a captive, experiencing the torturous and masochistic trip towards the death along with the main invisible protagonist. The voice over is an instrument of torture, in a minimalistic way telling about the physical and mental experience of “X”, doubts and even raising anger and concern that he can not die. The rhythm of the film is slow and torturous. The viewer is forced to keep his breath waiting to the protagonist to die. The death ultimately seems a solution to a slow and hard process of dying (see

Figure 37.).



Figure 37. “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy.” *Death metaphor*, 2009. Videostill, www.peterliehti.ch.

Torture is presented differently in “Yodok Stories”. Here the viewer is exposed to narratives of a torturous stories of protagonists from North Korea, and visual representations of events, such as enactment of an actual beating scene from Yodok. The mood of the film resembles mooring, where the loss is that one of a homeland, relatives, past and at the same time – present. There are moments where the viewer is exposed to detailed explanation of means and methods used in concentration camp. Spectator is explained, what kind of penalties North Koreans have to go through, and for what ridiculous, reasons.

There is also a strong line of longing and nostalgic experience that is articulated thorough the film by main protagonists. “Yodok Stories” is a disturbing film, however, it places the viewer in the position of incapability to changing things, which is actually similar to the initial stage of the director. Spectacle as a universal structure becomes a form via which the viewers can identify with the players.

De-realization and de-personalization. A.Hardie in her film seems to split into two – rational woman, film-maker and wife, and scared, irrational being, exposed to the experience where science seems to be not the most reliable method to solve the problem. It reflects the process of protagonist's de-personalization and de-realisation

regarding her own environment. For example, when A.Hardie's study about the probability of her own death reaches a dead end, she decides to go to a shaman. She narrates her experience, incorporating sounds from the shamanism session into the film, and visualizing them in a form of a hallucinating trip, where the final destination is a dream (see Figure 38.). The real world becomes less important than the one seen in a dream. Protagonist has to refuse her own ego, even features of her personality, as she seems more attached to her living than to rationality.



Figure 38. “The Edge of Dreaming.” *Animated horse – metaphor of the film*, 2009. Videostill, www.edgeofdreaming.co.uk.

Film “The Sounds of Insects – Record of a Mummy” deals with de-realization even to a greater extent. Only at the very beginning film shots resemble conventional documentary. Immediately after that the viewer is dipped into a count-back towards the climax – death. The visuals are often surreal, blurry, slowed down or fast forwarded. The reality in the film is dream like: as “X” feels he has nothing to do with the world as we know it, he is experiencing it in his own strange way. Normally, the experience of the world as surreal and strange can be reached by drug, alcohol usage, or during the attack of a mental disorder. The protagonist, seems to also have different perception of the world and self. Therefore, it could be said that while watching the film spectator is experiencing the self and the world of protagonist (see Figure 39.).



Figure 39. “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy.” *Viewer is exposed to the Pov of the protagonist X*, 2009. Videostill, www.peterliechti.ch.

In “Yodok Stories” characters have more than one role – they are actors and they are refugees of North Korea. Within the documentary narrative director treats them as both. He captures who his characters change when they are on the stage, and when they leave it. Therefore, as it was a case with “The Edge of Dreaming”, protagonists are experiencing processes of de-realization and de-personalization within the frame. By becoming actors, they push aside their autobiographical self, and become symbols, universal representations of a certain unit. The reality they are referring too is dystopian, and the reality they are creating is per-formative. The world of the protagonists is trapped between the past and the present. However, even if film is telling the story of refugees of North Korea, it is literally presenting the perspective of a film-maker.

Archival of reality. Most of the film material in “The Edge of Dreaming” is shot for the film, between the time A.Hardie was 48 and 49. The only material that could be categorized as an archival is personal footage from the daily family life. However, the documentary itself is a documentation of the year, A.Hardie's actions and work. During the “Q and A” session in 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival she emphasized, that she shot so much footage on daily life partly because she was not sure what the resolution of the film is going to be like. On one hand, it could be a happy end film, on the other – a story that ends up with the death of the protagonist. This feeling got

stronger after she was diagnosed with a lung disease that was getting worse in time. Archiving daily life was important not only as a material for the film, but also – in the worst case scenario – as a memory of a daily routine for her kids. Therefore, for the author of the documentary, rather than the usage of the archival, this process of archivisation became of a crucial importance.

There is no archival material used in P.Liechti's film. It is all created for the film. However, some of it, such as the environment of the forest, the hut, where the “X” was staying, looks very much archive like. Here the re-creation of the events, a fake documentation of the suicidal, is helping to construct the atmosphere and the emotion, in order for the viewer to empathise with the character and situation better. However, there is no attempt from the side of the director to claim the footage or the imagery of the film to be real archival. It is all openly fictional and cinematic (see Figure 40.).

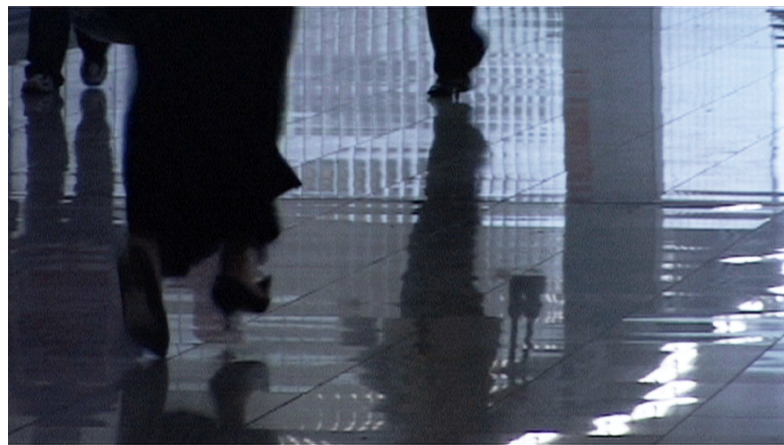


Figure 40. “Sounds of Insects – Record of a Mummy.” *Reconstruction of real*, 2009. Videostill, www.peterliechti.ch.

Since there is almost no archival material on the reality of North Korea, there was no chance for A.Fidyk to use it in his film. The only accessible material from the country was from the official television broadcasts programs and shows. These pieces are incorporated into a film narrative. Otherwise, this film, just like “The Edge of Dreaming” focuses on the process of the documentation of testimonies, and the process of the building up a musical. The process of archivisation is not based on personal history – it is based on a very personal decision and observations. It articulates stories of

people in an objective manner (if we assume that facts and ethics of the Western World, that the filmmaker is representing, are to be counted as objective).

Summary of the Chapter IV

- Despite the fact that in documentary film industry the production of conceptual and creative documentary films is still limited, the films chosen for the analysis of this thesis (from the 6th International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius and 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival) demonstrated consistency in terms of articulation of the subject matter and form chosen. It can be concluded, that in the field of creative documentary there is a tendency to look for metaphorical form to explain the subject matter better, and to engage the viewer with the story. This is often the case when dealing with the subject or history (“Rabbit a la Berlin”, “Cooking History”, “Yodok Stories”) or personal history (“Fleeting Memory”, “The Edge of Dreaming”). In all cases directors had to find a common and playful ground to hook today's viewer onto stories that had been either told many times before, or were too personal to be of a public interest. By creating a layer of distance, based on directors vision, these films become easy to comprehend and to engage with during the screening. The idea, the minor subject, becomes of a major importance and serves as a driving force to build a unique narrative. This process of conceptualization resembles the idea of creation of a Mechanical Man, where the idea to create of a life form suggest the form – human being.
- Directors vision in creation of a documentary film resembles the idea of a shape that in itself is a form to be filled in order to complete the mission. It is the idea that is haunting (like the fact that there was a huge population of rabbits living between the two walls of Berlin, or the dream about the death of the film-maker when approaching 49). Film-maker is the one to decide of the parts, structure, treatment and juxtapositions of the film (they might be connected by the narrative, like in “The Sounds of Insects – Record of the Mummy”, or visual, like in “Fleeting Memory”). In a creative process director is being an artist and a scientist, joining two ideas of 'creator' together (the author of the film “The Edge

of Dreaming”). Usually the subject matter has at least two layers (war and cooking, Berlin Wall and rabbits, concentration camp and performance). Just like in the process of creation of the Mechanical Man, when dealing with creation of life and the creation of form, director decides on integral parts and the the method to join these bits together. However, documentary film, like the Mechanical Man, can be no longer be controlled after it/he starts independent life in society.

- Each documentary film has a different structure, just like each form of Mechanical Man. However, the reference to the idea of film, just like the reference to the idea of man, suggest a certain structure, mainly based on dramatization (introduction, body, resolution/state of equilibrium, destruction of the equilibrium, and returning to the equilibrium with the major changes in character's status). This is the same as to say that in order to create a man, author needs to construct a shape – legs and hands for the creature to walk, brain and heart for it to be alive and communicating. Films “The Edge of Dreaming”, “Rabbit a la Berlin”, and “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy” are examples of a structure based on a voice – over narration, where dream like visual supports the verbal sequence of the film. On the contrary, in “Fleeting Memory”, “Cooking History” and “Yodok Stories” the visualisation is to be seen as the driving force of the film.
- Visual and narrative styles of the films analysed create a character of the film, just like the outlook defines manners of the Mechanical Man. It all depends on the priorities and choices of the author. Frankenstein creates the creature by putting almost no emphasis on his visual aesthetics, because the subject matter – the idea of artificially created life – is more important than anything else. While in case of creation of replica of Maria it is different – the creature has to be human like, sexual and appealing. All films analysed had different approaches to aesthetics: in “Yodok Stories” subject matter is more important than the visualisation. In other films -- “On the Edge of Dreaming”, “Sounds of the Insects – Record of the Mummy”, “Rabbits a la Berlin”, “Fleeting Memory” and “Cooking History” the visual treatment of the subject matter is of a big concern of the film.

- Modes of a documentary film refer to types of Mechanical Man. Each product of a creative process ends up in different results and causes different effects. The analysis of documentary films from the festival programs have revealed that the most common mode to categorize different types of films is reflexive mode since it embraces all other modes. In a way, it is a compromise in categorization, where anything that does not fit other definitions go under the most abstract one. Films analysed usually embrace more than one mode and go beyond academic definitions of documentary sub-genres. That is related to the fact that documentary films also include elements of fiction (mock-documentaries and documentary hybrids). Some of them -- “Yodok Stories”, “Cooking History”, “Rabbit a la Berlin”, “Fleeting Memory” – might seem closer to what is referred to as familiar and, therefore, conventional form of documentary, while others – “The Edge of Dreaming” and especially -- “The Sounds of the Insects –Record of a Mummy” are much closer to fictional narratives. Therefore, it is to say that the first group of films is closer to the creature created by Dr.Frankenstein, while the others – to the replica of Maria, where the Mechanical Man is differs much more from the general characteristics of the human being.
- Film starts functioning – telling the story – when all parts of it are juxtaposed and combined in harmony. The same applies to the Mechanical Man – only when parts are bind together and connected under certain logic, the artificial life can be created. Therefore, this process is considered to resemble the physical and chemical action of a film-maker. Certain methods and techniques can go beyond the traditional understanding of a documentary film, such as set ups and effects used, but as long as they contribute to overall goal and idea of a film-maker they would not disturb the eye of a viewer. All films analysed embrace a certain type of effect application – modification of the picture (set ups -- “Cooking History”, “Rabbit a la Berlin”, “Yodok Stories”, modification of the visual in motion -- “The Edge of Dreaming”, “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy”, “Fleeting Memory”), but that does not diminish documentary value of films. On the contrary, it helps to articulate the idea, create the mood, rhythm and motion.
- All documentary films analysed are based on tracing the reality as a sample in

order to create alternative reality of the film. However, this reality could not be created if there was no testimony of the author. Directors of some films analysed are tracing their own life, such as “Fleeting Memory” and “The Edge of Dreaming”, and then creating a testimonial narrative which expresses their own relationship and vision of it. In other cases -- “Yodok Stories”, “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy”, “Rabbit a la Berlin” and “Cooking History” -- directors are talking about the reality that is distant to them in terms of the of time, place and even lived reality. Therefore, these documentaries contain different research approach which is much more based on gathering facts than straight forward reflection on the issues analysed. Just like in the process of creation of the Mechanical Man, different aspects of reality might be traced according to the vision of a creator, and different methods used in order to complete the initial task.

- Documentary as a film, works via the vision and hearing faculties of the viewer. Playing around their empathy and instincts they evoke different relationship to film reality: experiences during and after the encounter with the story. Most of the films are not meant to encourage or engage the viewer into any action or program. The only exception might be “Yodok Stories” since it talks about the form of resistance via the example of a group of people. The rhythm and motion of the film is mostly created during the process of editing, when parts and bits of sounds and visuals are assembled together. Here the major difference between the creation of the Mechanical Man and the creation of a documentary film might be encountered. In “Frankenstein” and in “Metropolis” there is a momentary awakening of the creature, when the life is entering the body constructed, so the director has no full control over the process as big part of the end result is actually left to chance. In documentary film making director is able to follow the process of the film evolution and therefore is much more aware of what is going to come out of it at the end.
- Since documentary films are realities of their own, they contain a certain degree of de-realisation of the reality on the ground. They are only referring to actuality and using it as a medium to construct alternative time and space within which the characters are living and experiencing. At times this de-realization process is

more exposed, like in the film “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy”, at times – more covered, like in “Cooking History” or “Rabbit a la Berlin”. That effect is related to the fact that during the creative process director, just like two crazy scientists in “Metropolis” and “Frankenstein”, end up isolating him or herself from the real experiences, and give themselves in for the process of creation, where imaginary and physical reality merge together. People acting within the documentary film are referred to as characters – that is the process of diminishing of who they actually are, while assigning them the role to play.

- Archival material was used in most of the documentary films analysed. In some of them footage was taken from the archives of a social and political history -- “Yodok Stories”, “Rabbit a la Berlin”, “Cooking history”, while in the others – film-makers used personal archive -- “Fleeting Memory”, “The Edge of Dreaming”. Film “The Sound of Insects – Record of a Mummy” is very distant from actuality and therefore there was no chance to find any references to a real event. As a result, the film-maker has chosen to create a non – existing archival for the film. There is a tendency in contemporary documentary films to use and interpret the archival material in a creative way. It resembles the idea of usage of human remains (parts of the body, heart and brain) in a creation of an artificial life form. Archival is something that is pre-created and therefore referred to as authentic and unique, since humanity have no actual tools to go back in time and witness what has been lived back then and there. This authenticity is serving as a basis for reliability of any documentary film, or, in case of the Mechanical Man, legitimisation for the creature created as a human form.

CHAPTER V

Analysis of the Online Documentary Projects

Introduction

The question of what documentary film is has been an issue of debate for almost a century. It seems that every new try in terms of artistic approach, treatment of reality or new way of screenings is as a reason for a new debate to start. The presence and even omnipresence of virtual environments, such as internet, seem to challenge not only established ways of screening films, but also change the routine of film-making. It is rich enough within itself to provide exhibition space as much as to offer new working methods (internet is not only a space to exhibit, but also a space to research, get in touch, and etc.). Therefore, it is possible that computers and internet are able to embrace all three stages of film-making: preproduction, production and post-production, -- and even screening sessions. In this context it is interesting to look at the way the documentary production develops and functions.

Philosophers, such as Heinrich Beck and Martin Heidegger, have analysed the phenomenon of technology, and its relationship with humans. It seems that 'everything is supplied for a human of technological era to consume. However the paradox of today's technology is that the human beings themselves become a supplement for technological consumption. It is important to analyse this perspective in terms of documentary projects that were recently launched online by two very different and well established film-makers and artists: David Lynch ('Interview Project') and Jonas Mekas ('Web project of 365 short films').

The film-maker and visual artist D.Lynch is known for his surreal, dream-like, night-mare films. Recently he has started an online "Interview project" (2009) (<http://interviewproject.davidlynch.com/www/>), where a new interview is ought to be published every three days. D.Lynch claim that there was actually "no plan" for the

“Interview project”, and it is simply based on 20 000 mile road trip that takes over 70 days across and back the United States. The crew had found and interviewed people in different locations (homes, bars and etc). The author hopes that what people will get out of the “Interview project” is “a chance to meet these people” interviewed, because “it is something that is human and you can not stay away from it”.

Lithuanian-born artist often referred to as a god-father of an American avant-garde cinema, in 2007 started a “Web project of 365 short films” (in <http://www.jonasmekas.com>). In the introduction he states “I am challenging myself for one calendar year beginning January 1st 2007 to make one 3-7 minute video each day. It will be my diary of sorts”.

Thinking about specific signature that they have on their film production and the role that their persona plays in it, references should be made to auteur structuralism: when films are not being traced to their origins, but rather -- to their creative sources. Therefore the film in this thesis is seen not as 'communication, but as an artefact which is unconsciously structured in a certain way'¹³⁴.

In order to discuss artistic approaches in these documentary films, it is necessary to assume that the process of film making is, actually, an artistic activity. It is not a new thing to say that, unless we talk about news reels, documentaries usually are build around ideas and concepts that producers and directors are trying to articulate¹³⁵. However, journalistic approach can not be totally ignored or deionised, since artists often borrow techniques and methods in order to convey, articulate and deliver their ideas differently. In addition, when it comes to documentary projects stored online, one can observe that even creative projects (those to have rather artistic than informative or social priorities) often imitate the news media in terms of format (interview, report), duration (projects exhibited or stored online are usually either cut into parts (like it is done in case of “Youtube”) or are simply created that way), exhibition (video piece goes along with a written description, audience can leave comments or contact the editorial, artist, creator). That has to do with documentary genre which is trapped between news media and fiction. In order to gather information artists are making interviews, using observational “fly on the wall” method, interact with characters, or provide their own

¹³⁴ Peter Wollen, “The auteur theory,” in *Theories of Authorship*, ed. John Caughie (London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2001), 146.

¹³⁵ Philip Dunne, “The Documentary and Hollywood,” in *Hollywood Quarterly* 1 (2), (1946): 167.

comments in form of “voice of god” - voice-over.

5.2. Analysis of the “365 Films” and “Interview Project”

Concepts and ideas articulated. The conceptual part of the two online projects is a complex structure to be discussed. Since J.Mekas and D.Lynch have established styles, in other words – personal styles and concepts that are evolving in all of their films, the overall auteur concept is present within the project just like the idea of the project per se. For example, J.Mekas, as “Fluxus” artist, is also articulating these ideas within each of his films. They are short, shot by hand -held cam-recorder, there are no big statements of big goals to be achieved or articulated within the video. Works are related to experience of the artist himself or people from his environment. The artist is a documentarist and the witness. Recording of daily events that are of significant personal or, at times, -- even public importance (historical events, meetings with famous people, concerts of pop-stars and etc.) has always been in focus of J.Mekas video experiments (another illustrative example of it is “Lithuania and the Collapse of USSR (2008)”. He chooses rapid shooting and editing techniques to emphasize the “daily” and even reduces the importance of what is within the image (celebrities, revolution etc.). He embraces visual noises and ambience, which is logical thinking of his concept and line of the diary that is actually present in quite a few projects of J.Mekas.

D.Lynch is known for his dark and mysterious, dream like films. His characters are in between human beings and creatures, real and fictional, imagined and documented. Characters in “Interview Project” are actually very similar to the characters in his fiction films. They all hold a certain strangeness and awkwardness, they do not seem very normal, however, seem to be no different from people we see in streets. In a way, a signature of D.Lynch and his previous films ultimately creates the suspense in his videos. Since the viewer is familiar to D.Lynch's narrative style, and even more – visual approach, it is challenging to accept that the videos displayed online in the “Interview Project” are actually documentary, not fictional.

The concepts of the two projects are pretty explicit and even reflected in titles: “Interview Project” and “365 Films”. As D.Lynch claims in the introduction video, there was no plan for the “Interview Project”. The aim of it is to meet people. The method –

road trip on which people has been found and interviewed. The idea suggests the form – interview. However, the idea of “finding” instead of “meeting” people resemble the idea of casting. It is possible, that D.Lynch is playing around the idea of relativity between fiction and documentary. This project is defined by 70 day road trip that is actually similar to production period of a fiction film.

J.Mekas is filling in the year with videos on daily basis. His project have started on January the 1st and finished on the last day of December 2007. It is a visual dairy, chronicle of personal and universal history. The idea is based on his determination and responsibility – to upload videos daily, therefore, to constantly be productive. It is rather a form of challenging yourself than actually challenging the medium, form or idea. His has a passion to collect and to archive. One of the illustrative examples of it is the fact that he established Anthology Film Archives, which is one of the world’s largest and most important repositories of avant-garde films.

Finally, even if very different in conceptual approach and style, both online documentary films projects are able to prevail the consistence in terms of form and the initial idea.

Defining director's vision. Documentary films always evolve around the the relationship of the three – the author, audience and subject matter. B.Nichols notes it as “I speak about them to you”¹³⁶. Even if the presence of internet in the two projects analysed does not influence that much the relationship between the creator and subject matter, it does indeed effect strings attached to th audience and subject matter, as well as those between the author and the audience. The major changes in process appears when the documentary video is processed for the online placement. This means that the author encounters different routine and discipline in time of production (the two projects are exposed to the time pressure, imposed by the idea of the project per se, which is rather a feature of the rutine of news media than production of film).

In case of the “Interview Project”, D.Lynch is occupying the position of a show host, which is close to the one of reporter, but yet different. He introduces interviewees, but is not really present in a video (just like it is the case in many magazine shows) (see Figure 41.).

¹³⁶ Bill Nichols, “How Do Documentaries Differ from Other Types of Film?,” in *Introduction to Documentary*, (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2001), 21.



Figure 41. “Interview Project.” *David Lynch*, 2009. Videostill,
<http://interviewproject.davidlynch.com>.

J.Mekas is not making any formal introduction, but he is present in his own videos quite often. His roles are changing – he might be a poet, explorer, observer and etc. He is changing constantly, depending on a video. It is the same as to say that if D.Lynch is telling us about (them), J.Mekas is revealing more intimate reality of his own. If D.Lynch's project is rather rhetorical, J.Mekas's one is more autobiographical.

The two creators have rather different interaction with the events represented. J.Mekas is also a photographer and documentarist, while D.Lynch is just a figure, name, and clearly superior figure to his own team and characters. In other words, projects of J.Mekas is more lived and less directed:

<...> photographers can have a more direct interaction with the event. They are able to make eye contact with their subjects and relate more fully; they can feel more a part of the event, being less dominated by the distancing effect of the camera apparatus. <...> the image of that event is present at the same time as the event itself: the profilmic event and its filmic representation coexist. With the ubiquity of digital photography and cinematography, this experience has become commonplace¹³⁷.

J.Mekas is not so keen in straight forward addressing of the audiences, however

¹³⁷ John Ellis, “What are we expected to feel? Witness, textuality and the audiovisual,” in *Screen* 50 (1) (2009): 67.

that is exactly what D.Lynch does. When introducing his characters, director is always placed in different environment than the protagonist. He is, in fact, in the environment that is similar to room or studio, home environment. He is a storyteller, a host, but he perceives the reality shot and edited in the same way as the audience is does. J.Mekas reveals rather established relationship with his characters, just like in amateur films: 'Amateur films map the private sphere from the point of view of the participants, collapsing the border between subject and object'¹³⁸. D.Lynch stays cool and detached to his creation and characters, he pays more attention to relationship with his audiences. Even the note that appears before every new episode ("The views expressed in these interviews are those of the participants alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the "Interview Project" or its sponsors") signify the conscious distance from what is on the screen. However, the two projects remind of the relationship between the creator, subject matter and the audiences in television spaces, that are 'filled by voices proclaiming and celebrating their own "freakishness", articulating their most intimate fears and secrets'. The public disclosure and narrative of personal identity is a crucial ingredient of a revitalized (and economically viable) factual television market¹³⁹. D.Lynch's approach to his characters and even the method – road trip to find them – seems to be borrowed from television. The project is meant to please the viewer: '<...> the emphasis is laid on the power of film to capture reality "out there" for us "in here." <...> Truth has to be made vivid, interesting; it has to be "dramatized" if it is to convince the audience of the evidence, whose "confidence" in it allows truth to take shape'¹⁴⁰. It also applies to the project of J.Mekas, just his confidence is achieved differently. If D.Lynch makes domestic into extraordinary, daily into entertaining, and his own name uses as the additional value to boost the public interest, J.Mekas is playing with his public and private persona in much more direct way. He is there, within the video, in fact, he becomes the video himself, as documentary footage reflects his own very routine, and processes of seeing, hearing, and sense making.

In order to entertain the audience J.Mekas chooses the approach which is quite close to the reality show format, in video diary rooms and on life-coaching

¹³⁸ Malin Wahlberg, "Wonders of cinematic abstraction: J. C. Mol and the aesthetic experience of science film," in *Screen* 47 (3) (2006): 278.

¹³⁹ Heather Nunn, "Errol Morris: documentary as psychic drama," in *Screen* 45 (4), (2004): 414.

¹⁴⁰ Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "Documentary Is/Not a Name," in *October* 52, (1990): 79.

programming, and is associated with social verification: 'I am seen, therefore I am' ¹⁴¹. For the case of D.Lynch, we need to rewrite this statement into a claim: “they are seen, therefore they are”.

¹⁴¹ Heather Nunn, “Errol Morris:documentary as psychic drama,” in *Screen* 45 (4) (2004): 414.

Structure. J.Mekas and D.Lynch are constructing their online video project in different ways. J.Mekas thought the year 2007 is uploading short – few minute long videos – online. At the end project consists out of 365 short videos that are assembled visually in a form of a calender. The viewer can choose the month, the date, and construct the structure of narrative him or herself (see Figure 42.).

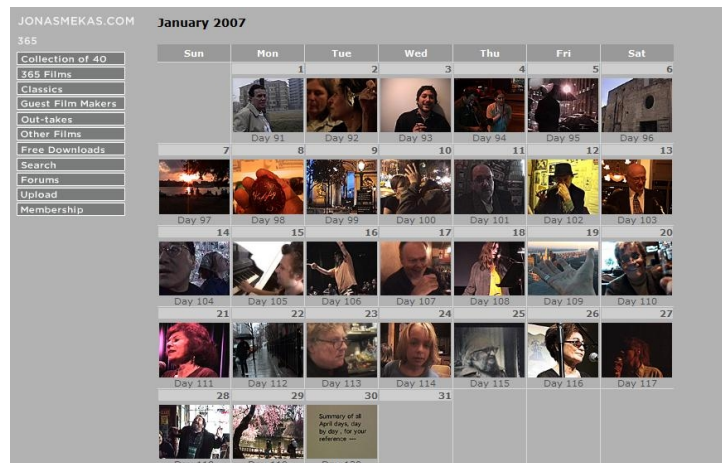


Figure 42. “365 Films.” *January 2007*. Videostill, www.jonasmekas.com.

D.Lynch's project is based on a long road trip across and back the United States. The page starts with the latest episode, above which there is a detailed information about the route and location where the character has been “found”. On the right side of the screen there are links to recent episodes and advertisements of the up-coming ones. In a way, the structure of display, just like the title of the project, seems to refer to news media (see Figure 43.).

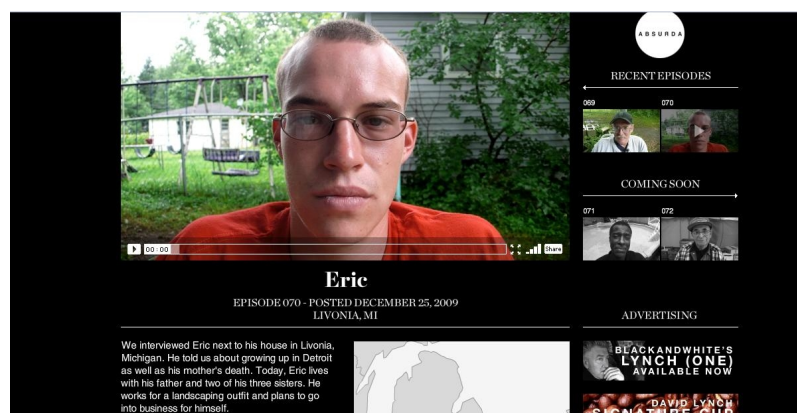


Figure 43. “Interview Project.” *Eric, episode 070, 2009*. Videostill,

However, when it comes to online documentary projects, it is not always easy to discuss the structure, as it is no longer clear what structure we have to discuss and which theories to apply – New Media, of film. In such projects the idea, not even visual style or dramatic action, becomes a key element joining all different episodes together. It could be said that structure is pre-arranged by a web designer who is working under the idea of the director. But it also could be said, that the real structure of narrative is rooted in freedom of the viewer to choose the episodes and the sequence. In other words, the structure of online documentary projects bound by the uniting idea reminds of the idea of a “menu”, which, actually, is also a word used in New Media and computer technology vocabulary. The viewer opens up a web site as if it was a menu, and chooses the combination of options according to his own taste or interest. The program, software, serves as a waitress that brings in everything what the viewer is asking for.

When analysing the structure of a single, separate and de-contextualized video from J.Mekas's and D.Lynch's projects, it could be observed that they resemble a weird mixture of news media report (in terms of duration and approach chosen by D.Lynch) and film or even video art (when it comes to J.Mekas). In one of the videos, recorded in 2002 J.Mekas provides the conversation between Susan Sontag and Bela Tarr where they talk about modern technologies. The two discuss how the way young people think have changed, and that “they actually think in a way, like a machine does”¹⁴². These two projects, regarding the structure, can actually be seen as the reflection of transition from the linear way of thinking towards pictorial. Videos get shorter, they all embrace the form of series which has no real continuity, and no reference to each other.

Such scene based narrative structure is also something that was already explored and reflected on by Cubist and latter on – avant-garde artists in terms of “distortion” or “dissection” of a movement or a form¹⁴³.

Film starts with the frame. The narratives are, in a way, never ending, never starting, offers no introduction, conclusion or traditional three-act structure. All videos

¹⁴² “365 Films,” http://www.jonasmekas.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Product_Code=79&Category_Code=365JAN&Product_Count=7 (accessed 14 November, 2009).

¹⁴³ Hans Richter, “The Avant-garde Film Seen from Within,” in *Hollowood Quarterly* 4 (1) (1949): 37.

exist independently, as extracts from something bigger, however the bigger picture is nothing but the assemblage of these small stories. As a result, both documentary projects starts with ideas and design (visual and audiovisual representation of the idea behind). In J.Mekas's calendar, just like in D.Lynch's "Interview Project", each window begins with the first frame of the video displayed. It is the hook that in conventional documentaries appear in the introduction part of the film. But instead of moving the viewer, as in the traditional structure of the film, here the videos need to be moved by the viewer in order be awaken and to tell the story.

Visual and narrative style. The first obvious distinction between the two projects is, actually, the level of professionalism. If J.Mekas pays almost no attention to a visual and sound quality in his videos, the defined aesthetics becomes almost essential to D.Lynch's "Interview Project". This shows the different importance that the two artists put on visualisation and sound recording: J.Mekas is coming out in an avant-garde and experimental style, while D.Lynch's holds onto mainstream cinema practices. Videos by D.Lynch are shot and processed in rather professional way: there is a certain planning for the set up involved, camera is always well established, sound is well edited, just like wide shots are well juxtaposed with close-ups (see Figure 44.).



Figure 44. "Interview Project." Jerry Willsm, *episode 077*, 2010. Videostill, <http://interviewproject.davidlynch.com>.

Interviewee is always shot in the arranged set, with not much movement in the background. Sound and visuals are edited so that it would please the eye of a viewer. When the two projects are compared, it is very clear that even if it just an illusion, the approach of J.Mekas, which is less cinematic, seems to be more appealing, more real, while in case of D.Lynch the genuine interview seems to be much more fictional. Therefore, the two projects signify a battle between what is called cinema and amateur videos. Amateur film poses a threat to more dominant visuals it is heteroglossic, multiple, and it forms a significant site of cultural struggle over who has power to create media and to enter into representation¹⁴⁴. And yet the visual stories that J.Mekas is telling are those of public interest since they open the gate to the world of known, elite, or art elite. Even if shot and edited in amateur manner, they are telling the story of public interest.

The project of D.Lynch, in that respect, is totally opposite: it is processed in a professional manner, yet picturing people of no public interest. The only common thing in case of the two becomes the narration and storytelling, which is compressed in short time. Therefore seeing both as creative practices one can observe 'fusing of the reality of world with the motivation of imaginative design is often stimulating in its bringing together of recognition with kinds of 'making strange' or, less radically, what we might just call "re-seeing"¹⁴⁵.

J.Mekas does not care much not only about visualisation, but also facts. It is actually more about being up to date, on time and being appealing. Therefore, even if project was launched in 2007, January's chapter contains edited pieces from 2002. It reminds of news media, when main purpose becomes to keep public interested, give it a show, record and report actuality and factuality of artist's mundane, however, not suggesting what and how to think about things. In addition, it reflects not only what is happening, but also what had happened (in this case, memories become superior to actual events of a day).

¹⁴⁴ Karen L. Ishizuka, Patricia Rodden Zimmermann, "Morphing history into histories," in *Mining the home movie: excavations in histories and memories* (Los Angeles: California, University of California Press, 2007), 277.

¹⁴⁵ John Corner, "Television, documentary and the cathegory of aesthetic," in *Screen* , 44 (1) (2003): 97.

Modes and forms. J.Mekas in his online documentary project is choosing few approaches, such as expository, per-formative, participatory, observational. However, in most of the videos he is an observer, using “fly on the wall” or interactive approach. D.Lynch is more formal, he is not even conducting interviews himself, he has a team that is in charge of it all. His approach in overall project resembles expository mode, that is, in fact, often categorized as the most common in journalistic practice. Approaches used by these two film makers are very different in terms of style, visualisation and their own involvement. However, it is not easy to discuss modes of overall projects. If D.Lynch's project still can fall under the definition of the expository mode, J.Mekas's project is indeed representing a mixed mode case. On the other hand, it could be questioned, if at all we can apply conventional definitions of documentary mode to something that is exhibited online and does not contain a narrative structure. Therefore, the fact that both projects are made in order to be exhibited online has to be taken into account.

Just like cinema and television, internet also has its own formats and rules imposed upon the artist and film-maker that, actually, are not only left there for formal considerations, but also influences the creative processes per se. Artist or film-maker has to consider physicality and limitations as much as opportunities of such space of screening before and during the process of creation. That is to say that documentary narrations ultimately turn into pictorial rather than linear narrations. 'In cinema, the image can both narrate and describe at the same time, but there is still a tension for, although the narrative system struggles to fix the meaning of an image, there is always more than the narrative can hold in place'¹⁴⁶. This is an important point to consider when we talk about relatively short documentary video pieces, as it is a case in the two projects.

Therefore, the space of exhibition, such as internet, is actually not bringing any innovations to a documentary mode concept, at least, when we discuss a single video as part of the whole project. In a way, such discussion would lead to no conclusions just like the analysis of one single scene from the film or mis-an-scene. Rather, it suggests that there is a need to focus on this single video as part of a bigger picture, as it stands for a scene within the non-linear narrative. Since there is no line to follow, we can no

¹⁴⁶ Andrew Higson, “Space, Place, Spectacle,” in *Screen* 25 (45) (1984): 2.

longer talk about continuity (unless we consider the road trip and daily updates as a sort of “series”, however it would also be misleading since the set, and main characters are changing). Mode is actually closely related to a certain development in time. What we are left with in case of D.Lynch's and J.Mekas's projects is, actually, an eclectic narrative that embraces references to different generic approaches, but never really develops one. Rather, it is a development in terms of space (filling in the blanks).

J.Mekas's stories are conveyed in rather descriptive way. It resembles the regular form of a diary, where the events are being reflected and pointed out in order to be documented. What happened before or after (context) is not that important. In most of the pieces there is no continuity, no relations and interrelations, unless the audience is able to put visuals in context itself. The project “365 Films” is combined out of pieces shot and processed in a home video production style (see Figure 45.).

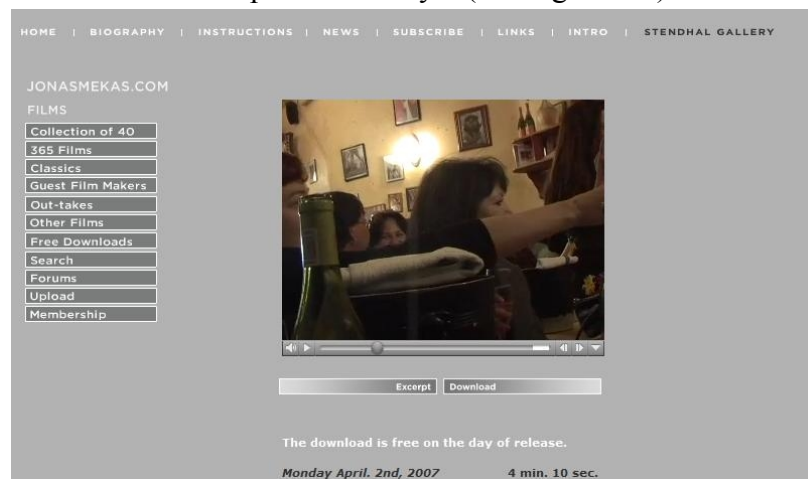


Figure 45. “365 Films.” *January 9, A book party & Pola Chapelle's lesson in art*, 2007. Videostill, www.jonasmekas.com.

When it comes to an “Interview Project” is all about small narratives, personal essays of the interviewees. The character is a story itself, revealed by narration, reflections, attitude and behaviour. Yet, small narratives are not meant to be constructed into a bigger and consistent one.

Traces and testimonies. In both cases, the reality represented resembles actuality, and therefore, it traces reality rather than provides testimonies. However, in

case of D.Lynch's project it is more deliberately chosen and stylized, leaning slightly towards the side of a testimony. The amateur and synaesthetic aesthetics used by J.Mekas brings it more close to a accidental record onto an events of history. The project "365 Films" evokes the feeling, that shots often were random, spontaneous, as the aesthetics chosen by the author hides the idea of planing. D.Lynch creates a film by using reality as a medium. He does not attempt to 'witness', he 'claims'.

Baring in mind his artistic and, to some extent, even political importance, J.Mekas's project embraces not only personal, but also social historicism (the scale of it is pretty vast – from political scene to artistic). But despite the content and public figures, visually his pieces are nothing more than a bunch of home videos.

'Michael Foucault argued history is always incomplete, filled with gaps, fissures, and ruptures. His method offers the way to position amateur films not as text, but as series of power relations and negotiations between dominant film practices and marginal ones'¹⁴⁷.

Therefore, this documentary archive is balancing on a thin line between public and personal, professional and amateur, still falling under one of the types of the documentary films referred to as ethnological films. Just his exploration is conducted within his own environment, that, in fact, is exotic, as it embraces certain elite figures from NY art scene and academia.

The portrait of reality in J.Mekas's online documentary project seems not much modified, it is photographic. Recalling the idea of the photograph as a "death mask" for reality, it could be said that it illustrates this form in full capacity. First of all, the first frame is still, the entire composition of the videos on the web also serve as some sort of cover, that starts witnessing the historical past, once – physical reality, only when interrupted by a mouse click. The same could be said about D.Lynch project, however his "mask" created includes more interpretation, it is more imaginary. Videos made by J.Mekas, actually could have been made almost by anyone that has camera, however, the style chosen by D.Lynch is very specific and contains a visible "signature" of the author on every single episode. In his project there are no fictional details, however, the reality represented feels fictional, with intentionally chosen characters, and such choice ultimately suggests that the gaze of the creator is directed towards the line between real

¹⁴⁷ Malin Wahlberg, "Wonders of cinematic abstraction: J. C. Mol and the aesthetic experience of science film," in *Screen* 47 (3), (2006): 278.

lived and imaginary.

Physical and chemical artistic action. Documentary films are not coined only out of concepts. Therefore, the technical and organizational aspects of making those concepts into visuals, are of a crucial importance. Above it all stands the visual approach: 'that is to say that photography in documentary was and will always be important in terms of articulation of subject matter'¹⁴⁸. This haven't changed much. The language of camera is the language of film-maker. Visualisation of films and videos, therefore, can serve for different purposes: 'the visual as 'iconography', the visual as extraneous and obtrusive 'style', and the visual as 'poetry'¹⁴⁹. These effects are achieved via technical means, while processing and manipulating images and sound. The video, in that respect, resembles to human: it has its own kinetics and physicality, just like something sensual – ability to evoke emotions. Therefore, genre, or mode in documentary, is nothing more than an outfit – deliberately or accidentally chosen, rather technical mean to reveal the subject matter.

Documentaries online in both projects exist as quite independent units, creator him or her-self can decide on mode, level of modification and time of presentation. There no censorship in terms of modifications of reality and experimentation, so all above modes that were discussed before can be chosen in order to reveal the subject. In fact, within one project, which in our case, is superior to single video, artist can use different modes. This would be quite destructive approach when it comes to liner narration and one complete film project, since the narration would get distracted. The distinction can be made between what is called 'thick text' and 'thin text' documentaries in terms of the density and transformative scale of their mediations¹⁵⁰. In project “365 series” J. Mekas uses both and embraces all bunch of different modes and aesthetics.

Unfortunately, we tend to think that the closer the idea of documentary gets to the idea of artistic creation, the thicker this textual layer is. This is not necessarily true, since the manipulation can be made in a very exposed manner and also it can be well hidden (like in case of “Interview Project”). In both ways the creative tension between

¹⁴⁸ Willard van Dyke, “The Interpretive Camera in Documentary Films,” in *Hollywood Quarterly* 1 (4) (1946): 405.

¹⁴⁹ Andrew Higson, “Space, Place, Spectacle,” in *Screen* 25 (45) (1984): 3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 94.

reference and artefact is apparent¹⁵¹. Mediated reality with the signature of author, such as director or an artist, turns into an art piece. The name of the creator labels the reality captured, just like M.Duchamp's ready-mades. Reality is free and shapeless, unless it is labelled by an artist. Therefore, films by J. Mekas are more of an avant-garde and the ones by D.Lynch, breath with abnormal normality and suspense.

It would be a perspective of technological determinism to claim that alternative spaces of screening along with its formal characteristics is the only criteria to define creative process and a final result of such documentary making. Just like it would be mistaken to think that 'the technical means that the avant-garde used in order to grow reveal its meaning'¹⁵². Since in most cases the choice of exhibiting is a conscious choice of director or producer, it must be seen not only as imperfect structure that dictates creative solutions, but also as alternative to mainstream and genre specific tradition to approach audiences. J.Mekas and D.Lynch's online projects encounter new creative and organizational struggles that would not be the case if traditional media is chosen for screenings.

Given the fact that documentary films have not too many ways of reaching audiences (either festivals or television), internet seems to be great alternative, letting film to be always available. Though while screenings and broadcastings are organized in terms of programmes and nets (time) in cinemas and televisions, in internet space they seemed to be designed (in terms of space).

Given significant differences of narrative structure it is doubtful that the term documentary film can still be applied when talking about such online projects as "Interview Project" and "365 Films", even if the essence of the two is purely documentary. So it is necessary to once again ask 'quite what counts as 'documentary' nowadays, given the hectic generic mutations'¹⁵³ not only due to television, but also virtual space environments.

Senses evoked. There is no clear general mood in the project "365 Films" as each video contains different rhythm and evokes different sense of motion. The only hope in reconstructing rhythm and mood of the project is the viewer who can

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 96.

¹⁵² Hans Richter, "The Avant-garde Film Seen from Within," in *Hollowood Quarterly* 4 (1) (1949): 35.

¹⁵³ John Corner, "Television, documentary and the cathegory of aesthetic," in *Screen* , 44 (1) (2003): 93.

deliberately choose the sequence and construct his own story. But that also gets complicated since short videos are destructing the focus and the flow even of an artificially created narrative. D.Lynch's project is more consistent in that respect. Since the author in his creative practices has been always playing around the idea of mood and creation of the suspense, it is also reflected in his documentary. The rhythm is always relatively slow, the mood is evoking suspicion. It seems that there is always another layer, another face of the character, the secret that has not been articulated and never revealed.

However, it feels like the idea of motion and dynamism in these two projects is more celebrated when it is not within the film or video piece, but when it goes beyond it, allowing the audience to get involved more in a dynamic process: "Orchestration of motion, the dynamic joy of movement, fascinated and inspired the futurist painters; in 1912, Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase," Picabia's "Boxing." They discovered "dynamism" and "simultaneity."¹⁵⁴

Internet though is not a medium, it is a space, but as such it also offers different approaches to continuity and different dynamism due to its own very character. In fact, internet space is not asking artists to come up with narrative. It is asking for an idea that is powerful and moving.

Therefore, the energy that makes ideas and narratives move within the internet is kinetic, it is more than anything else based on physics: the action of the artist is equal to reaction of the viewer. If the idea is moving, if one liked the first video, it is very possible that he or she will continue surfing within the web page. In other words, what we find in J.Mekas's and D.Lynch's projects are scenes within scenes, embraced by visual and conceptual form (calender in case of J.Mekas, and interview in case of D.Lynch).

In both cases when the viewer chooses one of the videos, it also gets a description of what is in there, as it is provided as a text placed besides, or some extra visual information (like in D.Lynch's case – the map with the route). 'The pictorial qualities of the documentary image, with its organization of screen space into a plane both of reference and of formal design, are in powerful combination with its kinetic properties'¹⁵⁵. All in all, all documentary videos here are presented in terms of well

¹⁵⁴ Hans Richter, "The Avant-garde Film Seen from Within," in *Hollowood Quarterly* 4 (1) (1949): 36.

¹⁵⁵ John Corner, "Television, documentary and the cathegory of aesthetic," in *Screen* , 44 (1) (2003): 96.

established design with iconic references to moving image.

De-realization and de-personalization. As it has already been notified, projects of J.Mekas and D.Lynch are good examples of documentaries with the absence of one single narrative. In that respect it resembles human experience in daily life which is combined of bits and pieces, and rarely have a clear and logical sequence. On the other hand, in both cases – project by J.Mekas and by D.Lynch – the creator is providing the viewer only with one sample of certain encounter or experience. It is not always real time, usually it is edited and arranged. In that respect, the actual, physical reality is being modified. When put together, pieces don't interact. There is no longer need to assemble separate pieces (interviews or daily impressions) in one sequence, just like there is no need to search for the form that would articulate message the best. Pieces are living independent life and yet they seem to be part of a bigger picture – the project. If before we were able to talk about film projects, now we talk about projects combined from sequences. So documentary, in this case, is no longer a film. It is a title, a project that embraces the social or personal stream of consciousness. Some scholars argued that there is no such thing as documentary at all 'whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques. This assertion is as old and as fundamental as the antagonism between names, and reality needs incessantly to be restated, despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition'¹⁵⁶.

The question of truth and representation of reality in documentary has been an issue for theoretical debate since the very beginning of its existence. When it comes to online documentary projects, there is not much new to be said in that respect. Techniques and technologies used for recording and editing are same as those in film-making and video art production. Though in terms of visualisation of the documentary record meant to be exposed online, changes in the window size are obvious when compared to the one of television and cinema. Frames, in these cases, become smaller, and yet – changeable. Window within the window, and the two within the computer screen can be manipulated according to the preferences of the user. The smaller screen means less immerse experience, bigger detachment from what is seen (Figure 46.).

¹⁵⁶ Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "Documentary Is/Not a Name," in *October* 52, (1990): 77.

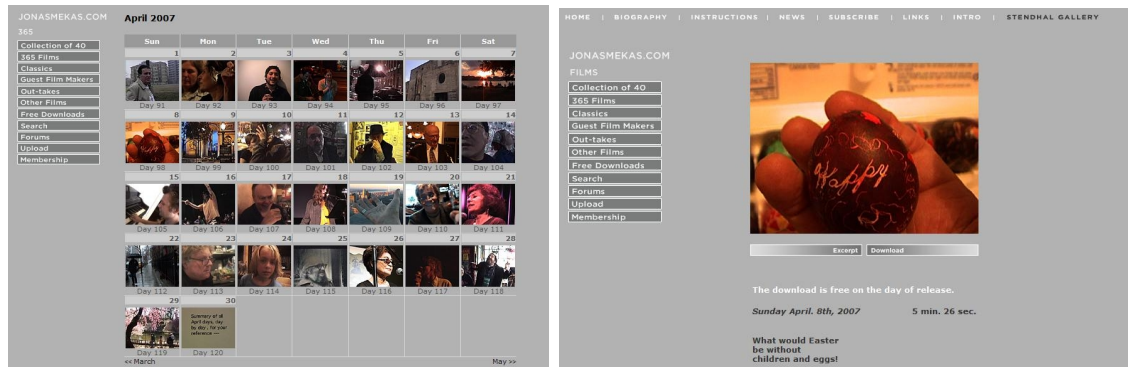


Figure 46. “365 Films.” *April 2007*. Videostill, www.jonasmekas.com.

J.Mekas is not really looking for characters in a manner “just look at them”, while in D.Lynch's project it is the opposite. The reality in the “Interview Project” becomes imaginary, and real people become characters. In fact, this effect is achieved by dipping the viewer into a certain emotional state before he or she starts to even watch the video (it is all because of the on screen play and the persona of D.Lynch per se). It is not a question of manipulation on visuals, it is a question of aura creation. 'The reality effect of audiovisual material remains striking, but it is also fragile'¹⁵⁷. It can be said that D.Lynch is evoking a certain de-realization of a viewer, who perceives a documentary reality with the awareness that it is real, but at the same time is experiencing it as surreal. His characters are, to some extent, de-personalized, they seem created and artificial. However, D.Lynch's projects does not evoke experience of de-personalization of the viewer. In this context. J.Mekas's videos are rather neutral, resemble reality and therefore does not evoke any stronger feelings, except from the empathy and identification with film-maker or protagonist. This also illustrates the different world-views of the two directors – for J.Mekas it is fragmented, consisting of strong memories and episodes, while for D.Lynch it is rather consistent strange and mystified.

Therefore it can be concluded that when talking about mediated reality, it is no longer possible to talk about physical reality. What the viewer is exposed to is just a reflection and the continuous repetition of physical.

¹⁵⁷ John Ellis, “What are we expected to feel? Witness, textuality and the audiovisual,” in *Screen 50* (1), (2009): 69.

The real? Or the repetitive, artificial resurrection of the real, an operation whose overpowering success in substituting the visual and verbal signs of the real for the real itself ultimately helps challenge the real, thereby intensifying the uncertainties engendered by any clear-cut division between the two¹⁵⁸.

The further reference to what is called “audiovisual culture” can be made. The “world of images” signify the modification of self, and reality into an idol. “The world of images” becomes possible only when the image can still reveal its opposition – the realness of the original, within which it would still be possible to live¹⁵⁹.

The effect of the real strikes even the most cynical viewer immediately. Recorded images and sounds features immediacy and a presence that cannot simply be denied. This immediacy still has the capacity to astonish¹⁶⁰. However, it can be said that none of the online documentary projects can actually be seen as transparent rendering of events, societies, personalities¹⁶¹. The presence of camera, process of editing, or in other words – process of mediation is obvious in both, and reveals itself differently in the two projects. Perhaps in this day and age 'paradox lies in the word 'screen' itself, as many writers have realized. A screen is a means of display but also of concealment. Behind the screen lie the mechanisms that bring you the pictures and the sounds, concealed by the very thing that they bring into existence¹⁶². The moment of actual event is captured according to the data shown in camera's viewfinder, then it is edited according to what the creator sees in the screen in the editing room, and finally it is served for the audiences via the screen of computer.

Archival of reality. There is no archival material used in any of the projects if 'archival' is understood as a ready found footage that supports the main idea of the film. On the other hand, the videos uploaded online in J.Mekas's project are archival. Not all of the footage seems to be shot for the project purposes, also shootings were not done

¹⁵⁸ Trinh T. Minh-Ha, “Documentary Is/Not a Name,” in *October* 52, (1990): 79.

¹⁵⁹ Jean -Luc Marion, “Prototipas ir atvaizdas,” in *Atvaizdo dovana ziurejimo meno metmenys*, (Vilnius: Aidai, 2002), 112.

¹⁶⁰ John Ellis, “What are we expected to feel? Witness, textuality and the audiovisual,” in *Screen* 50 (1) (2009): 68.

¹⁶¹ Annette Kuhn, “Documentary: The Camera I Observations on Documentary,” in *Screen* 19 (2) (1978): 71.

¹⁶² John Ellis, “What are we expected to feel? Witness, textuality and the audiovisual,” in *Screen* 50(1) (2009): 68.

on daily basis. It is, actually, a collection from personal archival of J.Mekas. However, D.Lynch's shots could not be categorized as the archive since they were shot specifically for the project and in a very stylized manner. It could be said that for something to be categorized as an archival material, the document itself has to get detached from its original context or loose primary purpose.

As we already discussed, documentaries are usually perceived with quite a mistaken assumption that they are films least detached from reality. Jill Godmilow discusses this in terms of Dogma “the result of classical assumptions of documentary film-making – that system of cinematic representation that is said to produce sober, unauthorized texts. Text through which the world supposedly tells itself, without any ideological intervention from its authors”¹⁶³. It is also not the case in any of the online documentary projects.

The process of documentation became a natural activity of human beings. J.Mekas's actions are no different from what all people, who have any type of recorder, are doing. The only difference is that he is also doing it for artistic purposes, that is to say, is conceptualizing his actions. However, everybody got used to documenting and cataloguing our own lives and everything around, mostly due to the availability of recording equipment. More than that, user -friendly software make it easy to manipulate the created documents of historical past the way we want it. The tricky part of J.Mekas's personal archive is that it is of a public interest, since so many well known names are involved in it. J.Mekas is a public person, so his personal archive becomes of a public value. However, archive remains subjective and presents the perspective of the artist as an observer, creator or participant. D.Lynch is also subjective, however the videos are shot from a perspective of neutral observer as if a journalist. Therefore, if not stylized, they could be perceived as pieces of the objective record.

When displayed online visuals also have to share the virtual room with other images and text. Therefore, unless the user chooses it deliberate, these windows are never left out alone, they never go independent from other icons and signs placed within the same, bigger, embracing window.

Though videos are still historical, they seem to be as much historical as the selective memory of human is. A good example of it is the online documentary project

¹⁶³ Jill Godmilow, “Kill the Documentary as We Know It,” in *Journal of Film & Video* 54 (2) (2002): 3-10.

by J.Mekas. Though it would be wrong to claim that this sampled reflection of reality placed within the virtual environment signifies the discontinuity of the historicism. Rather it reminds of the blackout effect (memory may be jumping from one thing to the other, creating myths and assumptions in order to create a basis for behaviours and attitudes, but there is nothing like “remembering nothingness”).

Summary of the Chapter V

- The space of screening, such as the internet, pushes artists to consider new forms of narrative construction, just like the new environment or era within which the Mechanical Man is created, offers new ways of constructing it. Within the internet, the diminish the linear story telling and the rise of pictorial one can be observed. Within the internet space and projects the single sequence gains independence in terms of a big narrative. That brings a question, whether the documentary project online can be compared to the Mechanical Man, and if so, what stands as a body? In online documentary projects, the way visuals are organized in terms of space becomes more important than their organization in terms of time. They don't have to have direct links and connections with other sequences published under the same title. However, they become more dependent on textual and contextual icons and texts that embraces them. The presence of internet in the two projects analysed does not influence that much the relationship between the creator and the subject matter, it does indeed effect strings attached to the audience and subject matter, as well as those between the author and the audience.
- J.Mekas has a changing role within his videos, while the role of D.Lynch in an “Interview Project” is rather established. The treatment of the subject matter and protagonists in two projects is also different: J.Mekas seems to be less hierarchical than D.Lynch. J.Mekas is not so keen in addressing audiences. His viewer is less positioned and defined: his videos might be meant for characters as well as for anyone else. D.Lynch is choosing classical way of appealing the audiences: he talks about 'them' to 'us'. That is to say that J.Mekas in his project operates as both – the artist and scientist, while D.Lynch is more close to the role

of artist than the scientist. In terms of visual aesthetics the two artists are using their own already well established techniques: J.Mekas's works embraces amateur aesthetics, while D.Lynch remains loyal to his visually pleasing videos. The two works serve like a positive and negative of the same thing: J.Mekas is telling a story of elite in an amateur manner, while D.Lynch is giving a room to speak up for grass-roots in a professional one. The reality recorded and edited in a professional manner is more fictional, while reality mediated in an amateur manner is more convincing, and evokes stronger feelings of identification with an actual event as the one lived by the viewer.

- Videos in D.Lynch's and J.Mekas's projects exist in form of selective memory of a human. Windows to recorded reality are changeable in terms of size and illusion of distance to the viewer. Continuity is no longer created by an artist, instead, it is created by the viewer. There is a difference between the reality lived, reality lived while recording and reality watched (which was recorded). Reality watched is three layered: composed from event, layer of mediation and screening. J.Mekas in the project is presenting his own archival material, while D.Lynch is rather interested in creating an archive with people 'found'. This idea of ready found also resembles the idea of found elements in the construction of the Mechanical Man.

CHAPTER VI

Personal artistic practice

Introduction

This chapter analyses the concept and the process of implementation of the two short documentary projects, film “All About Beauty” (14 min.) and animation “Born in USSR” (6.30 min.). Both projects were made in the year 2009-2010 as part of this thesis project for Sabanci University, Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design MA program. This chapter provides the analysis of personal works in context of theoretical framework developed. Along with the conceptual development it also covers main aesthetic and ethical challenges encountered during the production process. This part of the thesis is the most subjective and, therefore, stands as a form of artist's statement. It can be argued that despite the factor of high subjectivity level, it is the only chapter that illustrates processes of conceptualization and realization of the project in a comprehensive manner (since reflected from within the process). The ideas of the two projects can not be discussed aside from the personal motivation. Both projects are rooted in personal experiences and observations, and therefore are to be further discussed in this thesis.

1.2. “All About Beauty” and “Born in the USSR”

Concepts and ideas articulated. The driving force for the project “All About Beauty” was ambivalence that is surrounding the idea of beauty in the uncomfortable encounters. As a result three subjects were chosen for the film – transgendered actress from Istanbul, Turkey – Deniz, imprisoned women in female colony in Panevezys,

Lithuania, and the beautification of a dead female body in morgue, Vilnius, Lithuania. There is lack of knowledge, acknowledgement and especially articulation of the idea of beauty these three context: funeral ritual, relatively isolated living in prison, and rather hysterical fight of transgendered people for the right to exist in a certain environment. Beauty might be a weapon to fight for love and acknowledgement, and a method to hide the death fact, or the punishment. Attachment to the femininity and beauty became a conceptual axis of this documentary short. The task of the team was to articulate this discomfort and ambivalence using film as a language. It was decided not to put any emphasis on the identity of the characters and let the visual speak for itself. Protagonists were representing certain social stereotypes, at the same time articulating the idea of the film-maker.

The idea to make a documentary project “Born in USSR” started as a thought about Lithuanian generation which was born in Soviet Union, but has almost no political memories about it. People born around 1984 remember infantile details from daily life, such as absence of bananas, dresses made in China which were very fancy thing to wear for a girl, absence of foreign goods, such as the chewing gum, similar clothes that were many times remade by parents (from trousers to shorts) due to the absence in quantity and variety of clothing available in the market. It seemed to be an interesting paradox that the generation born in Soviet Union learned about it's political realities and heroes only after the independence. Therefore, the Soviet Union, for this generation, is not much different from a mythological place, lost in time and space. These ideas offered the medium – illustrations by Viktoras Satunovas, published in the book “Su Leninu” (“With Lenin”) (see Figure 47.) in children propaganda book back in 1987. As a result – the medium defined the genre and the style – short animated



documentary narrative.

Figure 47. “Su Leninu.” Cover of the book, 2009. Illustration by V.Satunovas.

Defining director's vision. The vision of the film about beauty have changed in time. Even if it was almost immediately clear that the film will consist out of three parts, the question of how to shoot it and edit was an issue for quite a while. At first idea was to use old archival footage with Deniz from two years ago (see figure 48.). However, at the end it turned out that the archival footage could not meet standards of the film. The only suitable scene was the one in which Deniz was putting on a make up for the show, and is turning from a male into a female.



Figure 48. “All About Beauty.” *Deniz is putting on a make-up*, 2010. Videostill from the film.

But it did not contain the specific mood and did not reflect the discomfort and uneasiness to the extent that was anticipated. The film also needed literal articulation of the idea of beauty. Therefore it was decided to re-shoot the part of Deniz. Interviewee seemed a convenient form as she always had dreamt of becoming a celebrity. Due to the fact that she not yet literally became one offered a structure where she would be playing double role-- asking and answering questions. Questions were written down for her to read and to answer. Her limited knowledge of English language helped to articulate the uneasiness and struggle in terms of her effort to fight her masculine nature and to create

new – female identity.

Part in prison initially had to be shot in manner of reality show. Prison, just as isolated reality show environment, observed by surveillance cameras seemed to have many similarities (idea of panopticon). Detainees understood beauty as femininity, sexuality and performance. They would act out for camera by covering well known songs, dancing or showing of with their clothes. Each detainee had a personal understanding of what beauty is, and tried to articulate it not only verbally, but also physically. The discomfort, struggle and uneasiness was already there – embedded in their performance.

The third part – preparation of the body for the funeral ritual was initially meant to reflect the process of embalming. However, shots available were those of a man, and due to the overall concept of femininity in the film, seemed to destruct the structure. It was decided to re-shoot it. Since the beautification process was much more articulated not during the process of embalming, but rather – during the time when the body is being dressed up, it was decided to reflect this process.

Animated documentary “Born in USSR” also had many visions. The initial idea was to animate images according to the interviews and memories of the people born in 1984. Interviews were made, however, the imagery did not seem comprehensive to create a strong – interview based – narrative. The other version was to combine animation and archival footage from the mid 90's. This idea also did not work out due to difficulties to access the material and also – uncertainty about it's effect on the narrative. The fairy-tale form seemed to be most appropriate and satisfying.

In the process of creation of these two films it was necessary to balance the research based scientific and artistic approach. The objectivity and historical truth though, was not one of the major concerns. The form and the visual language was of a bigger concern thinking of the most appropriate way to articulate the subject matter. Films have no room for visual presence of the director, however it was necessary to strictly be present in sets, venues, during the processes of shooting and editing in order to be sure that the idea and the emotion is not getting lost in between of other (secondary) subject matters.

Structure. Film “All About Beauty” is based on three parts that differ in visual

and narrative style. The first part is the interview, that embraces long shots of protagonist answering the question and close-ups, where Deniz is asking these questions. The second part – female prison shows two protagonists – a woman who is obsessed with knitting and clothes, and the woman who is obsessed with dancing. The first character takes out all the content of her wardrobe and tries on clothes in front of camera, explaining how she combines outfit together and what is the suitable environment and time to wear different suits. The second lady dances for the camera and tells the story of how she gained and lost weight after the first imprisonment. The third part of the film is based on the observation of the beautification of the young female body. The process resembles any beauty procedure, however weird set up signifies that it is not a standard one. It is mainly shot in close-ups, in order to maintain the suspense till the very last moment (see Figure 49.).



Figure 49. “All About Beauty.” *Undertaker is removing the nail polish from the hand of a dead female*, 2010. Videostill from the film.

The animation is based on 14 major scenes that illustrate the content of a fairy-tale narrated by the voice-over. Scenes have different characters – adults, such as soldiers and marching musicians, children and non-human protagonists, such as birds. Children symbolize infantile. This idea is present in each scene. At the beginning protagonists of the animation are adults, however, their actions get destructed by the interruption of childhood symbols, such as balloons. Since the perspective of children is represented in the story, latter on in the narrative kids take over the scene. There are no major actions in the film, just a little movement. Characters seem to be like paper dolls

that children in Soviet Lithuania used to play with, at the same time illustrating rough and mechanical, controlled existence in Soviet Union.

Visual and narrative styles. Visual story of film “All About Beauty” is a form of articulation of the main idea – uncomfortable relationship with beauty. In the first part close ups are investigating traces of male and the female in the face of Deniz. Camera slips thought her face, shortly focusing on different features – eyes, ears, lips. The part where Deniz is answering questions is more established – she is sitting on the couch, in front of a big mirror, decorated with purple feathers, and masks hanged next to it. These symbols, that were already there, in her house, compliment the idea of the film. Juxtaposition of long shots and close-ups is quite aggressive and disturbing, synchronizing the emotion of aural and the visual. The words spoken are overlapping, the second layer of sound which is delayed is destructing the ear of the viewer and is not letting to totally focus on Deniz's questions and answers (see Figure 50.).



Figure 50. “All About Beauty.” *Deniz*, 2010. Videostill from the film.

In the prison part there are few places where the viewer is exposed to a black screen, the absence of visual. That was a deliberate solution attempting to make the viewer focus on the verbal content of the story. The first protagonist of the prison part is talking short, often not finishing sentences. This aspect of her inconsistent language structure also offered to edit visuals accordingly. Therefore, the part where she is trying all her clothes on is edited in a jump cut manner, making the action and the narration

incomplete. The dance performance of the second character is also edited in the same manner, since it helped to enhance the aggression and determinism that she possessed in order to loose weight.

The part in the morgue is blur and rather abstract. Close-ups does not reveal the identity of the protagonist or space. Camera follows the hands of the undertaker that are washing the hair, dressing up the girl, and are putting on her last make-up. The music part in this piece is not part of the digesis, it is a composition created for the scene. Partly, because the original sound of the scene was a hard-core metal music. However, the idea of having synthetic music seemed to meet the idea of synthetic action – beautification of dead. In a way, this composition helps to shut up all the hints about life and living, and producing artificial and fictional atmosphere of the scene. Before entering the scene of morgue, viewer is exposed to an uncomfortable sound that is familiar for those that had ever witnessed the end of a television broadcast. Beeping symbolises the end, the cut, the absence. Therefore, it builds an sound bridge to the scene where the living is no longer present.

All visuals in the film “Born in USSR” were originally meant for propaganda purposes and resemble the modernist poster style. They are two dimensional, flat, nicely arranged in balanced compositions. The animation displaces visuals from their original set up, just like it displaces them from the original story. There is always only a minor action within the scene. This action is a symbolic representation of the realities of Soviet Union narrated in a voice-over. Visuals in the animation are not representations of real people. They are representing a sample (pioneers, soldiers) and stand out as fictional characters in the fairy-tale. The sound of the film is designed combining female voice-over and musical composition that resembles those used in Soviet cartoons.

Modes and forms. “All About Beauty” is a mixed mode documentary. Since three parts were shot in different manner, it would be hard to categorize it. The first and second part of the film are per-formative, however, the last one is observational with almost no influence on established and repeatative process. Therefore, it could be concluded that film is consist to what is referred to as a reflexive form. Different manners of shooting and editing were chosen due to the fact that all three subjects covered in the film deal with the issue of beauty differently. Set ups, characters were

also very different. Perhaps the only uniting characteristic was weirdness that derives from the exaggerated emphasis on beauty and beautification processes. Therefore, it would be rather murderous to narrate film in the same manner or to apply one defined mode. The collision in terms of shooting, editing and rhythm of the set ups is creating another layer of rather destructing aesthetics which is unsolved within itself.

It is even harder to categorize the short animation – documentary “Born in USSR”. First of all, it does not contain any shot footage, any video material that is usually the basis for any film. There are no real characters and no real performers. There is no real story either – it is a fairy-tale. The only real thing within the film is a voice-over of the author. This documentary project was made as a challenge to the dominant understanding of what documentary is, in order to high-light problems of its definition, where the understanding of what is real and what is fictional often moulds together, and where real lived is not necessarily more valuable than the imaginary. The reason to call this project as 'documentary project' is based upon the fact that documentary refers to documentation and archivization processes. The book as such is a document that resist time and that is becoming a symbolic representation of certain era and times latter on in history. Today the book plays no role of propaganda, it is just an illustrative example of the production of the machine of certain ideology. The book gains historical value when displaced from its original context and detached from initial function. It is serving as a memory form, that might stay in someone's personal book shelf, be thrown away or, in the best case scenario, – exhibited as a 'death mask” of the regime that had failed. Therefore, the definition of this mode remains open – ended and problematic. Perhaps the only way to categorize it is to define it as a documentary-fantasy (docu-fantasy), where the document is employed to full-fill the dreams of imaginary narrative.

Physical and chemical artistic action. There are no special effects used in film “All About Beauty”, there are also no major manipulations in terms of visual content, except from the manner of editing. Jump cuts, as mentioned before helps to achieve the effect of incomplete Geshtalt, and therefore offer no resolution. Visuals are cut in the middle of action according to the music or manner of speaking (see Figure 51.).



Figure 51. “All About Beauty.” *Dancing prisoner*, 2010. Videostill from the film.

Perhaps the major manipulations are those of sound, especially in the last part of the documentary where original sound is replaced with musical composition, and the first part where a certain form of delay effect is achieved when layering the sound. These manipulations were chosen in order to emphasize emotion prior to the story of the film. The problem that derives from such manner of editing is that the overall film may seem to be too short to comprehend and to understand, there is not enough time to visually analyse the images, it resembles the trailer of the film rather than a complete narrative. However, that is also a deliberate choice, made by the director, in order to bring up the issue of beauty in uncomfortable situations, where rather than thinking and focusing on beauty one might be rather concerned with how to escape. The idea of escapism is the one that increases the speed of the narrative and that pushes it further by skipping visual and aural parts in order to get over with it faster. In a way, the time after the screening is the time when the viewer should start reflecting and engaging in the inner dialogue about the subject matter.

Story of “Born in USSR” takes place in an environment that is created artificially. There is only a reference to real, but the reality represented is the one of the drawings. This project, in a way, is based on manipulations: starting with the idea of copying the book, cutting out chosen images in computer environment, and finishing with the process of making those still and stiff, two-dimensional pictures move within the scene created. Some scenes created within the frame are resembling the original

composition of the author (V.Satunovas), however, in most of them the environment, such as the background, is manipulated. There are also effects, such as light, rain created, that originally were not present in the book. It is a generated effect of the computer program. The purpose of it is to destroy the originality and context, the idea of propaganda and political message within the scene, and engage characters and environment in a new narrative. It is a process of resurrection of imagery figures for a new life, where they are used as a criticism for the environment and ideology that they were created for.

Traces and testimonies. The reality represented in the film “All About Beauty” first of all is the reality of beauty. The set up, such as life of transsexuals, prisoners, or the ritual of funeral is of a secondary importance and serve as a context. It could be said that the film deals with the extract, a certain aspect of actuality. The actuality in the film is modified by the articulation of the concept, in other words, with deliberately chosen issue within the bigger context, by diminishing it to a lower scale. The reality represented is condense and filtered, selected and juxtaposed. In the first two parts reality is set for camera, none of them are actually resembling a daily routine of the characters. The third part reveals routine, but the point of view chosen also modifies it by emphasizing the detail that might otherwise go unnoticed or overwhelmed within the bigger context. On the other hand, the reality represented is not imaginary, nor fictional, it is extracted. It is a testimony of the author of the film rather than witnessing. The set up was created in order to full-fill the artistic vision and proof the hypothesis. When characters get engaged in the subject matter, camera traces the proofs, process and evidences.

“Born in USSR” does not resemble actuality. The reality of the short animation is the one of a fairy-tale. It is imaginary as it is still rooted in the idea of a book and visual as a document, meant for certain purposes and representing a certain era. It is modified into a different narrative that is openly fictional. The narration, the story told behind the frame is made up based on memories of a Lithuanian generation born around 1984. Therefore, in a way, it is also rooted in real experiences and comments. However, the level of actuality is low and distanced from what can be referred too as real. The nature of the narrative is testimonial, and the testimony is not completely real either.

Fictional elements are mixed up with real makes it harder to estimate the level of reliability. It resembles the associative perception of the environment of kids, when they tend to mix up in the stories what had really happened and what they made up in order to colour up the storytelling.

Senses evoked. “All About Beauty” is dealing with distortions and destructiveness. This mood is also reflected in visual language (jump-cuts, close-ups, long shots) and sound (delay effects, external sound usage, musical compositions). The subjects chosen for the coverage of the beauty issue are extreme and might even be shocking. Rapid editing is doubling that shock effect, and therefore these two destructive energies (rough cuts and disturbing images), at the end, smoothers the effect and neutralizes each another. The rhythm of the film is fast. As mentioned before, it resembles the feeling of a witness when exposed to something unpleasant. The perception of such exposure is usually selective and partly occupied with the need for the uncomfortable encounter to end faster. However, after the exposure is over, just like after the screening of the film, the witness starts to reflect and even consider how she or he could have reacted, or done at the moment of the encounter. In a way, film creates the same effect, where after it is finished, it does not provide the relief that it is finished or resolved. That is to say that the viewer is held as a captive for 14 minutes of screening, with no right to comment or interfere. It might also evoke feelings of anger, disgust and dissatisfaction that might be directed towards the characters or the film-maker. On the other hand, it is doubtful that the viewer will empathize with the characters much. They are not idealized or glorified in the film. They are struggling for beauty, which normally, in the context they are in, should not be one of their major concerns.

“Born in USSR” is rather slow narrative. It is not disturbing and does not offer much to learn from. It is rather cheerful and offers a relatively happy end – departure of the kids from USSR. However, it is open ended since it offers nothing defined about whether the children reached the shores of a better world or not. The rhythm of the animation is relatively consistent, floating, and resembles wave-ling. The fairy – tale is narrated in a peaceful manner and reminds of the stories that children are told by their mothers before going to sleep. The figures in the animation are also moving relatively slowly, as if they are on the flow of the sea or the river. The viewer is not disturbed,

rather exposed to a meditative experience. There are no major dramatization, however it contains all three necessary elements of a story telling – introduction, body and resolution to the story.

De-realization and de-personalization. There is a major difference between the reality that the film is referring too, and the reality revealed. The reality is used as a source, but it goes through conceptual and technical filters in order to become crystal and consistent. Indeed, the reality of the film “All About Beauty” is constructed and pre-set, therefore, encouraging the effect of de-realization. Characters, except from Deniz, are not identified, there is no information provided about their stories, identities and life. The spectator is provided only with samples and bits of their personal history, and only that part which compliments the idea of the film. Characters are trapped in between their status or role in the society – Deniz is a man and a woman, an actress and a show girl, a person in real life and a character; prisoners are also women, performers in the film and for the film, their identities and crime stories remain undisclosed; the woman shot in the morgue is also not showed in a long shot, the viewer has no background on who she is, how she had died, what was her name or status in the society (see Figure 52.).



Figure 52. “All About Beauty.” *Prisoner is trying her clothes on*, 2010.

Videostill from the film.

In a way, all characters are used as illustrative, but not entirely specific examples. The world view created in the film is the one of struggle and effort for the reason that might seem absurd. Film en-frames the pure idea of beauty in distorted frames.

“Born in USSR” is creating a dystopia reality with the reference to historical past that has dissolved in memories. It de-politicizes its definition, displaces it from the geographical place, de-constructs its realness by giving no references to any real footage, character or the interview. In addition, it is also a de-realization of a real narrative that images are taken from. There are no references to original text of the book, political propaganda or narratives (see Figure 53.).

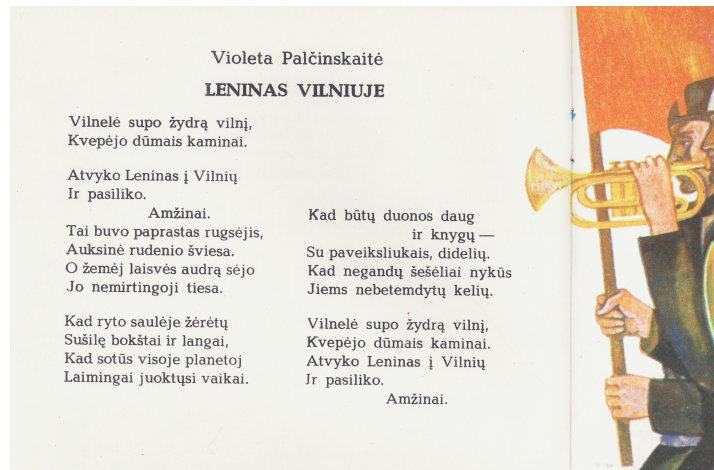


Figure 53. “Su Leninu.” *Text from the propaganda book, 2010.* Illustration by V.Satunovas.

The film attempts to create fictional environment for not-real characters that back in history, at least in the imaginary world of children who have read the book, might have even had qualities of real people. The world view reflected in the film is that one of a film-maker. It is a comment on the dissolving memories on Soviet Union realities. The world view of a creator is adjusted to the world view of children.

Archival of reality. There is no archival material used in the film “All About Beauty”, except the part before the title. Though it could also be argued, to what extent the material is archival, since the only reason to label it that way is the fact that it has been shot for another project. All other footage was shot and re-shot specifically for the film. There are no documents used in the film since film does not attempt to refer to anything that would legitimize the objectivity of its content. Rather it is an archivization process of the characters, their temporary or new state (newly achieved femininity, imprisonment, last days before funeral). But rather than documenting the state they are in, film documents their current relationship to beauty, which may also change and evolve in time. The archivization process is based on author's subjective selection and understanding of what is there to be documented. It is a record of protagonist's history that has nothing to do with the bigger definition of it.

“Born in USSR” is based on archival material, however the idea of archival

needs to be further discussed. The book is a document, so are the illustrations used in it. It is a statement in itself about the era, aesthetic fashion, political realities and pathos of propaganda, in worshipping the leader – Lenin. Film does not embrace any written documents of the film, it only uses the visuals. However the visuals are not directly propagandistic – they might have been illustrations of any other book. The only difference is the usage of colours, such as red and blue, that were often applied in the design of Soviet posters. The film is re-mediation process of the visuals, extracting them from the medium of paper and applying for the digitalized story. It is a way of recording the past and adopting it to today's standards and dominate medium. In post-modern, or even post-post modern age there are millions of trends and fashions and therefore every aesthetic choice that has been hit in the past might find a space to exist and legitimize itself. However, due to the birth of a certain aesthetics in a certain time period, it will always contain a reference to the past and the faculty of memory. The film, as a result, is documenting that specific aesthetics of a Cold War time, at the same time documenting the traces of that era (see Figure 54.).



Figure 54. “Su Leninu.” *Marching soldiers*, 2010, Illustration by V.Satunovas.

The archival, the book, is based on social and political history of the Soviet

Union, and Soviet Lithuania. The archival created in the film is based on memory and distant interpretation of the past. Articulation of such personal perspective becomes possible only after the death of the regime and the actualities of the past. That is to say, the film stands as a new form of personal archive, of a very personal perception, that, to some extent, coincides or refers to the perception of the political and social past of the generation born before the independence of Lithuania.

Summary of the Chapter VI

- Applying same theoretical categories to films and to personal artistic practice allows to compare how depending on the point of view the judgement of documentary film is changing. This chapter is subjective since it analyses personal artistic practice. In this part the author of this thesis is both – observer and creator, while in the two chapters of analysis, the position of the viewer allowed to make more critical and objective remarks.
- Personal artistic practice, which consists out of two short film projects -- “All About Beauty” and “Born in USSR”, -- illustrates the process of creation where the initial starting point is the idea. The materialization of the concept starts with the research which was conducted differently in two cases analysed (idea to make a film “All About Beauty” was the result of few earlier projects and observations made during the process of their production), while “Born in USSR” was rather of a personal concern, and derived from discussions with peers. The research was conducted differently – before starting the film “All About Beauty” there has already been a huge amount of footage collected, however, extra filming sessions had to be held in order to achieve the effect in the visual stories that would go well with the idea articulated in the film. For the “Born in USSR”, a number of correspondence and interviews with Lithuanians born before the Independence has been conducted in order to get a reliable feedback on how do they feel about the Soviet Union. That is to say that the production process of the documentary film hardly ever starts with the medium. That is why the starting point in documentary film production resembles the initial stage of a production of the Mechanical Man.

- During the process of production director's vision might and usually is changing depending on situations, new opportunities and unplanned obstacles. It is different from the production of fiction films, where the most insecure period is that one of the research and planning. In documentary film making, being on the set always brings in new challenges. It is important for the director to have a very clear and defined vision of the film, as well as the plan of how to make it, at the same time leaving the room for surprises and unexpected but valuable happenings. The film “All About Beauty” was very defined from the very beginning, at least in terms of structure and the subject matter. However, the characters offered the design of the edit and the constructions of the scenes. Film “Born in USSR” did not have such a clear vision at the initial stage, it changed and was modified during the process. However, given the medium – animation – there was no room for surprises on the ground, the process was relatively easy to handle and to control. The major problem that occurred, was the challenge to find the form that would embrace the information gathered in the interviews (that on chewing gum, limited amount of goods in shops, and ice-creams sold for a certain price) that could not be illustrated with the imagery of the book. As a result, it was decided to leave aside interviews for a time being, and to move from specifics to more general ideas and the form of memory as such. These are similar challenges that Dr. Frankenstein and doctor from “Metropolis” encountered while creating their creatures.
- Film has to have a structure of a narrative with a certain level of dramatization in order to be able to narrate the story or articulate the idea. Film “All About Beauty” is based on three parts that are increasing in the level of intensity. The ending credits, where the film shortly goes back to the prison set and shows the performance of the women singing, is an attempt to recreate the state of equilibrium and reduce the discomfort that the viewer was exposed to previously. The degree of dramatization is much smaller in film “Born in USSR”. It is a simple fairy-tale narrative, where the state of equilibrium is disturbed by the children thoughts that outside of the Soviet Union there is a bigger world. The process of combining pieces in documentary film narrative is the process of choosing and decision making in order to create a narrative,

which, as the Mechanical Man, would be capable of playing a role within the society or the circle of spectators.

- In the project “All About Beauty” visual as such was of a lesser importance than the emotion and the message. On the contrary, in the project “Born in USSR” visual was the main message that signify the aesthetics and realities of the historical past. Just like with the Mechanical Man, only on the motivation of director can define the importance of the visual aesthetics and the relationship between the aesthetics and the subject matter. The replica of Maria in “Metropolis” was a woman, and, therefore, it had to have all characteristics associated with femininity, such as beauty and sexuality. In fact, her role in society was defined by those characteristics. The creature of doctor Frankenshtein was male and therefore the outlook was of a lesser important than the role, or the absence of role that resulted in madness and destructiveness.
- The two projects are not easy to categorize in terms of documentary film modes. “All About Beauty” is closest to what is referred to as a reflexive documentary, where the idea is embracing all bits and pieces of methods and aesthetics used in different modes. Documentary project “Born in USSR” falls out of defined documentary categories and therefore could possibly be defined as a docu-fantasy. That illustrates the problem of merging of video art, fiction and documentary film genre. It becomes hard to draw the clear line between them and therefore, to analyse it by applying conventional academic definitions. At the end, all films differ from each other, just like all Mechanical Men do.
- Manipulations used in film “All About Beauty” are mainly those of speed and motion, action, voice and visual cut-off. Nothing is completed, resolved or disclosed till the end. While the film “Born in USSR” is based on manipulations – those of visual motion, fact and story narrative, sound. The idea of manipulation goes hand in hand with the idea of propaganda book where images of the film were originally displaced from. Manipulation in a creative process is a form of design that the film-maker gets engaged with in order to complete the vision. Depending on the specifics of the design chosen, and the idea to be implemented, director, just like the doctor creating the Mechanical Man, decides on the levels and limits of manipulations applied.

- Tracing the aspects of beauty in situations that are disturbing was the aim of the documentary “All About Beauty”. On the other hand, it is a testimony to claim that beauty is so important in three situations covered – life of transgendered person, prison and ritual of funeral. Despite the importance of beauty there are also other issues that are equally important. However, deliberate decision to focus on one issue defined the flow of the story and act of camera. Project “Born in USSR” is tracing the aesthetics and the memorial aspect of the past, however the fictional story narrated by a voice-over is also of a testimonial nature. Traces of reality in a creative process serve as a frame and the example that is to be filled with creativity and precision. This also applies to the process of creation of a Mechanical Man, where usage of real and found imply creation rather than re-creation.
- The two projects discussed differ in terms of motion and emotion, it evokes different feelings and are based on different rhythm. Just like the very characteristics of the Mechanical Man, the two films can hardly be compared in terms of motion and the rhythm. If “All About Beauty” deals with fast speed and motion, incomplete action and discomfort, “Born in USSR” stands for rather slow-paste illusionary and even relatively cheerful vision.
- The processes of de-realisation of reality and de-personalisation on the characters within films were deliberately chosen due to sensitive subject matters. The permission to shoot in the prison and morgue was issued due to the agreement not to disclose identities of the characters. Therefore they are not real people, with defined history and identity, but rather, samples and illustrations of the subject matter discussed in the film. The case is different only with Deniz who is playing in the first part of the film “All About Beauty”. Since it is so important for her to establish her newly achieved identity, which is part of the struggle for the beauty, it was necessary to include it in the film narrative. In “Born in USSR” there are no human characters, but cartoon characters are also detached from their original identities created for the book, and placed in a different reality that they did not belong too. That leads to a conclusion that just like any Mechanical Man, constructed from human and mechanical parts is automatically detached from human society and from his or her original essence

(bodily or technical), film by itself detaches his actors and environment from the original source.

- There was no archival material used in the film project “All About Beauty”. It was rather the archivization process of the current state of the characters (Deniz's as a woman, prisoners and prisoners, and dead female body as a corpse). These all states were either temporary or result of a specific process. Project “Born in USSR” is based on an archival material, however the document used there is one book -- “Su Leninu”. It is a process of re-mediation of an old medium, a conversion of old document into a new one, adjusted to time and space. It is also a form of preservation of visual aesthetics of a certain era. It is a record of left-overs of blurry memories of a generation born in Soviet Lithuania, and raised in independent republic. In that respect, Mechanical Man can also be seen as a result of re-mediation process, where old objects are combined and assembled together in a new logics in order to serve different purposes.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical and the empirical studies of this thesis based on the analysis of literature and comparative analysis of online documentary projects, films screened in the 6th International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius, the 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival and personal artistic practice proves the hypothesis that contemporary documentary film making tendencies echo the dream of a modern man to create a replica of life, where the organic input of reality is not bigger than the biological input to a human body, and the author is a hybrid of a scientist and an artist, trying to compete with nature.

Philosophical theories and influential artistic ideas on media and society

adopted to the phenomenon of a documentary film have demonstrated theoretical possibility to connect the idea of the production of documentary film and the creation of the Mechanical Man. M. McLuhan's ideas on media as an extension of a human body, Italian Futurists' and Expanded artists' thoughts on cinema, as well as theories of New Media showed that in today's world the reality lived and the reality of arts have merged together. As a result, physical reality in media became the subject of history, rather than collective memory, with its critical discourse and qualities or authenticity. In a documentary film, any subject of reality is turned into the object. It is stylized and adjusted to fit in the reality of media. Such processes evoke cinematic experience which can be defined as de-realization and de-personalization. Modern men's attachment to the mediated reality is signified by the obsession of one's self-arhyvisation process.

New Media can be seen as a major contributor to the processes of fragmentation and sampling of reality, but it may also serve as a tool to reunite these pieces on a different level. This process resembles a chemical reaction, where structural elements need to separate in order to reunite again in totally different homogeneous structures.

Cinema is rooted in kinaesthetic nature, which is based on the sensory perception. Cinema tools, i.e. media, are the extensions of human kinaesthetic organs, such as eyes and ears. Media expands human experience of motion, seeing, and hearing. Once accustomed to such new perceptions due to the constant encounters with media and its products, humanly sensors are unconsciously seeking for similar experiences in real life.

Contemporary documentary is an intentional message of the author. Rather than emphasizing the social message, it often stresses the relevance of the interpretation of the personal, political or social history. In a creative process of production, director tends to ignore reality, by creating a new subjective narrative based on the documentary material and observations. Because of this involvement, his or her attitude and behaviour resembles lying. However, he or she is consistent in this process, and often has no conscious control over the art produced. Such films are the artistic productions that embrace not only representational, but also —fictional or imaginary elements. Testimonies of the reality seem to be playing more important role in today's documentary film making than the traces. Testimonies are more subjective and not

bounded to the actual lived experiences, while traces serve as the death masks of reality.

The process of the development of the Mechanical Man, just like the development of a creative documentary film, demonstrated a number of similarities. The issues of the encounter of aesthetics and ethics in the documentary filmmaking refer to the action of symbolic suicide or murder. Death, the violation of ethics, is also an inevitable component in the process of the creation of a new form of life and aesthetics – the Mechanical Man. In creative documentary making this concept suggests the form, the choice of visual and audio style of the film. These actions always lead to the distortion of actuality. Artistic qualities of the work often increases proportionally to that distortion level, where subjectivity takes over objectivity. The same applies to the process of construction of the Mechanical Man, where human organs and parts are combined according to the logic and calculations of the scientist, whose ultimate goal is not to copy reality, but create a new form of it.

The Mechanical Man is a product of samples of different media, and its production involves acts of appropriation and montage. These issues remain relevant in Post-modern and post-Post-modern era, especially when talking about arts (and documentary film as one of its forms). Documentary films, just like the Mechanical Men, are the products of the actuality and the technological intervention.

The thesis demonstrated, how the production of the documentary, just like the production of the Mechanical Man, involves the tension between the two roles of the creator – the role of a scientist and of an artist. While it is a general perception that science and scientists strive for objectivity and calculated results, artistic essence seems to be rooted in the emotional and the illogical. The tension between the two roles results in a strong creative power.

The analysis of the literature suggested a framework for a qualitative analysis of this thesis, based on similarities between the construction of a Mechanical Man and the process of production of a creative documentary film, when looking at the role of the director, the processes of conceptualization, the building of the body and the content of the film. Materialization of the idea of the author requires a concept, a clear vision of what he or she is going to achieve at the end,

and a calculated choice of visual and narrative style that would work in a harmony and would result in a consistent structure. This consistency is being achieved during the emotional and logical process of tracing the reality and providing testimonies about it. The construction of the body of the film requires a physical action, such as shooting and editing, as well as a chemical reaction, based on director's senses of motion, rhythm and mood. The construction of the mind of a the Mechanical Man resembles sensual faculties evoked during the time of viewer's exposure to the film. The question of how the reality is represented, and how characters function within the film, is to be discussed under the ideas of de-realization of reality and de-personalization. These effects resemble the collision between the reality used and the reality created. The subject of mind – memory and history -- is to be discussed in the form of usage of the recorded reality, which prevails in the form of archival.

Analysed relevant films, the selection from the screenings of the VI International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius 2009, and the 12th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 2010) have shown a significant similarity in the process of the creation of a documentary film and the Mechanical Man. These films (“Rabbits a la Berlin”, “Cooking History”, “Fleeting Memory”, “On the Edge of Dreaming”, “Sounds of the Insects – Record of a Mummy”, and “Yodok Stories”) serve as a good example of conceptual documentaries that start from the idea and vision of the filmmaker, as a scientist (research base) and artist (creative process). This idea is articulated in a consistent narrative structure, visual style and choices of the sound. In the respect of being driven by the passion to create the alternative forms of reality that respect directors resemble mad scientists creating the Mechanical Men. The construction of the body of the film, just like the construction of the body of the Mechanical Man, is based on an accurate composition of the samples of reality and the samples of the generated pieces of representation, such as set up scenes, visual metaphors, animation and special effects. The process of the montage or editing, based on juxtapositions, manipulations of medium (film footage) in terms of duration, speed, and aesthetics, helps to create a harmonious anatomy of the film body.

In film, unlike in the process of the creation of the Mechanical Man, the character of the narrative is shaped and tested during all the steps of the production. In

the case of the Mechanical Man, the creator cannot be sure about the character of the creature before the moment of its awakening. On the other hand, after the film is created, just like after the awakening of the Mechanical Man, the director loses control over it, as the creature or the documentary starts its independent life and interaction with the public. That may cause unexpected results and reactions that were not anticipated by the author. The film, just like the Mechanical Man, embraces reality of its own that might not be of common understanding as it becomes a subject of de-realization and de-personalization of the characters. Archival material used in films analysed (except from “Sounds of the Insects – Record of a Mummy”) stands as the metaphor of history rather than the subject of collective memory. In films, archival material is embraced by a different context, usually generated by the author (“Rabbit a la Berlin”, “Cooking History”, and to some extent -- “Yodok Stories”). Just like the Mechanical Man, documentary film has no memory of its own – all it is left with is history.

The framework of the analysis applied to the study of two online documentary projects -- David Lynch's “Interview Project” and Jonas Mekas's “365 films” -- have demonstrated different forms of application of the concepts, and revealed a few problems in with comparison of documentary and the Mechanical Man. Online documentaries are never connected in one clear linear narrative structure. Since the Mechanical Man is a result of the montage processes, while this method does not necessarily need to be applied when documentaries are uploaded online, the body of the film no longer resembles the body of a human being. Narratives stored online are demonstrating an alternative pictorial form of story-telling, where the organization of the visuals in space becomes more important than their organization in time. There is not much interaction between the separate visuals, as the focus of interaction shifts to the one between the viewer and the visuals. That is to say that online documentary films, contrary to the documentaries made for theatres and television, do not gain full independence, and require a constant intervention from the viewer. In addition, the independent single sequence of a big narrative becomes more dependent on the textual and contextual icons that embrace them. Videos in D. Lynch's and J. Mekas's projects exist in the form of a selective memory of a human. Windows to

the recorded reality are changeable in terms of the size and the illusion of the distance to the viewer.

The role of the director of the online documentary project is also questionable in terms of its comparison to the role of a creator of the Mechanical Man. The director, as the case of D. Lynch has demonstrated, might be seen as distant from the actual production of the film, and as too exposed, as opposed to a crazy scientists working undercover while constructing the Mechanical Man. Nevertheless the idea of a team implementing the vision of the director might still be legitimized by referring to the fact that Dr. Frankenstein was the one in charge of the creative power, but also had an assistant helping him to deal with the practicalities of the creative process.

The reflection on the personal artistic practice – short documentary film “All About Beauty”, and short animation documentary “Born in the USSR” -- based on the framework of analysis, connects the theoretical and practical sides of this thesis, and once again illustrates the similarities between the production of the Mechanical Man and the creative documentary. In the case of both projects —the director was the main creative force shaping the idea, body and the content of the films. Practice revealed that the process of documentary film making has little to do with the reality that films are referring to; it is constructed, set and scripted mainly according to the vision of the director. The major problem encountered in the analysis of the works was that of definition of the project “Born in the USSR”. Since it does not contain any footage, real characters or stories, and embraces only animated illustrations from the Soviet propaganda book, it might be questionable whether it is correct to consider it as a documentary project. However, since documentary films are dealing with the documents and concepts, and the film embraces both – book as a document, and the concept of a fairy tale and childhood memories – it becomes possible to legitimize the project as a documentary. It also resembles the process of the production of the Mechanical Man, since images used are displaced from the original context, re-mediated, and reconstructed into a new narrative. It is a form of resurrection, however, not of the specific document, but rather – of a specific aesthetics. Since the film “Born in the USSR” does not fall under any defined category of a documentary mode, this thesis offers to define it as a docu – fantasy, where elements of fiction and documents

merge together in one narrative. Documentary films, just like every Mechanical Man, have different characteristics and features and they go through the different production processes.

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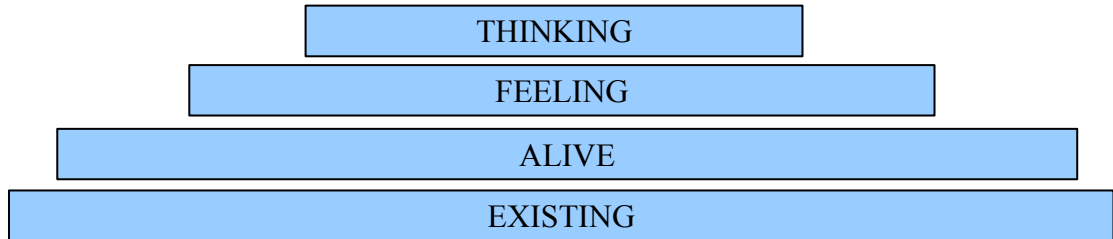
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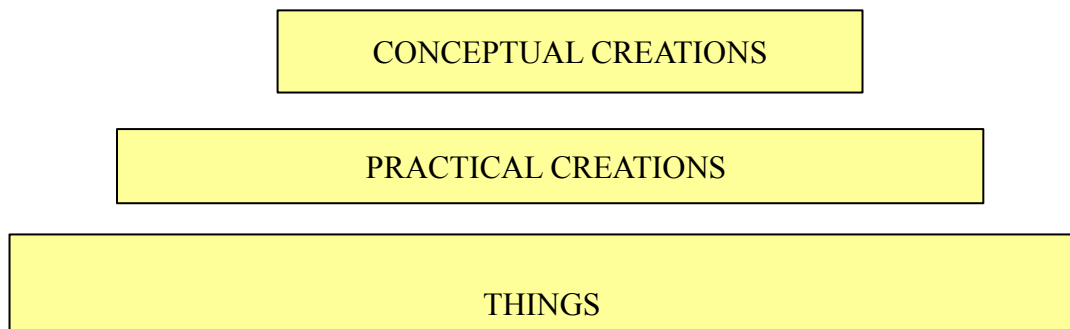
6th International Documentary Film festival Vilnius, Program, 2010.

APPENDIX

Appendix A



Appendix B



Appendix C

DISTRIBUTION

Short documentary film “All About Beauty” and docu-fantasy “Born in USSR” were made for cinema screenings. Films are to be distributed to short film festivals around Europe. Among them – International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated films, 7th International Documentary Film Festival Vilnius, 7th Zagreb Film Festival, International KurzFilm-Festival Hamburg, International Short Film Festival Berlin, 25th Brest European Short Film Festival. Distribution kit consists of project proposal and a copy of DVD.

Aside from festivals, copies of projects are to be sent to institutions specializing in distribution of short films, such as “Interfilm”, and “Arsenal” (Institute for Film and Video Art). Films may also be exhibited as video works in galleries and museums, however, that is not a primary goal of distribution plan. When exhibited in a gallery space, they to be screened in a dark space, medium – to big screen. Any of these films are not planned as part of installation. Film “Born in USSR” in 2011 is to be uploaded online, (sites like www.videoart.net). Such distribution of documentary film “All About Beauty” is impossible due to relatively strong content of some images (morgue), and fear to directly or indirectly effect life of the film characters. Film “All About Beauty” is also not going to be distributed in Lithuania due to ethical considerations and initial agreement with some of the film characters.

Appendix D

ALL ABOUT BEAUTY

Genre: documentary

Duration: 15 min.

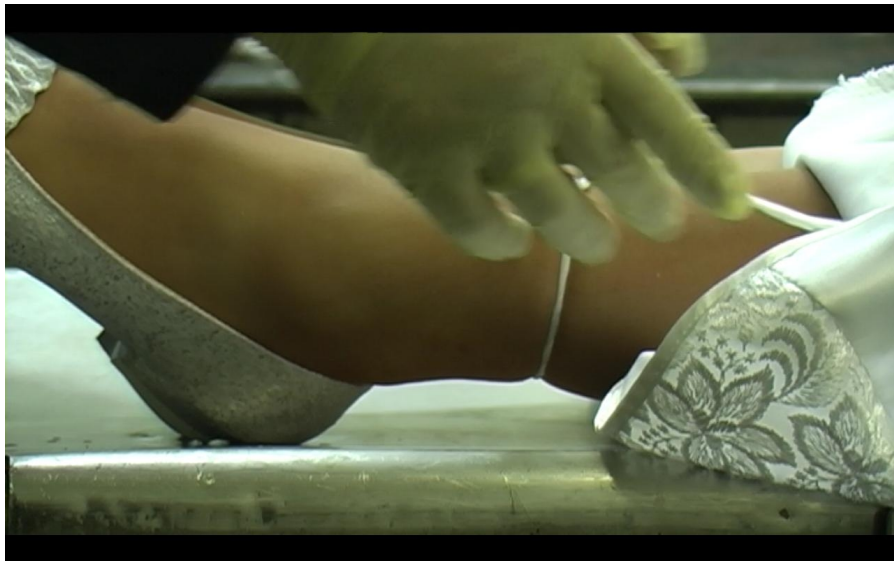
Format: DV

Director/scriptwriter: Simona Zemaityte

Sound: Alp Tugan

Camera: Simona Zemaityte/Giedrius Jurkonis

Location: Lithuania/Turkey



Introduction and personal motivation

In documentary projects, as a director, i often deal with issues that consciously or subconsciously are related to my fears. The idea to make a visual narration on beauty occured while working on another film –

contemporary funeral rituals in Lithuania. While shooting in funeral houses and morgue I observed that so many things there were based on importance of outlook, appearance and image.

Few years ago, in Istanbul I was shooting transgendered cabaret actress Deniz. Story of her personal and professional development really touched me. Especially, thinking on how much importance in daily life and performances she gave to her newly achieved femininity.

These two stories made me question the **idea of beauty in unusual and uncomfortable situations**. I started questioning the importance of beauty in unusual and rather uncomfortable situations. I started questioning different states of existence, and portraits of “self” in terms of beauty construct. This is how I came up with the third piece on beauty in female prison in Lithuania.

Structure of the Film

Documentary film “All About Beauty” contains **three parts**: embalming of the body, transgendered actress's interview with herself, and narration of 2 ladies, sentenced to jail, analyzing the concept of beauty and its relevance in terms of the situation they are in at the moment. All three parts evolve around the same issue however they are constructed and shot in different styles – those to correspond to protagonists' behaviors, personalities, attitudes and situations.

Synopsis

Part I covers **Deniz** asking questions about her own appearance, attractiveness and beauty. Deniz herself is answering these questions. It is like interview with your own self, reflection or small talk with an “alter ego”. Part II tells the story of **2 female protagonists** that are, for the moment,

sentences to imprisonment. They say it does not really matter where are you, as long as you are a woman, caring about yourself is an essential thing. Ladies talk about inner beauty, reflect on the importance of appearance and illustrate it by their performances. Part III was shot in a morgue. It follows the dressing up process of a **female body before the funeral.**

Visual style and concepts

Part I juxtaposes Deniz sitting in a living room below the mirror (wide shots) and answering questions in the interview manner while the interviewer is herself. Deniz who is asking comfortable and uncomfortable questions is shot in close up manner. That is because Deniz herself is a duality that embraces masculinity and femininity, dreams and reality, ego and alter-ego issues.



In Part II camera becomes close to what it could be in any reality shows. However, the sequence is edited in jump-cut manner in order to reveal and illustrate visual and audio-visual stories of characters better. One of the sentenced ladies are very much concerned with her image and look, therefore, even in front of the camera she tries out different clothes. The other girl tells the story how when she was arrested for the first time she gained 16 kilos, but managed to loose it by simply jumping in the cell all day long. This part embraces performance, interviews and observations.

In Part III Close-up abstract shots are dominant. There are two protagonists: the body and the undertaker. It is a record of a last beautification.

Sound and music

Most sound is part of the diegesis. The noises and compositions are used in order to reflect the subject matter and mood of the film better.

Appendix E

Born in USSR

animation/documentary

film

Director /scriptwriter: Simona Zemaityte

Sound: Alp Tugan

Visuals: illustrations from the book “Su Leninu” (1984) by Viktoras Šatunovas

Duration: 7 mins



Personal motivation: I was born in 1984, Soviet Republic of Lithuania. However, me and my peers have almost no political memories regarding Soviet Union. But we remember well three types of ice-creams that existed – vanilla, juice, and the chocolate that were so hard to get. We also remember limonade

in glass bottles that we used to mix with water in order to increase the amount of it, heavy quadratual backpacks for school that had either giraf or lion prints on it, dresses “made in China” that we were so proud of cause they looked different and colorful, first chewing gum that was hard to find, blue trainers that all kids used to wear, and kindergardens where parents could leave kids for one week and that we were so much afraid of. This short animated documentary film embraces the visuals that were published in children propaganda book in 1987 and the memories of a generation that this propaganda was directed too.

Reasoning for timing: In 2011 it will be an anniversary of a breakdown on Soviet Union. Therefore I believe it is a right time to produce a non-political film about childhood memories from of my generation.



Visuality and concept: in order articulate distance to political reality, and emphasize the playfulness of the childhood. No real documentary images are going to be used. Film will contain only ready found and animated pictures from children book published in Soviet Republic of Lithuania. The direct translation of the book would be “With Lenin”, and it was meant for propaganda reasons. In

the film characters and their stories are recreated from illustrations. In film “Born in USSR”, illustrations are given a chance to tell alternative story – story of the children that they were meant for. This story is also an offer of alternative narration of well known piece of history.

Sound: The voice -over narration, fairy-tale, of the film, is supported by musical motifs. Though the visual narration and the audio part at times will contradict in order to reflect on the idea of unbiased and infantile perception of reality that children have.