

Michael Pilz

Biography

Michael Pilz

Film Artist

Short Résumé and Filmography



I was born in 1943, just a stone's throw away from the „iron curtain“ which separated Austria and Czechoslovakia in those days. I grew up amidst the rolling Waldviertel hills with their fields and patches of trees, rivers, and woods.

The countryside has a slow-motion way of rolling away to the horizon. It instills a feeling for the dignity, weight, and inertia of the primary rock formation you are standing on. Rest your gaze on these bedrock hills, and you will begin to move along to the soft, smooth, measured flow of these meadows and woodlands.

There was Catholicism, Gregorian chants, Soviet newsreel propaganda films. Listening to the radio and browsing through bookstores, I came across a different life in far away places, which was based on a different rhythm.

In 1954, I began taking photographs, working with 8 mm film. In 1956, finally, I packed my bags and headed for Vienna, a city closer to the world of, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, Henry Miller, and Sigmund Freud. I saw the works of Jackson Pollock, Karl Prantl, Robert Frank, Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, Robert Bresson, and the New American Cinema.

I was desperately in need of a new place and I came here to stay. The only thing I never wanted to leave behind was the slow movement of these landscapes and the lesson they taught to my eyes. What you learn up there is to have time, not plenty, but enough. Enough to let your eyes rest just long enough to see the picture.

Later on, I developed a growing interest in the technical, material, and mental aspects of cinematography as well as the various ways of expressing the subconscious in film.

The larger part of my cinematographic experiments of the sixties, most on regular 8 mm film, is lost since 1985. It was a bit of bad luck and the ignorance of the people involved which landed the material in the garbage in Lucerne, Switzerland.

In these films, I had, above all, experimented with different cameras and the film material itself (all forms of direct treatment such as painting, scratching), handheld and out-of-control-moving cameras, and absurd, that is to say anarchist staging. I took various approaches to examine pure („basic“) cinematic phenomena.

Since 1983, I have engaged in delivering occasional lectures and holding workshops on aesthetics and experimental filmmaking.

1943

Born in Gmünd, Lower Austria, close to where the „Iron Curtain“ used to separate Austria and Czechoslovakia.

1952 to 1955

Monastery boarding school at Zwettl (choirboy).

1955

First attempts at photography and filming (8mm).

1956 to 1962

Secondary school in Vienna (Polytechnic School HTL / TGM, electrical engineering).

1962

Matura (graduation / school-leaving exam).

Early influences: Soviet newsreel propaganda films, Gregorian chants, medieval music, modern jazz, the writings of Camus, Beckett, Henry Miller and Sigmund Freud, subjective black-and-white photography by Robert Frank, Karl Prantl's clear sculptural forms and, above all, early films by Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, but also New American Cinema.

Growing interest in the technical and material aspects of cinematography, especially its potential of expressing the unconscious.

1962/64

Extensive travels to Scandinavia, Benelux countries, and France.

Starting from 1964

Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Department of Film (camera, direction), discontinued. Film experiments 8mm and 16mm, extensive engagement with contemporary avantgarde films. Freelance photographer.

1964 to 1972

Author, cameraman, director and producer of short fiction-, documentary-, and experimental films (among others, with Khossro Sinai, Franz Novotny, Gert Winkler).

Definition of position within the scope of contemporary filmmaking in terms of aesthetics and content.

1967

First marriage, two children.

Starting from 1968

Participation in politic-cultural activities in the context of demands for public funding of Austrian filmmaking.

1971 and 1972

Filmförderungspreis („Young Film Artist's Award“) of the city of Vienna.

1970 to 1978

Author and director working in different genres with various departments of ORF, Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (cultural programs, entertainment, documentaries, including FRANZ GRIMUS, 1977).

1972

Venice Biennale Film Festival.
(short fiction film WLADIMIR NIXON).

Starting from 1972

Video works (in collaboration with John Cook, in preparation of various film projects, as well as with Bernhard Frankfurter, for, among others, the long-term city district project SZENEN AUS DEM WIENER MILIEU, 1978).

1975

Charter member of the „Syndikat der Filmschaffenden Österreichs“ („Syndicate of Austrian Film Artists“). Various film policy initiatives (for example founding of the „Österreichischen Filmtage“ at Velden, later at Kapfenberg and Wels in 1976; founding of the alternative film distributor „filmladen“; founding of the alternative „Kinokooperative“). Substantial contributions to public discussions related to necessary state funding of art and film productions in Austria (1977 Catalog of Cultural Policy Measures, 1980 Film Funding Act („Filmförderungsgesetz“)).

1976

Founding of Michael Pilz Filmproduktion (in connection with the fiction feature LANGSAMER SOMMER by John Cook).

1977

Divorce of first marriage.

1979/82

Two-part documentary HIMMEL UND ERDE, international festival success.

1982

Second marriage, two children.

Starting from 1983

Workshops and seminars (film aesthetics, creative documentary filming, and experimental filmmaking, among others at University of Applied Sciences at Dortmund, Germany, in 1993/96).

1983

Member of Künstlerhaus Vienna.

1984/1985

Feature film NOAH DELTA II, produced and realized in Budapest (one-year stay in Budapest).

Starting from 1987

Increasing focus on working with video, journals „Private Eyes“ (1988/99 PIECES OF DREAMS, 1991 TWO HORSE TOWN, 1992 CAGE, 1993 IL FAUT APPRENDRE À VOIR, 1994 ALL THE VERMEERS IN PRAGUE, 1995 PRISJADIM NA DOROZKU, 1999 DA CAPO AL FINE, 2000 INDIAN DIARY, etc.).

1988

Participation in workshops of US director Jack Garfein (structuring plays and direction) and, subsequently, filming

of 60 hours of video footage during six weeks of Garfein's rehearsals for four short plays by Samuel Beckett at George Tabori's Theater „Der Kreis“ in Vienna (1999 PIECES OF DREAMS, 2004 THAT'S ALL THERE IS).

Participation in the International Stanislawski Symposium in Paris (practice seminars).

1988/1990

FELDBERG, experimental fiction feature film without dialogs.

1989/1992

Concept, development, and direction of the „StadtFilm-WerkStatt“ media project at Lower Austria's new provincial capital of Sankt Pölten.

Classic psychotherapy from 1975 through 1992 (1975–1977 Mady Wood, 1977–1992 Guillermo Otálora).

1994

Trip to Central Siberia (1995 PRISJADIM NA DOROZKU, 627 minutes).

Divorce of second marriage.

Workshop for producers and film makers, held together with my friend Jon Jost in Riga, Latvia: THE ART OF PERCEPTION.

1995

Documentary film projects designed to support police training programs (funding was denied for political reasons) and conflict management of kindergarten teachers and parents (could not be financed due to general lack of interest).

1996

February, trip to the US (1996 WAS ÜBERSETZT IST NOCH NICHT ANGEKOMMEN, 1998 BRIDGE TO MONTICELLO).

1997

July, trip to Zimbabwe (1998 EXIT ONLY for 3sat-TV, 1998 VIEW OF THE WORLD for Kunsthalle Tirol, etc.; 2004 ACROSS THE RIVER).

2000

March, trip to Southern India (2000 INDIAN DIARY–DAYS AT SREE SANKARA).

German documentary filmmakers Christoph Hübner and Gabriele Voss produced a one-hour conversation with Michael Pilz for 3sat TV's series „Dokumentarisch sehen“, „Im Spiegel des Fremden“ (broadcasted 11 Februar 2001); Vorwerk8 (Berlin) published the complete conversation („Ins Offene – Dokumentarisch Arbeiten 2“).

October, trip to Cuba (2001 LA HABANA, with Gabriele Hochleitner, under commission of the International Filmfestival of Rotterdam for the series „On the Waterfront“).

2002

January, another trip to Zimbabwe (GWENYAMBIRA SIMON MASHOKO, to stage the Installation „A Tribute to Simon Mashoko“, Gallery Delta Harare, among other things). Montage of SIBERIAN DIARY–DAYS AT APANAS, short

version of the trip to Siberia 1994 (1995 PRISJADIM NA DOROZKU).

September, Künstlerhaus, Vienna, participation in the salon exhibition (SIBERIAN DIARY and GWENYAMBIRA SIMON MASHOKO).

2003

Mai, participation in the anniversary celebrations „30 Years Frente Polisario“ at refugee camps in the Western Sahara (project WESTSAHARA/2005).

Training program in „Nuad“, Thai–Yoga (THE ART OF FLOW).

Fiction– and documentary film project MEHR ALS DAS (with Gabriele Hochleitner).

Start of project KINDSEIN IN EUROPA (under the auspices of Austria’s UNESCO Commission).

2004

Montage of extensive footage produced in Zimbabwe in 1997, ACROSS THE RIVER.

Montage of footage of a conversation with Austrian writer Brigitte Schwaiger in 1995, 28 APRIL 1995 AUS LIEBE/FOR LOVE.

MEMORIES OF YOU 7 DECEMBER 2003, in memory of the friendship with Austrian writer Helmut Eisendle who died in 2003.

Completion of two experimental videos by Helmut Eisendle, SCHÄFFERGASSE 1 and SCHÄFFERGASSE 2.

Montage of footage of rehearsals for three late plays by Samuel Beckett staged at George Tabori’s Vienna theater „Der Kreis“ under the direction of Jack Garfein in 1988, THAT’S ALL THERE IS.

2005

Second training program in „Nuad“, Thai–Yoga (Veni Labi). Start of planning for film retrospective at the Austrian Film Museum in November 2008 (Curator Constantin Wulff, Vienna) as well as for a substantial book (Olaf Möller, Cologne).

Participation at the 16th International Documentary Film Symposium Riga, Latvia, 10–15 September, with MEMORIES OF YOU 7 DECEMBER 2003.

Completion of the experimental montage WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES („for meditation“) from footage dating from the years between 1995 and 2003.

Artist website „www.michaelpilz.at“ goes online.

2006

April, member of the jury for documentary films at *finale*, the national czech filmfestival in pilsen.

Extended trips to Yemen (April) and Iran (May); Presentation of WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES at the Islamic Center for Culture and Arts, Esfahan/Iran, May 17, 2006. Presentation of the Samuel Beckett–Jack Garfein documentary THAT’S ALL THERE IS at the international Holland

Festival, Amsterdam, and at the Museum of Modern Art, Antwerp.

Completion of two new 35 mm cinema prints of HIMMEL UND ERDE (Heaven and Earth, 1982) as well as conversion of all earlier films to modern digital media.

Workshop at the Shadow Filmfestival Amsterdam (November).

Gabriele Hochleitner starts working on her film portrait with Michael Pilz (to be continued in 2007 and 2008).

2007

In preparation for the retrospective at the Austrian Film Museum, Vienna, in November 2008: Review of films, photos, and writings in my own archive as well as research at the archives of ORF (Austrian Broadcasting Corporation) and the Municipal and Provincial Archive of Vienna (Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv).

Another trip to Iran in October (with Gabriele Hochleitner). Presentation of PIECES OF DREAMS at the Islamic Center for Culture and Arts, Shahrecord and Esfahan/Iran, October 14 and 15, 2007.

Some of my early and, in part, forgotten works are turned into new films (A PRIMA VISTA, among others).

2008

January: world première of A PRIMA VISTA at the International Film Festival Rotterdam under the category *Kings and Aces*.

March: Sibiu, Romania, presentation of the *A tribute to Simon Mashoko* (GWENYAMBIRA SIMON MASHOKO/2002) multimedia art installation in cooperation with Werner Puntigam (photography) and Klaus Hollinetz (sound installation).

April: Graz, Austria, Festival of Austrian Films, special retrospective „The Sensual Appeal of Emptiness“ encompassing the presentation of PATICCA SAMUPPADA/1986, STAATZ ENDE/1989, SIBERIAN DIARY/2003, INDIAN DIARY/2000, GWENYAMBIRA SIMON MASHOKO/2002, CAGE/1992 and WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES/2005, as well as two lectures on „The Sensual Appeal of Emptiness“ (*Die Erotik der Leere*).

November, 14–30, Austrian Filmmuseum, Vienna, retrospective, including the films *Jahresrückblick/1975*, *How the Ladies Pay–Lou Reed/1977*, *Die Generalin/1977*, *Gruppenbild mit Damen/1977*, *Franz Grimus/1977*, *A Prima Vista/2008*, *Himmel und Erde/Heaven and Earth/ 1982*, *Plakatkleber/1965*, *Unter Freunden/1966*, *Für Peter Noever und Achille Castiglioni/1969*, *Underground/1969*, *Wienerinnen 1–3/1971*, *Wladimir Nixon/1971*, *L’Imagination des Yeux/1973*, *StaatZ Ende/1989*, *Windows, Dogs and Horses/2005*, *28 April, 1995 Aus Liebe / For Love/2004*, *For Some Friends (Portrait by Gabriele Hochleitner)/2008*, *Yemen Travelogue — Days at Shibam and Seiyun/2008*, *Indian Diary — Days at Sree Sankara/2000*, *Parco delle*

Rimembranze/1988, Der Lauf des Wassers/1988, Pieces of Dreams/1999, Cage/1992, Bridge to Monticello/1998, Feldberg/1990.

FilmmuseumSynemaPublikationen published the book *Michael Pilz — Auge Kamera Herz*, by Olaf Möller and Michael Omasta, 285 pages, 200 photographs, ISBN 978-3-901644-29-0, office@synema.at or www.filmmuseum.at.

2009

March, Nederlands Film en Televisie Academy, Amsterdam, Masters' Degree Film, Workshop

Board member of Künstlerhaus Vienna.

July, special program at the 35th Summer School Uherské Hradistû (CZ) with *Heaven and Earth, A Prima Vista, Bridge To Monticello.*

Finishing the first part of my Iranian travelogue, INVOCATION OF BLISS (November, world premiere at the 40th International Film Festival of India in Goa).

2010

Finishing the second part of my Iranian travelogue, ROSE AND JASMINE.

June, travel to Rome for DIARIO ROMANO—FRATELLI D'ITALIA.

Prizes and awards

1970 + 1971

Filmförderungspreis („Promotional Award for Film“) of the city of Vienna

1983

Prix du Jury Oecumenique, Festival du Film Documentaire, Nyon, Switzerland, for HIMMEL UND ERDE

1983

Grand Prix for Best Documentary, Festival Figueira da Foz/Portugal, for HIMMEL UND ERDE

1996

Recognition Award for Film Art, Austrian Federal Chancellery

1997

Recognition Award for Media Art / Documentary Film, Provincial Government of Lower Austria.

Publications

1986

Kein Film – Ein Stückwerk: Dziga Vertov (self-published),

1989

Donner. blitzt – Notizen zu einem Filmprojekt (FELDBERG), Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum (Provincial Museum of Lower Austria), Vienna, new series No. 245

2008

Michael Pilz/Auge.Kamera.Herz, published by Olaf Möller and Michael Omasta/ FilmmuseumSynemaPublikationen No.10/Vienna

Film festivals

Rotterdam (NL), Edinburgh (GB), Kapfenberg (AT), Aurillac (FR), Venice (IT), Vienna (AT), Riga (LV), Nyon (CH), Berlin (DE), Figueira da Foz (PT), Montréal (CA), San Jose (US), Graz (AT), Athens (US), Frankfurt a.M. (DE), Cannes (FR), Karthago (TN), New York (US), Wels (AT), Salzburg (AT), Paris (FR), Duisburg (DE), Santa Cruz (BO), Thiruvananthapuram (India), Manila, Uherské Hradiste (CZ), Bellaria (IT), Goa (India), a.o.

Installations, solo and group exhibitions, performances

Künstlerhaus Vienna (AT), Kunsthalle Tirol Hall.i.T. (AT), Anthology Film Archives New York (US), Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (DE), Kunsthalle St. Pölten (AT), Blau-Gelbe Galerie, Vienna (AT), Wiener Festwochen/Vienna Festival (AT), Institut Néerlandais Paris (FR), Afro Asiatisches Institut Galerie Wien/Vienna (AT), Galerie Thurnhof Horn (AT), Haus am Waldsee/Berlin-Wannsee (DE), Literaturhaus Krems (AT), Literaturhaus Vienna (AT), Galerie Habari

Vienna (AT), Kulturhof Johannes Aquila Radkersburg (AT),
HMH–Galerie Linz (AT), Blau–Gelbe Viertelgalerie Zwettl
Lower Austria (AT), Delta Gallery Harare (ZW), Pasinger
Fabrik Munich (DE), Belgrad (CS), Maputo (MZ).

Workshops, seminars, lectures

School of Design, Zurich (CH), University of Applied Sciences at Dortmund (DE), StadtFilmWerkstatt St.Pölten (AT), Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna (AT), Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna (AT, Department of Film and Television), International Center for New Cinema Riga (LV), Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna (AT, Department of Design/Film), Stiftung Märtpplatz/ Rorbas (CH), European Institute for Documentary Filmmaking, Duisburg (DE), Volkshochschule Stöbergasse (adult education center), Vienna (AT), Shadow Filmfestival Amsterdam (NL), SUREH/Institute of Art, University of Esfahan (Iran), Nederlands Film en Televisie Academy, Amsterdam.

Artistic consultant

for films of Claudia von Alemann (War einst ein wilder Wassermann/ 1998-2000), Othmar Schmiderer (Josef Hauser–Klang und Raum/1988, Am Stein/1997, An Echo from Europe/1998, Im toten Winkel/2002), Gabriele Hochleitner (Die Stadt und die Erinnerung/2000, Autisti/2003, Luigi oder der geheime Garten/2001-03, also sound), Beate Pils (Public chat/2003, Zeitgeist/2002), Regina Höllbacher (Ganz Normal/2002-05), Kenan Kilic (Nachtreise/2002), Angela Summereder (Baustelle/2004, Ort–Ried/2004 and Vermischte Nachrichten/2006), a.o.

Films and videos (selection)

Prater, 1964 , 16 mm, b/w, no sound, 12'
Plakatkleber, 1964 , 16 mm, b/w, no sound, 11'
Unter Freunden, 1965 , 16 mm, b/w, no sound, 14'
Symposion, 1967, 16mm (unfinished, lost)
Big Shot, 1968, 16mm, 10'
Voom, 1969, 8mm, 240' (lost)
Underground, 1969, 16mm, 6'
Jascha, 1969, 16 mm, b/w, no sound, 16'
Lui, 1969, 16 mm, b/w, no sound, 13'
Coop Himmelblau, 1970, 16mm, 25' (lost)
Wladimir Nixon, 1972, 16mm, 23'
Das Lied vom Hofer, 1972, 1"-Video, 25'
L'Imagination des Yeux, 1973, 1"-Video, 30'
Langsamer Sommer, 1976, 8mm/35mm, 84' (with/by

John Cook)

Szenen aus dem Wiener Milieu, 1978, 3/4"-Video, 120'
Franz Grimus, 1977, 16mm, 45'
Lou Reed, 1977, 16mm, 8'
Die Generalin, 1977, 16mm, 25'
Himmel und Erde, 1982, 16/35mm, 297'
Wels, 1984, Video Beta, 84'
Noah Delta II, 1985, 16mm, 108'
Paticca Samuppada, 1986, 16mm, 16'
Parco delle Rimembranze, 1987, 16mm, 14'
Der Lauf des Wassers 1988, 16mm/1"-Video, 44'
80 cm 5t, 1989, 16mm, 107'
Staatz Ende, 1989, 16/35mm, 4'
Feldberg, 1990, 35mm, 115'
Two Horse Town, 1991, Video, 53'
Eigentlich spreche ich ja eine andere Sprache und trotzdem haben wir immer gut miteinander gesprochen, 1992, Video, 101'
Für die Vögel, 1992, Video, 71'
State Of Grace, 1993, Video, 89'
Cage, 1993, Video, 180'
Il Faut Apprendre À Voir, 1993, Video, 136'
All The Vermeers In Prague, 1994, Video, 121'
Prisyadim Na Dorozhku (Let's Sit Down Before We Leave), 1995, Video, 627'
The Making Of Prisyadim Na Dorozhku, 1995, Video, 34'
Irgendwo hätt' ich sonst hingewollt', 1995, 16mm, 51'
Was übersetzt ist noch nicht angekommen, 1996, Video, 69'
Exit Only, 1998, Video, 86'
Bridge To Monticello, 1998, Video, 110'
Pieces Of Dreams, 1999, Video, 55'
Da capo al fine, 1999, Video, 103'
Indian Diary – Days At Sree Sankara, 2000, Video, 168'
La Habana, 2001, Video, 72 min (with Gabriele Hochleitner)
Gwenyambira Simon Mashoko, 2002, Video, 210'
Elegia Romana, 2001/2002, Video, 52'
Hwange, 1997/2002, Video, 44'
Siberian Diary – Days At Apanas, 2003, Video, 140'
The Art Of Flow, 2003, Video, 107'
Across The River, 2004, Video, 151'
Memories Of You 7 December 2003, 2004, Video, 26'
28 April 1995 Aus Liebe / For Love, 2004, Video, 180'
That's All There Is, 2005, Video, 151' + 142'
Windows, Dogs And Horses, 2005, Video, 40'
Silence, 2007, Video, 94'
A Prima Vista, 1964/2008, 16 mm/Video, 91'
Juwel Of The Valley / Dourat Al–Wadi, 2006/2008, Video, 364'
Yemen Travelogue – Days At Shibam and Seiyun, 2006/2008, Video, 160'
MF – Für Marianne Fritz, 2008, Video, 52'
Invocation of Bliss, 2009, Video, 92'

