

Feldberg

A film by Michael Pilz
Austria 1990, 115'

Soon there will be four or five hundred theaters – let us hope – where the usual events of life will be acted out considerably better than in reality, and thus no one will go to the trouble any longer of wanting to experience things himself.

Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, 1883

With **Feldberg** Michael Pilz has succeeded in creating a masterpiece. It is a work so austere and lucid that I wonder how a filmmaker like him can continue in this direction. I do not think one can be more radical. Pilz's film is a challenge for the viewer. How much patience can be demanded of the viewer? The answer is a lot, provided a filmmaker like this one can make the viewer feel that he wants to go as far as possible.

This film was shot in an area – known as *Feldberg* – where the filmmaker knows each stone and blade of grass, this might remind one of Cezanne, who conquered Mont Saint Victoire visually. Never before have I experienced a landscape in a film so tangible and exciting as in **Feldberg**. In this film the landscape is no longer just the background. It is the foreground, acting as the main protagonist, as it were. In this landscape there is a non-verbal confrontation between a man and a woman that is both mysterious and transparent, since both actors are not simply playing their roles but seem to be conquering the mountain.

With his austere and simple way of making films things are not easy for Pilz in bourgeois Austria. However, I think that for a filmmaker like Pilz things are not easy anywhere. Not anywhere is it easy for uncompromising and headstrong filmmakers to translate their visions into reality. The fact that there is this film **Feldberg** does not, at any rate, speak against Austria.

*Gertjan Zuilhof,
DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER,
Amsterdam, 31 October 1990*

0. The film

It all depends on how we interpret the silence around us.
(Lawrence Durrell ¹)

The title bed, a firmament of letters, which condenses from a koan of mere spots of light into a legible text, remains just as intangible. During the first scene we join the male protagonist drifting into a minute-long sleep, and behind his forehead, we too, dream ahead the film that is to follow. As he awakens, breathing heavily, breathless, so do we. There can be no doubt about this, it is a film by Michael Pilz.

1. Nature.

*Without people
perhaps only with "simple" people
archaic
a "closed", natural
circuit of things.
MAN is "with" nature,
not "against" it.*
(Michael Pilz: DONNER.blitzt, 1989 ²)

Feldberg continually reminds us that everything speaks to us, that all things keep telling us stories, noisily as the rain, the winds or the crackling branches, or silently as the stones, the moon and the sky, in *ideal form of natural speech, the silent exchange of communication with nature*³. We slowly feel along ponds, trees, bushes, following the protagonists into their world which is also our world.

I remember that *the camera does not constitute the world as a linguistic context* (Kracauer), remind myself of the theoretical precepts of the 70s regarding the cinema



and the process of visual perception. The increasing of the film as a transmitter especially of perceptions, experiences and visual evidence. It has been said, that the cinema was clearly suited to this purpose and did not lend itself to an interpretative approach, since film *can do without a depiction of inner worlds, of linguistic motivations without its presentation becoming incomprehensible*.⁴

Of course it is only with fulfillment: his dreams are our dreams – we believe that without interfering, judging, acting – we may yet be able to participate and see everything. Our eye in the cinema is, in principle, inviolate, there can be no physical confrontation, i.e., the physical presence of the objects depicted cannot be *experienced*. Even the employment of a subjective camera angle can only seemingly overcome this chasm. Nothing can happen to us, we experience an illusion of inviolability and immortality as the images on the screen fade before us – since no contact is possible between them and us⁵.

In 115 short glimpses we dive through **Feldberg**, where at last nature, too, has once again been given a role in the human shadow play. What we see is not new, but fresh and full of stories; seeing something really *new* remained the privilege of our ancestors who witnessed the first toddling steps of the cinema in its infancy. To us, (cinematographic) images are an integral part of our recollection (quite apart from the fact that *our recollection consists of a good deal of forgetting*)⁶. In the 90s we can no longer get around the realisation that our lives as we live them are filtered through images of prior experience, a *secondhand mode of living*, as Eco put it⁷. Actually, it might better be called a second-hand-mode of seeing. Pilz counters this loss of fertile internal emptiness, this flooding of our being with images, by exorcising the devil with the deuce, drawing us inside his idiosyncratic images. In the background we always feel this film-maker's postulate, which remains as programmatic now as the time of filming, and continues to fascinate me, to *find new, fresh, unused images* and to *illustrate images that we have not been preconceived*⁸. I remember how much I enjoyed (and still enjoy) seeing Tarzan films where the jungle, the ever moving, ever noisy whirling growth has fascinated me more than the (admittedly necessarily flat) message. – The replacement of *meaning* by *sensuousness* (Kracauer). In Pilz's film nature does not present itself as noisily talkative, but *the silence is so palpable that it almost turns into language*, (Karl Kraus)⁹.

2. The Characters.

There is hardly any narrative, there seems to be no action at all. Only the two actors, a man and a woman, meeting each other in the setting of nature, while we as viewers may think or feel that there may have been a story with many secrets hidden behind the two faces. (Michael Pilz, Press Release, Wels 1990)¹⁰

A love(?)story. The further we move into it, the more familiar the faces become – seen in the moonlight, in front of a pond, rubbing a forehead against trees – hands full of glass splinters, the borders of country roads, outside/inside a cabin. *What I have in my face is character* as Humphrey Bogart put it¹¹. The characters here tell us nothing in words, even their miming is sparse and seems hardly coordinated

with their internal psychological tendencies, perhaps they *no longer even have any psychology*¹². In spite of that, or perhaps precisely because of that, their wordlessness is expressive. They live within the situations/confrontations/meditations, they do not withdraw from the processes which they share with each other and with the surrounding nature. *A situation where silence reigns while speech is expected, itself begins to talk*¹³. The whole, so to speak, comes together as the sum of absence. Brief encounters, hardly any physical contact, storm-withered, empty gazes, gestures that have become automatised through everyday repetition. Encounters as on mornings after wakeful nights, an opportunity to *sense and experience, in a film, something of that which happens when we slowly shut our eyes and submit to the movements of the hypnagogic state before falling asleep, and to uncertain, unintentional occurrences*¹⁴.

I am reminded of a statement by the late Lawrence Durrell: *Introverts at least escape this terrible addiction of wanting to surrender themselves to each other*.¹⁵

The contacts between the actors become increasingly close and intense, once the camera moves. Approaches, repulsions. This again brings to mind Kracauer who somewhere called the act of waiting the single adequate religious act¹⁶. The protagonists expand their inner worlds, becoming more differentiated, more concrete, more palpable. Parallel to that the realisation becomes more pressing, more tangible, that these images are not producing their effects somewhere inside our own heads, but are instead projected onto a screen in a darkened room by a technical apparatus and thus appear to be *outside*. Then again we lose ourselves on known and familiar worlds/woods/lakes/faces/images typical of Pilz.

The illusion that the protagonists (and we) are continuously themselves (ourselves) condenses into the question: is it them (us) only again and again, *in such rapid succession that they (we) give the impression of a continuous strip of images at times flickering like an old silent movie?*¹⁷.

A film about resounding nature and human silence. That which is not present, is desirable (Pilz).

The arc of time is stretched more and more, we find ourselves within an infinite, timeless waiting-loop outside an old wooden cabin. I'm reminded of Borges: *We may assume the origin of time to be either in the future or in the past*.¹⁸ Or, *There is no past, there is no present, hence there is also no future*. (R.W.Fassbinder)¹⁹. I am also becoming aware once more that time often seems like a sieve; it separates things – which remain seemingly unchanged – from human beings, who are subject to constant change.

Shimmering railway tracks, the magic of stones, wood and grass, but also her hand hitting him, aggression condensed in time, people beginning to change, to step outside of themselves – newly found and already lost again.

I recollect how in the koan of the title bed one spot of light after another lit up, now I am suddenly flooded by an inconceivable glaring, white light which shines through me, cleanses me, and almost blinds me. *I hate always the eye to be knothole*, Ernst Jünger said²⁰.

Outside the cinema I dizzily recall that today there are therefore two modes of life after death: one in the afterlife, and one in the cinema²¹.

The cinema, then, is still the place *where the hunger for experiences can be sated*. (Rutschky)²², when the camera, following Kracauer's precept, symbolises a researcher who enters unfathomable fields.

3. The Koan.

*Whether it be hot or cold
Whether it be warm or far,
Whether it be cool or longer
Such is the way that time does change.
The settee blossoms freedom of the sea,
Lips so blue of the red sunset
Silent night in marmalade
Fine art, may God protect you.*
(Karl Valentin, Expressionist Chant)²³

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- ³ Hart Nibbrig, *Rhetorik des Schweigens*, Frankfurt a.M. 1983, p.21
- ⁴ Michael Rutschky, *Erfahrungshunger, Ein Essay über die 70er Jahre*, Köln 1980, pp.80
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- ⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, *Die zwei Labyrinth*, München 1986, p.264
- ⁷ Umberto Eco, *Über Gott und die Welt*, München/Wien 1985, p.214
- ⁸ Michael Pilz, *DONNER.blitz*, 1989
- ⁹ Karl Kraus, *Schweigen, Wort und Tat*, Wien 1916, p.23
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- ¹¹ *Bogie, Das Humphrey Bogart Kultbuch*, München 1987, p.70
- ¹² Michael Rutschky, *Erfahrungshunger*, p.178
- ¹³ Hant Nibbrig, op.cit. p.41
- ¹⁴ Michael Pilz, *Austrian Films 1988*, on *PARCO DELLE RIMEMBRANCE*, p.75
- ¹⁵ Lawrence Durrell, *Justine*, p.78
- ¹⁶ Michael Rutschky, *Wartezeit*, p.290
- ¹⁷ Lawrence Durrell, *Justine*, p.155
- ¹⁸ Jorge Luis Borges, op.cit., p.268
- ¹⁹ Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Die Anarchie der Phantasie, Gespräche und Interviews*, Frankfurt a.M. 1986, p.223
- ²⁰ Ernst Jünger, *Annäherungen, Drogen und Rausch*, Berlin/Wien 1980, p.97
- ²¹ Wolfgang Till (Ed.), *Karl Valentin, Volks-Sänger? DADAist?*, München 1982, p.391
- ²² Michael Rutschky, *Erfahrungshunger*, p.175
- ²³ Wolfgang Till, *Karl Valentin*, p.291

Ölwin H. Pichler,
"Feldberg. 1 + 1 = 0. Remembrances. On silence."
BLIMP, No 15, Graz, Winter 1990

The use of words in movies still seems absurd to Michael Pilz, who is not only Austria's most eminent but also best documentary filmmaker. To him, film is primarily concerned with seeing. A term he interprets in its double meaning as visual activity and as a cognitive process. This is the reason why in **Feldberg**, his most recent work, not a single word is spoken. What can be heard, instead, are the sounds and noises of nature, splattering rain, roaring wind, foot-falls on a pebbled path, or the crackling fire – all in three – dimensional dolby sound.

Feldberg is a film of a sort we do not usually get to see in the conventional run-of-the-mill story-telling movie. It is a very private encounter with emotions, with the conscious and subconscious. Two protagonists are tossed into an almost pristine landscape where they encounter each other and are confronted with themselves and the other and with nature. The character's past and the reasons for their being stranded here remain as much as mystery as their relationship. At a superficial level, no story is being told at all; as a viewer one is called upon to interpret the images in his or her own way and to connect the visual elements is a story of his or her own making.

While shooting the film Pilz asked the two *actors* to be whatever they wanted to be. All connections are later conjured up by us as viewers: we notice the lack of concrete pointers usually provided only too lavishly by narrative cinema. Are they a couple of lovers going through a series of conflicts? Or two people who have only just made each other's acquaintance? The decision is up to the viewer. In that respect, **Feldberg** is an invitation to meditation, to pondering the meaning of our own existence, since, with our imagination, we either reduce or enrich the body of this film.

Feldberg, furthermore, is a mosaic, a construction made up out of several minute-long, uncut sequences, which as a whole reflect a universe of emotions, quietude, aggression, impatience, or paralysis. Emotions shared by the viewers in the cinema auditorium. Again and again it becomes necessary to re-orient oneself, to adapt to repeated turn-arounds and reconnections or break-off points.

Bernhard Praschl, *DIE PRESSE*,
Vienna, 21 March 1991

It cannot be inferred from the film just what the personal connections between the actress and the actor are. The situations have been broken up into a continuous series of metamorphoses and variations and only individual freeze frames connect the multiplicity of images into a scenic *whole*.

Michael Pilz is not a decorator. He is an eliminator, whose main concern is subtraction. His is the art of film-making by an incisive talent. Here, history has been amputated, presumably not just to see what might happen if the images cease to be representative. Otherwise they might derive their autonomy from reality's lack of potency. Such a film does not so much seek power as to produce content, simply in order to get ahead. By applying subtraction to everything, its real or deceptive constitution is guaranteed to be equally found or lost. It all depends on the viewer. The rain, as Bert Brecht would have said it, continues to fall, or at any rate, tries to.

The story has been drastically reduced, since it would otherwise dominate the film. The plot has been removed, as it would impose order over the relationships. All stable elements have been eliminated, since they are a part of the employment of power. Biography, too, has been amputated, since it would carry a method into the relationship between the actress and the actor, leaving them to fritter away within it. Again and again I was obliged to choose between various codified conditions which I believed I had discovered were merely dialogic universalities.



But what, then, remains? Everything does, albeit in altered constellations. And this variability excites not only the film's external situation, it also gives rise to its inner meaning, its syntagmata. Any single frame could be run through all the variations likely to affect it in the near future, each picture being no more than the sum of all of its variations. Thus, it ostensibly escapes the power apparatus that could fix it. But the procedure here is far more precise. Pilz sets out by eliminating the relationship which would remove all possible power elements ascribed to the actress and the actor. I could not even claim this to be a negative procedure, in as much as it implies positive processes. Hence my highly idiosyncratic use of privileged knowledge. Since my playback controls the amplitude of variations and regulates it at the same time.

In this sense, then, **Feldberg** knows no complicity with either a fair or a foul mouthing-off behind turned backs, not even under the cloak of critical representation. Otherwise the story, even if it were justified, would be replete with know-it-all-isms. But if Michael Pilz prefers to refrain from aspirations to godliness, this does not merely change the content but also the form of the film, which thus ceases to be omnipotent, while the characters in it simultaneously commence to become carriers of content. In this sense, content is granted a free run within a form impossible without the removal of representation. The originality of such an approach appears to have been brought about mainly by the subtraction of rigid power structures, thus setting free a new potentiality of films, generating a non-representational force.

No other film knows better how to find a beginning or an ending, since this one begins or ends at the very moment I start or stop watching it. It seems foolish, at first, to be interested in the beginning or end of this film, its origins or possible futures, since the film is not over for quite some time. Neither the historical nor the eternal is to be found here, only the temporally incongruous. Pilz does not interpret the past, since this film does not have any past. He does not prophesy, because the film has no sense of future. Time depends on the viewing – a viewing directed against our culture, thoughts running counter to the rhythm of the film, benevolence directed towards the sounds.

These images contain only a minimum of structural constants and homogeneities. They are, however, no less definite, since their rules are mapped out within the framework of a continuity. This continuous variation, indeed, refers to every image, in the manner of a very generalised chromaticism. In that respect, all the parts of the film reveal themselves as images of transposition. This is a musical film, because in it every form of modifications of alteration has been mustered, disallowing any repetition of the same note without achieving different results. That is a musical form of continuity or discontinuity.

The operations at work on the style and design of each frame are nothing less than exact frequency indicators, themselves (still) a part of the film, although they do not contradict the content. Affections without subject matter, variations without any indications for action. What counts are the specific means to realise the goal of a continuity of variations.

This film runs through many metamorphoses imposed on it by Michael Pilz, though in reality it merely crosses over them, only assuming a knowing attitude. Pilz connects his frames along a line of variation through which he escapes the domination of narration, and arrives somewhere beyond a dominant influence. In fact, the conditions of dominance are part of their production process only in as much as they were subtracted, scrapped or severely curtailed. This film is simply only a carrier of variations. It only unfolds within conditions of variation. What matters in variation is their conditions of frequency, the modifications of those conditions, insofar as they engender claims or statements in accordance with variable coefficients along a line of transformation.

The subjugation of form under frequency of variation, the subjugation of subject matter under intensity, the more intensive variation of affections, seem to me to be achieving two significant goals here: criticism is transferred to outer form and subject matter, in the sense of *theme* and *ego*. Here, there is an order, an order of variations, on intensity and affections. The variations of sentences may interrupt, contradict or cut across one another. Equally, they may continue from one another, forming part of the same continuity.

The line of variation does not, however, run between the actress and the actor, since between them only a fabric of relations and options is showing up.

And yet, it all takes place – even the story!

Erwin Puls, March 1991, Vienna

Cinequest 1991 closes with perhaps its most extraordinary work, **Feldberg**, a film of exceptional beauty and sensitivity. Instead of manipulating us into an emotional state, Pilz brings us an opportunity to authentically experience human relations and our natural surroundings and thus to discover genuine feeling.

In this evocative work, we hear and see the interactions of a man and a woman in a pristine forest. We gain a sense of intimacy with them and nature. Suddenly we leave the worries of our scattered lives and begin to remember the primal elements of existence: earth, wind, fire, water, people, creation. This epiphanic process demands a patience and an almost meditative state, but it is so worth the effort – just as a journey to a mountain meadow requires some effort in order to find its treasures.

We leave the traditions of narrative for a more open approach to cinema. There are suggestions and onsets of a storyline, but almost everything remains a mystery for our encountering. This is a film that will allow you to observe and exist, without anxiety, without demands, and it allows you a rare glimpse into the life of things.

*THE SECOND ANNUAL SAN JOSE FILM FESTIVAL,
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White on black. The light in the darkness. The silence in the noise. The world is created like this in Michael Pilz's film **Feldberg**, which was screened in Riga during the last *Arsenal* (1992). But it would not be precise to call the film the product of Pilz's creative work. He uses the language of cinematography for building and bringing to the people his philosophical model of how he feels about the world.

All 14 films by Michael Pilz (in formal terms, we can classify some of them as documentaries and other ones as feature films) are in point of fact philosophical and psychological sketches. Whether the main character is an actor or documentary existing person, is of no importance at all. Michael Pilz does not open stories with realistic events. Action, people, gestures, tears, noises – these are all parts of the external rhythm of life and we do not have less or more important details.

It is almost impossible to tell the story of **Feldberg**. The spectators themselves are allowed to interpret what is going on and also to build the story in their imagination. Pilz proposes the system of signs in various dimensions. He does not like the didactic way of telling which we can often see in so-called “films of action”. How to build the story of action and how to join separate elements of visibility or meaning – is the problem of the spectators. Everything depends on the emotional and intellectual level of the spectator. On the dark screen appear clear white dots, which take the shape of letters. They fill the screen chaotically and then change into words, terms which at the end bring the information. These are only the titles of the film.

In the centre of the film there are two people – a man and a woman. Pilz does not give names to his heroes, nor their past, not even their ages and voices. He takes away all these things which would be able to help us understand. During two hours the heroes are not allowed to say a word. Nature is speaking instead of them – knocking at the door, the echo of footsteps, autumn grass, weeping rain. The man is not the main hero of the film although it is his portrait that we can watch throughout the film. The actors do not play any roles, they just exist on the screen.

Everything in the film lives its own inner life and there is no difference between a man or a blade of grass. And only together they form the total scene of the world.

The camera accidentally comes across the silhouette of the man. We do not know how long he is staying here – for a moment or for eternity. There is a quietness in his gestures and slow movements, only in his lips and eyes we can feel an inner intensity. Maybe it is a hint about the relationship to the past, maybe – to the future. But the path on which the hero will step after a moment is not of an accidental nature, but one of the codes for the solution of the film.

Michael Pilz worked with his actors with the method of Tai Chi for a while, so the film is also built like the model of this oriental attitude to the world. That’s why there is a slow balanced rhythm on the one hand and inner excitement on the other hand. When the spectator agrees to take up the rhythm which is proposed by the director and his rules of the game, he starts to feel good and enjoy himself. The faces of both the man and the woman appear on the screen as a confirmation of the spectator’s expectations. Michael Pilz searched for one underlying principle. And he found it in the ancient Chinese, who discovered the principle of interaction – Yin and Yang, the structure which regulates the life of the universe. The image of the woman is only a part of the universal rhythm. That’s why the director makes the concrete image of the woman indefinite. You may assume that she is young or that she is old. You can see in her eyes at the same time hope, expectations, indifference and

isolation. Pilz uses Tai Chi in the sense of the simultaneous beginning of two opposite phenomena (as the philosopher Lao-tzu said). The road which is between man and woman is attractive and retractive at the same time. One does not exist without the other. Everything is close and isolated, eternal and instantaneous at the same time. You must feel the whole from a part and the uninterrupted stream from the interrupted moment. The two are one.

The landscape keeps the feeling of presence of a man even if he is not there. But in the landscape there does not exist the confrontation between a man and nature. The portrait of the woman is of the same importance as the wind and the trees. The landscape does not give the illustration and does not comment on the human passion. Nature is as alive and complicated as the two people continue to be for each other.

The first meeting of the man and the woman is happening more in our imagination than in reality. The man is lonely, the woman is lonely. They are looking at us or, maybe, at each other. Look straight into the camera, straight into the eyes. But this look is not concrete, it is blind. It seems as if it met a wall in its way and returned to the deepness of the soul.

Slow, tender rain falls on the lonely man. The earth and the heaven are joining each other. The rain (Yin – water and the beginning of the woman) and the man (Yang) are also joining each other. The rain becomes stronger and its noise is louder than any other noises. This is the moment of harmonious unity.

The physical contact between man and woman is nervous and instinctive. He declares his physical superiority, she obeys. That’s the rule of nature. The aim of the game is to conquer. But there are things not for the eyes of strangers and Pilz leaves the man and the woman together and does not show what happens next.

The pulse of the universe is still beating. Day is followed by night. And the night noises take away the day’s tension. The night makes nature pause in the action. And it is not important, whether the morning has come or the moment which lasts a hundred years has happened between sunset and sunrise. These are other people. The opposite points have come close. They still keep their spiritual autonomy, but already exist near each other. Black and white have changed into the various-coloured harmony of human relations. And these eyes which look at us (so different, lonely and contradictory) are maybe the only concrete look from the screen to the auditorium. Only one time in the film the woman allows the man to conquer her, but it is a kind of renunciation. And in spite of the fact that the man won the struggle, he is not the conqueror or winner.

Tai Chi includes opposite pairs – dark and light, action and peace, Yin and Yang: the action itself, the opposite of the peace, starting with peace and returning to peace.

All develops in one way and then back.

Already at the beginning, in the way between man and woman, Pilz proposes their logical repulsion. In the Holy Book of Teresa of Avila we can read: “O God, you know that we do not understand ourselves, we do not know our desires and all the time go away from those whom we love and for whom we are longing”.



The light and the darkness usually force each other out. The sigh of the woman is in contrast with the silence of the house, but the shaft of light leaves its shape in the dark house. In the silence of the landscape we hear the heavy steps of the man. But the stone building which he made on the shore of the lake will not be the basis for a family house, it is just a heap of stones. By this time the hand of the woman is indifferently playing with the piece of glass. Something has been broken ...

In Pilz's film there is external simplicity and the mystery of reality. It is not always easy to translate the visual frames. But you do not need to do it. Pilz leaves open the borders between imagination and reality not only for the spectators but also for the heroes inside the film. Was the stone building real, was the glass broken, did two people meet amidst a nature of ancient beauty or did it only happen in their expectations? There exist the variations ...

Before Pilz the existence of the real world (being in time and space) and the unreal one (without time and space) was recognized by Jean-Paul Sartre and not only by him. Sartre considers that only the position of consciousness determines the world of imagination as the real universe. Probably this process is also two-sided. Our consciousness can not recognize the real world as existing objectively. The Austrian filmmaker Michael Pilz interprets all concepts and positions in a multisemantic way and this is the charm and the fascination of his film.

Both the visual and the philosophical level of cinematography are important for Pilz. Sometimes we get a false feeling that the system of visuality is very simple and even didactic in this film.

The director shows the hands of the woman and how she washes her hair, the face of the man under the open air near the fire. The shapes of the fire that play upon the face of the hero. The director realizes the passive attempt to join the man and woman beginning one more time. We see the back of the woman looking out of the window at the man by the fire. The rabbit is being roasted over the fire as if it were the body of a naked woman. Or maybe it is once again the play of imaginations? But Pilz likes to make the spectators guess. He allows them to see it for a long time (at some moments only a short time) in order to understand what is going on. He makes the spectator become doubtful – do you really see what you see at this moment? He does not give the advice to trust only one's eyes, because we often only pretend that we understand what is in this film and do not feel it with our emotions and senses. Pilz invites the spectator to become the co-author of the film.

In one of the interviews the director said: "In my childhood a good movie had to be a shock and make the spectators sit in their seats without movement and watch the story and action. But I myself am able to decide what makes me feel and what not. Film does not need to be aggressive and make one change one's mind. I want my spectators to create together with me and put into this process as much emotion as they like to".

Pilz always leaves the frame unfinished. He likes to play with the fractures and space. All can be understood by comparing. There are film directors who build little ships

and organize big sea battles in a glass of water and then they are proud if the spectators see in this the waves of the ocean. Michael Pilz tries to help the spectators understand themselves – how they feel the world. That's why sometimes in this film the mountain looks like small stones and small stones look like great mountains. Pilz tests the perception of the spectators. That's why he leaves us for a long time together with nature and then remakes the position: the appearance of a human being in nature changes everything. The whole turns out to be a part of another whole. Pilz allows the spectators to finish this drawing .

I would like to say that in fact the film by Pilz is a collage of autonomous episodes lasting for several minutes. But they are edited in a calculated order. And only the whole film is the reflection of the universe of the emotions.

Pilz does not hide the editing of the film, on the contrary, sometimes even demonstrates it. One after another he shows three seemingly very similar episodes, but they are very different. These are three attempts to make contact between human beings. Not in a physical, but in a mental sense. People are sitting together, but they are so far from each other. He has something to say to her, but she does not want to listen. The man extends his hand but as a response receives only indifference (maybe deserved). Then they exchange roles. The woman is ready for tenderness, the man refuses her. Three attempts to perceive another one as oneself and three failures. Why? The film does not answer this question. But it is the only question in **Feldberg**. This film is a meditation about our existence.

Like the film itself the heroes emerge from the imagination and return to the darkness of the universe. The pulse of life continues outside of the film and says by its peace – everything goes away, everything returns.

Feldberg is an encounter with emotions, consciousness and subconsciousness. Two people wander around with the hope of meeting each other, with the hope of making contact with themselves and another person and nature. But it is decided that they must leave ...

Who are these people? Lovers at a bad moment in their relationship? Or maybe strangers who have met for the first time? Maybe people who will not meet each other? Who are we in this world and will we meet each other?

The charm of Pilz's film is not only visual but also its philosophical motive. Nothing is so simple and nothing is so complicated as we are told. The film makes the spectators listen and the listeners see. It makes us think about basic things in life, about inner forces and inner actions. Using only basic concepts – water, earth, people, fire, the universe – Pilz makes us forget for the moment about everyday little things.

Will this world which we could build during this film be real or unreal? It depends on how much we allow ourselves to use our emotions in the labyrinth of the film. In any case this film guarantees each of us some gains and some losses. Everybody will receive what he has deserved.

*Daira Abolina,
"The questionnaire of Michael Pilz",
pre-diploma work before finishing Film High School (VGIK)
in Moscow, spring of 1993, Riga, Latvia*

Before I was able to investigate the hot-blooded new cinema of tropical Asia for the IFFR, for a decade I took an annual winter trip through the German-speaking centre of Europe.

It was the year of Michael Pilz' **Feldberg** when I first came to Austria for the Rotterdam Film Festival. I think the film was premièred at the Austrian Film Days in Wels, but a beautiful old cinema in Vienna was rented for this visitor from Rotterdam in order to do justice to the radiant 35mm image and to have the best experience of the minimal yet meticulous soundtrack. I was impressed by the craftsmanship and the visual and audio purism even though I couldn't know at the time that Pilz was about to abandon working with classical film techniques and become a pioneer in using handy video formats.

Maybe Pilz wanted to try it one more time: to make a film that recognizes the extremes of purism in cinema while also being state-of-the-art in its sound and vision. And so very expensive for an avant-garde film. A film that could measure up technically to mainstream cinema and which the maker and therefore only allowed to be screened in qualified cinema. This was a demanding if not impossible paradox and the beautiful, secretive and pure **Feldberg** remained as seldom screened exception to the rule that avant-garde is a poverty-stricken art.

Feldberg can be described as a drama film, because it has two actors, but it is above all a masterclass in cinematographically capturing a breathtaking mountain landscape. Pilz is himself a talented cameraman, but on this occasion he turned to Peter Schreiner. Only later, for instance after seeing Schreiner's own film **BLAUE FERNE** (1994), is possible to see just how essential Schreiner's contribution was to Pilz' masterpiece.

This year, a film was presented that took me back to the early 1990s. To 1990 itself, to be precise. To the year of **Feldberg**. We're talking about the stunning **BELLAVISTA** by Peter Schreiner indeed, cameraman on **Feldberg**. Beautiful, calm and self-assured in black and white and shot in one location, a forgotten German-speaking enclave in the Italian Alps, the kind I thought no longer existed. Schreiner deliberately allowed a lot to pass him by. He filmed his small archaic community as it were with archaic means. He has picked up where he left off in his closely related film **I CIMBRI** (1991) after having not filmed for a long time. The power of his work has remained equally strong. Beautifully captured light in the endless grey tones between black and white may well have something timeless.

And they are not only beautiful shots of the mountain village Sappada/Pladen/Plodn (depending on which language you speak) in the sun or in the snow.

We listen closely to the amazing old language and the occasionally dramatic life stories. Stories sometimes with angular philosophies of life and peasant poetry, but poetry

it certainly is.

Schreiner would appear to have withdrawn for a long time in the landscape and among the people who populate his films. Chopping wood instead of making films. It seems to have had the desired result. Capturing the peace, the way of life and reasoning in the isolated mountain community is recorded with an incredible amount of respect and sensitivity. One season more or less seems less relevant.

During the absence of Schreiner, Pilz has built up an imposing video oeuvre, focusing on a personal perspective and lengthy meditations. Meditations that have occasionally led to extremely long films such as his travel diary from Siberia **PRISYÁDIM NA DOROZHKU/LET'S SIT DOWN BEFORE WE LEAVE** (1995). Or the exhaustive portrait screened during the recent Holland Festival (Rotterdam, Holland) of the theatre maker Jack Garfein **THAT'S ALL THERE IS** (2006).

Films lasting 10 hours in the case of Pilz. Films in black & white in which an incomprehensible mediaeval German is spoken in the case of Schreiner. They asked for it, you could say. To be admired for their courage, but also to be relegated to the fringe.

Pilz and Schreiner of course only form an exceptional fringe within Austrian documentary, that with names such as Ulrich Seidl, Michael Glawogger and Nicolas Geyrhalter is itself exceptional enough to have a clear profile in an international sense. Characteristic for the Austrian situation is that the exceptional fringe (Seidl, Glawogger and Geyrhalter certainly don't make television) has its own fringe.

A fringe that is occasionally supported and cherished reluctantly, but apparently there's always some money to be found for real art in Austria. And that certainly makes the journey worthwhile every year.

And yes, the mountain comes to Mohammed. **BELLAVISTA** is coming to Rotterdam.

*Gertjan Zuilhof,
In the Mountains — Notes on a Certain Kind of Austrian Cinema,
Rotterdam International Film Festival, November, 2006*

Original title	Feldberg
English title	Feldberg
Country of production	Austria
Years of production	1987–1990
Date of completion	September 1990
Process & Format	35 mm color negative 1:1,85
Sound system	Optical sound, DOLBY-A Stereo
Running time (24 i/s)	115 minutes
Length	3.200 meters
Script & Realization	Michael Pilz
Cinematography	Peter Schreiner
Sound	Reinhold Kaiser
Art direction & set decoration	Mario Bräuer
Actors	Thomas Rauser, Maria Martina
Taijiquan	Wang Dongfeng
Editors	Michael Pilz, Hubert Canaval
Music composition & performance	Masik Janos
Sound mix	Sipos Istvan
Optical sound	Mafilm Audio Limited, Budapest
Negative & laboratory	AGFA XT 320, Listo Film Vienna
Print & laboratory	AGFA CP 1, Listo Film Vienna
Lights & colors	Franz Rabl
Assistant director	Othmar Schmiderer
Assistant camera	Elke Harder
Location manager	Claudia Brody
Script supervisor	Andreas Kopriva
Makeup & hair	Karin Schön
Costumes	René Diamant
Stage & electrician	Dietmar Blochberger
Produktion manager	Michael Katz, Gebhard Zupan
Producer	Michael Pilz
Executive producer	Veit Heiduschka
Coproduction & executive production	WEGA Filmproduktions GesmbH., Vienna
Financial support	Austrian Film Fund & Austrian Television
First screening	16 October 1990, Austrian Film Days, Wels, Austria
Festivals	Wels, Austrian Film Days, October 1990 Vienna, <i>Viennale</i> , International Film Festival 1991 Rotterdam, International Film Festival 1991 Athens, USA, Athens Film Festival 1991 Figueira da Foz, Portugal, Festival Internacional du Cinéma, September 1991 San Jose, California, Cinequest Film Festival, September 1991 Riga, Latvia, <i>Arsenal</i> , International Film Festival 1992
Feldberg	was filmed between June and September 1989 on original locations called <i>Feldberg</i> near the towns Eggenburg and Pulkau in Lower Austria. In 1989 the book "DONNER.blitz – Notizen zu einem Filmprojekt" (THUNDER.lightning flashing – notes on a film project) by Michael Pilz was published by the Cultural Department of the Government of the Province of Lower Austria.
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