

Il faut apprendre à voir

Video by Michael Pilz
Austria 1993, 136'

Without language there would be no poetry, but there would be no wars.

Arthur Koestler

This video was filmed in and around Delphi, Greece, on 25, 26 and 27 September 1988, at a historic meeting of the European Federation of Audiovisual Filmmakers on the occasion of the European Cinema and Television Year, concerned with questions of cultural manipulation through mass media (Delphi Declaration).

Since then the original 8 mm-videotapes have aged and partly lost or changed their colours. Beside these unexpected effects overexposure and some other operations of the handheld video-camera (a Blaupunkt CR 8000) have more and more captured my interest.

Ever since my early works on film in the late fifties I like to film in a way that maybe called editing in the camera. The same happened here. This approach of exposition let the audience have similar experiences to mine watching and listening to the film when I was looking through the camera.

Some camera movements I post-edited in slow motion and accordingly I faded out the noises: Suddenly you see and you see that you see. That's all. One can watch this video also in parts, in different parts and at different times since the whole is shown in it's details.

The title *Il faut apprendre à voir* relates to a casual dialogue between a Portuguese film director and an English lady about art and industry.

Michael Pilz, Vienna, June 1993



(...) Let us now turn to an exhibition that was likewise part of the Wiener Festwochen. Almost unnoticed, Michael Pilz showed his video installation **Delphi Declaration** in a side gallery of the Messepalast. In a neatly whitewashed room, which was apparently decorated in ancient Greek fibreboard years ago, white pieces of paper are attached to the wall in a terrible, cold neatness, conference papers of a symposium that met in Delphi on questions of cultural manipulation by the audiovisual mass media. The papers on the left are recognizably draughts, since lines are crossed out and there are hand-written notes in the margin, while on the opposite side is the final copy, clinical, neat and orderly. The entire room exudes utmost objectivity. At the back, in a small darkened room three cheap, somewhat grimy garden chairs have been placed in front of a TV set. From midnight to midnight the very personal conference movie of Michael Pilz is being shown as an endless loop: It is a matter of absolute subjectivity. He shows the conference from the viewpoint of the bored participant, he roams through Delphi and its environs with his camera, he observes the people that live there, then he is interested in a jellyfish in the ocean or a piece of paper that is blown along the street by the wind. All of this is neither technically perfect (the copying process resulted in additional strange colour effects) nor informative in the usual sense of the word, but watching it warms the cockles of one's heart. All of it, in its tension between outside and inside, order and untidiness, objectivity and ..., invites us, in Pilz's own words, "to an optical and acoustic reflex zone massage" in an entirely unobtrusive and pleasantly undidactic way. I sat in front of the television for quite a while and just enjoyed myself. Twice visitors came into the room, studied the documents with knitted brows, briefly looked into the small room and left. They probably mistook me for a part of the installation.

Jürg Jegge,
"Festwochenpawlatschen",
FORUM, No. 473-477, page 97,
Vienna, July 1993

At a conference which took place in Vienna in December 1986, the rules which should be applied to regulate the national as well as the international transmissions via radio and television were, perhaps for the first time, considered at length. It is all too well known that neither of these two mass media can be barred by geographical or man-made boundaries between different countries. It is therefore imperative that control is exerted of this mass media which reaches individuals living in cities, villages and even the most isolated arctic and tropical areas all over the globe.

Since its introduction and operation on a world-wide scale, TV has become the most efficient vehicle not only to inform, but to exert a control over the behavior of millions of human beings hypnotized by the magical power of the TV screen. Its tremendous persuasive power in spreading the paranoid orders broadcast by shrewd dictators in different countries has been the cause of endless suffering and death to millions of people. Since the most remote times, man has been most receptive to the effect of symbols reaching him through the visual and auditory channels. As expressed in an incisive way by Arthur Koestler: "Without language there would be no poetry, but there would be no wars".

If, in the past, this symbolic way of communication could reach only a small audience and the advantage, or more often the damage, caused by charismatic leaders and astute politicians was restricted to the citizens of these particular countries, today the world-wide broadcasting of TV has brought to the fore a more subtle but no less venomous danger – that of its influence on the thinking and behavior of the entire human population. The unscrupulous exploitation of TV by industry, hungry to increase profit has had a most detrimental effect on the value system of the average man, causing him to desire and strive for an ever-increasing number of material goods, persuaded that only by owning these things will he ever achieve happiness and success.

However, I believe that the greatest danger lies in the fact that television today holds an enormous power over the thoughts and attitude of countless children who are constantly bombarded with its vivid and exciting messages. Not only does it hinder the formation of their own creativity since, in fact, the children no longer formulate their own ideas but are fed neatly confectioned concepts, but the damage goes much deeper. Their young and eager minds too easily fall victim to the extremely dangerous influence caused by a mass media that glorifies violence and cruelty. The frightening result is a generation of children who have a calloused and cynical way of viewing the world. Children who grow up indifferent to misery and pain of millions of people.

I would like to end by saying that television is a mass media with a tremendous potential for influencing in a positive way its spectators, if controlled by highly qualified and ethically conscious authorities.

Rita Levi-Montalcini,
"Some reflections on cultural manipulation
by audiovisual mass media",
Delphi, September 1988



European Audiovisual Charter – Delphi Declaration

From Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Eire, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Island, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, The United Kingdom, Yugoslavia, from all Europe, men and women of the Arts, directors, writers, musicians and academies, impelled by a sense of urgency, have gathered in Delphi.

Film and television are in the throes of a cultural crisis and we are gravely concerned for their future in Europe.

This Declaration is addressed to public opinion, European governments and the institutions of the European Community.

Film and television, by their widespread influence and dominant nature, have become a decisive factor in our culture. For it is our culture that is at stake:

1. Each individual has a right to personal development, through knowledge shared emotion and experience.
2. The public must have freedom of choice.
3. Creative artists must have freedom of expression.

Yet these rights, the means of personal development and communication, are all too often abused. Political and economic forces misappropriate them, turning them into tools of power.

It is the responsibility of all of us to fight against the gradual erosion of cultural identities in Europe. Everyone has the right to see creative work which expresses his national characteristics, particularly in his own language.

It is our responsibility to guarantee the free flow of ideas, news and creative works. Censorship, interference, manipulation for political or commercial ends are all threats to democracy.

It is our responsibility to protect the arts from those who are out to make a profit. Stand firm against the threat to the rights of both the public and directors. Commercial television must not pervert works of art and turn them into advertising props.

Do not allow them to continue cutting, mutilating and disfiguring the creative works of others.

Call a halt to their pretence of making programmes for viewers, while selling viewers to advertisers.

Thus the integrity and future of our television rest in your hands.

In this year of Cinema and Television, as Europe moves towards the free market in 1992, and the world approaches the year 2000, it is our duty to remind Governments of their duty.

We are fighting for human development and democracy.

It is a battle in which Governments must fight at our side.

Article 1

Film and television arises from an expression of many experience and imagination, and it is a real part of living culture.

Each work is also an expression of its creator's personality.

Because of this, a film or a television programme is not merely a product like other products: and the way that it is put before the public needs to reflect this distinction.

European laws and regulations need to take this into account.

Article 2

Every group of people has a right of access to film and television that reflects its social and cultural character with particular regard to the importance of its own language.

Whatever the particular contribution to any piece, its author is to be encouraged, to work in his own language.

National and European laws should protect cultural and linguistic identities by specific arrangements for financial subsidy, quotas and guarantees for distribution.

Article 3

The various countries in Europe should make common cause to sustain the development of film and television production in those countries that are economically weaker.

European institutions and in particular the institutions of the Common market should develop an effective policy to sustain and protect the voices of ethnic minorities.

Article 4

Only those physical persons who have created a piece – filmmakers, writers of the original work, of the screen play, the dialogue and the music – have the right to count as authors the piece in question.

By the sheer fact of having created the work in question, the author enjoys a right of absolute ownership proof against all contestation. This right consists of attributes of a moral sort, that are perpetual and inalienable, as well as of a hereditary character.

Article 5

The moral right that belongs to an author protects his standing and his work, which the public has a right to see in its original form.

This right includes the right of the author to claim back the right of origination of his work and to object at any moment to any modification of it by addition, suppression or change of any part of it whatsoever. Every pretension to reduce or suppress this moral right is null and void.



The definitive form of any audiovisual work is established by the director.

Actors and other performers enjoy rights in respect of their appearance and their interpretation in any audiovisual work in which they take part.

Article 6

Recognition of the standing and the independence of every originator, author and performer guarantees them a means of living from the fruit of their labour.

No public authority nor any national or European standards can deprive an author of his exclusive right to negotiate, individually or collectively, the conditions upon which the distribution of his work may be allowed as well as the conditions of his remuneration. This is without prejudice to any sort of legal or mandatory licence.

Article 7

Any piece of film or television only has genuine existence in so far as it is put before the public.

Authors of any audiovisual work enjoy the right to a bona fide presentation of it according to the custom and practice of their profession. Failure to do this well mean that the author recovers his rights in the work in question.

Article 8

Audiovisual mass communication by virtue of its dominant place in society, performs a function of common concern.

The way in which film and television is financed is therefore critical. It confers upon those who finance productions a power of decision which may or may not go along with the creative intention and the independence of the author.

It is the business of public authorities of each country as well as at the European level to foster creativity by the diversity of the sources of finance and so sustain independent production.

Systems of subsidy and underwriting of productions contribute to this aim.

Article 9

The concentration of the means of production and distribution in the hands of a small number of individuals and multinational companies fundamentally threatens democratic rights.

Every form of censorship, direct or indirect must be abolished.

The independence of artistic expression should be protected against political and commercial pressure.

Article 10

Films are primarily meant for showing in a cinema, and the public has therefore the right to see them there.

European laws and regulations should establish a chronological order in the various media for distributing films: first the cinema, then video, then Pay-TV and finally other television.

Article 11

Every individual has the right to access to all information and all film and television material but at the same time he has the right to be protected against the abuses of its manipulation for political or commercial ends.

National and European governments have the obligation

- to preserve free access to all media and
- to see that this media
- 1. in their schedules acknowledge social and cultural pluralism
- 2. avoid degrading and debating people's humanity and
- 3. contribute to freedom of choice and to fostering a spirit of critical appreciation.

Article 12

The public has a specific right, parallel to that of author and reinforcing it, to receive productions in their entirety, and in particular without interruption by advertisements.

The public should equally have a right of feedback to the output, and in particular of receiving all vital information.

Article 13

Audiovisual media are in our time the dominant means of communication. While they can turn young people into sheep, they can also be a source that quickens the creative imagination: they can spark off fresh expression, and they can spur a critical approach in the face of worn out ideas. They can set people thinking.

The art of film and television should find their place in the educational system of the countries of Europe.

The development of specialist teaching methods, fitting in with present and future technological progress, will be the best stimulant of artistic creativity, and the greatest encouragement to critical and intelligent participation that is part and parcel of a system that is genuinely pluralist and democratic.

Article 14

Audiovisual production is an integral part of the cultural heritage of our countries and of the record of our times, and should be conserved and kept in good condition.

This heritage should be freely available to the general public.

European Federation of
Audiovisual Filmmakers and
the Greek National Committee A.E.C.T.V.,
Delphi, Greece, 27 September 1988



Original title	Il faut apprendre à voir
English title	We Need To Learn How To See
Country of origin	Austria
Years of production	1988/1993
Date of completion	27 April 1993
Producer	Michael Pilz
Production	Michael Pilz Film
Original format	Video-8
Tape format	Beta, DV, PAL, 4:3, colour
Sound	Mono (Ch1+2)
Running time	135'14"
Language	English, Greek, Spanish, a.o.
Subtitles	No subtitles
Number of tapes	2
Concept & realization	Michael Pilz
Cinematography	Michael Pilz
Original sound recording	Michael Pilz
Music	Anonymous (radio)
Editing	Michael Pilz
Financial support	T.A.S.P., Vienna Stadttheater Wien Sony Austria GmbH (for the installation)
Il faut apprendre à voir	was part of the art installation Delphi Declaration, concerned with the conferences of the European Federation of Audiovisual Filmmakers in Venice, Italy and in Delphi, Greece, in autumn 1988, on the occasion of the European Cinema and Television Year. The art installation Delphi Declaration was part of the project Drehmomente and einsiedeln – ein zustand, (Michael Pilz Film, Tanztheater Sebastian Prantl and Stadttheater Wien), for the Vienna Festival 1993.
First screening	around the clock during the Vienna Festival, 15 May until 20 June 1993.
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