

Prisyadim na dorozhku

First montage

Video by Michael Pilz
Austria 1995, 627'

While I am sitting still and doing nothing, spring is coming and the grass is growing.

Zenrin Kushu

(...) For February 1994 we are planning a journey via Moscow to Siberia, to the towns of Novosibirsk, Novokuznetsk and the remote villages of Baidajevko and Apanas. Bertien van Manen knows the area, she has friends there and she speaks Russian. I will therefore entrust myself to her local knowledge and guidance. Concerning the work on the film the only things I will determine ahead of time will be the cinematographic technique used and the staff. Everything else is to be largely left to on-the-spot decisions and coincidence (travelling as *marvelling*).

Perhaps the content and form of the film can best be described by saying that in the form of a *cinematographic journey* I will endeavour to shoot the manifold ways of approaching one another and responding to one another, the kinds of dialogues, encounters, the *interfaces of several worlds*.

I will attempt to not only produce an image of the others but to enable them to create their own image for me.

To this extent this film will report on the experience of the effect of *looking* – inwards from the outside as well as outwards from the inside – and how images arise and emerge from that and in turn affect our way of looking.

I see that I see (Heraclitus).

*Michael Pilz,
Outline of the project "To Siberia",
Vienna, August 1993*

Since about 1990 the Dutch photographer Bertien van Manen has been working on a project for a book (*A hundred summers, a hundred winters* – Boekhandel De Verbeelding, Amsterdam) and a series of exhibitions (Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; The Photographers' Gallery in London; Provinciaal Museum voor Fotografie in Antwerp; Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland; Galerie Agathe Gaillard in Paris; Nederlands Foto Instituut in Rotterdam, Musée de la Photographie in Paris, Portfolio Gallery in Edinburgh, Gallery of Photography in Dublin, Institut Néerlandais in Paris and others) for which she undertook several journeys to the former Soviet republics. In my opinion she is one of the best Dutch photographers, with a strongly personal style that is direct, spontaneous and realistic. For more than twenty years she and I have not only been good friends, but have also shared similar aesthetic and philosophical concerns about the perception of reality and its photographic and cinematographic reflection.

This affinity as well as the fact that Bertien van Manen wanted to complete her project in the former Soviet republics in early 1994 in order to prepare the book and the exhibitions made me suggest to her in summer 1993 a joint journey. I wanted to shoot a personal film that was to deal not only with a distant country and unfamiliar people but also with that which I call the unfamiliar in ourselves.

The decision on the timing and route of our journey I left to Bertien. I purposefully did not want to do any preparatory research, but instead preferred to face the experience with an open mind and see what would happen. When it became



clear that we would travel to a Siberian village in deepest winter I abandoned the idea of shooting on 16 mm film and instead decided to use the small, handy and inconspicuous video technique which would make it possible to travel and film without excessive burdens. Working with 16mm film would not only have made our plans much more complicated in technical, organizational, personal and financial terms, but it would also have meant making a number of aesthetic decisions beforehand, since a more or less direct approach responding spontaneously to coincidences would hardly have been possible, given the expected travelling, living and climatic conditions.

Michael Pilz,
"Siberian diary",
Vienna, March 1994/June 1995

Prisyadim na dorozhku was filmed on a journey which I undertook in the company of the Dutch photographer Bertien van Manen and the Russian photographer Volodya Shabankov between 17 February and 5 March 1994. It led me from Vienna to Amsterdam and on to Moscow, to Novokuznetsk, to the small Siberian village of Apanas and eventually back again via Moscow.

The basis of this first montage are VHS video copies of the thirty hours of the original Hi8 material. It was recorded on Sony Hi8 video cassettes (E5-30HMEX and E5-60HMEX) with a Sony Hi8 Camcorder (VX1E with high density three-chip precision CCD) and with an additional directional microphone (Sennheiser MKE80R).

The linear editing was done with the help of two simple VHS video recorders, without the use of an editing computer or the possibility of sound mixing. With the exception of those visual parts to which music was obviously subsequently added without much technical equipment each frame corresponds to its specific original sound.

This first montage largely corresponds to the chronology of the journey. It was my intention to select more or less the best footage from the entire recorded material without regard for the resulting running time.

This first montage which consists of several parts must be post-edited on the Beta format with regard to certain individual images, sounds and cuts, tempi, rhythms and lengths as well as some of the image and sound qualities.

Prisyadim na dorozhku was an invitation to look and listen and marvel. In the sense of what Franz Blei (Austrian writer at the beginning of this century) intended I tried to film what was closest to me and is yet foreign to us. As far as the Russian language is concerned what mattered to me most was not so much understanding it as capturing its melody.

Michael Pilz,
"First montage, preface",
Vienna, September 1995

Prisyadim na dorozhku is a film for meditation – about people and things far away and close by, about the unfamiliar and the familiar, a winter's journey, images and how they are formed. About listening and looking closely.

About time and illusion, the exterior and the interior, the ephemeral and the present. About that which is cheerful or arduous, about slowness. About accidental and purposeful glances that provide us with sudden insights.

About love. About waiting until the images themselves speak to us. About depictions and reality. About light, twilight and shadows. Stillness. About childhood, aging, work, money.

About the cinema. Looking inside ourselves. Thinking in pictures. About fire. About death. About Masha's radiant eyes, Rudolf's weariness, Volodya's stubbornness, about Robert Frank's truth. About film editing and montage. About Tanya's gentleness, Van Gogh's café, Pyotr's cigarette, Bertien's always being in a hurry. The Gulag Archipel. Vodka, Chekhov, dreams, about the sunlight playing on Sergey's cheek. About matters of *how* and *what*.

Prisyadim na dorozhku is a road movie that explores and reports about these explorations, that follows tracks and leaves tracks behind, that shows how people are doing (in front of the camera) while not hiding how I'm doing (behind the camera). It tells of personal encounters and experiences. Whoever wants to, can let himself be lured on, perhaps less into the distant centre of Asia than into the landscapes of our own mind.

This film does not narrate a story: it is a montage of movements and images, a multitude of small and often inconspicuous events that express something, but do so casually rather than giving themselves an important air. It invites us to look closely while the stories *unfold as though by themselves*. Stories that do not belong together to begin with but are only joined by the film. One image refers to another, one event comments another. A brief instance and what it sees has disappeared the next moment while yet sharpening our view of the following scene, and so on.

It is not *necessary* to watch the film in one go all the way from beginning to end. One can look at it in parts, in different parts and at different times. Depending on one's interest or mood one can approach it as one approaches certain books, landscapes or persons. One meets someone, from time to time, now by coincidence, now intentionally, under different circumstances and in different moods, sometimes with curiosity, sometimes unsure of oneself, at other times sad or cheerful. No encounter is like the one that preceded it. Every new meeting is basically a surprise and leads to new experiences. It is just like travelling. Only by approaching something does it gradually become clear what it is all about.

Michael Pilz,
Vienna, October 1995

Prisyadim na dorozhku is indeed real cinema (and not too many filmmakers can do it nowadays) and includes some beautiful images.

Mario Simondi,
FESTIVAL DEI POPOLI,
Firenze, Italy, 23 October 1995

Its unusually long running time (ten hours), the very personal approach and the origin (as a travelogue), give **Prisyadim na dorozhku** its character of an uncensored diary. Michael Pilz shot this video film (if this is not an expression, then it should be) during a journey to Siberia with the Dutch photographer Bertien van Manen. A travelogue in the footsteps of a photographer, and the film also leaves a trail. Pilz regards the film as a meditation about what is distant and what is near, what is strange and familiar, about a winter journey, about listening and observing, about images and images creating themselves. The film is so full of everyday simplicity that the arrival of an old and full bus in the small Siberian village of Apanas works like a sensational action scene.

The title **Prisyadim na dorozhku** (Let's sit down before we leave) refers to the old Russian custom of sitting down before leaving on a journey so that the traveller may gather his thoughts.

In order to make filming easy in the conditions of the Siberian winter and in the most intimate situations in people's homes, Pilz rejected his initial intention to use 16mm film material. He preferred to use inconspicuous Hi8 video instead. According to Pilz it is not necessary to see the film straight through in one go, but it can be approached like a person whom you can get to know after various long or short encounters.

*Main programme catalogue,
25th INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM,
Rotterdam, January 1996*

Anyone speaking of experimental films – particularly in Austria – usually thinks of a kind of short to very short film. Not least for economic reasons the large format is rare. One filmmaker who has long experimented with more extensive formats is Michael Pilz. The fact that he has so far remained little known is probably due to the pertinaciousness with which he refuses crowd-pleasing compromises as well as to his reserve with regard to self-presentations and presence in the media. He seems to be a pensive person for whom the work means everything, while its reception by the public is of secondary importance.

Selfreflectiveness, one of the constituents of experimental film in general, is also a determining feature of Michael Pilz's films. They address the material and procedures of and by which they are made – to use the words of the Russian formalists. In the process Pilz, – and the only other Austrian to do so is Hans Scheugl – is concerned with issues of (cinematic) time and (cinematic) space, which is of course a delusion, since it is in reality a (limited) surface.

Among the maxims formulated though not always adhered to by Modernism is the one that refers back to Romanticism that in the arts the process is more important than the finished product, that what needs to be supplemented by the viewer is more fascinating than the harmonious whole and that the idea is no less important than its execution. That, however, contradicts the demands of a consumer

society in which a work of art allows a profit only if it is reified into merchandize. As a rule even the public subsidizer who could refuse to obey the mechanisms of the market wants to be given a tangible and presentable result, something that can be used in some way as a legitimation.

Michael Pilz is at best only marginally interested in such a result. For him filmmaking (in a way that is similar to George Tabori's ideal of theater work) is a process that is never completed and can perhaps never be completed whose value and beauty are found precisely in this preliminary quality and its potential for change. Strictly speaking this is the only logical consequence of the fact that any work of art realizes itself over time and with each viewer in a new and different way.

Born in 1943 in the Lower Austrian town of Gmünd, Michael Pilz belongs to the interim generation between the fathers of the post-war avant-garde, Kren, Adrian, Radax and Kubelka, and the second generation of experimental filmmakers who later gathered especially around *Sixpack*. Pilz is only a few years younger than Ernst Schmidt jr. and Hans Scheugl. The number of documentaries, features, experimental and television films, in which he has participated in one way or another – usually in several functions – is considerable and amounts to about fifty by now. He has worked with 8 mm, 16 mm and – rarely – 35 mm film and since 1972 with video, as director, scriptwriter, cameraman, recordist, cutter and producer. Already as early as 1968/69 he shot *VOOM*, an 8mm film with a running time of four hours. In 1972 he was invited to the Venice Biennale with a 25-minute film, and four years later to Cannes with a blown-up super 8 film. In 1977/78 he spent more than a year shooting his four-hour video *SZENEN AUS DEM WIENER MILIEU*. Between 1979 and 1982 he filmed his almost five-hour long film *HIMMEL UND ERDE*, which has been shown at eleven festivals.

Since 1993 Michael Pilz has been working on the ten-hour video **Prisyadim na dorozhku**, his most ambitious project so far, at least in terms of running time. The Russian title refers to the custom of sitting down together (for a small glass of vodka) before setting out on a journey. The round-trip journey documented by the film took him from Vienna and Amsterdam via Moscow to Siberia in the company of the Dutch photographer Bertien van Manen and her Russian colleague Volodya Shabankov. The warm intimacy of the conversations in the kitchen with their yellow and orange hues contrasts with the wintery beauty of the public places outside. The Russia which Pilz shows in his film differs significantly from the increasingly gloomy images with which the Russians themselves have been persistently providing us in the past few years in a kind of reverse Socialist Realism. As far as the technical aspect of the film is concerned Pilz has intentionally limited himself to the extreme. A superficial surface aesthetics would have very much run counter to his intentions. The seemingly amateur-like quality of the photographs and sound is an essential component of the underlying concept of cinemato-



graphic expression. In the opening titles of the first montage Pilz not only gives the technical details of the production, but also leaves the time code so that the viewer is constantly reminded of the camera as well as the actual passing of time during each take.

In the first instance **Prisyadim na dorozhku** is undoubtedly a documentary. At the same time it is also an experimental film. There is a lot to be said in favour of not regarding documentaries as a separate genre as is usually done but as a classification that cuts across genres. A cross-classification then permits us to distinguish between experimental and conventional documentaries, experimental and conventional animated films, experimental and conventional music films etc. In this way **Prisyadim na dorozhku** is an experimental documentary, i.e. a documentary that enters new ground and tries out new approaches.

The participation of two photographers in the journey – they are repeatedly shown in the film – is the basis on which the creation of images – i.e. precisely what Pilz is doing in his film – is also turned into one of its themes. We are occasionally shown images of people looking at images of people. And we repeatedly see and hear animals, especially dogs, in a matter-of-fact way, almost plaintive and certainly entirely unsentimental. Often the camera presents exactly the same perspective for a long time, at other times it becomes more active with pan shots and zooms. There is hardly any action in the traditional sense. Unlike the very sparingly used music, the dialogues do not serve a dramaturgic purpose. They disappear as unexpectedly and fragmentarily as they appear. Statements made directly into the camera remain isolated instances that are not expanded into interviews. If someone has not expressed himself well no correction is attempted. Moreover the Russian conversation usually remains untranslated, except when Bertien van Manen acts as an interpreter. Anyone who does not understand Russian has to perceive the dialogues like music. Sometimes this is a pity. At one point the Dutch and the Russian photographers discuss in Russian whether what Pilz is filming – namely their conversation – is actually interesting. Bertien van Manen, who photographs her conversational partner in this instance which is filmed by Pilz, argues that the object of the photography cannot decide whether the resultant image is interesting: that depends entirely on the subjective judgment of the person taking the picture. The doll inside the doll inside the doll – and at the same time a piece of media philosophy which would be well worth following linguistically. At some point the camera moves in front of the two travelling companions walking along a straight road for almost five minutes. In the twilight it is impossible to recognize their faces. Shabankov talks in Russian, acoustically almost inaudibly, about a passage in the gospels and the necessity of making it understandable to simple people. Then he tosses aside a piece of rope lying on the ground. The two of them walk on silently, all one hears is the crunching of the snow underfoot, but the camera stays with them, the cut occurs

much later; one senses the lingering time and the passing of time, the fascinating tension in the absence of any *activity*: an experimental documentary. In the fourth and final part of the film which contains most of the Moscow photographs the camera repeatedly as a leitmotif descends the escalator of the Metro and of a lift on whose glass panels the Russian word for *visible* has been scribbled in large letters.

Like John Cage, who occasionally permits his listeners to come and go as they please, Michael Pilz does not demand that we watch his entire film. The viewer is the co-creator in the sense that he or she can decide whether and when to watch. This is, however, very different from zapping from one channel to another, since the tempo of the changing takes cannot be influenced, and patience is therefore required while we are watching the film.

Michael Pilz travelled for more than two weeks, shooting 30 hours of video film. That means that even his ten-hour film still contains plenty of ellipses. However, the challenge and daring quality of this film lie in how the individual takes deal with time and how the montage refuses to hasten the viewer along. It is well worth taking up this challenge.

Thomas Rothschild,
"The Beauty of the Preliminary."
The redefinition of
documentary filmmaking by the works
of Michael Pilz."
AUSTRIAN FILM NEWS, No. 3/4
Vienna, June 1996

There is no other festival quite like the one held every two years in Riga, the Latvian capital, the city in which Eisenstein was born. (...)

The festival came about under unusual circumstances. In 1986, a group of Latvian intellectuals and artists, led by the documentary-maker Augusts Sukuts, defied the authorities by showing dozens of anti-establishment films that could not be seen normally in Latvia, then still part of the Soviet Union. They called the festival *Arsenal*, because each film was a weapon in the battle for artistic freedom. The films were shown all over Riga, in schools, parks, halls and cafés, confounding the KGB, who were too stupid to know what was going on.

Ten years later, Sukuts continues to create controversy, though some of the founders of *Arsenal* now sit in the Latvian parliament. (...)

A festival which, so Sukuts claims, contains only films that extend the cinematic language and challenge preconceptions. This is a tall order in a programme of some 200 films, but most of those I saw did just that. For example, there was Michael Pilz's 10-hour video, aptly titled **Let's sit down before we leave**. Life being too short, I did not see all of it, but it was there to dip into. A video diary of a journey the Austrian Pilz made to Siberia with the photographer Bertien van Manen, it gives one a sense of experiencing the trip in every detail.

Ronald Bergan,
THE GUARDIAN,
London, 4 October 1996

A ride in a motorized rickshaw, the heads of pedestrians flying by, teeming crowds on the side of the road, the honking of horns, throttling back, stepping on the gas. This could be India. Then all is silent. A door in a pitch-dark room, light behind it; another room, the chairs and tables are covered with white cloths; this place was abandoned a long time ago. A thunderstorm comes up, but in a different place, flashes of lightning x-ray the branches of a tree and plunge it back into darkness. Sometime later a studio, technical equipment all around. A man puts a cassette into the player and adjusts the speaker, we hear smacking sounds as if someone was treading a fine gravel path, the murmur of a spring. A cup comes into view, extensive lingering, accompanied by flowing water as if by music.

Sequences from Michael Pilz' latest film *WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES* (2005). It stands as probably the most enigmatic montage of visual and audio fragments among the oeuvre of over 50 films this Viennese documentary film-maker has created so far. And it most likely forms the most radical apex of his aesthetic program, which renounces narrative linearity and conventional association of meaning with audio and visual content and composes his material according to fundamental parameters of perception such as loud and quiet, bright and dark, far and near. Almost in a spirit of abandon, a strictly personal arrangement already takes shape during the process of filming. According to his own statements, Pilz films his object not from the head, as it were, but acts on a gut feeling and instinctively keeps an eye on image detail and content, on graphic proportions, light, color, contrasts, and sound; often, he already cuts entire film passages in the camera. His intense listening and looking is borne by what Freud called free-floating attention: Floating free and being attentive and waiting to see what will happen. In a conversation with Christoph Hübner shown in the 3sat TV series „Dokumentarisch Arbeiten“ (“Making Documentaries”, 2000), Pilz gave a good description of this immersion that is oblivious to the world, his complete devotion to his object. Hübner had asked how he, who has never used a tripod, managed to keep the camera so steady: „I don't know how to say it, one moves in so close to these things, physically and emotionally, and reenacts the movement of objects in one's mind, and that way one doesn't shake the camera or blur the images. This can get intense to the point where I don't think about anything. All I do is look, or hear, or I simply am. And I don't even know it. I don't know anything then (...). It's wonderful to come into this freedom. No more thinking. I'm not even doing anything anymore, just letting things be done; It's simply: not doing.“

With *WINDOWS, DOGS AND HORSES*, Michael Pilz not only pushes on with the open and poetic form of his

documentary method, he also brings together material from different times and locations in a single cinematic space. It comprises film and sound footage of various events and encounters between 1994 and 2003. Fortunate discoveries he made on the many journeys he took in recent years – to India, Africa, Cuba, Italy, Turkey, or different Austrian regions. The aforementioned studio, for example, belongs to graphic artist and painter Andreas Ortig from Karlstein, Lower Austria. Footage from these trips sometimes resulted in separate films; this one, however, appears as the associative sum of disparate cinematographic diary notes, a mosaic of experiences, a place from which a star-shaped set of vanishing lines leads to different layers and phases of Pilz' work. In spite of all craft professionalism, knowledge, and acquired urbanity, there is a constant theme running through his work to this day: ever-evolving wonderment.

Just as in Africa. In 1997, Pilz made his first visit to Zimbabwe. Participating in a cultural exchange program, he accompanied musicians and composers Peter Androsch, Keith Goddard, Klaus Hollinetz, Lukas Ligeti, and photographer Werner Puntigam on a visit to Siachilaba, a small settlement of the Bantu people of the Tonga. In the previous year, the „Five Reflections on Tonga Music“ had taken shape in Linz, Austria: Electroacoustic variations on the musical tradition of the Tonga. Both European and African musicians now presented their repertoire to each other, and Michael Pilz documented this confrontation of two different cultures. Not as an ethnographer who learns about a foreign world and breaks it down into discursive patterns, but rather as a body of seeing and hearing that joins in this symphony of the familiar and unfamiliar as an additional audiovisual voice. In creating his imagery, he mostly sets out by listening, as he said once: For his technique of „looking out from the inside“, tones and sounds were as reliable as images as they penetrate deeper into our sensory system. This „looking out from the inside“ creates a reality of its own, one that emerges from Pilz' perception of the outside world and which reaches far beyond a mere documentary style of recording facts. Thus, the footage from Africa that Pilz first included in *EXIT ONLY* (1997/1998) and later in *ACROSS THE RIVER* (1997/2004), focuses on seemingly meaningless details which occasionally turn out to serve as the initial, hardly perceptible trigger points of an entire chain of states of excitement: A man slightly bobs his head and softly hums a tune for himself, almost lethargically; a little later, the entire village is dancing and singing.

In the course of this first stay in Africa, Pilz got to meet musician and instrument maker Simon Mashoko, a virtuoso on the Mbira, to which magic powers are attributed in Africa and whose sounds often lead the way to a long collective state of trance. In 2002, Pilz visited Masho-

ko once more. From the resulting footage, he assembled his film *GWENYAMBIRA SIMON MASHOKO* (2002). A nearly four-hour marathon work of music and singing, of ecstasy and exhaustion. Static shots, occasionally continuing for several minutes without cuts, show Mashoko and his melodic spinning of yarns; no subtitles allow us to escape to secure hermeneutic realms. At the moment of shooting, even Pilz doesn't understand what the individual texts talk about. In 1992, together with choreographer and dancer Sebastian Prantl, he had staged a symposium on dance, music, and film, beautifully titled „entering the bird-cage without making the birds sing“. This goes back to a wise saying by Tao teacher Chuang-Tzu, according to which the respective meanings of language prove to be ineffective when an elemental and primeval state of consciousness is reached. In *GWENYAMBIRA SIMON MASHOKO*, Pilz translates this valuable proposition into action and uses his film equipment as a coproducer, as it were, of an energetic awareness that is opposed to discursive understanding. As with so many other Pilz films, at first sight, the foreign remains unfamiliar, one has to trust the unknown in order to feel familiar with it. That's what Pilz does.

And one has to trust him. When he embarks on his expeditions, never taking the straight road and stopping here and there to make a discovery. Even the most inconspicuous things are marveled at from all sides, sometimes by taking a turn into a side street out of sheer curiosity — this can be wonderful and irritating at the same time and requires advance commitment and attention. The effort pays off, which every one of his films goes to show. Because as he walks, Pilz doesn't drag his feet. He is a vigilant flaneur who really does open up new spaces of seeing, both for himself and the viewer. And he doesn't claim to be smarter than his audience, something that sets him apart from many in his trade. A large number of his videos are works in progress. Not only as projects but also in their inner structure. They are marked by his cautious approach, his drawing near, trying to get his bearings as if, at the outset, the filmmaker knew nothing and had to slowly make things accessible for himself. Like in *INDIAN DIARY* (2000), his chronicle of a stay at a health resort in the small South Indian town of Changanacherry. The views from a room are followed by first attempts at exploring the gardens of the Sree Sankara Hospital. Subsequently, the radius of action is expanded by trips into town. A very busy traffic circle, a procession of people with hats resembling colorful Christmas trees on their heads. Pilz' wonderment is, at the same time, our own amazement. The nurses enter the scene and are established as a fixed ensemble of characters that runs through the entire film. Everyday rituals are rendered visible, massages, ablutions, meditations; step by step, a system

of coordinates emerges that contains ever more fixed points. Occasionally, things that seem puzzling at first make sense in the course of events. As, for instance, the two men on the flat roof of a hospital, where the washing is hanging out to dry. At first, both are seen lying on mats, apparently basking in the sun; they are nonplussed by the camera. Later, Pilz climbs the roof once more and sees that this is the place where they gather for prayer.

A similar process unfolds in Pilz' other great travelogue, *SIBERIAN DIARY — DAYS AT APANAS* (1994/2003), even though here, reflections on the different ways of perceiving and looking at reality lead up to the actual beginning of the film. Not, however, as an elaborate theorem but in anecdotal form, through the personal notes of Dutch photographer Bertien van Manen, who accompanied Pilz to Siberia. With a certain degree of surprise, she relates how she and her Russian photographer colleague used to frequently call Pilz and tell him to take a look at this or that while he was still or already entirely somewhere else, following his very own tracks. She first begins her narration in English but eventually slips more and more into Dutch, and here, too, one is left with the phonetic body of words, merely listening and giving up on the decoding of meanings. In Apanas, a small Siberian village that lies buried under a thick blanket of snow for six months every year and where the film-maker and his two companions spend a few days, we encounter the same (acoustic) image: Pilz hardly understands a word of Russian, nevertheless, he strikes up a conversation — a dialog that does not attempt to fraternize and concedes to alienness. And again, the camera enters into an almost meditative relationship to things it finds and wasn't looking for, and in doing so, it is always specific. A conventional travel report would have probably shown the locals telling us about their hostile natural environment and the tribulations of their lives, far away from and forgotten by Moscow, coupled with images that illustrate the snowed-in scenery and dilapidation. Pilz makes us feel the hardships, the painfully slow passing of time when one is condemned nearly to inactivity, the steamy air in overheated and smoke-filled rooms, which mists up the lens, or simply how it is to walk through deep snow, how every step requires considerable effort and the body — just as the camera — is thrown off balance. Already in 1994, Pilz brought this material together for the first time in the ten-hour version **Prisjädim na dorozku**. Even the significantly shorter 2003 version is still two and a half hours long, and it is easy to picture the TV producers' dismissive gesture, especially when faced with an aesthetics, which opts out of any kind of linear dramatization and, from the viewpoint of documentary mainstream, pursues an almost subversive information policy.

Since 1978 at the latest, Michael Pilz stopped worry-

ing about making his films comply with the format guidelines and rules that competitors on the market adhered to. Before that, Pilz had mainly worked for Austrian Broadcaster ORF. As a co-founder of the „Syndikat der Filmschaffenden“ („Syndicate of Austrian Film Artists“), however, he was, at the same time battling for an Austrian Film Funding Act („Filmförderungsgesetz“), which actually came into effect in 1981 and became an important pillar of Pilz' own projects. In the course of working on FRANZ GRIMUS (1977), the portrait of a farmer, he eventually broke with TV altogether: The producers had scheduled merely four shooting days and four editing days – for Pilz a shockingly short stint for dealing with a person that needed a much longer period of study and involvement. His answer was to follow in 1982: HIMMEL UND ERDE (HEAVEN AND EARTH), a five-hour opus about life on a mountain farm in Styria – filming had extended over one year and editing had taken him another two years. The film starts with a quote from Lao Tse: „Take what is before you as it is, don't wish for anything else, just carry on.“ This can be taken as a programmatic motto for his open documentary concept, which he unfolded to its full extent for the first time here and has consistently pursued to this day.

Just be there. This also applies for the viewer. In the said interview with Christoph Hübner, Pilz maintained that he, who by now was almost exclusively working with video footage, had come to regard the setting of a monitor and a viewer as his favorite form of presentation. Such an intimate space would best enable him to focus on a Film and enter into a dialogue on what he has seen with his own self. And if the audience does not go along with his work in the desired manner? „Even if art is not really free, despite this being laid down in constitutions or basic laws, as an artist one is at least free in a certain sense. In the end, someone will listen now and then. And if no one is there at all, then you just listen to yourself.“

Mark Stöhr,

Musik des Sehens, Der Filmmacher Michael Pilz im Portrait, kolik.film, special issue 5/2006, Vienna, March 2006

Bertien van Manen
 biography (02/2009)
<http://www.bertienvanmanen.nl/>

EXHIBITIONS SOLO (A SELECTION)

2008
 Prague Festival of Art
 Gallerie Robert Morat Triennale der Photographie Hamburg
 Museum für Gestaltung Zürich Switzerland
 yancey richardson Gallery New York
 Fotohof Salzburg Austria
 Museum Ludwig Budapest

2006
 Yancey Richardson Gallery New York
 Galerie van Zoetendaal Amsterdam
 Frans Hals Museum Haarlem Holland
 "New Photography" Museum of Modern Art New York

2005
 Photo España Circulo de Bellas Artes Madrid Spain

2004
 Photo Museum Ulm Germany

2003
 Yancey Richardson Gallery New York
 The Photographers Gallery, Citibank Photographers Prize 2003
 London UK
 Centre Photographique d'Ile-de-France Pontault-Combault France
 Museum Kunst Palast Düsseldorf Germany
 Photo España Madrid Spain
 Printemps de septembre Toulouse France

2002
 Galerie du Jour, Agnès b Mois de la Photo Paris France
 'East Wind West Wind' Photographers' Gallery London UK

EXHIBITIONS GROUP (A SELECTION)

2008/09 Bildmuseet Umea Sweden

2008
 Bucharest Biennale

2007
 'InsideOut' Collections of Amsterdam Institutes FOAM Amsterdam
 'Scènes en Sporen' Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
 Howard Gilman Gallery, 'Hidden in Plain Sight' Contemporary Photographs from the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York

2006
 Op het tweede gezicht' Frans Hals Museum Haarlem
 'L'esprit du Nord' Maison Européenne de la Photographie Paris
 'Frames revisited' De Hallen, Frans Hals Museum Haarlem
 'Dutch insight' Kumho Museum of Art Seoul
 'Stories, Histories' - from the Collection of the Fotomuseum Winterthur

2005
 'In Sight' Contemporary Dutch Photography Art Institute of Chicago
 Martin Gropius Bau Berlin Photography Festival 2005 Berlin
 Palais des Beaux Arts Bruxelles
 'Récits d'une Mondialisation' Palais des Nations Genève (traveling exhibition)

2004
 Artist Opening, Museum of Modern Art New York
 'Cold Play' Présence Suisse Paris Photo Paris
 'Take five' Huis Marseille Amsterdam
 Dunaujváros ICA Budapest Hungary
 'D Foto' San Sébastian
 'Ce que j'ai vu' Fondation Cartier Bresson Paris
 'LINK' Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

2003
 Fundación Carlos de Amberes Madrid
 Centre national de la photographie Jeu de Paume Paris
 Photo's from the collection Fotomuseum Winterthur Suisse
 'Fables de l'identité' CNP Jeu de Paume Paris
 'Zwart Wit Kleur' Amsterdams Historisch Museum Amsterdam
 Fotomuseum den Haag Netherlands

PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE COLLECTION OF (A SELECTION)

Collection ABN-Amro/La Salle Chicago USA
 The Swiss Foundation for Photography
 The Baltimore Museum of Art USA
 Frans Hals Museum Haarlem Holland
 Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam Holland
 The Museum of Modern Art New York USA
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art New York USA
 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art USA
 The Metropolitan Museum of Photography Tokio Japan
 Maison Européenne de la Photographie Paris France
 Centre national des arts plastiques Paris France
 Fotomuseum Winterthur Winterthur Switzerland
 Fotomuseum Antwerpen Belgium
 Rijksmuseum Amsterdam Holland

BOOKS GROUP

- 2008
MoMA Highlights since 1980
- 2007
Photographies Modernes et Contemporaines La Collection
Neuflyze Vie
Dutch Eyes New History of Photography in the Netherlands
- 2006
"The Photobook", a History vol II by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger',
Phaidon
'Netherlands Now, L'école du Nord', MEP Paris
Contemporary Dutch Photography Kumho Museum of art Seoul
- 2005
2005 'In Sight' Contemporary Dutch Photography from the Collec-
tion of the Stedelijk
Museum Amsterdam
- 2003
'Gestes' Printemps de septembre ed. Actes Sud
'Tales from a globalizing world' by Daniel Schwartz Ed. Thames
Hudson
Citibank Photography Prize 2003
- 2002
'Blink' 100 photographs 10 curators 10 writers' Phaidon Press
- BOOKS SOLO
- 2005
Aorta Art Centre Chisinau "In Moldova"
- 2006
'Give me your Image' photo's taken in Europe 2004 -2005 Steidl
Verlag
- 2001
'East Wind West Wind' photo's taken in China 1998 - 2001 de Ver-
beelding Amsterdam
- 1994
'A Hundred Summers A Hundred Winters' photo's taken in the ex-
Soviet Union 1990 -
1994 de Verbeelding Amsterdam

PUBLICATIONS

- 2008
The New York Times jan,18 Art in Review
www.nytimes.com/pages/arts/design/index.html
the New York Sun jan10 www.nysun.com/article/69266
The New Yorker januari 28
- 2007
Camera Austria nr 97
Konac 12, Genis Aci Turkey
P.S. Parool 20-01-07 Mark Moorman
- 2006
'de Avonden' 27-12-06, Radio broadcasting
Art Forum Mai 2006
Sur la Terre Mars 2006
The Village Voice Leslie Camhi January 23, 2006
The New Yorker January 30, 2006
- 2005
Art World Shanghai
Art on Paper October
Tank Magazine Volume 4 - Issue 3
Vrij Nederland Lucette ter Borg September 24
Photonews Anna Gripp October
Art Review Jean Dykstra October
The New York Times Philip Gefter October 16
Draft Autumn
Vogue Paris November
NRC Handelsblad Marianne Vermeijden December 23
De Volkskrant Observatorium December 31

PRIZES

- Nominated for the Deutsche Börse Prize 2008
Shortlisted for the Citibank Photography Prize 2003
David Roëll Prins Bernhard prize
Maria Austria prize
Kees Scherer prize

COURTESY

- Robert Morat Hamburg
Yancey Richardson New York

Original title	Prisyadim na dorozhku
English title	Let's Sit Down Before We Leave
Country of production	Austria
Years of production, First montage	1993–1995
Shooting time	17 February–5 March 1994
Location	Amsterdam, Moskow, Novokuznetsk, Apanas (Siberia)
Date of completion, First montage	September 1995
Completion of project	1999
Producer	Michael Pilz
Production	Michael Pilz Film
Concept & realization	Michael Pilz
Cinematography	Michael Pilz
Original sound	Michael Pilz
Editing	Michael Pilz
Music	Szemző Tibor (<i>Other inhabitants</i>)
Featuring	Bertien van Manen, Volodya Shabankov, Rudolf Alexandreevich, Volodya Vorobev, Anna Petrovna, Ludmilla Vilvovsky, Lubina and Lena Benakomeva, Michael Pilz and others
Original format	Sony Video Hi8 PAL
Tape format	Video VHS, DV, PAL, 4:3, visible Hi8-timecode
Sound	Mono, Ch1+2
Running time	627'
Dialogues	English, Russian, Dutch, German
Subtitles	No subtitles
Financial support	Austrian Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Art
First public screening	December 1995, <i>Diagonale</i> , Festival of Austrian Films, Salzburg
Festivals, special events	Salzburg, <i>Diagonale</i> , Festival of Austrian Films, December 1995 Rotterdam, International Film Festival, January 1996 Riga, Latvia, <i>Arsenal</i> , International Film Festival, September 1996 Paris, Institut Néerlandais, November 1997–January 1998, part of the exhibition <i>Bertien van Manen, photographies 1977–1997</i> Montréal, Canada, November 1999, part of the exhibition <i>Bertien van Manen, photographies 1977–1997</i> Vienna, Afro Asiatisches Institut Galerie, 3 – 31 May 2000, part of the exhibition <i>Vor und hinter dem Ural</i>
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