

State Of Grace

Video by Michael Pilz
Austria 1993, 89'

When Chuang Tzu explains that the experience of Tao involves a return to an elementary and original kind of consciousness, he takes recourse to a pun that is a poetic riddle. He says that this experience of a return to that which we originally are, is like *entering the birdcage without making the birds sing*.

Fan (Chinese) means *cage* but also *return*; ming (Chinese) means *singing* as well as *names* (plural). Thus the sentence may also be understood as saying *returning there where the names are unnecessary, into silence, into the realm of the obvious. Or to the place where names and things merge into one and the same: To poetry, the realm where naming equals being*.

Octavio Paz

In August 1992 we met for a four-week international symposium on dance, music and film.

As a result the video **State of Grace** is a cinematic attempt to a maximum of exertion and a maximum of relaxation basing on the thoughts – among others – by John Cage and Chuang Tzu.

Michael Pilz



Sometimes when you dance you have a great moment with the balance, because it is always a fight of finding the center and the balance, because balance is out of regular. But in certain points you find that something is really, eh, *traversé* – going through you one point and everyone feels connected by strings. And I really have the sensation of being a marionette and all the articulations are held by strings, so you don't pull and it is only maybe something holding which is playing with you and because when you watch marionettes, string marionettes, or even Japanese ones, *Raku*-marionettes, there are three people for one marionette, adult persons, because they have children's marionettes too and the children are taken care of by one person and the adult marionettes by three and it is – so there are six adult marionettes on stage then you have eighteen people on stage and it was great, it is that after five minutes you really don't see who is who and who is influencing whom and then – it is amazing – and – grace?, – grace? – the state of grace? – you know? – what is *grace*?

*Christophe Haleb,
dialogue from the video
State of Grace*

They are making songs, they believe that the landscape goes through the guitar, that is how these people sing in the country, they never say *music*, they just take the guitar and sing their own troubles, their own landscape, what they see in their own landscape, sometimes, or about the animals or about their feelings, but it is the way, he found, that the landscape goes through the guitar and if you have a microphone, a microphone can make the sound louder but not deeper, so to make it deeper there must be something else.

*Ruth Golic,
dialogue from the video
State of Grace*

It was just a beautiful memory to me, it was something like I built up together with fifty more people and then also what we did with the girl, it had a very nice atmosphere, just really the air stopped, I didn't do it for them but more I have taken their energies into me to do something together like if you make contact with somebody and you don't know where it will lead, your movement goes somewhere, and it worked very well and then I walked out and the game was going on and I lost this feeling and from that point on when I lost it, it was not so interesting, my wife told me.

– Your wife?

Yes, she told me at the beginning it was so solid, the atmosphere and the air in the room that you could really have cut it and she saw that, my God, what will happen

here till the end if it goes on like this, she was really afraid at a point that it would really go too far maybe, because it is so –, and then I lost, I just forgot when I entered again, when I went out maybe this experience to me was too much, I forgot about going on with it, it was just somehow, a satisfaction, I should go home instead of running the whole.

– Maybe you should not have been so satisfied.

Yeah, but how can you do that? Yes you should get a lot of satisfaction during the work and then you are not so surprised when there is satisfaction at the performance.

*Ferenc Kálmán
in dialogue with Raffaella Giordano,
from the video State of Grace*

To keep back energies we shall profit in the future, if we keep back energies and don't act them out immediately – that's why I proposed to make duos. Of course I have also initiation to join and while I was watching a lot of energies came up and I felt –, but at the same time I tried to take myself back and that is an interesting experience also I can offer through this. I mean it is not just an order, it is an experience what (it) is (like) to hold back and respect someone else who has more, at a certain moment has more energies.

*Ferenc Kálmán,
dialogue from the video
State of Grace*

More, don't move, just stay in the position and don't move. I take out my fingers but don't move the fingers, I take only my hands, let – let – let and now push, a little and try to open the hand slowly and look also what happens, it is one by one like a flower, you see? You never did that? Slowly, don't ...

– It is strange, why?

Because it is – how we are, I don't know why but I know this happens, *no*?

*Giorgio Rossi
in dialogue with Barbara Krysllová,
from the video State of Grace*

When a dancer performs the steps are really –, they really become unimportant or at least (this is) how I watch performances now, I really like to watch dancers when I see them forgetting the shapes or the content they are working with and I think for my experience I had the greatest times on stage when I was really completely –, still working my structure but not, I mean, completely somewhere else, I mean, everybody probably knows that anyway.

*Sebastian Prantl,
dialogue from the video
State of Grace*

You sort of mean, if that is a situation at least one side has to stick to a certain framework, is that what you mean?

– This is one possibility, the other is, let's say, three starting points, the cage, the birds, the dance and the music and everything is open, free. For me the inbetween way, not only for me but also for the other persons is difficult.

That is of course for me a kind of research if I am given a leeway, how careful I am with it, that is I don't just let myself run wild –, what is *free*?

– I know that this is the question, I am also not so sure in my head –

Therefore it is an exploration for each of us –

Cecilia Li
in dialogue with *Istvan Horvath*,
from the video
State of Grace

Friday, 14 August 1992 (Ruth's birthday), John Cage died Thursday, 13 August.

Dear friends, we will be engaging in the LINE UP briefly described below about 10 minutes after Ruth has finished the warm up.

Please wear your colored costumes only! There is no costume change on stage except *Big Coats*, point shoes etc. or alternative costumes given by Eva. Avoid personal language while working unless it is part of your work: A) Kata = personal orientation, B) Line up = group orientation, C) Cage = framing. (Cage: realizing the space (architecture), listening to the sound (other, piano), watching!!! – smelling – touching camera sound !!!: other – obey to the rules as best as you can, to be continued, Sebastian.

Sebastian Prantl,
rules for the group

Michael, (it is a) great pleasure to see your way of filming the research. You give back a right perception of what is happening in the instant. I miss a lot of other situations, but I love to see the way people return: George with his humour and decision. Ferenc as a wise guy. Joel like a night bird in a silent world. The fear and doubt of Raffaella. About me I don't know. I seem reserved, which is in contradiction with my feelings about this experience.

Christophe Haleb,
dancer,
Paris, December 17, 1992

State of Grace is beautiful. Image, the camera's eye, the simple-human, details and sound – all of that we admired very much.

Maria and Milos Chlupac,
sculptor,
Prague, May 1993

Original title	State Of Grace
Years of production	1991/93
Country of production	Austria
Date of completion	February 1993
Producer	Michael Pilz
Production	Michael Pilz Film
Original format	Sony Video Hi8
Tape format	Beta, DV, PAL, 4:3, colour
Sound	Mono (Ch1+2)
Language	English, German, Italian, Hungarian
Subtitles	English
Running time	88' 50"
Concept & realization	Michael Pilz
Cinematography & original sound	Michael Pilz
Assistance to the camera	Elke Harder
Additional sound (DAT)	Othmar Schmiderer, Harry Friedl
Editing	Michael Pilz
Music composition	John Cage <i>Haiku, 1 piece of sonata and interlude</i> Claude Debussy <i>Prelude No. 7 2nd book</i> Arvo Pärt <i>Alinale</i> Eric Satie <i>Gymnopédie 1</i> Domenico Scarlatti <i>Sonata L 118, f-major</i> Giacinto Scelsi <i>Piano Suite Ttai No. 9 piece 6</i> Alessandra Palma di Cesnola, Linda Forsman, Raffaella Giordano, Ruth Golic, Christophe Haleb, István Horváth, Dorothea Hübner, Ferenc Kálmán, Barbara Kryslová, Joel Luecht, Sebastian Prantl, Giorgio Rossi, Beverly Sandwith, Miklos Visontai Cecilia Li
Featuring	Eva Riedl
Piano performance	Austrian Federal Ministry for Education and Art Cultural Department of the City of Vienna Cultural Department of the Government of Lower Austria
Costumes	
Financial support	
First screening	27 April 1993, Medienwerkstatt Wien
Festivals, special events	Salzburg, <i>Diagonale</i> , Festival of Austrian Films 1993 Frankfurt a.M., Alte Oper, <i>Screen Dance</i> 1993 Vienna, <i>Video edition Austria 1993</i> (documentaries) Riga, Latvia, <i>Arsenal</i> , International Film Festival 1994 Premiere-TV, Germany, autumn 2003
State of Grace	was realized as a part of the <i>International Symposium on dance, music and film</i> in Sankt Pölten, Lower Austria, August 1992. The concept of this symposium was by Sebastian Prantl (dance), Cecilia Li (music) and Michael Pilz (video and film). The symposium was organised and produced by T.A.S.P., Tanz Atelier Sebastian Prantl (Barbara Koller), Vienna, Austria. The <i>International Symposium on dance, music and film</i> was supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education and Art, by <i>Ostfond</i> (a special federal grant for Eastern-Western cultural relations), by the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna, by the Cultural Department of the Government of Lower Austria and by Niederösterreichische Landeshauptstadt Planungsgesellschaft mbH, Sankt Pölten.
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