

Peter Tscherkassky

Psychics of seeing

“I refer to my work as being cinematographic poetry and that’s why I love that layering, those superimposition, right from the beginning of my film work”

Peter Tscherkassky (born October 3, 1958 in Vienna, Austria) is an experimental filmmaker celebrated for his analog, photochemical approach, using found footage manipulated in darkroom processes rather than digital editing. Tscherkassky has received over 50 international awards, including the Austrian Film Art Prize (1996), the Oberhausen Grand Prize (2002), and the Orizzonti Best Short Film Award at Venice (2010). A central figure in Austrian avant-garde lineage, following in the footsteps of Peter Kubelka. He’s a co-founder of the Found Footage Festival and has helped foster a tradition of material-based experimental cinema.

Filmmaker’s cinema is grounded in analog ritual, every frame is hand printed, scratched, to expose the film’s physical essence. His work connects found footage with trauma and mental landscapes. It is all created manually, frame by frame. But like he said to us yesterday after the screening: “Not usually with number order, sometimes it is frame 9 then frame 22.”

In doing so, he created a spectral language that confronts image consumption, memory and cinematic infrastructure. This form of “cinematographic poetry” draws the audience into the medium’s sensory dimension.

Parallel Space INTER-VIEW

(1992)

The film was entirely shot with a 35 mm still camera on black and white stock. He confessed that the film was originally intended to be purely structural, but became extremely personal. Each photograph’s negative corresponds exactly to the size of two film frames, but destroys conventional unity of time and space. The psychoanalytic dimension is explicit. He addresses a character named Tim in an opening voiceover, and the latter is moving paper, converting optical disruption

into emotional symbolic feelings. It is an exploration of seeing memory, desire and identity - the purest process of inner experience and mirroring psychoanalysis.

Happy End

(1996)

Approximately 11 minutes, shot on Super8, developed on 35mm, the only film from the slot in color. Found footage of a married couple's constant celebration that the filmmaker is reordering into a ritualistic transformation. He discovered this funny Viennese couple (Rudolf and Elfriede) at a flea market, assembling their footage from the end to beginning, in which the couple appears to be aging backwards, towards youth. Exploring memory, intimacy, everyday rituals, but then again passage of life, a celebration of a generation of his parents, or the ones before them. A tribute to time, disappearance, and living the authentic life.

The exquisite corpse

(2015)

Crafted from a lot of different sources: erotic thrillers, nudist films and amateur clips, it amounts to 19 minutes of a very interesting piece of found footage. The film starts very easily, with a naked couple sailing, while discovering sleeping beauty on the beach. And then the feeling all of a sudden is something like shaking, moving, being in a parallel space of positives and negatives, collapsing bodies, sensual feeling that makes you think about that special somebody. It gestures conflict, desire as well true cinematic formalism. This experimental short needs to be celebrated as a standout for its construction, erotical but then again, driven. Ritual and abstraction, turned into an endless desire's architecture.

Peter Tscherkassky does not make films - he decodes them. In his hands, the film tape becomes a battlefield between memory, dream, and desire revealing its raw pulse.