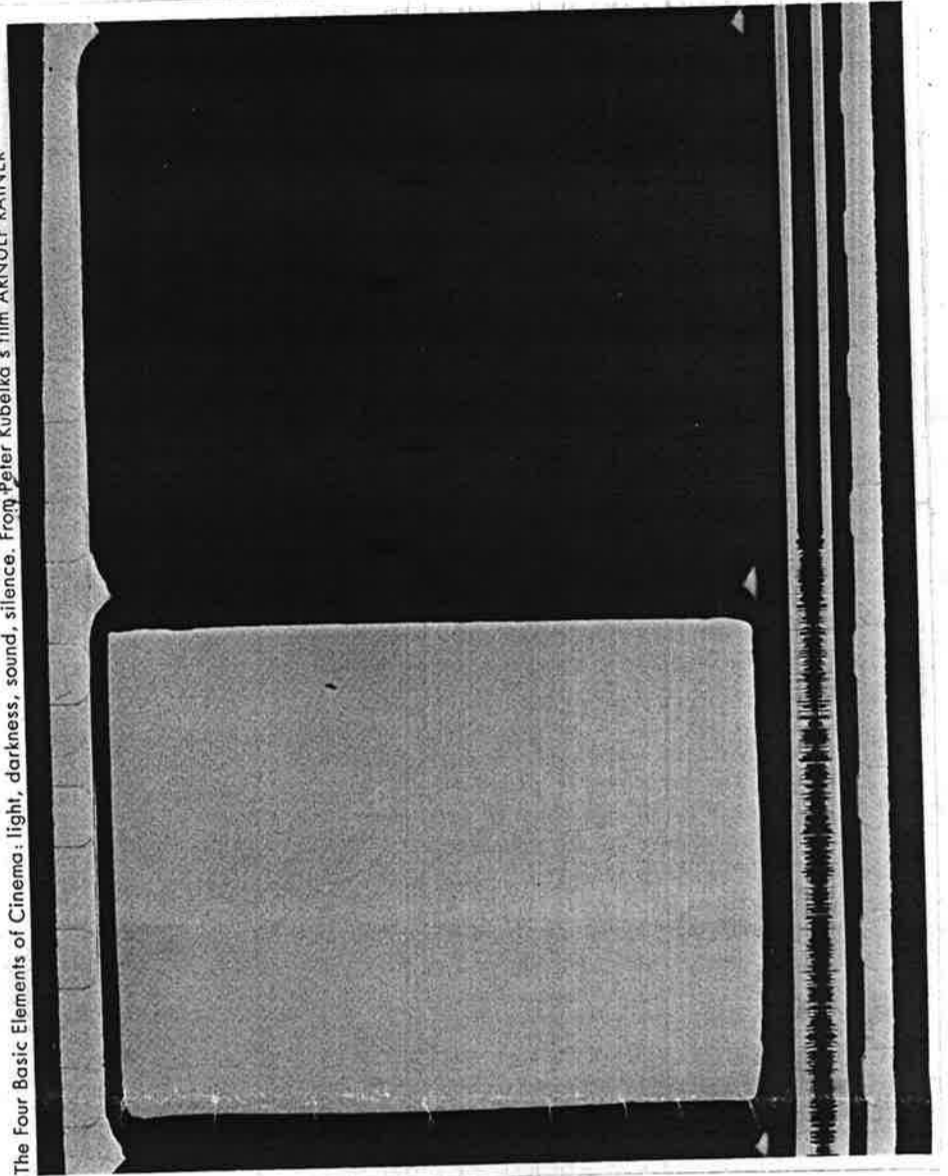


**Peter Kubelka, THE ESSENCE OF CINEMA and world premiere of Kubelka's latest film, MONUMENT FOR THE OLD WORLD**

Peter Kubelka intends to define the essential elements of cinema through an analysis of his own complete work. Although not an American, Kubelka is widely regarded as a key figure in the American Independent Film movement through the innovation, precision, and distinctiveness of his films. He has also been recognized as one of the most articulate theoreticians of Independent Cinema—a concept of the art of film he clearly distinguishes from the industrially produced narrative and documentary modes most familiar to a general audience. The course will include screenings of all his films: *MOSAİK IM VERTRAUEN* (1955), *ADEBAR* (1957), *SCHWECHATER* (1958), *ARNULF RAINER* (1960), and *UNSERE AFRIKAREISE* (1966). Informational programs of classical works of American Independent Cinema will also be presented, together with lectures that describe one person's vision of the medium.

Peter Kubelka's new film, *MONUMENT FOR THE OLD WORLD* (1968-76), will receive its world premiere at the Museum during the last evening of the course.

Peter Kubelka has worked as an independent filmmaker since 1952. He is co-founder and co-director of the Austrian Film Museum, and is on the Film Selection Committee of the Anthology Film Archives in New York City, for which he once designed an ideal projection room, "The Invisible Cinema." He has taught and lectured at more than thirty American universities and in most European countries. He has directed "Eating the Universe," a program of cooking as an art form, for Channel 13 in New York, and has recently directed the inaugural film exhibition, "Une Histoire du Cinéma," and edited a book of the same title, for the Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou in Paris.



The Four Basic Elements of Cinema: light, darkness, sound, silence. From Peter Kubelka's film ARNULF RAINER

Mensch als Empfänger von Signalen

→ Vom Gehirn sinnesorgane produziert und zusammengepflegt

Bsp. Appleesser:

1. Entschöpfung: Auge (sehen) →
  2. " : Nase (riechen) →
  3. " : Lippen (schmecken) →
- immer näher zum vertikal

Körper

Bsp. Auto fährt auf und

1. signal: Auge (wahrnehmen)
2. signal: Gehör (wahrnehmen)

→ schrittweise, wenn alles fähig, wie es zu spät

Hilf / Geräusch / Bild

Bewegung an

Bewegung durch

- Maren / Maren: Zerlegung der

→ Analyse der

- Linnore/Edison: Synthese

Diese zwei strömungen gehen über die ganze Filmgeschichte

Film ist eine Sprache muss also auch gelernt werden

→ Grund meiner Lektionen

24 Informationen / Sekunde // oder weniger

↑  
Bild

↓  
Ton

verschiedene Möglichkeiten, aber: Ton hat sich  
? dem Bild anzupassen: 24 Kombinationen / Sek.

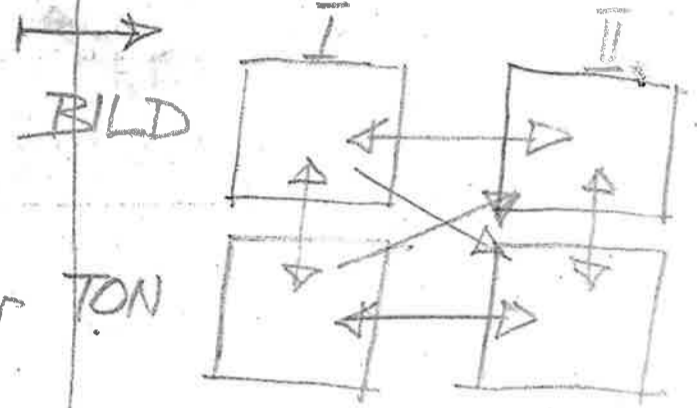
ein Ton → noch keine Musik  
ein Wort → noch keine Sprache

Film: ← 2

schmalste Einheit: zwei Einzelbilder



↑ dazwischen liegt die  
ARTIKULATION



[Filmsyntax]

Was kann Film leisten, was andere Künste nicht können?  
Wo ist die starke Seite des Films?

- RAUM kann nicht geändert werden → Foto / Malerei stärker
- ZEIT kann gestoppt, verlangsamt, beschleunigt, ausgetauscht, usw. werden!
- BILD ohne den dazugehörigen, natürlichen TON  
→ Auflösen der Kausalität "Filmaker als Gott"

TON gibt den STANDORT an. Bei gleichbleibendem Ton kann also das Bild gewechselt werden, auch wenn es von einem anderen Ort stammt.

Ton hängt die Bilder zusammen, → Ton stärker als Bild  
lokalisiert sie.

Lebensgefühl : Gefühl von Wechsel [speed/change]

Film kann die Geschwindigkeit selbst darstellen, durch schnelle Wechsel

# Movie Journal

Jonas Mekas

On January 30, at the Museum of Modern Art, Peter Kubelka closed his monumental lecture series entitled "The Essence of Cinema," with the premiere of his new film *Pause!*

I do not have to stress the importance of the occasion. It's not every year that one sees a new film from Peter Kubelka. Kubelka, like Dreyer before him, has become a synonym for an artist who works slowly, doesn't allow himself to be rushed by any outside force, produces few works but each work stands solidly like a rock.

Thus, ten years after *Unsere Afrikareise*, *Pause!* joins Kubelka's other five films — result of 25 years of work in cinema — increasing his total oeuvre from

38 minutes to a total of 50 minutes. The mind, time and screen crackle with economy and intensity.

In 1958-60 Kubelka made a film entitled *Arnulf Rainer*. The film contains only white and black frames. No images of Rainer's person and art. In *Pause!* Kubelka uses Rainer and his art but Rainer loses the title. In both films Kubelka triumphs over his materials.

His triumph is really quadruple. First triumph: *Pause!* is an ecstatic work. Second triumph: with the perfection and intensity of his work he dissolved audience's swollen-up expectations which had grown out of normal proportions during the ten years of waiting. He enabled us to receive his new work in its newborn nakedness. Third triumph: his dissolving of Arnulf Rainer. Arnulf Rainer himself is an artist of unique originality and intensity. His face art, which constitutes the source of imagery of *Pause!* is a chapter of modern art in itself. I have a particular aversion to film-makers who use other artists and their art as materials of their films. These films never transcend their sources. During the first few images of *Pause!* I had an existential fear. Kubelka had to consume and to transcend not only

Arnulf Rainer but also — and this constitutes his fourth triumph — to transcend the entire genre of contemporary art known as face art. A few more images, and my heart regained itself and jumped into excitement: both, Rainer and Art disintegrated and became molecules, frames of movements and expressions, material at the disposal of the Muse of Cinema. I am not saying this to diminish the person and art of Arnulf Rainer: his own greatness can not be dissolved, in his art. But here we speak about the art of Peter Kubelka, and in a work of art, as in the heavens so on earth, there is only one God and Creator.

The moment I am writing this, I have seen the film four times. It has changed and grown in complexity and excitement with each reseeing. Kubelka's image-sound articulations have moved to new grounds. There will be long papers written on it, the film will be seen and reseen during the centuries to come as long as there is electricity. Kubelka himself refuses to talk about his new film, he wants it to be seen without any levels of information or theory — the talking will come later.

One more thing about Arnulf Rainer. I think that Kubelka's use of his face and

body is one of the perfections of the film. Rainer's face contains an almost insane seriousness, a seriousness that is deep, tragic, almost cosmic and some will find it disturbing. All true seriousness is disturbing in a frivolous world. It is almost an animal kind of seriousness. Have you ever stood and faced the eyes of an animal — especially those of a cow, a donkey, or a camel — have you been taken into their cosmic, eternal seriousness? There is a sadness, too, in that seriousness. All the sadness of the universe.

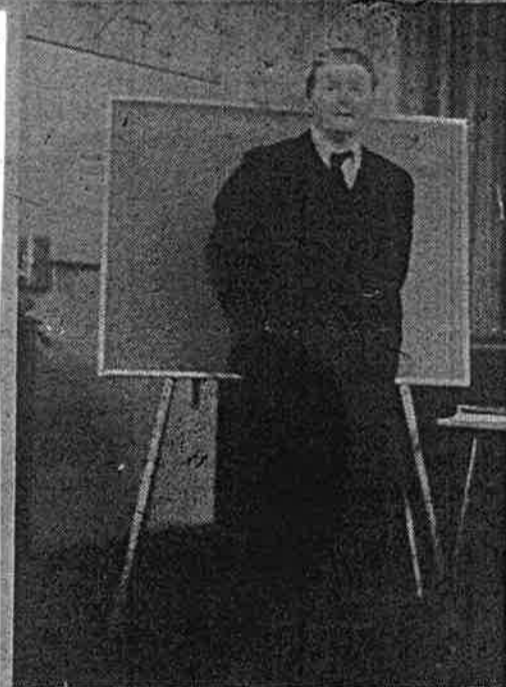
So that besides Kubelka's metric film theories and practices; despite his unemotional, merciless execution the film has a level of a Greek tragedy. By means of his sound and image orchestration he imbued the Rainer frames with deepest emotional meanings.

"Ah!" exclaimed Stan Brakhage, after seeing *Pause!* "I think it took me some time to see what you meant when you said that *Blonde Cobra* is a tragedy; but I think *Pause!* is maybe even more a tragedy than *Blonde Cobra*."

"Yes," I said, "it's curious that you say that. Because when I saw *Pause!* at M.O.M.A. I thought that besides being all other things it is also a psychodrama. And then, Peter told me, Sidney Peterson remarked to him, at M.O.M.A., that he thought *Pause!* was about alienation. Alienation was always one of the basic ingredients of the psychodramas of the Fifties."

So that *Pause!* will be seen, perceived and discussed on many personal levels. Kubelka's abstract, metric method eliminates single meanings and opens his film to all possible meanings.

The other day I was looking through some old clippings. I found these words, pronounced by Dylan Thomas during a BBC interview with James Stevens: "Poetry, to a poet, is the most rewarding work in the world. A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape and significance of the universe, helps to extend everyone's knowledge of himself and the world around him." Words that are true and proper to repeat on this joyous occasion of the first screening of Kubelka's new film, *Pause!*



Peter Kubelka lecturing at MOMA

Heli Wehler

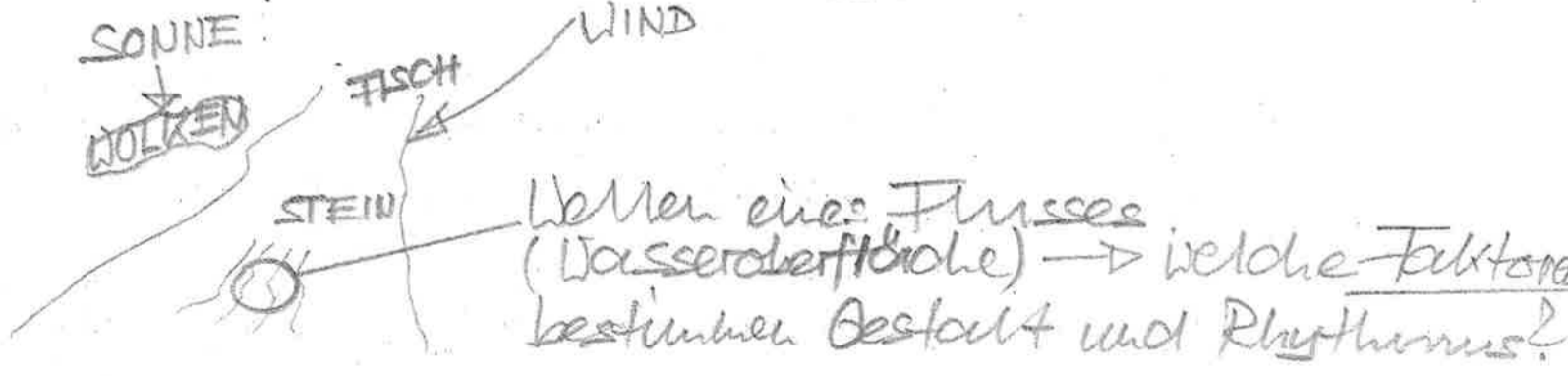
Kunst: Herausgehen aus der Welt  
→ konzentrierter Lebens-  
rhythmus

Film ist Rhythmus: 24 Wechselt  
sekunde

- Kunst wird wie das Leben  
analysiert

- Kunst wird so gemacht, wie  
wir das Universum verstehen

Einleitung zu SCHWACHATER: - Naturbeobachtung:



Filmkomposition



Film ist visuelle Energie

UNVEILING THE MONUMENT:  
PETER KUBELKA AND THE NEW WORLD

What makes the forthcoming premiere of Peter Kubelka's MONUMENT FOR THE OLD WORLD the most anticipated and dramatic event in the avant-garde cinema of the Seventies? That question might be even more hyperbolically framed as: On what basis might this forty-two year old Austrian film-maker whose complete works do not last an hour be called the most important film artist in Europe? He has been working on this film for almost ten years. A decade of silence is in itself a dramatic platform. Yet in those years Peter Kubelka has not been exactly silent. He has been the most articulate public theoretician of the cinema in America, a polemical position that once was Maya Deren's, then Jonas Mekas's, and more recently vacated by Stan Brakhage and Gregory Markopoulos in the late Sixties. Kubelka is an Austrian film-maker and an American theoretician.

This position is not without its ironies. Kubelka first met Brakhage and saw the work of some American independent film-makers in Brussels in 1958 at the 2nd International Experimental Film Competition. When I met him at the 3rd Competition, in the last week of 1963, he was revolted by the sloppiness and banality of nearly all commercial and independent films and despondent about the possibility of continuing his own work and finding an audience. Dreyer, Len Lye, and possibly Brakhage were excepted from his anathema to the world of film-making. However, he insisted that Brakhage made the mistake of talking and writing about his work.

Kubelka's despair had a history. He had grown up in a musical family during the war and had been a member of the Vienna Boys Choir. His education had been conventional, parochial, and limited, leaving him with an aversion to philosophy and a deep seated suspicion of the authority of "classics" in all the arts. To learn the craft of film-making, he enrolled in the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. There he en-

<sup>begegnete Hoffer</sup>  
countered the hostility that institution consistently gave its foreign students. Naive, he showed his teachers the film he made during the first long vacation, MOSAIK IM VERTRAUEN (1955) and nearly got kicked out for it. The artistic integrity with which he executed two advertising commissions, ADEBAR (1957) and SCHWECHATER (1958), ruined his chances for finding further commercial work. The 3rd International Experimental Film Competition rejected his brilliantly reductive film ARNULF RAINER (1960). At that point he reluctantly abandoned the 35mm format and began a five year labor on the intricate sound and picture montage of UNSERE AFRIKAREISE. <sup>verwickelt/schlunget/verwirrt/schierig</sup>

<sup>Spitze</sup>  
He came to America in 1966 with his edited rolls of sound and image, ostensibly to use the superior 16mm printing facilities here. In 1967 he took a job at the United Nations' film library in order to remain in America. He was quickly and universally recognized as a major figure within the avant-garde cinema. The audience for such work, which had died out in Europe in the Thirties, was at a peak in America. Along with this recognition and perhaps because of it, the film-maker began to lose his defensive and parochial attitude toward film theory. In a series of lectures in various universities he publicly elaborated a coherent theory of film, emphasizing the dynamic possibilities of "articulation" at the level of single frame changes, every twenty-fourth of a second.

<sup>Spitze</sup>  
Kubelka's theoretical position involves a devaluation of the authority of imagery and an emphasis on structure. He stresses the arbitrary and illusionary status of cinematic movement; the paleness of filmed imagery in relationship to natural phenomena (in his discourse natural phenomena—fire, rivers, thunder and lightning—become instead analogies of visual and sound montage); and the importance of reseeing the essential films until one has memorized them like melodies. Behind many of his formulations is the non-thematic concept of time as cyclical movement. Memorization, then, would be a transcendence of infinite temporal flow and the

<sup>halten/tragen/steuern</sup>  
sustained intuition of a recurrent pattern in time. Moving from the formal to the historical plane, Kubelka speaks of human life as a continuing "stone age," and disdains <sup>enttäuschung</sup> melioration. He edited all of his films as if the events depicted within them were simultaneous rather than successive. <sup>Schilfwerk/beschreiben/lat/mala</sup>

<sup>Hecke</sup>  
Kubelka insists that his words "have nothing to do with" his films. The nature of this non-relationship is obscure indeed, unless it means simply that one cannot substitute for the other. In fact, the essence of a cinema, as he propounds it, is effectively illustrated by his works. I vividly recall a discussion of the importance of theory for Kubelka I had with one of his oldest friends, the architect Raimund Abraham, who had emigrated from Austria to America shortly before Kubelka's first move and for many of the same reasons. We were dining outside at the Colomba in Venice, where a hedge of shrubbery separates the tables from the narrow street. As Abraham was expressing his fears that the act of expounding a theory might consume Kubelka's energies and mean the end of his film production—it had been about six years since UNSERE AFRIKAREISE—I suddenly saw through the dark green hedges in the late afternoon light the word "Cinema" flickering in the air as if to the rhythm of the film ARNULF RAINER. We stared in shock, then laughed and cried out when we realized that there was a movie house directly opposite the restaurant and that its defective neon marquee was sputtering into service. <sup>Zeit</sup>

<sup>Spitzen</sup>  
A date has now been set, January 30, for the first projection of MONUMENT FOR THE OLD WORLD. I have not seen so much as a still from it. Yet it is most appropriate that this screening will take place as the terminus of the largest public forum Kubelka has yet found for the espousal of his theories, and on the continent where he gained the perspective needed to make his new film. Whatever was foretold by il miracolo alla Colomba may be seen that night.

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1977

(→ FILM CULTURE READER  
PAGE 285: Interview with P. K.)