Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

Editorial – Harun Farocki

Organized in collaboration with Antje Ehmann and Doreen Mende, this issue of *e-flux journal* pays tribute to Harun Farocki (January 9, 1944–July 30, 2014) with a series of essays and reflections on his work and life by friends, collaborators, film scholars, and admirers. Those who knew Harun personally remember not only the epic influence of his work, but also his generosity as a friend and collaborator. As for us, we have never before dedicated a full issue of *e-flux journal* to a single artist.

From his best known films such as *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969), *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1989), and *Videograms of a Revolution* (together with Andrei Ujică,1992) to endless others such as *How to Live in the German Federal Republic* (1990), *The Interview* (1996), and *An Image* (1983), he used cinematic techniques to make the functioning of power seductive, even thrilling to witness. "More images than the eye can see," the voice of Ulrike Grote taunts in *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, a film reflecting on the surveillance photos taken by US warplanes that had aerially documented what was happening in Nazi camps during World War II. Even though these images were not seen by human eyes – whether willfully or not – we realize that allied cameras were complicit in seeing, but not in knowing what happened.

Farocki's films lead us to think that the real brutality of power that uses advanced forms of technology, transmission, and mediation goes far beyond the application of physical violence on human bodies, and towards something much more delicate, much more refined. Its real violence arrives in something like boredom, in rendering the actual functioning of power as boring – uninteresting and technical on the surface, but eventually and ultimately authoritarian in its inaccessibility. It is from this point that Farocki's mastery begins by identifying cinema as a historical meeting point between technology and seduction. Cinema has always been the name of the machine for merging warfare and entertainment, propaganda and pornography.

So why can't we then draw a direct line from its history into a present where cinema has already been weaponized as the primary technique for mobilizing vision – for drones and romantic comedies alike? From here it only takes Farocki's elegant sleight of hand to twist the apparatus back on itself, to render its own technologies of control interesting, seductive enough to be perceivable, perceivable enough to be accessible. It is through cinema that power can become fascinating in its complexity, charming in its grace, and deadly in its poetry, to the point where the spell of its technology is

broken. Once the aura is gone, slippages appear at the very centers of command, where every lock can be picked and US generals fumble blindly with their own software. The technology has become impossible to master, and also available to anyone. With Harun's precise scrutiny, an intimate world of techno-social micro-machinations comes to life. When an automated gate closes and latches, Harun is there. When looking into the LCD screens replacing rear view mirrors in cars, he is there. He is there when we address a colleague at work with a certain title.

Farocki's last work looked at the design of worlds within video games. If we understand the history of cinema as also being the history of optics, then what are the physics of a world made out of vision, of a living cinema? In gamespace there is always a problem when you try to leave, when you reach the edge of the world and you try to go past it, to exit completely. And in Farocki's *Parallel I–IV*, the moment you reach the edge, you hit a transparent border. Even if you fall through past the limit, the film loop starts again and you are urged to return.

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Kodwo Eshun

A Question They Never Stop Asking

Watching the artificial waves breaking on the mechanical shore in *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1989) prompted a question: Why did I, together with Anjalika Sagar, under the name of The Otolith Group, have to travel to Cinema Empire Sofil in Achrafieh, Beirut, in order to see nine Farocki films for the first time?[1] To answer such a question in March 2006 meant confronting the implications of Farocki's absence from Britain's film culture. The experience of being enlightened – and no other word can convey the impact of watching the ways in which *The Creators of Shopping Worlds* (2001) studies architects as they discuss images that track the eye movements of shoppers – provoked a corresponding revelation of the inconsequence of so much artistic culture within the UK. So many critically lauded moving images, I began to realize, actually functioned to shield spectators from having to come to terms with the ways in which moving images operated as interlocking components of the military, entertainment, sports, finance, and corporate complex within Europe, America, and beyond. These moving images, it seemed to me, should be challenged, if not rejected outright, for their inabilityto produce the kind of perceptual training provided by works such as *War at a Distance* (2003) or *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992). Inside that cinema in Achrafieh, the dynamic tension inside and between images was playing itself out. The mystifying force of images that were mobilizing outside Cinema Empire Sofil, outside of Beirut, beyond the edges of Lebanon, which would emerge in the July War, were revealed by the clarifying powers of montage inside that cinema in Beirut.
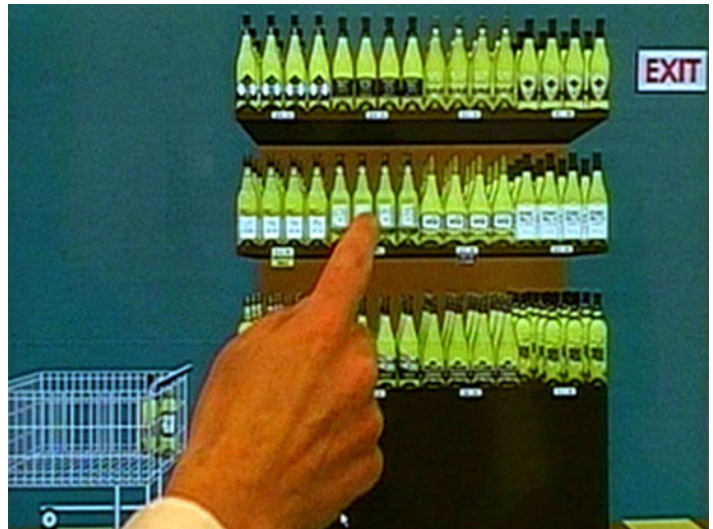
Harun Farocki, *The Creators of Shopping Worlds*, 2001. Film still.

Those three evenings spent watching Farocki films with Anjalika Sagar and the writer Emily Dische-Becker acted as a kind of extended

Harun Farocki, *The Words of The Chairman,* 1969. Film still.

primal scene. They precipitated a process of disidentification from a tacit consensus within the UK. They incubated a desire to position The Otolith Group against the values championed by people that Farocki once characterized as "those polite British assholes." To align yourself with his works did not mean imitating his artistic methods. It meant affiliating yourself with all those that considered themselves to be friends of Farocki, whoever they might be, wherever they might live. These friendships were nurtured in an almost clandestine fashion until 2009, when Farocki's London allies broke cover to mount three exhibitions intended to win contemporary generations over to the joys of instrumentalism and didacticism.[2] Perhaps many others were drawing the same conclusions. Six years on, I can discern Farockian thinking in the demonstrative, detailed, comparative projects that confront the multi-scalar histories of the present.[3] And yet none of these projects have travelled to the UK. Which suggests that Farockian projects continue to affront deeply held presuppositions about the nature and purpose of moving images. What, then, is the nature of this affront, and how can it be characterized? In Farocki's works, aesthetic thinking takes on a very specific form, which Nicole Brenez describes as an

> intensive and meditated form of encounter … a face-to-face encounter between an existing image and a figurative project dedicated to observing it – in other words, a study of the image by means of the image itself.[4]

The outcome of this encounter between an "existing image and a figurative project" tends towards the instructional, the instrumental, the demonstrative, the didactic, the comparative, and the mimetic. These qualities were, and are, bad objects within a moving-image culture that still aspires towards cinema as an expanded form of painting, diary, dream, fantasy, sculpture.

To take Farocki's preference for the instructional seriously is to embark, joyously, upon an internal exile from much of what understands itself as experimental culture. And now that Farocki is gone, it becomes clear to me that his films, videos, television programs, essays, texts, exhibitions, and interviews provide nothing less than an alternative value system that enables you to encounter the mutation of images in the present. This face-to-face encounter with the present entails a practice of psychic secession from much of what is recognized as art through metabolizing Farocki's methods, attitudes, stances, positions, sensibilities, sensations, intensities, preferences, and negations. This process cannot

be illustrated; it must be lived. Instead, the metamorphosis undergone by Farocki's ideas can be glimpsed by studying certain cinematic gestures in his films. These gestures appear as involuntary memories, unbidden and uninvited. They are expressions orphaned from narratives and disarticulated from their montage. Memory condenses and compresses a Farocki film into a single scene that takes on a mimetic character. As I write these words, I catch myself emulating a character's expression with my hands, mouthing her words. A character's gestures take momentary control of my hands and move them into a position that I then recall. They arrange my mouth in a certain shape. Goethe Institute, London, February 19, 2009. I am the front end of an image of a ponytailed, horse-faced white American male demonstrator of an animation therapy platform in *Serious Games III: Immersion* (2009), talking to an unseen audience, running through the menu of audio options for rocket shells, tilting his head, waiting for the delayed audio of a detonation, obediently lifting the right side of his mouth as it finally, satisfyingly explodes on impact. In my mind's eye, I see Farocki's face, that peculiar complexion that eluded racial identification, in *Interface* (1996). I see him imitating the right-hand-on-right-hip of a Greek statue, the video camera framing his standing position in a perspective whose awkwardness recalls the cramped, cornered perspective of Gustav Leonhardt seated at his harpsichord in *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (1968).

March 2008. I watch Zurich bystanders during a grey afternoon waiting for their bus, ignoring the giant screen of *Transmission* (2007) that depicts people placing their hands in the devils footprint. 2009. November. The red room at Tate Modern. An incongruous, uncredited Jaco Pastorius-esque fretless bass that plays faintly, intermittently, insistently as the images assemble one abstract diagram after another in *As You See* (1986). Hamburger Banhhof, 2014. August. In *Serious Games I: Watson is Down* (2010), a sullen expression of an American soldier, facing his monitor at frame left, his shoulders slumped as he sits back in his chair upon hearing a soldier announce unexpectedly, inexpressively to the other soldiers practicing steering tanks: "Watson is down." Raven Row. November 2009. Ground floor. I watch crowds watching Marilyn Monroe scowl at her loutish boyfriend when he says to her, "You'll spread," as the couple, dressed in denim shirts, sleeves rolled, and jeans, walks away, the camera following them, picking them out from the dispersed crowd of factory walkers in *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* (2006). September 2014. *Parallel II* (2014). In my laptop
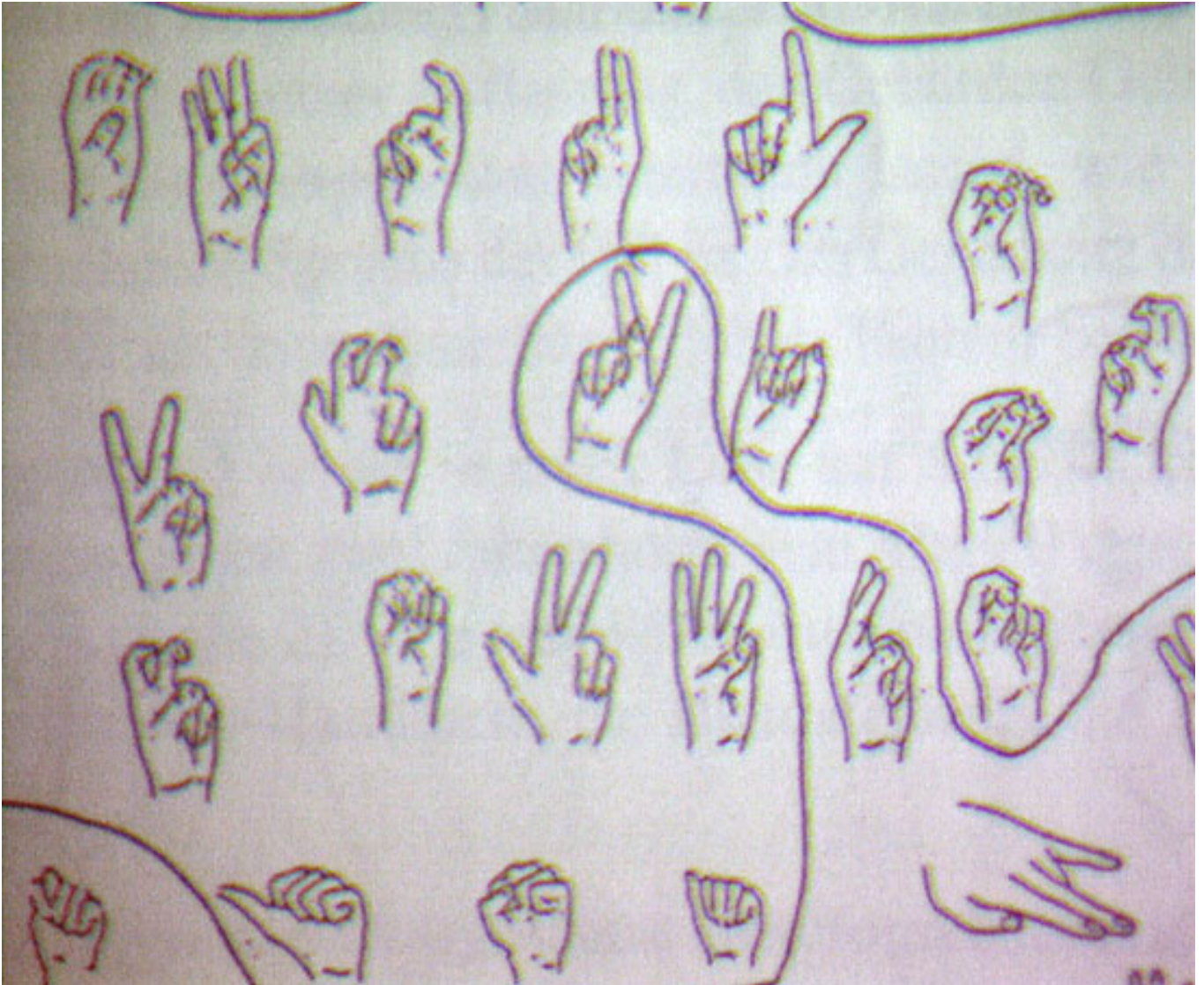
Harun Farocki, *The Expression of Hands*, 1997. Film still.

screen, on my cheap IKEA table, an animated man is standing; in an uncouth gesture, he reaches down to adjust the position of his testicles in the crotch of his baggy khaki trousers. From an unseen monitor in an exhibition space that I fail to recognize, I hear Cynthia Beate's serene voice analyzing missiles travelling in opposing directions in the garish promotional video integrated into *Eye/Machine* (2000). Lichtenberg. December 2008. Hearing the massed monolith march of a flat drum, a single repeating guitar, a violin bowing and droning, repeating and building, implacably. Faust and Tony Conrad playing on the soundtrack for *The Taste of Life* (1979). Lichtenberg. January 2009. *The Words of The Chairman* (1967) plays on Farocki and Ehmann's television set. A paper plane splashes the black-and-white blood of tomato soup on a face drawn on a paper bag that lurches back as if shot by a bullet fired by montage.

Within this itinerary of medial-memory implants can be glimpsed moments from other works that were neither directed nor written by Farocki but which he admired and recommended, which he learnt from and thought with. This kind of text or film or record triggered a process from which a concept might emerge that would in turn become operative as a method. To look at any of these works is to go under the hood of Farocki's thinking in order to approach the operating system whose commitments he never ceased to upgrade. 2009. June. I pull the heavy volume *Pier Paolo Pasolini: corpi e luoghi* (1981), clad in its black slipcase, from the lowest shelf in Farocki and Ehmann's front room. I sit on the sofa and open its pages at random. Farocki appears, gently takes the tome from my hands, and begins to point to a sequence of eight images in the book, arranged in two columns of four.

Page 129. A man holds a mirror to his tongue in *Pigsty* (1969). A student bites his thumb in *Notes towards an African Oresteia* (1970). A woman gnaws her nail in *Theorem* (1968). A man covers his mouth with all his fingers in a gesture of apology. *Pigsty*. A man presses his finger against his lip in *Accatone* (1961). A monk presses his finger to his mouth in an impudent gesture of silence in *Hawks and Sparrows* (1966). A man covers his mouth in surprise in *The Decameron* (1971). Another man instructs an offscreen presence to be silent in *The Decameron*. Page 155. Two images at top left. One depicts a man with badly misshapen teeth from *The Gospel According to Saint Mathew* (1964). The second is a man with decayed front teeth from *La Ricotta* (1963).The third fills the lower third of the page. A man thumbs back the upper lip of a young woman to reveal her single

decaying upper tooth in *Salo* (1975).[5] These stills represent a fraction of the 1,800 frame stills which constitute the *Pasolini Antropologo* of *Pier Paolo Pasolini: corpi e luoghi.*

In their catalogue essay for their "Cinema like never before" exhibition, Farocki and Ehmann described the *Pasolini Antropologo* as "containing photograms ... organized according to theme" – quoting visual motifs that recur throughout Pasolini's films, such as "unburied bodies" and "cannibalism, victim's remains." They conclude that *Pier Paolo Pasolini: corpi e luoghi* relies on "the successively juxtaposed images to form relations, on the images to comment on images."[6] In other words, it studies the image by means of the image itself. The immanent logic of the *Pasolini Antropologo* seemed to have overcome the "peculiar unquotability" of writing on film that faced film theorists like Raymond Bellour from the 1970s onwards.[7] It seemed to speak about film using the same techniques as film itself. It looks forward to the cross-section epic of *A Day in the Life of A Consumer* (1993) or the "elementary motif analysis" of *The Expression of Hands* (1997). It is a *summa logica* of Farockian soft montage.
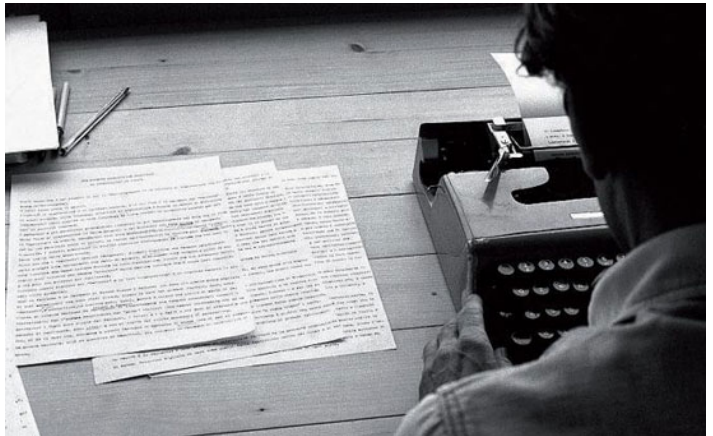
Pier Paolo Pasolini writing his unfinished novel *Petrolio* (Oil).

It prompts many questions. What happens when you place images side by side? Face to face? When you put them to work?What capacities for comparison or commentary emerge in the movement from one image to another and back again? If images comment on images, then what kind of commentary do they produce? What are they saying? How do they explain themselves? What are they arguing about? What do they demonstrate? What do they imitate? When do they copy each other? Who do they inhabit? What do they emulate? Who do they rival? Where are they going? What do they possess? Who do they possess?[8]

Images reveal images to be an industrialization of thought that needs to be

analyzed on its own terms, which are not human. From 1967 onwards, Farocki pioneered the historical unfolding of images as an "external objectification of thought."[9] He invents face-to-face encounters between existing images and figurative projects dedicated to their observation. And now it is March 25, 2006. 10 p.m. I walk up the street, away from Cinema Empire Sofil. I can see Farocki's lean silhouette ahead. A cigarette between his fingers, on the way towards his lips. He hadn't stayed to watch his films. He has seen them all before. Four months later, the July War begins between the Israeli Defense Force and Hezbollah forces. The mystifying powers of images and the clarifying powers of montage continually reverse into each other. Farocki's images never stop working. What is an image capable of? It is a question they never stop asking.

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Kodwo Eshun was born and lives and works in London. He studied English Literature at University College, Oxford University, and teaches Aural and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. His published work includes critical analysis, catalogue essays, and magazine articles. His art projects include film and video compositions that coalesce around the notions of the audiovisual archive and archaeologies of futurity. He regularly presents papers at international conferences and symposia and has chaired discussions and moderated dialogues and debates. Author of *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (Quartet, 1998), he is a cofounder of the artists' collective The Otolith Group and a regular contributor to the magazines *Frieze, The Wire,* and *Sight & Sound*.

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"Travelling is Impossible: Harun, Kodwo, and I," films by Harun Farocki and the Black Audio Film Collective, presented by Kodwo Eshun. Organized by the Lebanese Association for the Plastic Arts, Ashkal Alwan at Cinema Empire Sofil, Beirut, March 23–26, 2006. Preoccupied as I was with presenting three films by Black Audio Film Collective, I was unprepared for the impact of watching double and triple bills of Farocki films over two consecutive nights followed by a quadruple bill over 6 hours and 30 minutes. 2 These exhibitions were Harun Farocki, "Three Early Films," curated by Bart van der Heide, Antje Ehmann, and myself at Cubitt Gallery from January 17 to February 22, 2009; Harun Farocki, "Against What? Against Whom?," curated by Alex Sainsbury at Raven Row from November 2009 to February 7, 2010; and Harun Farocki, "22 Films 1968–2009," curated by Stuart Comer, Antje Ehmann, and The Otolith Group at Tate Modern from November 13 to December 6, 2009. Two weeks into "22 Films," Comer showed me an email he received from a well-known structuralist filmmaker dismissing Farocki's films as mere "television" and cautioning him to "remember who his friends were" and "which side he was on." 3 I discern Farockian thinking in projects and exhibitions such as "Anthropocene Observatory – The Dark Abyss of Time" by Armin Linke, John Palmesino, and Ann-Sofi Rönnskog and Anselm Franke, 2013–ongoing at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin; "Travelling Communiqué" at the Museum of Yugoslav History, Belgrade, conceived and curated by Armin Linke, Doreen Mende, and Milica Tomic, 2014; "Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth" at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, curated by Anselm Franke and Eyal Weizman, 2014; "1979: A Monument to Radical Instants" at La Virreina, Barcelona, curated by Carles Guerra, 2011; and "The Potosi Principle" at Reina Sofia, Madrid, curated by Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, 2010. 4
Nicole Brenez, "Harun Farocki and the Romantic Genesis of the Principle of Visual Critique," in *Harun Farocki: Against What? Against Whom?*, eds. Antje Ehmann and Kodwo Eshun (London: Raven Row, 2009), 128. 5
Pier Paolo Pasolini: corpi e luoghi, a cura di Michele Mancini e Giuseppe Perrela (Theorema edizioni, 1981). Mancini and Perrela worked with Laura Betti for three years to complete the text, and founded their own publishing imprint, Theorema edizione, in order to publish what the editors described as an "antropologiche di corpi e di luoghi" in the form of an "archiviazione di set cinematografici." Ehmann and Farocki write that the frames are extracted from all twenty-one of

Pasolini's films, although Pasolini's films actually number twenty-two. 6
Harun Farocki and Antje Ehmann, "Kino wie noch nie," in *Kino wie noch nie*, eds. Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki (Cologne: Generali Foundation and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter Koenig, 2006), 17. Curated by Harun Farocki and Antje Ehmann at Generali Foundation from January 20 to April 23, 2006, the exhibition travelled to Akademie der Kunst in Berlin in May 2007. John Akomfrah, Anjalika Sagar, and I visited "Kino wie noch nie" with Farocki and Ehmann in May 26, 2007. The title "Kino wie noch nie" is an homage to Helmuth Costard's masterpiece *Fussball wie noch nie* (1970), in which six cameras follow George Best throughout a Manchester United match. 7
Raymond Bellour, "The Unattainable Text" (1975), in *Kino wie noch nie*, eds. Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki, 118. 8
So exhaustive indeed that I have never reached the conclusion of *Pier Paolo Pasolini: corpi e luoghi* since acquiring a copy at Donlon Books when it was still at Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green, in 2010. It cost £70, which made it the most expensive book I had ever bought, at that time. To this day, I have yet to see the sequences on "unburied bodies" and "cannibalism, victim's remains" referred to by Ehmann and Farocki in 2007. 9
Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 238.

What if sounds and images were food, the raw material of a meal? Could one then think of ideas as the spices one adds to the food material? And the structure of the audio-visual as the cooking medium that brings everything together? It needn't be totally arbitrary – or always "added on top," or "injected into." It could be that certain raw foods invite the use of certain spices and discourage the use of others.

Ruchir Joshi

Also of Things: Notes for a Film Remembering Harun Farocki

Or one could flip it around. It could be, couldn't it, that by the end, as you bring it to your mouth, as you bring the finished thing to all your senses, you're unable to tell which was the idea and which the image and sound. Could you maybe trace the genealogy of earlier dishes or meals that went into what you're eating? Could you then taste a certain kind of knowledge, the caramelized sugar or the pepper-burn of a certain kind of understanding?

At first you don't notice it. The taste of the chilies only comes through afterwards, after the mouthful has gone down, or even after you've eaten a lot of the food.

But most suppliers are not like that, most of them want to deliver meaning right up front, like pizza delivery at home. Otherwise, why is the

customer wasting his time?

Then again, some cooks, the best ones, are different. The taste of the meaning comes through almost as an afterthought. It's something the rest of us can only aim for.

You can be of the Left and not love Mao. You can think maybe Mao wasn't the best chef after all. That for every ten million customers he fed, maybe one million died wanting food. The chef is dead, long live the chef. The taste of failed revolutions – that comes through later as well.

A lifelong divorce from the Movement – I can't love you, I can't leave you.

When you finally see it, you're unable to tell what came first, which was the idea and which the image and sound.

They say you never hear the shell that kills you. Is it possible to say: you never taste the spice that's cooking you? Is it possible to think of bloody wars and crashed revolutions as the spices that cook our lives? Is it possible to regard a film as a reverse-engineered recipe book?

We spend our lives trapped in wires, whole days plugging in and unplugging stuff. We are the first batches of humans to do this. Over the last hundred and fifty years, our story has been the change in our wiring, the mutation of our wires.

Wires, plugs, male, female, multi, earthed, cut open, ends frayed, short-circuited, burnt, bombed. Puns can't help themselves: it's the splicing that carries the spicing.

Each human, too, you could argue, is a like a wire, one connecting to other wires, each carrying our load, our traffic of memory-messages, our individual set of splices.

"This wine has an aftertaste like the dust on a rusted can of 1970s ORWO positive stock."

The weight of a work you can measure in cans. The sound-image becomes weightless, or, the weight changes, becomes a block.

That thing you told me, the whole idea of football being a memory of the skilled use of the feet on weaving looms. One could add the memory of feet in stirrups, riding the plough, dancing on grapes, or just dancing.

When rolling the camera, your eye no longer looks to save raw stock. When editing, your feet itch to kick something. Some invisible server takes the weight of everything. All you're left with is what you can see and hear.

The memory of film cutting our fingers. Feeling the tape joints, the foot pedal of the flatbed editing machine. The old editor's feet tapping in a tic. Everything now wired between eye and elbow, between shoulder-twitch and mouse button. A click is a cut. A click is a released missile. A click is a cut, a tick on the to-do hit list. Some invisible server takes the weight of everything.

Was there an architect who said windows first came from a mistake in the wall-making? Was there a biologist who suggested that every tree is a mistake? A tree through a window, a mistake framed by another mistake. To make films is to make mistakes. Fail, fail better. Make mistakes, but new ones, deeper ones. To misquote Pasolini, "Death is in no longer being able to make mistakes."

What do these two Germans think – of the

sudden absence of people in my overcrowded city, or of the rare city trees in one of the most fertile deltas of the world? I don't know.

A city – like a film – is made up also of things you can't see and cannot hear.

Think of a woman, or a man, as a city. Or, as the Baul singers say, think of a human body as a *paagol karkhana*, a lunatic factory, that houses, or entraps, the soul. A building – with rooms and machinery, with openings – through which thieves can enter and escape, a building with guards – who keep the conscience. As the singers would say, the product of the factory is the love and knowledge you send out across your life.

Ruchir Joshi is a filmmaker and writer based in India. His films include *Eleven Miles* and *Tales from Planet Kolkata*, and he is the author of a novel *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh.*

Maybe end with: the worker, has finally left the factory.
I guess the worker has the right, to finally leave the factory.
Let him leave, the taste of his work will stay.
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Christa Blümlinger
An Archeologist of the Present

We had gotten used to speaking to each other in English or French, whether in public or private. That's not to say that Harun didn't care what language he spoke in. He loved punch lines. He quoted gladly, exactly, and without any smugness. He would often ask me about the origin of some French word that had struck him in the course of his unceasing explorations. Austrian idioms, though, remained foreign to him, even in all those years he taught in Vienna. He never ceased to be repelled by the way his students at the Academy of Fine Arts butchered the German pronoun *Ich* into an *Ieee*. At least he eventually stopped pointing out the Austrianisms in *my* letters, though that may have been a result of the extraterritorial changes in my phraseology. The one thing that excited him even more than everyday dialogue was literature. I remember with what great urgency he told me at the 1989 Berlinale, in the streets of wintry Berlin, that Thomas Bernhard had just died – and, he added, my country's greatest contemporary author.

Farocki's oeuvre bespeaks a consistent interest in forms of migration. He parsed the official depiction of migration in his video *In-Formation* – which he called "a silent movie" – and found myths of cultural difference, sedimented in language regimentation and pictograms. He himself was a passionate Berliner, always attached to his respective neighborhoods, but also a frequent and distant traveler, a "rocketeer," as he liked to say. His interest in migration was related to a foible for *the rootless* – as described by philosopher Vilém Flusser,[1] with whom he was in dialogue. No surprise then that the only actor Farocki ever dedicated an entire film to, was Peter Lorre, the lost one (*Der Verlorene*), whose "double face" he read as a palimpsest of transatlantic movements. Perhaps it was this interest in migration (also in the sense of *translation*) that inspired him – like Pasolini – to study gestures, one of his central projects.

His installation *Transmission* (Übertragung, 2008) describes the human touch as a magical gesture of grasping and thus compiles, through scenes of hands touching monuments, a catalogue of rituals of cultural memory. To put it in Wittgenstein's terms, Farocki tried to play out *language games* of every kind, in relation to the actions into which language is woven – in a complicated network of overlapping and crisscrossing similarities.[2] He himself liked to speak in metaphors and analogies; his line of argument often took pictorial detours, forming chains and series much like his shot sequences.

Harun Farocki was interested, again and again, and in manifold ways, in the capacity of images to conjure up the presence of absent objects. His 16 mm documentary *In Comparison*

Harun Farocki, *Eye/Machine II,* 2001. Film still.

(*Zum Vergleich*), for example, isn't only about the various forms of brick production. Subtextually, the film hints at a sensory affinity between the manual production of bricks and the process of recording this film – of physically imprinting, splicing, constructing images with light and film stock, which, like the traditionally constructed house, seems to be a thing of the past. While the close-ups of pouring and molding offer a haptic view of bricks, the grainy material of the analog film refers to the tools of the filmmaker, who does his work on set, in the field. Bit by bit, the structure of the film indicates that an editor arranges shots in the same way a master-builder assembles houses from clay: both depend on a manually supported vision of montage. Farocki's vivid depictions of gripping hands demonstrate that gestures are deeply intertwined with recognition. If you wanted to take the metaphorical reading of this comparative documentary about producing bricks even further, you might discover a Bazin- or Rosselini-esque dimension, which connects the film itself (and not only its subject) with the idea of the imprint and reproduction.

In his film-essay *As You See* (Wie man sieht, 1986), as well as in his "observational" documentaries like the aforementioned *In*

Comparison, and also in his installations such as *Eye/Machine* (Auge/Maschine, 2001–2003) and *Counter-Music* (Gegen-Musik, 2004), Farocki sketches out a cultural history of labor, leading from handwork to the fully automated production and panoptical vision. From this point of view, his comparative study of brick manufacturing dovetails with his other investigations, in which he contemplates, for example, what is meant by an industrial "network" or "trust" ("Verbund" in *Between Two Wars*, 1978) or a "War without Soldiers" (*Eye/Machine*) and what forms of representation such abstract terms have inspired (in Brecht, in Lang, but also in television).

Whether he was taking on Taylorization, or military and civil surveillance, or the simulation and automatization of society, Farocki was usually attempting to locate the situation of the human body within mechanically and visually oriented dispositives. He filmed and researched those places where the mechanisms of power revealed themselves most nakedly through performative functions: in instructional classes, such as the ones he visited for his precise civilizational study, *How to Live in the German Federal Republic* (Leben-BRD, 1990), or in the supermarkets and prisons that he recorded for

Harun Farocki, *Eye/Machine II,* 2001. Film still.

his double-projection installation *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* (2000).

Intuitive thought and sensuous knowledge underlie Farocki's aesthetic on all levels. His goal was to convey experiential processes as procedures in time. For that very reason, film remained his preferred medium. Farocki even referred to filmmaking when defending the agenda and politics of the film magazine that he so passionately co-edited. In a *Filmkritik* editorial, he compared the magazine's unobtrusive presentation to a barely-noticeable tracking shot in Bresson's *Le Diable Problablement,* which possessed a strictness that he described as a rigorous continuation of the narrow framing.[3] This aesthetic description certainly applies to Farocki's own audiovisual investigations, which deconstruct found material with a dogged exactness, while remaining open about their own discourse. In an accordingly programmatic manner, the Filmmaker writes elsewhere: "One has to be as suspicious of images as one is of words. Both are intertwined in semantic and definitional relationship ... My goal is to search for buried meaning and to wipe the debris off the images."[4] One could describe this aesthetic program as a combination of image and language critique.

Farocki begins his film *Catchphrases – Catch Images: A Conversation with Vilém Flusser*

(Schlagworte – Schlagbilder: Ein Gespräch mit Vilém Flusser, 1986) with the following voice-over: "To Vilém Flusser, photography was as radical an invention as the printing press. Photography kicked off the development of technical images: film, electronic images, computer graphics. These technical images, says Flusser, opened up a new lifeworld." One could just as easily apply this description to the filmmaker's own agenda. Farocki is interested in the way that technical images produce meanings and trigger actions. He exhibits the language game of his own work so that it can be understood as a process. His films and installations are inclined to make both theoretical and sensory use of the iconic material that underlies them. Their view of history is conveyed through medial archaeologies, wherein they are negotiated, while their logic progresses via cinematic methods, in confrontation with the respective precursory or successional visual mediums.

How our lifeworlds are shaped and fashioned by old and new technologies, how and with what games we exercise for cases of emergency – that was once again the subject of Farocki's recent installation cycle *Serious Games* (Ernste Spiele, 2009–10). He never lost interest in how people learn. He was a staunch autodidact himself, already from a young age. Farocki liked
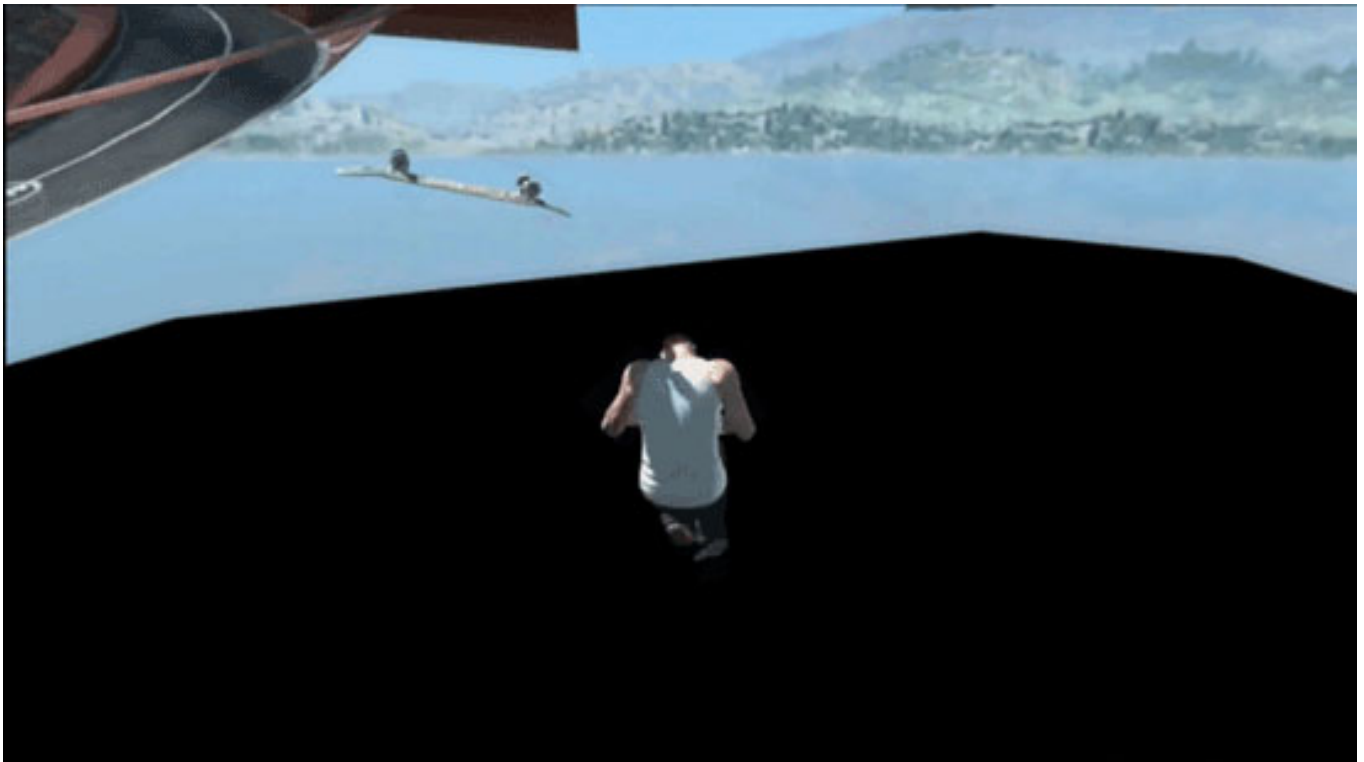
Harun Farocki, *Parallel II,* 2012–14. Film still.

to describe himself, ironically and confidently, as a school and college failure.[5] From an early age, Brecht had been his favorite author – and this was long before his plays were a fixture of West German curriculums. The filmmaker, author, artist and teacher never got tired, in his work and his life, of being a *Maître ignorant* (as defined by Jacques Rancière[6]). He was less concerned with questions of pedagogy than with a democratic distribution of knowledge. "What are you reading these days?" he liked to ask. He was always glad to send out articles that he found important, or to talk, in very precise terms, about films he was keen on.
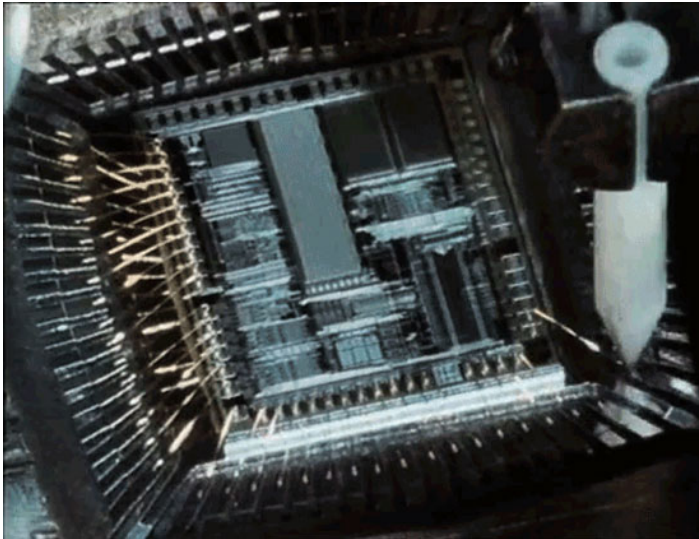
Harun Farocki, *War at a Distance,* 2003.

His life began in the shadows of the war; and he worked through all the convolutions of this influence in his art. In 1944, right when his birth was expected, the allies bombed Berlin. His family was forced to leave the city and ordered to Neutitschein (Nový Jicín today in the Czech Republic), a district called the *Sudetengau* under Nazi occupation. In an autobiographical essay, Farocki described the geopolitical circumstances of his birth as follows: "We only spent a few weeks there, less time than I have since spent explaining that I am neither a Czech nor a Sudeten German."[7]

In the same year, 1944, the allies bombed, not Auschwitz, but the IG Farben factory nearby the death camp. Drawing on analyses of these events, how and why the allies didn't act on their knowledge of the mass destruction of the Jews, Farocki developed his most important film. *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges, 1988) decodes a host of military images, focusing on two visual dispositives: American pilots in 1944 and CIA agents in 1977 offering two different lectures on the aerial photographs of Auschwitz.

In this instance, Farocki developed an epistemological field of technological history – measurement and surveillance in a period of rapid automatization. At the end of the film, a blind spot in the photographic act, referring back to the reality of the concentration camp, becomes visible.[8]

The final shots further emphasize details of the American pilots' aerial photos, which are picked up in the sweep of the film several times, framed and arranged in different ways. At the end of the film, through a permutative movement of cuts, the extreme enlargement of the photographs reminds us once again of their materiality. Farocki shows these images in precisely the spaces where visual thought takes place, and in connection to specific techniques of reproduction and distribution (in albums, archives, institutions). Whenever he used marginal and hard-to-access image materials from specialized archives, he sought to consider these conditions of visibility in his analysis.

By appropriating what he calls "operational" images, which initially belonged to a purely utilitarian context, Farocki explains the historical decoupling of eye and machine as the distinction between the autonomy of machines and their connection to the human body. His series of three installations, *Eye/Machine*, demonstrates how the graphic abstraction of military education images can lead to the "denial" of the real; they simultaneously take part in the dispositives of power and their archival process, which follows a purely instrumental rationality. These visual machines have integrated image-processing software, which, as Farocki notes, works "with the same clumsiness" that "robot arms execute new assignments."[9]

In Farocki's video installations, cinema always represents a field of reference, even when they are largely in dialogue with utilitarian pictorial worlds. His work shows to what extent, even within geographic spaces that have been entirely virtualized, digital images and automatic "vision machines" (Paul Virilio[10]) are often oriented toward anthropomorphic forms, abiding by the reality of human vision. Thus, in *Serious Games*, for example, Farocki draws an important part of the manifold arsenal of military simulations into sharp relief.

The interactivity of certain computer games demands accelerated reactions from participants – who are far away from the hypnotic condition of the film viewer – particularly games that demand military performance. The military decor at the real practice site in the Californian desert doesn't only simulate the real world in "enemy" territory, but should also ideally correspond to the soldier's prosthetic image apparatus. Cinema,

Farocki shows us, is imitated here in ambivalent ways. In the first place, the illusionary effect of calculated images seems to be oriented, paradoxically, toward the analog image and conventions of cinematic spatial experience. Now and again, however, a representational paucity appears, which *Serious Games* pinpoints as a symptom of the loss of realism that takes place in military games between the moments of preparing for war and processing its post-traumatic effects.

In his most recent installation cycle, *Parallel* (Parallele, 2014), Farocki contrasts animated clouds with a filmic-photographic projection of real clouds.[11] Farocki's comparative image analysis makes clear that the actual challenge in the representation of virtual clouds is not so much the imitation of the mimetic power of the film, but the integration of its pictorial-spatial logic into a graphic system. The image comparison makes clear to what extent the computer simulation is at once *indication* and *appearance* – or in Foucault's parlance, map and image.[12]

Harun Farocki, *Parallel III,* 2012–14. Film still.

Farocki had a singular way of investigating the order of things, and a rare capacity for doing so. An archeologist of contemporary pictorial cultures, his work will remain farsighted long after his death. With his detailed and rich cinematic memory, he knew – like the French critic Serge Daney – how to view the world in an encyclopedic sweep from the perspective of the movies, which since childhood had been one of his most important schools. And he knew that to master the medium, he required a personal manner of writing and a precise, rigorous form. For that reason the film journal *Trafic*, which Daney founded, was one of Harun's preferred outlets. *Trafic* is also where he encountered his favorite translator, the philosopher Pierre Rusch.

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Translated from German by Leon Dische Becker.

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1
Bodenlos, Eine Philosophische
Biographie (Bernheim:
Bollmann, 1992).

2
Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Philosophical Investigations, § 7
and § 66.

3
Harun Farocki, "Die Existenz der
Filmkritik," ["The Existence of
Film Criticism"] *Filmkritik* 301
(January 1982): 2–4.

4
Personal Testimonial by Harun
Farocki, cited in the program of
Filmclub Münster (Summer
2001): 5

5
Harun Farocki, "Lerne das
Einfachste!" [Learn What's
Easiest!], unpublished
manuscript, 2009.

6
Jacques Rancière, *Le Maître
Ignorant*: *Cinq Leçons sur
l'Emancipation Intellectuelle*
(Paris: Fayard, 1987).

7
Harun Farocki, "Written Trailers,"
in *Harun Farocki: Against What?
Against Whom?*, eds. Antje
Ehmann and Kodwo
Eshun*,* exhibition catalouge
(London: Raven Row, Koenig
Books, 2010), 221.

8
The film inspired a plethora of
commentaries, from a Lacanian
reading (Kaja Silverman, 1993),
to a historical review (Thomas
Elsaesser, 2004), from a
Deleuzian-inspired
analysis (Raymond Bellour, 2010)
to a Benjaminian
interpretation (Georges Didi-
Huberman, 2010), to name but a
few.

9
Harun Farocki, "Le point de vue
de la guerre," *Trafic* 50 (Summer
2004): 449.

10
Paul Virilio, "Fin de l'histoire ou
fin de la géographie? Un monde
surexposé," *Le Monde
Diplomatique* (August 1997): 17.

11
For more context, see my
program introduction "What is at
Stake in Farocki's *Parallel*,"
in *Berlin Documentary Forum 3*,
eds. Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg
(Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der
Welt, 2014), 182–189.

12
Michel Foucault, *The Order of
Things: An Archaeology of the
Human Sciences* (London:
Routledge, 2002), 72.

James Benning, *FAROCKI*, 2014. Film still.

James Benning
FAROCKI

Harun Farocki was a thoughtful man. For me he made sense of things. He looked in the right places. He was analytic and poetic, subtle and bold. And he knew the power of redundancy and form. But what I liked the most was his laugh. It came from deep within his heart and soul. When I wrote his daughter Anna to say he will live on within us all, she wrote back saying she wasn't ready yet to accept just that. And she is right ... we have lost a lot. Harun Farocki rest in the peace you were so fighting for.
          – James Benning
Val Verde, 2014
          ✕

Anselm Franke
A Critique of Animation

In 2014, Harun Farocki was beginning work on a film project on Marey and Muybridge and the origins of cinema. The last thing I received from him was a DVD copy of a wonderful but obscure Thom Andersen film on Muybridge from the 1970s.

The body in movement: this project would have been a logical continuation of his work, an explication of a concern with "life" and its mobilization and reconstructibility that was already implicit in most of his films. More specifically, this new work would have drawn comparisons between the alliance of film, physiology, and the science of work that are at the origins of cinema, and the role that computer simulations and computer animation have assumed in reorganizing life (as well as the body and work) today.

Cats, dogs, and rabbits tumble through Étienne-Jules Marey's studies of animal movement.

A few years back, when Harun was beginning to draft the series *Parallel*, he was speaking of his interest in the technologies used in films like *Avatar*. In particular, motion-capture technology is somehow close to the techniques used by Marey: actors in special suits perform movements in spaces equipped with cameras and sensors. Human actors lend their gestures to what will later become a digitally animated character.

Indeed, the suits actors wear in motion-capture rooms recall those black suits with white points that were used in Marey's physiological laboratory to track and dissect movements. As is well known, these physiological experiments not only led to the moving image, but were also foundational for an emerging science of work, for the rationalization of labor on the assembly line.

A typical scene from a Harun Farocki movie: a factory worker has to insert prefabricated parts into a machine for further processing. A study of the movements of both humans and machines. What is the worker doing? Why does this factory

Étienne-Jules Marey's striped tracksuit helped in studies of the movement of the human body in locomotion.

This scan of an actor's face was developed by the *Avatar* CGI team in conjunction with the University of Southern California. Their objective was to produce Emily, a hyperreal CGI character modeled exactly after the real-life actor whose face enabled the scan.
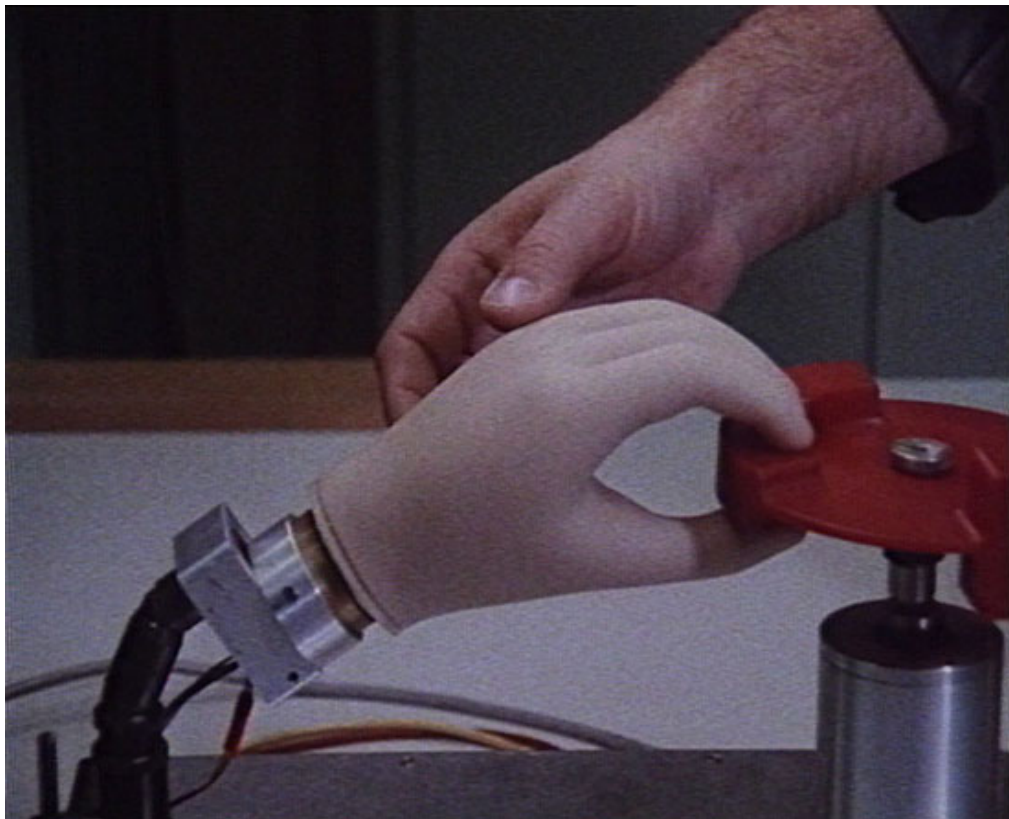
Harun Farocki, *As One Sees* (Wie man sieht), 1986.

need her? It does not need her muscle power, nor her creative thinking, but only her cognitive ability to *recognize* the position of the parts that have fallen chaotically into a basket, and then *grab* them and align them anew with the machine. What kind of new machine could replace her? Rationalization on the assembly line, just like rationalization in war, depends on coming to terms with movement, complexity, and contingency, on linking recognition with movement. To this end, the machine has to learn how to "see." "Seeing" here is detached from the labor of making a representation; it knows "recognition" only as a technical process of identification, in stark contrast to the meaning of recognition in human affairs and in politics. It is an a-subjective recognition in the best sense of the word.

Erhard Schüttpelz has suggested a useful distinction between "the complicated" and "the complex," which helps to understand what is at stake in such a scene. According to Schüttpelz, "complicated" is anything whose operations can be computed, like train timetables. A conversation at a bar, however, is "complex": it is ambiguous, and its many layers of meaning (and of animation) involve more factors than a simulation can easily take into account. The difference between the complex and the complicated was and continues to be the foremost frontier of modernization. By means of standardization and computation, modernity seeks to turn complexity into something that is merely complicated. War has been the prime engine of advance on this frontier.

Rather than being the "archeologist of images," as he is often described, I learned to see Harun as first and foremost a documentarist whose work revolves around "life." Certainly not in a vitalist sense, in some romantic or essentialist turn of mind, but in a non-reductionist way, as living, non-alienated labor, as dialogic force – life as something that upsets and disconcerts logic and the machine, but without ever affirming it as therefore entirely beyond logic or the grasp of concepts or imagery. To the contrary, life is actualized in form, in images, in concepts.

To me, Harun's work always appeared as a critique of animation, of the modes of animation and subject-production that pertain to industrialism. But this critique rarely targeted the phantasms of popular fiction directly (although sometimes it did); rather, it was directed at the "magic" that he identified in the seemingly inconspicuous representations of purely operational processes. Such a dialectical inversion resounds with Benjamin, and indeed I was often tempted to see films like *Between Two Wars* or *As One Sees* as a realization of what

Benjamin demanded from the Surrealists in 1929, namely, that they exchange "the play of human features for the face of an alarm clock that in each minute rings for sixty seconds."

"Life" in Harun's world and work is diagnosed like a patient in critical condition. I would call the diagnosis "clinical positivism," a monitoring of life-systems at their critical margins. Capital's solution to the crisis of the absolute negation of life, it turns out, was its techno-social reconstruction. The patient had to be reanimated, and in the course of this reanimation (and thus de-alienation and de-objectification), the oppositional matrix of the disciplinary society had to be undone. What followed from this was the well-known collapse of dichotomies, which Harun captured like few others. When he analyzed the links between production and war, it was by way of an emphatic immersion in its logic, a dialectics that put itself permanently, and empirically, at risk. He then became a technician, one who relied, to paraphrase Benjamin, on an action to "put forth its own image" – "as if the world itself wanted to tell us something." But when he portrayed the absurd theater of the grand de-alienation of neoliberalism, he was not only truly Brechtian; he also delineated how desire, the dream of transformative mobility, and psychic life as such had turned into a resource. The way people now had to "put forth their *own* image" demanded a rather different response.

This is why the image of the motion-capture technique used in *Avatar* matters. This image, showing the actor in the lab and the resulting digital character next to each other, is an image of the production of images, and it represents the solution that was applied to the "problem" of the technological negation and subsequent reconstruction of life. It is an image that is paradigmatic for our current moment: humans pushing machines across the uncanny valley, beyond the winter of artificial intelligence. The winter of artificial intelligence: this refers to a period of several decades in which AI and robotics failed to fulfill the horizon of expectations in reconstructing and automatizing life. It describes the temporary inability of the machine to cross from the merely complicated into the realm of the dynamically complex. The winter of artificial intelligence: an allegory, also, for the reductionist, militaristic reality principle of an "administered life." But above all, it was a "problem" at the junction between technology and imagery, one that demanded to be solved.

The solution is represented in the image of motion-capture technology. Harun spoke of how digital animation hit a limit (not unlike the "winter of artificial intelligence") when it tried to reconstruct the human walk (again referring us

back to Marey). It always looks mechanical, and never organically alive. Not only is it cheaper to use real actors in motion capture than to produce characters from scratch in digital animation, it is also the way to ensure that technology today has always-already been pushed beyond the uncanny valley, because that valley itself is now bridged by the investment of life into machines. In augmented realities, "intelligent environments," and "self-learning systems," the organic and the machine have formed intricate networks. Living beings now supplement the machine and provide it with that part of animate intelligence which to date it has not been able to (re)produce by itself.

Thus, the "frontier" between the complex and the complicated has transformed: the complicated now "accommodates" and "frames" the complex, by monitoring its flows and registering any deviations from the "patterns of life," using them to expand their scope by means of generative algorithms. Harun referred to the data maps of operational computer animations that are used to monitor complex systems – from factories to cities to battlefields – as "ideal-typical" images, images that seek to outperform cinematographic and photographic representations, and indeed the reality of life itself. Reality is then no longer the measure of an always imperfect image. Instead, the image increasingly becomes the measure of an always-imperfect reality. It was this inversion that Harun's work never failed to put back on its feet.

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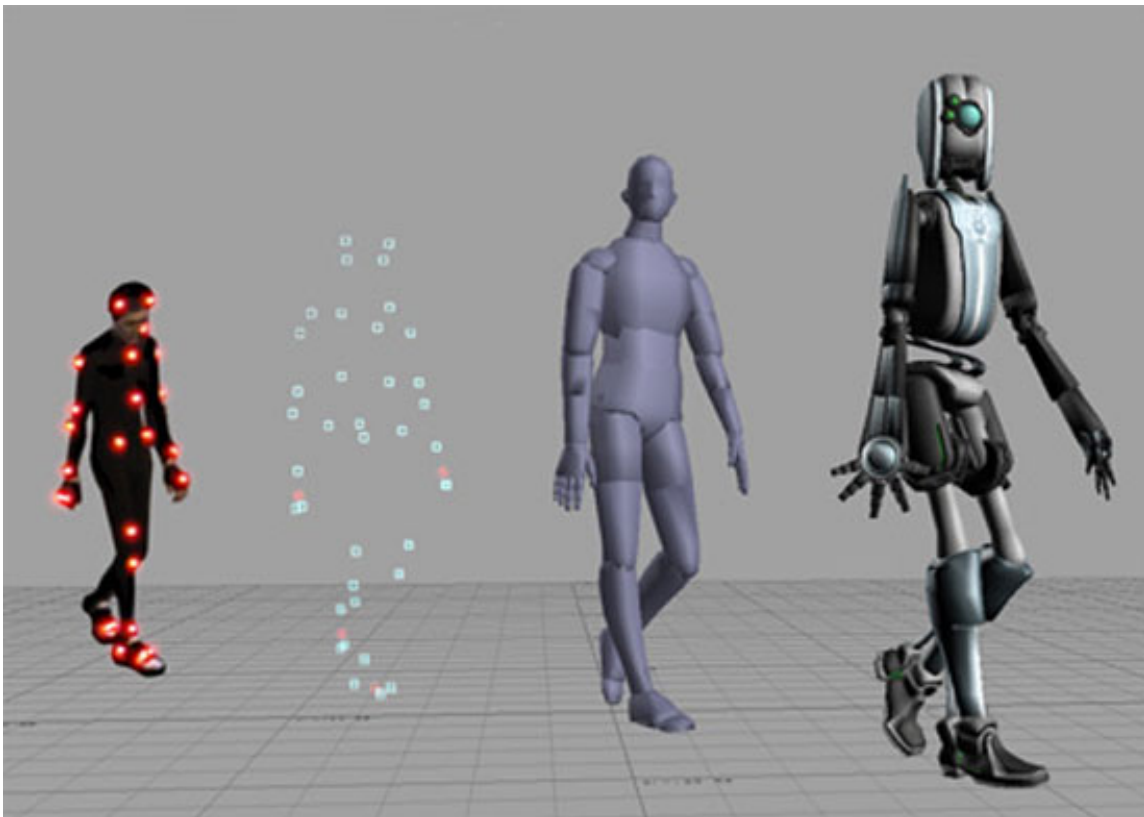
To generate realistic movement, a CGI Robot integrates the scanned movement of a human actor.

Anselm Franke is a Berlin-based curator and writer, currently Head of Visual Arts at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, where recent exhibitions have included *#3 Down to Earth* and *Forensis*. In 2012, Franke curated the Taipei Biennial based on the theme "*Modern Monsters / Death and Life of Fiction.*" From 2006–2010, Franke was artistic director of Antwerp's Extra City Kunsthal. Franke will be the chief curator for the tenth Shanghai Biennale, which opens on November 22, 2014. He has edited, published, and contributed to numerous publications.

Cathy Lee Crane
Letters to Harun

Wed 5/28/2014 8:05 a.m.
Dear Harun,
I hope this finds you and finds you well. I wanted to propose something to you.
My Pasolini film will be showing at the Arsenal as part of the Pasolini Roma exhibit at MGB during the last weekend of September. I have been invited to the ICI on 9/25 to present previous work.
I wanted to know if you'd be interested in having a conversation with me that evening about three of my short films, *The Girl from Marseilles*, *Sketches after Halle*, and *Adrift*. I suppose we could talk about the flâneur, the archeology of historical remains, and me and my camera (perhaps our work on the prison project too).
I await your thoughts on this.
Much love to you and Antje.
Cathy

Mon 6/2/2014 4:02 p.m.
Dear Cathy,
it took me some days to find out about my schedule. And I am free on 9/25 and even in Berlin and am happy to confirm that I will stand with you on the stage of the Arsenal – or in front of it.
On Sep 9th an exhibition with new work of mine is scheduled at Greene Naftali. Perhaps you are around and we could finalize the program and the procedure in Berlin!
Love,
Harun

Tue 6/3/2014 10:08 a.m.
Ah how wonderful, Harun!
My first thought might be to consider one of your early short films alongside one of mine … perhaps …
Remember Tomorrow with *Sketches after Halle*
Einschlafgeschichten 1–5 with *Adrift*
The Taste of Life with *The Girl from Marseilles* or *On the Line*
The ICI event is a sidebar to the Pasolini and is intended to ground the viewing of that film at Arsenal with a look into the conceptual drive of my early work.
Much love.
Really grateful and excited to have a public conversation with you.
Cathy

Fri 6/13/2014 9:40 a.m.
Dodici, Dicembre
Dear Cathy,
Have you ever heard about this film by Pasolini and others?
I learned today that a copy was found.

More soon,
Harun

Mon 6/23/2014 9:49 a.m.
Dear Harun,

I have downloaded the film which no, I had never heard of.

ICI thought it best for us to consider our conversation around Pasolini, perhaps works that the Arsenal doesn't show or something about his formal approach to the critiques of capitalism that your work (I wonder what of your works you could look at with Pasolini in mind) takes up.

Well, how would you feel about the following proposal:

Adrift in the Gesture of Hands: A Conversation with Harun Farocki and Cathy Lee Crane

In *The Cinema of Poetry*, Pasolini introduces the notion of a system of gestural signs. Harun Farocki and Cathy Lee Crane will discuss this idea (among others) in the context of viewing their collaboration (*Prison Images*) as well as some of their previous individual work.

So of course, I wonder WHAT films and if one of your own might fit into his schemes of the language of reality or free indirect discourse or any of Deleuze's takes on this essay.

I hope you get a nice summer break. You were so present in the conversation at Flaherty last week in part because Jill Godmillow showed *What Farocki Taught* …

big love to you, antje, and anna.
xoxoxxoCathy

Thu 6/26/2014 7:29 a.m.
Dear Cathy,

because I have a new computer some mails are missing. I can't find the one in which you proposed the titles we should show together in the Arsenal. Please resend. I remember that some titles are not available – luckily, in some cases! – and I will propose others.
I'd love to do the Arsenal event with you – when? – but i don't think I should perform at a P-conference.

I have a fellowship, I attended a summer school, I had to sit on far too many podiums. I'm not a Pasolini-expert – Germany is full of young film scholars!

Love from Weimar.

On the way to here I always pass through Halle.
Harun

Mon 6/30/2014 1:10 p.m.
Hello Harun,

Greetings in your Weimar holiday. It seems absolutely certain that we would need to discuss at ICI on Thursday 9/25 our collaboration and earlier work in the context of Pasolini's essay "The Cinema of Poetry." I can appreciate if you would prefer not to do this though I think we could have fun. And really, I've talked with enough scholars that as practitioners it could be great. But again, I would understand if that is not your preference. When you can, please do let me know. And of course we shall see each other in NYC earlier in September and Berlin in the latter part of that month no matter what you decide.

I look forward, as always, to that.
Much love,
Cathy

Tue 7/1/2014 3:33 p.m.
Dear Cathy,

please excuse my stubbornness, but I would really prefer not to do something on PP!

Far too many times I have recently sat on podiums without feeling comfortable about it – I imagined what i would think about somebody who has not really something urgent to say about a topic.

I would love to do something with you about your films. And it should be your evening – not mine.

Because we collaborated on it, we should perhaps include *Convicts* – if you want. If not, I would be fine if we just show works of yours and talk about it.
Best,
Harun

Wed 7/2/2014 9:20 a.m.
No problem Harun!
I look forward to the moment we can talk publicly about my work …
Love to your ladies!
Cathy

Fri 7/18/2014 3:37 p.m.
Hi Cathy,
I want to put you on the guest list for a superb dinner at Greene Naftali on September 9.
Are you around?
Best wishes,
Harun

9/26/2014
Dear Harun,
Someone steals your name plaque. What a fuss. My rambling attempt to follow the map Antje makes for me – past Brecht to you (she repeats this) meets with failure. Perhaps my

story of getting lost makes you laugh that very generous laugh of yours. I find myself here in Berlin as planned. A gray September day. The event at ICI and the screening at Arsenal, fantastic. Except you did not stand with me there. So, I go to you here, undeterred by the almost heavy-as-the-sky fact of your very stubborn absence.

I load the rental car with water. Betraying my own anxiety over entering a maximum-security prison in Southern California, I insist on taking precautions. That makes you laugh too. 1999. You and I together in a cell as the bars close behind us, and the camera, and the guard who shows us how he checks for contraband in the mattress. Lockdown. Another incident in the yard. And you insist on watching very closely, lovingly even. Somewhere the dripping of a nearby spigot brings to mind the impossibly beautiful end of Antonioni's *L'Eclisse*.

Yes, impossible. I cannot find the beauty in your passing. I turn to Antonioni, the weight of things, to places emptied of people. I read:

> For Kant, the difference between the beautiful and the sublime rests on a distinction between a bounded object of contemplation and "a formless object"

which has the capacity to extend the power of the human imagination. The ideal of beauty in nature "carries with it a purposiveness in its form," whereas an object of sublime contemplation may "appear to be contrapurposive for our power of judgment, unsuitable for our faculty of presentation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination, but is nevertheless judged all the more sublime for that."[1]

I suspect I find my looking for you compelling. Like my looking for Breton's *Nadja*, like my looking for Feininger's *Halle*, like my looking for *Simone Weil*, and then *Pasolini*. What an extraordinary horror, though, this particular longing. The colored squares placed in the dust of a construction site. Comparing. Bricks. A still life of fruit arranged for the camera. Lovers' hands touch while passing a coin. Chaos in the state-run television station. The cigarette burns flesh. Workers leave the factory. Not only these images but how to watch them; potentially even why to watch our bodies awkwardly positioning themselves and our tools in the labor, the strangeness that is our social/public body making our politics. His hands, you told me. Not

Cathy Lee Crane, *Vanishing Point*, 2014. The photograph shows Dorotheenstadt Cemetery in Berlin, where Harun is buried.

the talking head. And so, outside of Sacramento, I tilt down to frame the gesturing hands of the instructor for correctional officer training. He asks his recruits whether the gunshot is a "good shot." When is it warranted to shoot a prisoner? Watch. Frame. His hands. These are like the hairdresser's hands in *Shoah*. This is the language of the body that betrays us, by showing to us a discontinuity between our acts and our words. Pasolini called this language the cinema of poetry. Stanislavski called it subtext; the relationship of dialogue to behavior. You are an elegant Marxist. You will critique the regimes of power but you can embrace the messenger – sometimes. Like I refuse the past tense. Sometimes.

> The windowpane is what allows us to see, and the rail, what allows us to move through. These are two complementary modes of separation. The first creates the spectator's distance: You shall not touch; the more you see, the less you hold – a dispossession of the hand in favor of greater trajectory for the eye. The second inscribes indefinitely, the injunction to pass on; it is its order written in a single but endless line: go, leave, this is not your country, and neither is that-an imperative of separation which obliges one to pay for an abstract ocular domination of space by leaving behind any proper place, by losing one's footing.[2]

It is your never-condescending compassion for the absurdity of us, our living-ness, this thing or things we do. When we pulled into the little motel somewhere in the Imperial Valley, there was a casino, a disco, and other unattended amenities in a lonely desert. Waiting, we had a beer. Yours was serious business, though never so serious that you couldn't discuss it in an empty disco over a beer. This project which you made it your business to pursue; to watch very closely; to never stop looking at just how gross and oftentimes subtle our own complicity would be in building structures, regimes of our own oppression, containment, surveillance. Antje is right. Our job now is to think with you.

You are the reason I kept making films. Collaborating with you on *I Thought I was Seeing Convicts* transformed my understanding of the body. In being framed (or captured) we are both shaped by and resist its inscription. The warden let us have that footage of the lovers who meet in the visitation room at the Calipatria State Prison and say, "One day we will all have a bar code here." He moved his hand across his forehead.

You never stopped exploring the apparatus of the cinema for its implications and

complicities with the quotidian. You found the notion of an "apolitical" cinema absurd. Who then shall pick up your mantel? Who will guide us in order that we do not forget the technologies and mapping that make us?

And how is it that we have not yet built (though perhaps now we will) a dictionary of cinematic gestures? What you began in the *Expression of Hands*, then in *Workers Leaving the Factory*, remains an unfinished work. Such a work, I hope, is not intended to find the reductions of our affective states, the least common denominator required of AI laboratories. No, this effort will operate like an inoculation against the Soma Holiday that is rocking us with increasingly jangling speed. Softly. Innocuous. Nothing, you taught us, is that.

Your words to me as I was finishing my film *Pasolini's Last Words*: "I find the idea to repeat a gesture out of a film – the cross with hands in handcuffs – great. A real approach. Like remembering something, like whistling a symphony." Who writes, "like whistling a symphony"? Within the poetic cinema that words like these have encouraged me to explore, I inhabit that which cannot be named; through which, by failing to escape inscription, an outside one can only wish for appears. The ineffable. In those long, impossible days of August, I took up residence in this unknowable place.

✕

Cathy Lee Crane has been making hybrid narrative/documentary films on 16 mm since 1994. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, and individual grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the San Francisco Film Commission. Her first feature, *Pasolini's Last Words* (2012), enjoyed its world premiere at the Montréal Festival du Nouveau Cinema as a "gem of world cinema" in the Panorama International section, and is being distributed on DVD in 2015 by Salzgeber. Her short films have been broadcast on European television and are distributed on 16 mm by Canyon Cinema and Lightcone. She is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Cinema, Photography, and Media Arts at Ithaca College.

1
Matthew Gandy, "Landscapes of deliquescence in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert*," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* vol. 28, no. 2 (June 2003): 218–237.

2
Michel de Certeau, "Railway Navigation and Incarceration," in *The Practice of Everyday*, trans. Steven Rendall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

05/05

Doreen Mende

# The Many Haruns: A Timeline Through Books and Hand Gestures from 18,000 BC–2061

A few moments from encounters with Harun Farocki materialize in the form of his films and his own texts, passages from emails exchanged with HF over the years, my porous memory of dinners, and our reunions in the years to come. The time-fragments presented below begin long before we met and exceed the factual-temporal event of Harun's untimely, depressing, and shocking passing on July 30, 2014.

Such a method of selecting bits of time refers, first, to HF's insistence on reflecting on the means of production that a person conceives of or requests for making a tribute, an analysis, or "images in language" (as Jean Genet put it) public. In other words, HF permanently questioned and updated his work methods according to his own scientific research into the technologies that influenced and changed the processing of thought through image: agit-prop films and cinema in the 1960s; television and mass media in the 1970s and 1980s; reality TV, video, and the editing table in the 1990s; computer animation, games, and post-traumatic computer-based therapies in the 2000s onwards. HF's observation of the development of production techniques always projected his thinking, writing, and filmmaking into the contemporary world, in his search for the mechanisms behind "the industrialization of thought" (HF).

And second, this timeline wills itself to stay as precise as possible in terms of dates, names, observations, and comparisons. Learning from HF: each sentence – recorded, pictured, drawn, written, or spoken – is potentially a (never complete) archive of books and films as much as of thoughts and gestures. Each sentence carries the possibility of initiating acts of confidence through which we enter journeys of thinking – journeys of the kind that HF was so beautifully able to share, demand, propose, appreciate, let go, follow, and risk, to a degree that was always intimidating and utterly encouraging at the same time.

Magdalénien (c. 18,000–12,000 BC)
The ancient cultural period of the Magdalénien emerges during a monthly web video series on a German-French TV channel's website in 2013, when HF draws the curved line to depict the tight backside of a horse in order to demonstrate a profound change in his perception of images as a child: his transition from constructing two-dimensional images to constructing three-dimensional images. He juxtaposes his drawing with an image of the first human drawing (horses) on a wall in the Chauvet Cave. How come, HF asks, the visual grammars of the oldest images of the world are still legible to us today? This sequence brings to mind *Le Mains négatives*
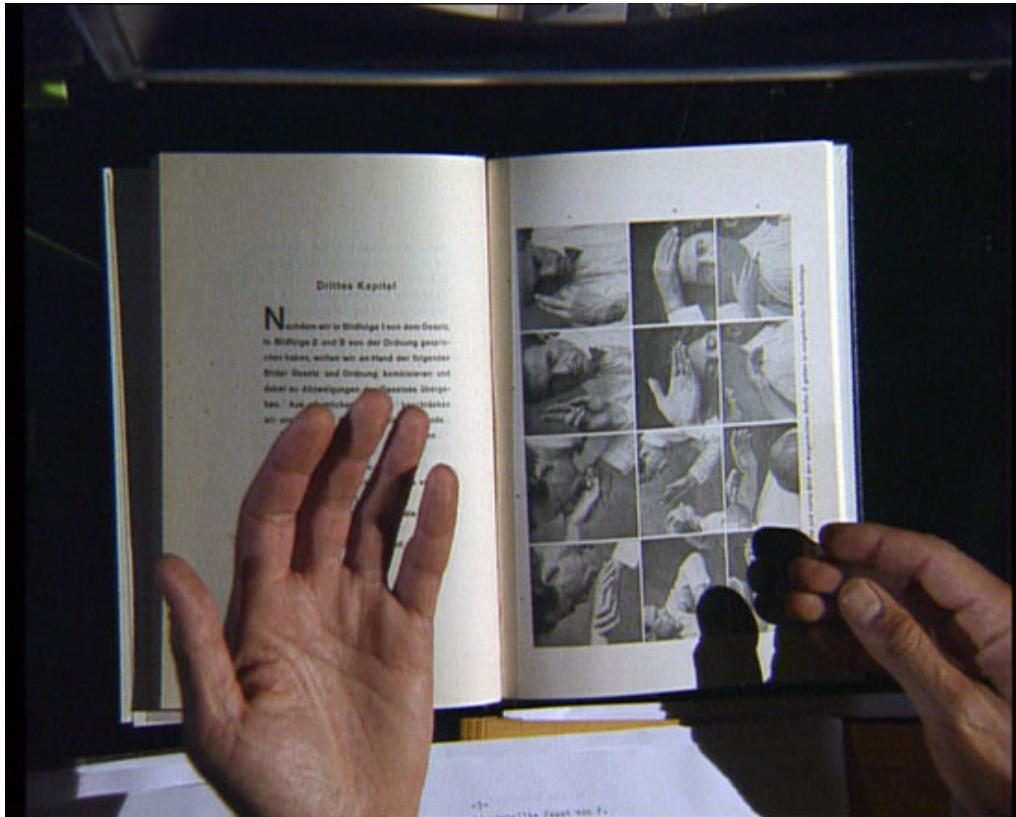
Harun Farocki, *The Expression of Hands* (Der Ausdruck der Hände), 1997. Film still.

Harun Farocki, *War at a Distance* (Erkennen und Verfolgen), 2003. Film still.

(1979) by Marguerite Duras, a film that "I admire a lot," as HF writes in an email on October 7, 2012 – a traveling shot through the streets of Paris from night til the dawn of day:

> They call negative hands the paintings of hands found in the Magdalénien caves of southern Atlantic Europe. The edges of these hands – pressed outspread upon the rock – were soaked in color. Most often in blue, and black. Sometimes red. No explanation has been found for this practice.

1892
Albrecht Meydenbauer's *Das Photographische Aufnehmen zu Wissenschaftlichen Zwecken, insbesondere das Messbild-Verfahren* (Photographic Recording for Scientific Purposes, Especially Photogrammetry) is published. Its origins can be traced back to the author's accidental experiment in 1858 at the Dome in Wetzlar. HF presents the book as a main character in his film *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (Bilder der Welt und die Inschrift des Krieges, 1988). The English voice-over, narrated by Ulrike Grote, comments, "This capacity to see better is the reverse side of mortal danger." This concern lays the groundwork for further investigations into the "technical image" (HF), specified in detail in the *Eye/Machine* trilogy (2000–2003), *Prison Images* (Gefängnisbilder, 2000), *War at a Distance* (Erkennen und Verfolgen, 2003), and *Serious Games* (Ernste Spiele, 2010).

1927
Dyk Rudenski publishes *Acting and Film* (Gestologie und Filmspielerei). It plays a major role in *The Expression of Hands* (Der Ausdruck der Hände, 1997) and makes HF speculate: "One can ask whether the cinema would have developed its own sign language if the period of silent movies had lasted longer." It must be said that already in 1967, the close-up of female hands reading Mao's little red book, cut off by the film frame, constitute the first sequence in *The Words of the Chairman* (Die Worte des Vorsitzenden, 1967), marking the beginnings of HF as a filmmaker. HF's elaboration on the expressiveness of hands recalls the comprehensive discussion in art-theory circles around "Notes on Gesture" (the essay by Giorgio Agamben from 1992) at the end of the 1990s. HF does not refer to this essay. Instead, he focuses on developing a "cinematographic thesaurus" and an "archive of filmic expressions," as he describes them in an interview with Thomas Elsaesser. This effort begins in earnest with

Workers Leaving the Factory (Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik, 1995).

1960
The French conscript soldier Marc Garanger photographs Algerian women who have never been photographed before without veils, for the purpose of issuing identity cards. The photographs are compiled in a book published in Paris in the early 1980s, which HF stages as a character in *Images of the World and Inscription of War* (Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges, 1988). HF uses his hand like a veil, covering the mouth and nose of a woman in one of the photographs.

1967
Shortly after discussing the book *Fantasy and Labor* (Fantasie und Arbeit, 2009) – a "biographical dialogue" between the filmmakers Iris Gusner, from East Berlin, and Helke Sander, from West Berlin – HF writes an email to me on November 3, 2013:

> Helke Sander was a close confidante. We argued until dawn about whether the female question could be solved independently of the general social revolution, and also whether the Chinese were right to cut pianists' hands off during the cultural revolution. Watch her film *Redupers*. It turns out that women don't have to wait until the whole world is just. – The Black Panthers were considered important in the GDR? I'd like to know more about that![1]

With Sander, HF realized a series of films contributing to the famous years of HF's involvement in the militant-political scene in West Berlin, which included HF inviting Holger Meins to be the cameraman for *The Words of the Chairman*. The film stars the artist Ursula Lefkes, who is HF's first wife and will give birth to twin daughters a year later.

1969
Inextinguishable Fire (Nichtlöschbares Feuer, 1969) is often described as an "agit-prop" film. Considering, however, HF's meticulous observation of hands in the film, one can speculate that it is actually an "action-film." The singular form of "hands" in German is *Hand*, which shows etymological proximity to *Handlung*, or "action." Concretely, action enacted by a hand takes place in the seminal scene when HF, while reading the eye-witness statement of a napalm victim, uses his right hand to stub out a burning cigarette on his left arm. A hand can rob, count money, carry, defend, kill, caress, and serve as a

Harun Farocki, *Still Life,* (Stilleben), 1997. Film still.

Robert Bresson, *L'Argent,* 1983. Film still.

"paper stage screen," as HF writes on his hand almost thirty years later in *The Expression of Hands* (Der Ausdruck der Hände, 1997).

1986
HF introduces books as living characters in *As You See* (Wie man Sieht, 1986). Although books have starred in his films since the appearance of the little red book early on, they are now credited along with the crew:

> *The Baroque Arsenal* (Rüstungsbarock): Mary Kaldor
> Camera: Ingo Kratisch, Ronny Tanner
> *The Human Condition* (Vita Activa): Hannah Arendt
> Sound: Manfred Blank, Klaus Klingler
> *Architect or Bee?* (Produkte für das Leben statt Waffen für den Tod): Mike Colley
> Producer: Ulrich Stroehle
> Speaker: Corinna Belz
> *Progress without People* (Maschinen gegen Menschen): David F. Noble
> Mixing: Gerhard Jensen
> Negative Cut: Elke Granke
> Research Assistant: Michael Pehlke
> *The Outdatedness of Human Beings, Vol. 2* (Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen II): Günther Anders
> Producer/Author: Harun Farocki
> Dem Andenken von William W. (In memory of William W.), 24.2.1977–24.3.82

It becomes clear that film offers a multilayered archival function.

1997
HF contributes *Still Life* (Stilleben, 1997) to Catherine David's Documenta X in Kassel, with a delivery-delay of a few weeks after the exhibition opening. The inclusion of filmmakers, poets, and writers as artist-authors in the festival indicates a profound paradigm shift in contemporary art, which will be discussed five years later with "experiment with truths," or "documentary/vérité" (Okwui Enwezor). HF's role in this shift emerges from two sides: his lifelong insistency on the analysis of image-languages as data and capital that constitute major forces in a globalizing world, and the contemporary art world's search for a new realism after 1989. Shortly before, the Lille Museum of Modern Art commissioned a contribution from HF to the exhibition: *Interface* (Schnittstelle, 1995). This is the turning point – or a "spatial turn" in filmmaking – from cinema and TV in art spaces to installations. At the same time, HF works with Kaja Silverman on the book *Speaking about Godard*, which can be regarded as a conversational farewell to cinema.

2010
Through an email program's archiving technology, this letter from HF can be dated precisely to May 10, 10:17 p.m. CET: "I've never been to Ramallah. My spellcheck is so dumb that it doesn't know that place. Couldn't these programs educate themselves at night, on Wikipedia, like the workers did in the past?"[2]

HF visits Ramallah a few years later, when his word-processing program still does not consider it a really existing place.

2014
After a four-year-long world tour through fifteen cities in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, HF finishes the video-project *Labour in a Single Shot*, which he's been putting on with film curator, video artist, and life partner Antje Ehmann. The two are collaborating with filmmakers, video-documentarists, and amateurs in each specific and respective location on what labor looks like in the form of weeks-long educational sessions. The last stop is Johannesburg in April 2014. *Labour in a Single Shot* invites viewers to speculate about a global-cultural history of labor through the image as it relates to living conditions, revealing the geopolitics of labor and the historical transition from craftsmanship to Taylorism (as discussed in *The Expression of Hands*) to Fordism to post-Fordism to the tertiary sector. It is driven by two distinctive elements that have shaped HF's work since he decided to be a filmmaker: first, the educational potency of the image, now taking up the form of educational group-sessions proposing an image-geography of labor; and second, the image-frame as a space to visually and concisely locate the economic and social consequences of living with global capitalism.

2018
The World Cup takes place in Russia. The installation *Deep Play* (2007) constitutes the opening exhibition of the Pavilion for Contemporary Visual Cultures in the Republic of Donetsk. It also brings to mind July 2014, when HF may have read the summer issue of his favorite magazine, *Lettre International*. The first essay was "Fussball in Brasilien: Lebenskunst und Lebensfreude im synkopischen Rhythmus des Spiels" (Football in Brazil: The Life of Art and the Pleasure of Life in the Syncopated Rhythm of the Game) by José Miguel Wisnik. A perfect HF idea: it discusses the mass interest in football (e.g., the World Cup in Brazil in summer 2014) as a translation of the physical absence of military battlefields in highly capitalized parts of the world. Military warfare has turned into economic warfare, produced and broadcasted through

strategic images that push art to its limits. July 30, 2014 comes to mind.

2061

The 100th anniversary of the first Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade. Some fifty years earlier, during a dinner with friends towards the end of July 2014, HF talked about Kosovo, the UN, new binary orders, impasses of sectarianism in political thinking, and football. Unfortunately, there is no recording of the conversation. What remains is a shadow-like image of HF wearing a white T-shirt with a print of a male torso in Soviet-socialist military dress framed by an exuberant wreath of red roses.

×

☐ Harun was not only a football lover. He also was a traveller, questioner, listener, and observer. He was an interlocutor, essayist, analyst, non-ideologist, intellectual, and non-academic. A bibliophile and language-lover, he was an image-surgeon, image-worker, work-partner, family guy, a German-Indian born in Czechoslovakia, a project-maker, beer-drinker, smoker, collector of T-shirts, commentator, and advisor. As a non-fan of large dinners, he was still a great conversationalist. He was an admirer of some of Adorno's music compositions, and he was a filmmaker. And Harun was a friend of utmost social and intellectual generosity. Certainly, the sequence of Haruns is incomplete. Many Haruns remain missing. And the sequence is written without hierarchical order. Rather, it depicts the manifold radiance of a person whose various formations could all emerge during one evening.

Defying and repressing his physical absence, I can see him watching, reading, and listening to the abundance of tributes to HF, the filmmaker. Harun the person would now perhaps lift his arms up to his chest with open hands. Then he would move them slightly up and down with a gesture of modest but vehement clearance, saying "enough, enough," as if to defend himself, like a convict, against the laws of a culture that commemorates in public. With open hands that indicate intimacy, which HF demonstrates in *The Expression of Hands*, he would smile, and perhaps his gesture would serve as a call to attention for a discussion of an article he had just read.

Archives of books, gestures, and thoughts remain to be watched, held between hands and translated into images. Harun would dislike nothing more, though, than if interventions into the thought-constructing systems of the world we live in today stopped taking risks, stopped producing something new – if we were to get too lazy to precisely investigate the politics of our post-humanly cybernetic era to turn its

strategies against itself.

Nothing would make HF more discreetly upset than if we were to forget to educate ourselves during the night like the workers did in the past.

Doreen Mende lives in Berlin and works internationally as a curator, writer, scholar, and editor. Her concept-driven projects involve research in relation to economics, display practices, internationalisms, nonaligned spirits, solidarity, and geopolitics. She recently finished her practice-based PhD in Curatorial/Knowledge at Goldsmiths. Since 2009, she has been a faculty member at the Dutch Art Institute. The conceptual framework for her contribution on HF to *e-flux journal* refers to the idea of futurity as found in *Otolith Timeline* (2006) by The Otolith Group.

1
German original: "Helke Sander war eine enge Vertraute, bis in die Puppen stritten wir ob die Frauenfrage unabhängig von der generellen sozialen Revolution lösbar sei und auch ob es richtig wäre, dass die Chinesen in der Kulturrevolution den klassischen Pianisten die Hände abhackten. Sieh Dir mal ihren Film REDUPERS an. Es hat sich herausgestellt, dass die Frauen nicht warten müssen bis die ganze Welt gerecht ist. –– Die Black Panther waren in der DDR wichtig? Darüber wüsste ich gerne mehr!"

2
German original: "Ich war noch nie in Ramallah. Mein Korrekturprogramm ist so doof, dass es diesen Ort nicht kennt. Könnten diese Programme nicht nachts sich bei Wikipedia weiterbilden, so wie früher die Arbeiter?"

Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann

How to Wear a Scissor-Wielding Trifecta on a T-Shirt

We see a street through a surveillance camera. A crowd of working people are out and about – informants, money transporters, messengers, street cleaners, sausage vendors. Private and state security agents can be seen in the background, aiming at pedestrians from an enclosure. Now and again, a pedestrian is hit and falls to the ground. A house is raided by police officers. Another security agent poisons his own dog. A poem is superimposed over the scene:

> Everything that doesn't blind us is real.
> How can we show you investments in action,
> or the movements caused by capital –
> the privileges, the dependencies, the dreams of elimination,
> the capacity for betrayal in each and every one of us?
> How can we show you capital flows in detail,
> their source, course, and estuary pockets – who is allowed to work for them, at what pay, and when they're laid off?
> But if we draft a picture of a machine that simulates the market economy, you will shut your eyes.
> First you will shut your eyes to the pictures, then to the memories,
> then to the facts and correlations.
> We can give you only a rough idea of how the market economy works.

That's from *The Crooked Paw* (Die Krumme Pranke, 1999), an animated film we shot with Amelie Wulffen and Josef Strau about the privatization of Berlin's public spaces. We were witnessing this destruction on a daily basis – the everyday disenfranchisement and repression. In the meantime, a wave of neo-national ideologization was sweeping the country, particularly the art world. We perceived it as a new beginning.

Our street-scene poem plagiarizes a passage from Harun Farocki's *The Inextinguishable Fire* (Nicht Löschbares Feuer, 1969), a film that deals with the impossibility of describing the effects of napalm. In a memorable scene, Farocki outlines the monstrous abyss between description and fact, in a manner both existential and banal, by putting out a cigarette on his arm.

> How can we show you napalm in action?
> And how can we show you the injuries caused by napalm?
> If we show you pictures of napalm burns, you'll close your eyes.
> First you'll close your eyes to the pictures.
> Then you'll close your eyes to the memory.
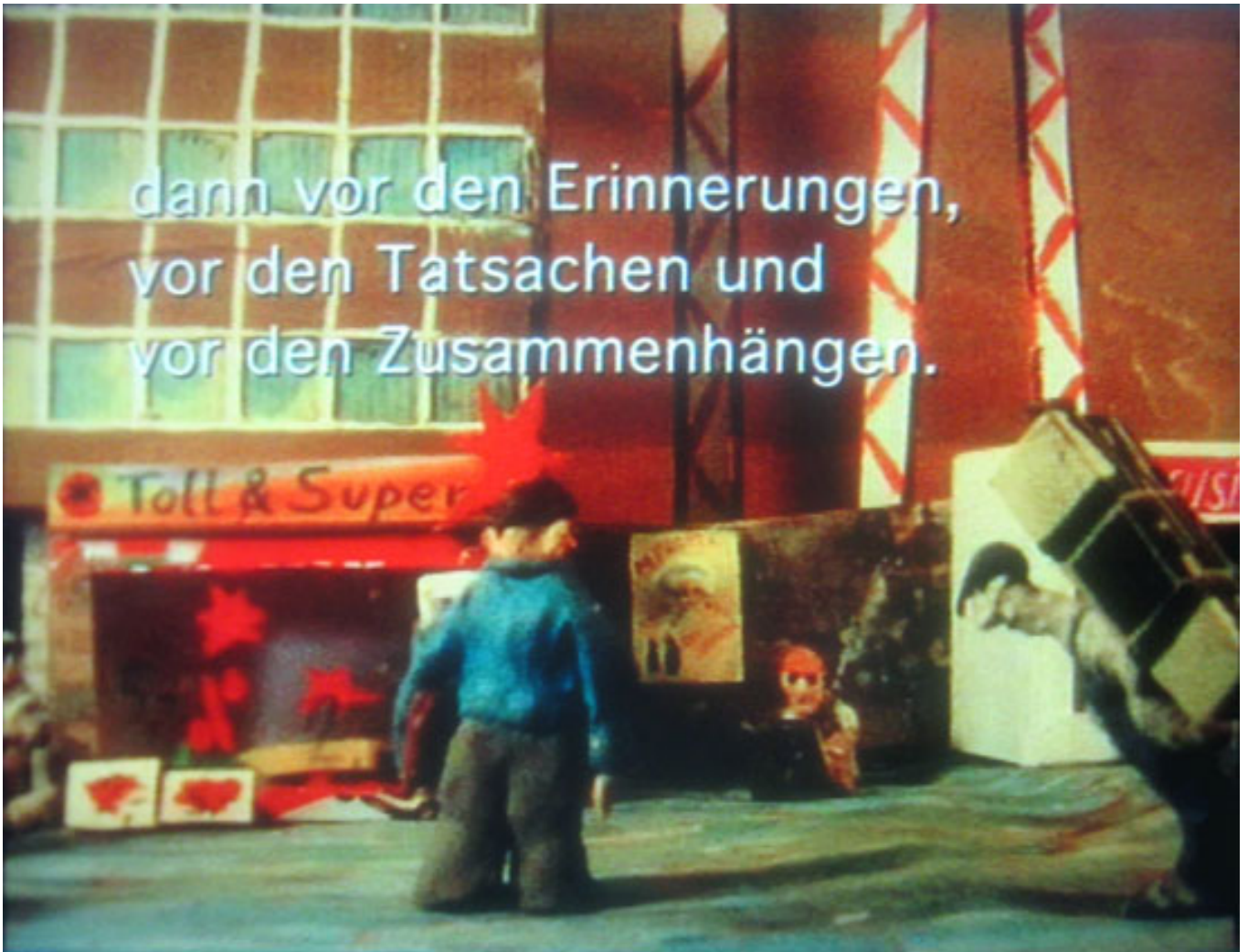
Alice Cresicher and Andreas Siekmann, *The Crooked Paw* (Die Krumme Pranke), 1999.

Then you'll close your eyes to the facts.
Then you'll close your eyes to the entire
context ...
We can give you only a hint of an idea of
how napalm works.
– *The Inextinguishable Fire*

Along with Allan Sekula's compositions, Harun Farocki's work was one of the few tools we had at our disposal to decipher the political reality dawning on us at the outset of the '90s. The forced euphoria of the neoliberal offensive seemed to be completely overturning reality – distorting countless artistic methods, corrupting them, making them useless or just ridiculous. Harun Farocki's films retained their integrity, distance, and precision.
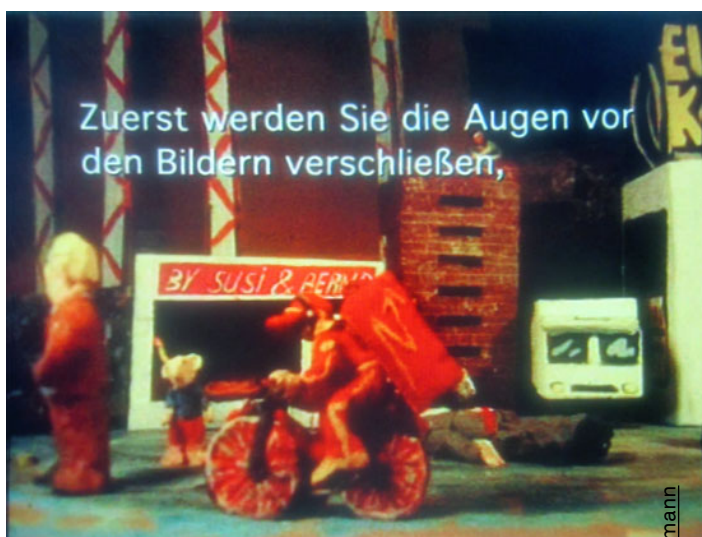
Alice Cresicher and Andreas Siekmann, *The Crooked Paw* (Die Krumme Pranke), 1999.

We met Farocki a few years after plagiarizing his film, to exchange a copy of *The Crooked Paw* for a copy of *The Inextinguishable Fire*. We found him to be very good-natured and generous. He didn't take us very seriously, with our obsessively splenetic super-8 film – all plasticine animations, digitized and edited with friends on the first avid media composer.Our collaboration started later, when we discovered a shared admiration for Gerd Arntz and Otto Neurath's pictorial statistic method of the 1920s. Arntz and Neurath's goal – in conjunction with the Communist enlightenment of the people – was to represent political facts in quantifiable terms; not to show numbers and curves that would be immediately and visually graspable, but rather to force viewers to slow their reading and spend a certain time counting. This delay in comprehension, which makes the facts tough and hard to digest, always seemed to us closely related to Harun's work. His film *Between Two Wars* (Zwischen Zwei Kriegen) features the

journal *Wirtschaftsformen* (Economic Systems) from the Atlas der Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft (Atlas of Society and Economics), as well as Gerd Arntz's graphics, which were an homage to the council revolutions of the 1920s and their occupation of factories and army bases. The immediate proximity of these graphics to that revolutionary society lent them a special aura. And we rediscovered this aura, fifty years later, in films like *Between Two Wars* and *Inextinguishable Fire*.

Harun, we assume, was often amused and a bit perturbed by our political naivety, which – fueled by the excitement of the moment – was often ignorant to previous experiences. Today, as is probably typical for those who are left behind, we find ourselves wishing that we'd spoken more with Harun, who seemed to us like a mighty, rather ironical resonance chamber for the history of political subjectification. We could have discussed our respective experiences of politicization, what that meant at different times – a conversation that only now, at the time of this writing, seems unfinished.

Instead, we will watch his films, which still break down the *res gestae* of image power with a precision and clarity second to none: camera images dispatched from bombs, the snow left by their impact, visual material that was used to justify declarations of war or to whistle-blow through WikiLeaks – material on the control of consumers, captives, candidates, soldiers, civilians, and again and again the transition from control to execution.

We last worked together on the project *Labor in a Single Shot* (Ein Einstellung zur Arbeit), which had Harun and Antje Ehmann travelling around the world for the past few years, setting up workshops in various cities, encouraging participants to capture their local labor situation from a cinematic perspective. We presented the cities' data according to the pictorial statistical method of Arntz and Neurath, and designed a central icon for each location. The icon for Lisbon designed itself: three people – representing the IMF, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission – each holding scissors. Since the mass protests in Greece, Spain, and Portugal in 2011, this image has become a symbol for the execution of whole economies in accordance with the German model.

The destruction of public space through privatization, disenfranchisement, and repression that left us speechless in the '90s is now an exported standard.

Too few artists today are developing the tools to measure this repression, to make it tangible and debatable. We're missing people who give us – *through their work* – the means to despise this repression. The photo below shows

Harun wearing the scissor-wielding trifecta on a
T-shirt, after the Goethe Institute in Lisbon
refused to print the icon on their press release.

✕

Thomas Elsaesser and
Alexander Alberro

Farocki: A Frame for the No Longer Visible: Thomas Elsaesser in Conversation with Alexander Alberro

Alexander Alberro: When did you first meet Harun Farocki?

Thomas Elsaesser: In the summer of 1976, I spent time in Berlin researching a book on New German Cinema, interviewing as many filmmakers as I could, but also critics. I knew Farocki as a critic, from the articles he wrote for *Filmkritik*, but had not seen any of his films. If I remember right, I had an introduction through one of his fellow students from the days at the DFFB, Ingrid Oppermann. One sunny afternoon, I visited Harun in his apartment in the Nassauische Strasse in Berlin-Wilmersdorf. I had just published a long piece on Rainer Werner Fassbinder ("A Cinema of Vicious Circles") that I presented as my visiting card, but it proved an unfortunate move, since he seemed bodily repulsed by the idea of someone seriously writing about Fassbinder. In the ensuing argument, Harun was so sharp and witty, and such good company that I said to myself: What do I care if he trashes my writing? This is someone I could spend hours with. And he was very generous. He lent me his tripod for my super-8 camera. I borrowed it as an excuse to visit him again.

Only very recently, after his death, I realized that this wasn't in fact our first encounter. Farocki spent part of his childhood in Indonesia, and in 1956, at the age of twelve, he published his first piece of prose, about a man who entered the house under false pretenses and used a moment of inattention to steal a silver ashtray. This was all attentively witnessed by Harun, already then an observational documentarian in the making. His short essay was published in a German youth magazine called *Rasselbande*, a sort of alternative to *Mickey Mouse*. As it happens, in 1956 I was the paper boy for *Rasselbande* in my hometown, so I must have held in my hands and distributed the very issue that carried Farocki's article. For almost sixty years, then, I'm proud to say, I have been helping to spread Harun's work.

AA: While Farocki's work is evidently very concerned with various forms of montage and with the kind of distantiation that montage can realize, he didn't think according to a logic of binarism and opposition but rather in terms of a logic of difference. To what extent do you think that this logic of difference, as I'm referring to it, directed his filmic and artistic practice?

TE: At least since Derrida and deconstruction we know about the pitfalls of binary thinking, that any either-or opposition risks being already co-opted: the alternative isn't an alternative, but the subordinate term in relation to the dominant. This has important political implications that I think Farocki was intuitively well aware of: in the struggle against

Harun Farocki, *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, 1988. Film still.

capitalism, acts of "resistance" and notions such as "opposition" had to be used strategically rather than as primary responses to the dominant power structures. Just as hackers and Apple might well end up living in a symbiotic relationship – as host-and-parasite, rather than as outright foes – Farocki realized that a system can use its opponents as a way to self-regulate and stabilize itself. His term for this kind of symbiosis or relation of antagonistic mutuality was *Verbund*, which he was able to retool for his own purposes. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, competing German steel manufacturers decided to form a conglomerate and cooperate, and a number of chemical firms formed the trust that became IG Farben. *Verbund* as a strategic alliance of differently motivated agents was initially the German translation of "trust" or "cartel." Farocki applied the *Verbund* method metaphorically to his own work, to signal how he used different media – television commissions, film reviews, political filmmaking, radio plays, book reviews – so the work done for one assignment could feed into several of his other projects.

Harun Farocki, *Interface* (Schnittstelle), 1995. Film still.

But *Verbund* is also a useful term if one wants to understand the principle behind Farocki's practice of separating and joining. It was typical for him to join what wants to hide the nature of its connection (famously, security prisons and shopping centers via spatial dispositifs of surveillance), and to separate what we are used to thinking of as belonging together (for instance, work as wage labor). *What Goes Without Saying* (Eine Sache die sich versteht) was the ironic title of a film that Farocki made with Hartmut Bitomsky in 1971. A key passage read:

In chapter four of *Das Kapital*, Marx portrays the act of exchange as a balancing act, and makes what seemed obvious become a problem. The authors are attempting to achieve a similar ambivalence: they want to make a person walking think about what walking is, and fall over.
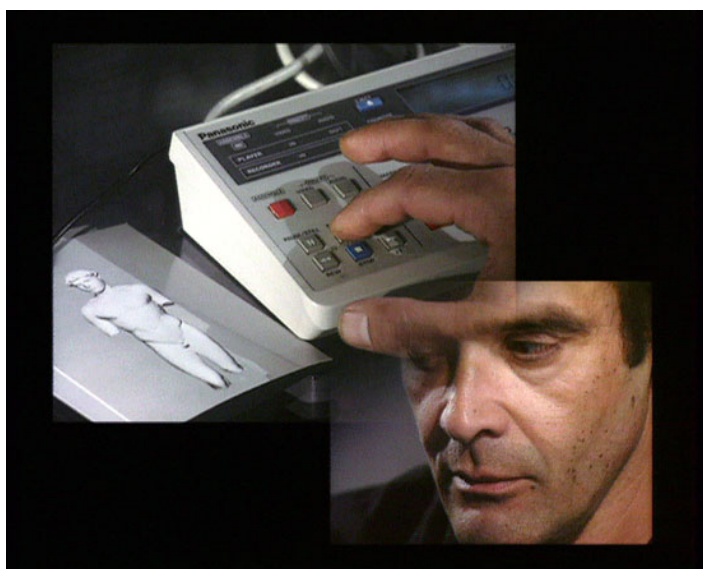
To come back to binary relations: *Wie Man Sieht*, for instance, is at first glance very much about the binary logic of the computer. But the film challenges this logic by proposing a more organic or modulated relation between things, positing a reversible relation between plowshares and canons, or opening up the opposition between horses and tanks during WWI. It explores the difference between German motorways laying a grid over the landscape, after the American model, or inflecting them towards a "European" option that makes them follow the contours of the various types of terrain. The film then compares this to a butcher cutting the meat along the lines of the different body parts.

Farocki's ideas about montage, as your question implies, were complex and sophisticated and in this respect, the logic of the "and-and" (parataxis) prevailed over "either-or." For instance, *Schnittstelle* (Interface) sets up a series of moves between *Schreibtisch* (writing desk) and *Schneidetisch* (editing table), where each can take on the functions of the other (writing/editing; leaving out/combining with): the precise cut that allows for new associations, in a sort of conceptual Kuleshov effect. In an early essay I published on Farocki in 1983, I put it as follows:

> The paradox is that Farocki is probably more brilliant as a writer than as a filmmaker, and that instead of this being a failing, it actually underlines his significance for the cinema today and his considerable role in the contemporary political avant-garde. Only by turning itself into "writing" in the largest possible sense can "film" preserve itself as *a form of intelligence*.[1]

Farocki also had a rare gift for what one might call *recto and verso thinking* (as opposed to "on the one hand, on the other" thinking). He used to say: you take a clipping from a newspaper article and put it away. Five years later you come across it again, but now it's the item on the reverse side that grabs you, except that the final paragraph is missing.

AA: Farocki's move from cinema spaces to art spaces related on the one hand to the radical change in European public television in the

Harun Farocki, *An Image* (Ein Bild), 1983. Film still.

1980s and '90s, where everything became much more homogenized and the broadcast space that used to be available to directors like Farocki for more experimental films disappeared, and on the other hand to a larger move in the culture where many more museum spaces are built than spaces for experimental cinema. As Farocki moved into the art world, he began to work more with film loops, double or multiple screens, and spatial montages. How much do you think his work changed as it moved from one space to the other?

TE: His transition from filmmaker to installation artist was also an act of separating and connecting. He distributed the linear flow of film across the monitors of his installations, creating new connections, as in *Deep Play* and *Comparison via a Third* (both 2007). Applying the principle of montage to space, he challenged visitors to experience this separating and connecting in their own bodies' peripatetic trajectory. But he was very agile in keeping the same principles going whether in single or multi-channel, as in *Workers Leaving the Factory*, reworked as multichannel, in *Comparison over a Third* (both single and multichannel) or in *The Silver and the Cross*: a work that keeps a dual focus (then/now, painting/static long take), and when the camera explores the huge canvass of the painting, it follows the winding paths and tracks, making us part of the different crowds depicted, wandering peripatetically up and down the silver mountain, as if the painting was an installation and we film viewers were also gallery visitors.
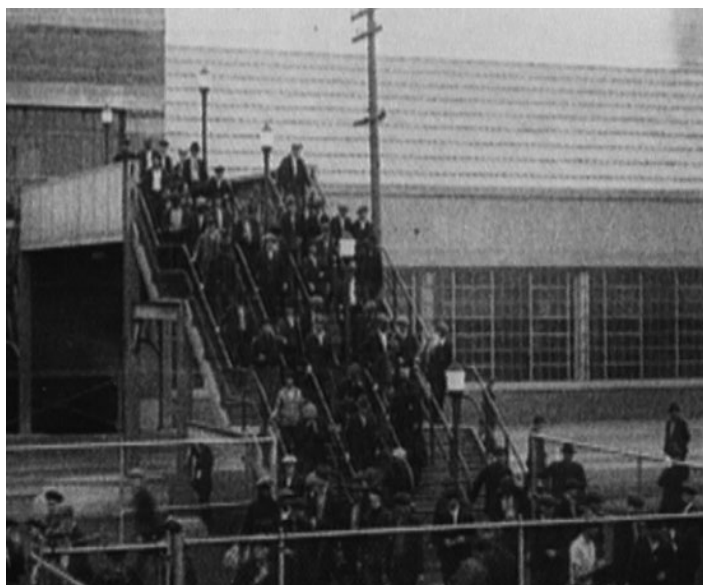
Harun Farocki, *Workers Leaving the Factory,* 2005. Film still.

But the move from cinema to gallery – quite apart from the economic factors that you hint at, the drying up of cinema venues for avant-garde

films, as well as the disappearance of late-night television slots for experimental work – was also a logical step as cinema lost its status as a socially relevant public sphere and surrendered this role to the art world. And true to his *Verbund* model, Farocki has tried (successfully) to remain present in the socially and aesthetically most politicized art forms. Today, this is the art installation, the essay film, and other documentary forms, and not television or independent feature films.

AA: Given the prevalence of drone culture and the US National Security Agency's almost total surveillance program, the somewhat threatening notion of surveillance or of being imaged from above that one finds in *Images of the World and The Inscription of War*, the *Eye Machine* series, or even in *I Thought I Was Seeing Prisoners*, seems to have been prescient. One gets the impression from watching these films that there's something ominous in being surveilled, whether from above or in any other way. Yet today, while we know we're being surveilled more than ever before, many people just don't seem to care – or, pushing this even further, find that surveillance makes them feel safer rather than mistreated. So, two questions really: To what extent do you think that investigating the growing world of surveillance was important for Farocki's work? And how closely do you think his films capture the shifts in public attitudes to surveillance over time?

TE: I think already *Images of the World* showed the dynamic relations inherent in acts of surveillance – as both deadly and ignorant, as both pleasurable and threatening. The film at several points highlights the ironies inherent in the word *Aufklärung* in German, which can mean: reconnaissance, enlightenment, the clearing of the skies of clouds, and sex education. If the US reconnaissance planes in 1944 were seeing Auschwitz and not "seeing" Auschwitz, it points to the fact that surveillance can be a form of stupidity, giving a treacherous sense of being in control. The irony there is that these surveillance photographs of Auschwitz were only *discovered* because an officer in the late 1970s was so moved by the television series *Holocaust* that he *remembered* once seeing pictures of the camps in a filing cabinet in the Pentagon. It took a *fictional* program to bring to light this *documentary evidence*, but it also confirmed that the Allied's war aims were not the rescue of Jews, but to dismantle and destroy Germany's war machinery, in this case the Buna synthetic rubber factory, part of the Monowitz slave labor camp near Auschwitz.

I think it is these parapraxes, these slips, that suddenly reveal unexpected connections or surprising disconnects in our world that makes

Images of the World such an indelibly impressive work. The film made the rounds in the US just about at the time of the First Gulf War (1991), which was our first acquaintance with "smart bombs." Remember General Schwarzkopf on the evening news, with his pointer stick, showing us the little puffs of smoke that followed the "surgical strikes" on Iraqi positions, highways, or bridges? This was our first introduction to *Serious Games*. Not only did Schwarzkopf have a name right out of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* – his demos made him look like he had stepped out of Farocki's film.

Farocki also saw the many ironies in us "enjoying" this bird's eye view of destruction, this first-person–shooter perspective, where we are one with the camera without realizing that this camera would be killed along with the target, i.e., that the pleasure of sharing the point of view of a camera-bomb had a price: it was deadly.

As to feeling safe when surrounded by machines, Farocki seemed both puzzled and saddened by our general lack of awareness about the consequences of being seduced by these new toys – these sophisticated vision machines and surveillance devices. He saw how eager and ready we are to internalize capitalism's relentless drive to extract use value – i.e., profit – from our minds and bodies, and how easily we mistake this drive for self-optimization and performativity *as self-knowledge and enlightenment.*The degree to which civil society and the human sciences are becoming militarized in this process was one of the themes of his last installations.

AA: Many of Farocki's films also employ scientific pictures – operative images that weren't really meant to be looked at aesthetically, but to be studied as technical or illustrative tools. These types of images are visual, of course, but they're entirely different from those that proliferate in our general visual culture where images are produced for entertainment or educational (or advertising) purposes. To what extent do you think that Harun purposefully cultivated the aesthetics of this type of image?

TE: This use of images from very different sources and contexts – I once called them the other S/M practices of the cinematic apparatus, images produced for purposes of science and medicine, surveillance and the military, and taken from sensors and monitoring devices – is among Farocki's most daring, lasting, and far-reaching contributions to film history and media archaeology. Farocki calls them "operational images" and in *Images of the World*, he has traced their line of descent back to one Albrecht Meydenbauer, inventor of photogrammetrics (*Messbild-Photographie*) as a means of not only

recording historic buildings like churches or steeples, but to calculate scale and dimensions, in order to render them accurately in the forms of architectural plans and diagrams. In the film, Farocki ties this invention to the shock and trauma of nearly having been killed when trying to scale such a building *in situ*, so that operational images are images that carry with them the memory of places or the anticipation of situations too dangerous for human beings to be present in the flesh.

In a similar spirit, Lev Manovich makes the distinction between images that we use to "lie" with (simulation, as-if, make-believe) and images we use in order to "act" with (take action at a distance, extract actionable data, initiate a process). Insofar as operational images are images that no longer function like a "window on the world," they point the way to a new definition of what an image is. These are changes we tend to associate with the digital turn, but which really just remind us that moving images and still images have many histories, not all of which pass through the cinema or belong to art history. Digital images may merely have made these parallel histories more palpably present, but operational images, as Farocki clearly saw, are part of the visual culture that surrounds us. For instance, his film about a Playboy shoot for a centerfold (*An Image* [Ein Bild], 1983) documents how much labor has to be invested in creating operational images, even those that say: "look how beautiful I am." One could go even further and say that operational images – images that function as instructions for action – are the new default value of all image-making, against which more traditional images, i.e., images meant merely to be contemplated, watched disinterestedly, or which function as either "window on the world" or "mirror to the self," have to define themselves.

Instead of *looking* at images, we are more and more *clicking* on images.

AA: You've gone on the record to say that Farocki was well aware of how the visible and the intelligible were drifting ever further apart in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Can you elaborate on and explain what you mean by this, and give us an idea of how it played out in Farocki's films?

TE: In Farocki's early films, the reference point about the visible and the intelligible parting company is, broadly speaking, Brecht's famous remark quoted by Walter Benjamin: "The situation is complicated by the fact that less than ever does the mere reflection of reality reveal anything about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us next to nothing about these institutions. Actual reality has slipped into the functional." This is basically the
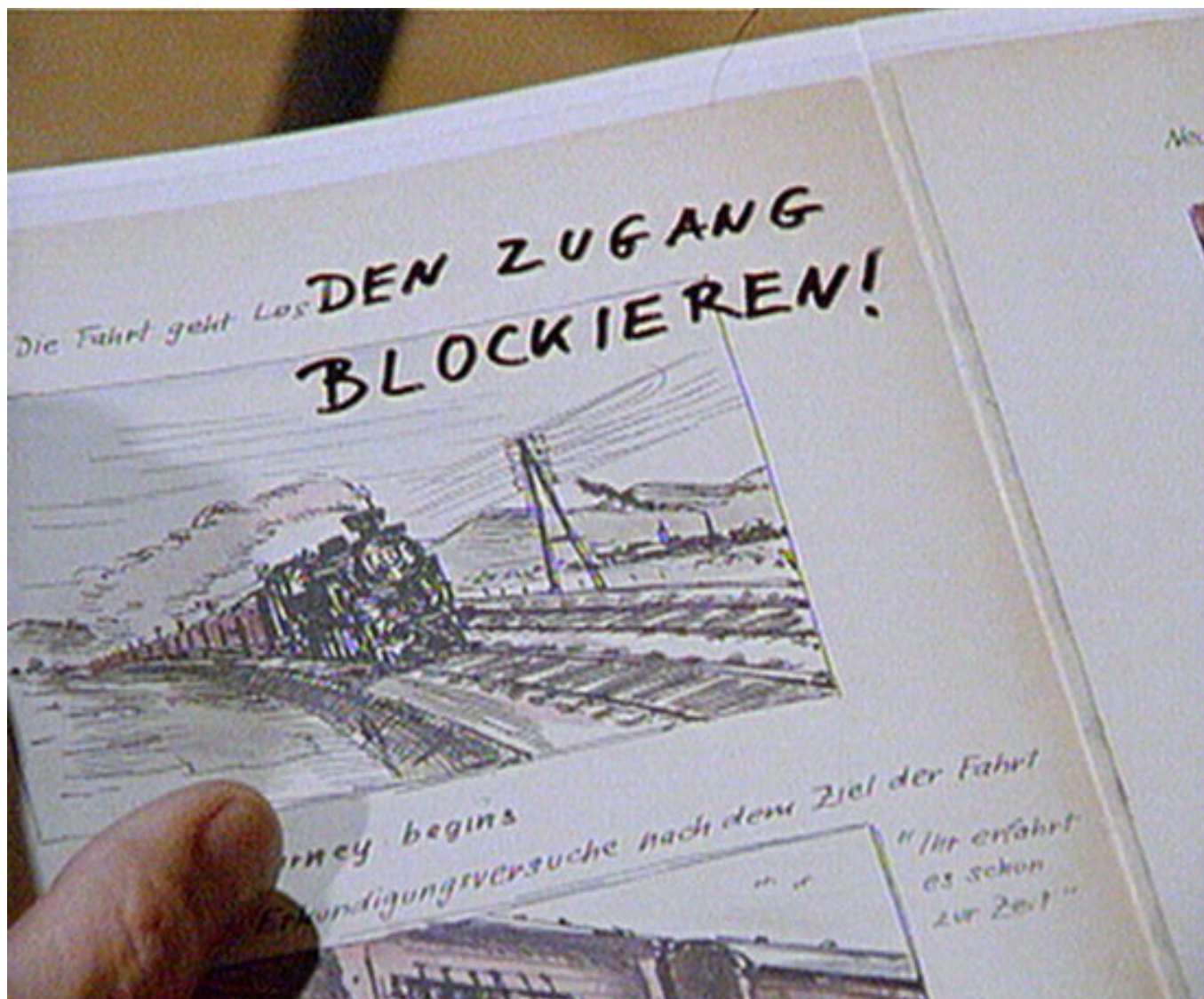
Harun Farocki, *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, 1988. Film still

premise of both *Between Two Wars* (Zwischen den Kriegen) and *Before Your Eyes Vietnam* (Etwas wird sichtbar).

But in the more recent installations, the dilemma is more general. There, Farocki seems to ask: How do we meet the challenge of visibility and visualization, when more and more phenomena that govern our lives are not visible to the human eye, because they are either too big or too small, too fast or too slow, or they deal in magnitudes and quantities we cannot comprehend other than in diagrams or mathematical equations?

It is where concepts such as "trauma" and "simulation" take on a new urgency. Not with trauma as a medical category (i.e., where the idea might still prevail that there is "normal memory" and "proper recall," and there is "trauma" and "post-traumatic stress disorder") or where simulation is the copy without the original in Baudrillard's sense (i.e., there is still a reality we can see and describe, and then there is this reality's mere simulation). Rather, where trauma and simulation have become two ways of naming and framing the no-longer-visible, which nonetheless has determining force, in terms that indicate the borders and limits of the visible and the intelligible: *Serious Games I–IV* and *Parallel I–IV* are for me examples of this testing of the limits of visibility and intelligibility under certain conditions.

Harun Farocki, *Parallel I-IV*, 2012–14. Film still.

And there is the matter of the voice, the commentary, the making visible through words. Farocki used voice-over in several of his films – and was criticized for it, for instance, for using a female voice-over in the English-language version of *Images of the World* – and some people found his films rather too didactic because of the words. But that is to overlook all the gaps that his laconic commentary created between the

sentences, exactly as he created gaps between the images. In other words, he was really very aware of the difference between *editing* as creating the blanks into which we can insert ourselves, and *editorializing*, i.e., appropriating material from others, and making it say what he wanted it to say. Just as often he obliged himself – and encouraged us – to *listen into* the pictures, so as to bring out what an image might want to say, or might have wanted to say. In that sense, his mastery of editing both words and images was also his ability to be a very good listener.

AA: Another trait of Farocki's films is that they indexically point to what lies on the margins of the field of vision. For instance, in *Images of the World and The Inscription of War*, the Allied reconnaissance camera photographs Auschwitz in the Second World War but it doesn't see what it has photographed because that's not what it's looking for; or in *Workers Leaving the Factory*, the workers are depicted as they leave the factory, but the labor that they carried out for many hours in that factory isn't represented. To what extent do you think that in such cases (and one can think of numerous others in Farocki's work) the missing countershot – the concentration camp, say, or the workers in the factory – is the driving element of the film?

TE: I like the idea of the missing countershot. It complements what I just said about editing versus editorializing, i.e., the way the cut in Farocki creates a gap, it generates a kind of *conceptual Kuleshov effect.* You have to "see" things that are not shown, the way that Chris Marker in the opening of *Sans Soleil* says that it's the black leader that has to convey the sense of happiness he felt at the sight of the three children in Iceland.

Take Farocki's film installation *In Comparison* (also known as *Comparison via a Third*), where the viewer is invited to speculate as to what entities are being compared, or what the missing third might be. When I saw it in Vienna, the projector was quite audible, and across the comparison between different methods of brick-making and brick-laying I began to imagine what was not mentioned: that the third might be filmmaking itself – as both an activity of building something brick by brick, but also as a collective, communal activity, as brick-making is in India and Africa. This of course stands in contrast to the increasing computerization of filmmaking (and brick-making) in Europe, as if to contrast the community of a film crew with the more solitary postproduction work, especially when shooting digital. But I also had the idea that bricks can build a house, a school, or a factory that makes deadly weapons. None of this is directly mentioned.

But your question also touches on another

important topic, namely *framing, reframing, unframing images*, and what they represent. *Images of the World* is crucially about framing and revealing, quite literally in the series of photographs of *Algerian women* who were forced to unveil for the French colonial authorities, and where Farocki's hand covers them again, as if to protect them from prying eyes.

Another form of reframing is at issue with the aerial reconnaissance photographs of Auschwitz in *Images of the World* we discussed earlier. The pilots took photographs of Auschwitz, but they didn't know what Auschwitz would become. The reframing occurred in the mid 1970s, when the television series *Holocaust* helped shift the perception of WWII and put at the center of the war effort the fate of the Jews, as can be seen, for instance, in the permanent exhibition at the Holocaust Memorial in Washington, where the narrative is framed by the US Army liberating the camps. A temporal reframing of meaning and context occurs with the trophy photos taken by a camp guard at the Auschwitz ramp, and only discovered, years later, as part of an "album," that is, photos taken with the future in mind – the future of the Thousand Year Reich, not the eternal shame of the German people, which they now document. Again, Farocki uses his own hands as a frame, to both shield and reveal the woman at the center of the photo that features so prominently.

But in another twist, *Images of the World* itself underwent a kind of *reframing through its international reception* and the intervening historical events. Made over a period of years and completed in 1989, it was a film protesting against atomic energy and Pershing Missiles on German soil. However, it was not shown until 1990–91, after the end of the Cold War – the fall of the Soviet Union – when the threat of atomic warfare had receded. As Farocki himself put it, *Images of the World* went out into the world as a film against nuclear arms, and came back to him as a film about smart bombs and the Holocaust.

AA: Rather than a form of direct communication through images that he produced, Farocki often seemed to rely on preexisting images to mediate his communication with the spectator. What do you think the logic of this strategy was? Was it economic? Was it anti-auteurist? Was it an attempt to produce a form of distantiation in the Brechtian sense, insofar as distantiation is a form of indirectness?

TE: I don't think that his use of found footage was either anti-auteurist or primarily for economic reasons. He was more an *ethnographer* of all those situations, those locations, those people who made use of moving images or indeed still images for purposes other than display or spectacle. At first he was fascinated by the function of role-play, test-drives, drills, and rehearsals of emergency situations – in short, how performative approaches to social life had taken hold of society, indeed had begun to define the social: the film *Leben BRD* is a great – sad, funny, and deeply ironic – inquiry into this obsession with rehearsing (for) living. Later, Farocki became interested in the function that images have in this permanent performative staging of life, how social life has acquired a layer or film of spontaneous virtuality. What might once have been the preserve of the fire brigade or the military, i.e., training for a mission or for an emergency, has bled into everyday life, either in the name of self-improvement and optimization, or for the sake of risk aversion and security. In *Serious Games*, about PTSD-therapy simulations, or the most recent works on gaming and virtual worlds, Farocki had begun to document both the pragmatic and the ludic uses that such image-worlds initiate, as well as the feedback loops that result. In other words, these are extensions or further explorations of Farocki's strategic understanding of operational images, and how they begin to define for us what an image is. In one of his last interviews, Farocki speaks of his sense that images are no longer about *representing* the world, but about how to *intervene* in the world, they are no longer images as reproduction even in Walter Benjamin's sense, but *images as realities in their own right*.

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A version of this conversation took place at Artists Space in New York on September 8, 2014. All images courtesy of Harun Farocki and Antje Ehmann.

Thomas Elsaesser is Emeritus Professor, University of Amsterdam, and Visiting Professor, Columbia University.

Alexander Alberro is Virginia Bloedel Wright Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at Barnard College and Columbia University in New York.

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Thomas Elsaesser, "Working at the Margins: Two or Three Things not known about Harun Farocki," *Monthly Film Bulletin* no. 597 (October 1983): 269.

e-flux journal #59 — november 2014 Thomas Elsaesser and Alexander Alberro
Farocki: A Frame for the No Longer Visible: Thomas Elsaesser in Conversation with Alexander Alberro

Filipa César
Joint Leopard Dot

In one early conversation with Harun, I commented on my troubles with language and the misunderstandings imbedded in the practice of translation. I described how I had once incorrectly used the German world "Artikulation" to describe a pain in my elbow:"meine Artikulation tut weh." My German-speaking interlocutor was confused since the word "Artikulation" in German is used to describe a thought put into words, but never a joint between two bones (as for example in Portuguese and English). In the German sense, I was saying: "my utterance is hurting." Then Harun told me how he was interested in the deviations of meaning and the polysemic nature of words. He said that if he were to choose another occupation, he would be an etymologist.

Floating meanings have nothing to do with imprecision, but rather with the precise possibilities of language, and Harun was a passionate expert in detecting, inventorying, and describing what can be seen, and what this can mean. Sometimes Harun would wear a leopard shirt, which I started to link with the multiple meanings that the monosyllabic Yahoos of Borges's *Brodie's Report* associated with the word "nrz": "a starry sky, a leopard, a flock of birds, smallpox, something bespattered, the act of scattering, or the flight that follows defeat in warfare."[3] Well, war was always in the background of Harun Farocki's cinematic essays; by connecting certain dots, an observation of a simple daily gesture could be conditioned by that of pulling a trigger. Just as the hand of a worker building a road could turn into a revolted hand throwing a stone.

As much as Harun was pointing to the convergence of living conditions and the macro-industries in charge of putting an end to lives, he was, simultaneously, interested in the beginning of life itself. Harun had a genuine curiosity for children, how they begin to articulate themselves and describe what they see. Regarding the notion that *Workers Leaving the Factory* (Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik, 1995) exemplifies the first cinema genre ever – a genre transversal throughout film history – Harun said: "As if the first word that a child just learned to speak was repeated over a hundred years, so as to eternalize the joy the child felt upon the very first experience of speaking."[4] Harun maintained that joy in experiencing the beginning of language anew over and over again, unfolding or dilating meanings. Throughout his life he recurrently worked for child audiences and with young people on different continents.[5]

I frequently briefed Harun about my daughter's first stories, poems, and comments. Oddly enough, the last time I did this, my eight-year-old's observation concerned war,

A photograph of Harun Farocki by Filipa César, January 2014.

articulation, seeing, and Harun's films. I had been talking with her about the war in Gaza and about a terrifying Israeli attack that had occurred that day, when she interrupted me to say, "Yes, and Harun made those films about soldiers training themselves with computer games for such an attack, and in those games there are shadows. Later, when they come back, they use other computer games to heal themselves from the war. But these games have no shadows because the money from the shadows is used for the healing of the soldiers."

"How to see" and "as you see" have different meanings, but both are embedded in the title of Harun's film *Wie man sieht.* Godard – or better yet, the brilliant analyst of Godard's work, Georges Didi-Huberman – would bring a similar thought to the homophony of "*vois la*" (see here) and "*voilà!*" (here it is). *Wie man sieht* includes both the educative and rhetorical question of "how to see," and the authoritarian statement "as you see." Harun's laboratories are located within this space between a question and a statement. *Wie man sieht* addresses the fact that ways of seeing get actualized in phenomenal connections and possibilities created when image and speech overlap. Harun's ways of seeing were informed by a particular ethics and political interest in the conditions of production and the economic constructions inherent to an image. I wish that History was taught *As You See*.

A shadow omitted from the therapeutic computer games of soldiers is probably not what the film series *Serious Games* is about. Yet there is something to this: a kind of a space of dispersion or uncertainty inherent to that film language, which created the possibility of an oblique reading, of seeing something that wasn't necessarily inscribed into it – a reading that eventually produced a *right* meaning, emerging beyond the image's intentionality.

Harun Farocki's sudden disappearance is a painful fissure, another *Schnittstelle* that creates a space between two incisions – an encounter and a loss. This gap is not a void, but the possibility of a joint. For those who lived his work and/or shared his life, the question is: What to join, and how to join it? A Farockian approach to this would be to engage in the ritual of recalling, the magical *Transmission* of those absent, the effort to connect by making material the emanating influence of the work he most admired.

Harun quoted and appropriated thoughtfully. On the subject of the renunciation of authorship, he once said: "He who finds knows how to judge and is therefore the true author."[6] Harun would pay tribute to others, through precise gestures of quoting that resulted in great

conceptual pieces of work: To introduce Peter Weiss in *Zur Ansicht: Peter Weiss* (1979), Harun enrolls himself as a film curator presenting his films. Seated at a table he reads a text about Weiss's work and life. The dispositive deviates from that of a newscaster in front of a TV camera: Harun offers a side view to frame his statement, making measurable the space between his hands holding a paper and his mouth articulating speech. In this expanse, a candle is the only source of light on the set. Harun's words displace the air acting on the flame, illuminating the scene. One could also say that all of Harun's works about labor are ongoing answers to Brecht's never-ending *Questions From a Worker who Reads*[7]. For instance, to express his interest in Vilém Flusser's polyglottic thinking, Harun invites Flusser to read an image: the cover page of that day's issue of the German newspaper *Bild* (a title which translates as "image" in English)[8]; The repetition of the sentence "I cannot find the photography"[9] resulted from the montage of a documentation of the countless retakes of a scene in Straub and Huillet's adaptation of Kafka's *Amerika*. The sentence becomes a mantra or a parable for Harun's search for the *photography* of his own film.[10]

How to recall Harun's work? An appropriate Farockian gesture that I witnessed recently was Antje Ehmann's exhaustive inventory of the items on Harun's worktable that I read as eloquently mournful concrete poetry. How to transfer his gestures, ethics, humanism? How to operate the instruments he had at hand? How to expand the problems that Farocki made visible, and are present throughout our lives and work? On the night of July 30, 2014, someone shouted, "We want more Harun!," as if a protest march was about to break out in the streets of Berlin.

I remember that sometimes Harun stood by himself, with an elegant but busy pose, hands on hips, as if just taking a short pause before going on with his work. Once, standing like that, I shared with him my daughter's loose, but slightly Brechtian comment while looking up at the cloudy sky: "Long time will pass, till I see this cloud again."[11]

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Filipa César is an artist and filmmaker interested in the porous relationship between the moving image and its public reception, the fictional aspects of the documentary genre and the politics and poetics inherent to the production of moving images. Between 2008-10, great part of César's experimental films have focussed on Portugal's recent past, questioning mechanisms of history production and proposing spaces for performing subjective knowledge. Since 2011, César has been researching the origins of film in Guinea-Bissau and its related geo-political radiance, developing that research into the project *Luta ca caba inda*. She is a participant of the research project "Visionary Archive, 2013-15" organised by the Arsenal Institute, Berlin. Selected Film Festivals include Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, 2013; Forum Expanded - Berlinale, 2013; IFFR, Rotterdam, 2010 and 2013; Indie Lisboa, 2010; DocLisboa, 2011. Selected exhibitions and screenings include: 8th Istanbul Biennial, 2003; Serralves Museum, Porto, 2005; Tate Modern, London, 2007; SFMOMA, 2009; 29th São Paulo Biennial, 2010; Manifesta 8, Cartagena, 2010, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2011; Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2012; Kunstwerke, Berlin, 2013; Festival Meeting Points 7, 2013-14; NBK, Berlin, 2014; Hordaland Art Center, Bergen, 2014.

1
Videozone I. International Video Art Biennial in Israel, Tel Aviv, 2002.

2
Harun Farocki, "What an Editing Room Is," in *Imprint: Writings / Nachdruck: Texte*, eds. Susanne Gaensheimer and Nicolaus Schafhausen (New York: Lukas & Sternberg; Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2001). German original: "Straßenarbeiter, wenn sie Kopfsteine verlegen, werfen einen Stein hoch und fangen ihn auf, jeder Stein ist anders, und wohin er gehört, das erfassen sie im Fluge."

3
Jorge Luis Borges, in *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998).

4
German original: "Als würde ein Kind das erste Wort, das es sprechen gelernt hat, über hundert Jahre wiederholen, um die Freunde am ersten Sprechen zu verewigen." From Harun Farocki, *Filme* (Berlin: Absolut Medien, 2009). English translation by the author.

5
See both *Labor in a Single Shot* in collaboration with Antje Ehmann, 2011–2014; and *Wie die Dinge entstehen*, a children's film program co-curated with Stefanie Schlüter at Documentary Forum 3, Berlin, 2014.

6
Harun Farocki and Hito Steyerl, *A Magical Imitation of Reality* (Milan: Kaleidoscope Press 2011).

7
See http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/literature/brech t/

8
Farocki, *Schlagworte – Schlagbilder* (1986).

9
In the German original: "Ich kann die Photographie nicht finden."

10
Farocki, *Jean-Marie Straub und Danièle Huillet bei der Arbeit an einem Film nach Franz Kafkas Romanfragment "Amerika"* (1983).

11
Brecht, Bertold *Erinnerung an die Marie A.* (Memory of Marie A.), 1920 " [...] Und über uns im schönen Sommerhimmel | War eine Wolke, die ich lange sah | Sie war sehr weiß und ungeheuer oben | Und als ich aufsah, war sie nimmer da. [...]" (" [...] And above us in the beautiful summer sky | Was a cloud which I watched for a long time. | It was very white and tremendously high | And as I looked upwards, it was there no more. [...] ")

Ute Holl

Farocki's Cinematic Historiography: Reconstructing the Visible

Farocki's work consists in pointing towards the visible. His art consists in opposing the visible and the obvious. Farocki's political claim is to demonstrate that in reality nothing is veiled, sealed, or concealed. Meticulous perception is his strategy for emerging from self-imposed nonage. His images do not deal with ideological mist or the ontological mysteries of an image, but with the inertia of our perceiving eyes, with laziness or a lack of mental audacity. His voice-over commentaries prove that the visible differs from the evident. Vision is stratified by implicit historical structures. These organize the gaze and sometimes blind our sight. Based on historical investigation, seeing with one's own eyes is a matter of political resistance. Observing against the grain of the habitual, against all evidence and blind spots, is the responsibility that remains in a world of machines that have appropriated human sight – or rather, as the installation *Eye/Machine* and the film *War at a Distance* (2003) show, machines that have soldered eyes, optical instruments, and industrial weaponry. It is not a matter of pearls, specks, or splinters in our eyes, but of Pershings and Patriots.

Extremely well acquainted with historical and contemporary systems of thought, Farocki has written on historical materialism, semiotics, and structuralism, but has defied all of them in filmic discourse. Cinema's pledge of truth lies in a certain resilience in resisting elements in pictures or in sounds or voices that escape the intentions and strategies of single authors and single recipients. Cinema's truth-claim is topological, developing between iconic elements and nodes of montage. It develops between people that discuss films "after the screening … *nach dem film,*" as a Berlin-based online journal of film criticism is called.[1] Cinema's truth-claim is uncanny, as it turns against the familiar, the accustomed, against what seemed to be clear and certain before the film. Cinematic truth, *kino pravda*, is manifest in the traces of the past that cinema bears, in spite of individual intentions.

Farocki's films deal with history as a matter of *mémoire involontaire* – involuntary and even unwanted memories. His films argue, for instance, that the fascist past is not hidden in postwar German society or cinema, is not veiled by evil powers, as the phrase *hätten wir gewusst*(had we known) suggests. There is no lack of evidence. On the contrary, Farocki's films show how the past keeps disturbing and haunting the present in visible, perceivable, describable symptoms. The historian-filmmaker fraternizes with specters, as in his recent film *Respite* (2007), where Farocki analyzes footage shot in Westerbork, the Dutch transit and labor camp for Jewish refugees – editing, commenting,

Harun Farocki, *Respite,* 2007. Film still.

and amplifying the impact of the images against the intentions of their photographer.

Cinema is the appropriate medium for storing and transmitting history's truth-claim, since the camera records more than any mind can remember. To appropriate history then is to appropriate the medium by studying its proper logics of recording, storing, transforming, and ordering sensory events. Cinema's deferments avert the closures of history.

In recent years, one of Farocki's main concerns was to establish a conceptual history of the moving image, taking as a model the German method of *Begriffsgeschichte* – a genealogical investigation of semantics and concepts – while at the same time dismantling its idealistic core. Indeed, the project started as a search for something in between, an epistemic object, still nondescript and vague in its dynamics: *Wie sollte man das nennen, was ich vermisse* (What should one call this thing I am missing?) is the title of the text in which he sketches out his epistemological plan.[2]

In a series of films and installations, Farocki assembled sequences according to conspicuously recurring cinematic motifs or topics, such as "workers leaving the factory," "prison images," "war tropes," "the aesthetics of

consumerism," and "the semiotics of cinematic hands." In this conceptual montage of topoi, he would challenge the primacy of the literal in historical thinking. Dismantling the matrix of the medium, these films point towards media formations which implicitly construe meaning and power relations. As in rhetoric, a filmic topos is a commonplace that stays unnoticed in its intangible structure while it structures meaning. Media logics of historiography are at stake in these films, even as subject matter, as in *Images of the World and Inscriptions of War* (1988). In all of these films, Farocki's commentaries interfere with the images, exposing unforeseen differences, opposing elements, creating incongruous aspects in the montage. Where his films seem to be repetitive and redundant, they actually establish new distinctions and differences. They are not conceived of as evidence, but as operative images. Cinema creates history instead of representing it. Filmic historiography thus becomes circular, circular-causal, procedural.

Workers Leaving the Factory, edited in 1995, remembers cinema's first historical topos – "The first camera in the history of film was pointed at a factory," as Farocki states in his commentary. But his discovery was more precise: the first
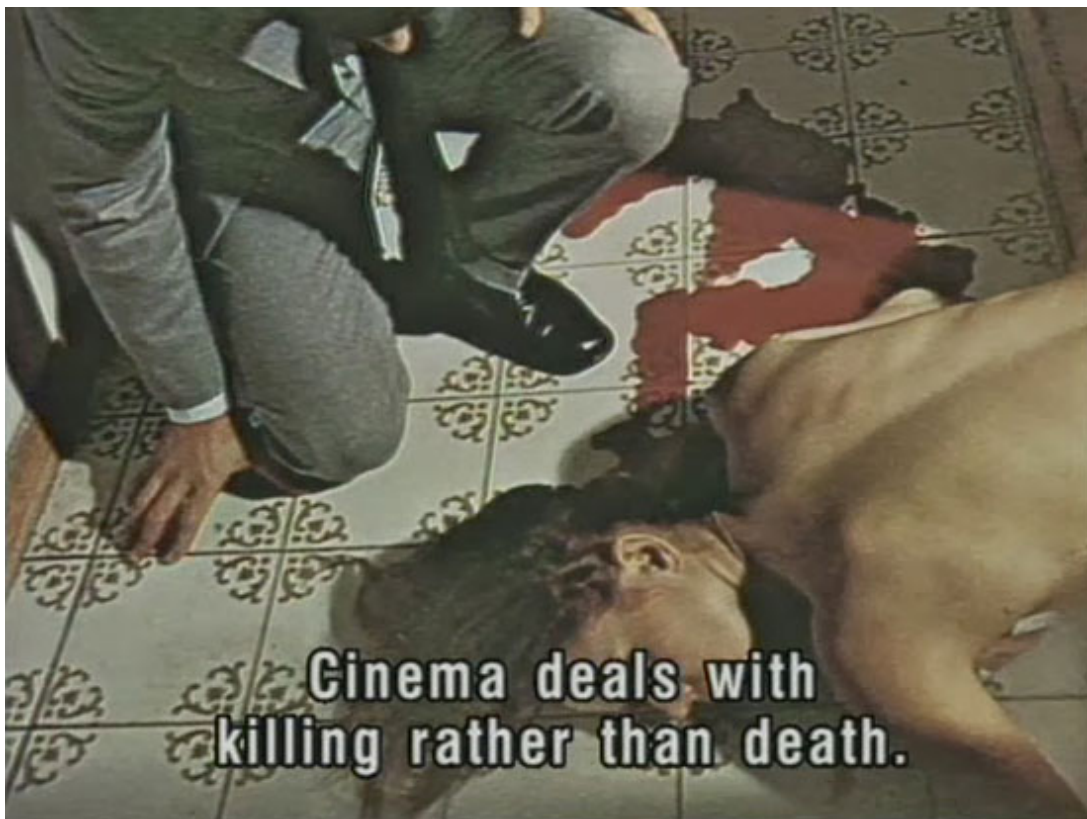
Hartmut Bitomsky, *Cinema and the Dead* (Das Kino und der Tod), 1988. Film still.

camera in the history of film was pointed at a *factory gate*, observing the workers, keeping their movements under surveillance. And, what's more: there is of course no countershot. Farocki's montage is a reconstruction of how cinema in its hundred-year history uncannily kept returning to this site, to this shot, as to an historical attitude. Farocki links historical examples of the scene, not chronologically so, but comparing them, thus giving an account of twentieth-century history as seen through the eyes of the camera: Griffith's *Intolerance*, Fritz Lang's *Clash by Night*, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Accatone*, Antonioni's *Il deserto rosso*, documentaries by Wildenhahn and Bitomsky. The space in front of the factory gate proves to have been restaged and reenacted throughout cinema's history, variegating relations of power and relations of passion inevitably attached to it.

There is one strange and irritating sequence in the film: a truck pulls across an open space, hits a ground-level roadblock, and is blown to pieces. Nobody is on the scene. An electronic camera records the procedure, obviously a testing protocol – a screen test. The truck is visibly compressed, strained, and then explodes. The image, which is repeated in slow motion, transmits a certain pleasure in breaking the seemingly unbreakable façade of a world operating as a stage for production ratios, their effects, and their aesthetics. In front of the factory gate, relations of passion are established in the absence of man – or woman for that matter. In this sequence, Farocki's voice comes from the Off: "This fantasy of violence, too, remembers the factory's gate as a historical space, remembers strikes and strikebreakers, occupations of factories, lockouts, fights for wages and justice, and the hopes connected to them."

The statement seems simple, but contains the whole force and impact of Farocki's thinking. It is the fantasy itself that he assigns knowledge to. The fantasy of the filmic image itself joins the movements and emotions of people, things, and social movements, desires and fears. The camera dispassionately records. Its eye assembles the history of technologies as well as power and property relations, and relates them to affects, those on the scene and those in the screening space. As cinematic experience, the destruction of a truck is the analysis of condensed labor.

Cinema is a historical entanglement of mind and imaging procedures as movements, compressions, and displacements of thought – *Bilder der Welt*, multifarious images of the world, instead of *Weltbild*, one worldview. In the exploding truck scene, Farocki addresses cinema's trans-subjective memory. It is not a

collective memory though, but an invitation to relate to an image. On the one hand, it means scrutinizing one's own strange and strangely familiar feelings at the sight of the truck's fragmentation. On the other, it is to recognize the scene as one in a series of shots observing factory gates, an example in a series of security logics and logistics, beginning with the Lumière Brothers observing "their" workers in Lyon in 1895, collecting reenactments of the site in different shades of violence up to contemporary electronic surveillance dispositives that control the labor forces of contemporary societies.

The violence expected in the scene of the tested and destroyed truck updates and refreshes constellations of resistance, strikes, and battles where nothing of the kind is actually visible. It is the force of destruction that points to violence contained in the production process, the one of the truck and the one that the security device is built to protect. It is the energy released in the picture that recalls labor disputes. In the missing countershot, in invisible editing, in gaps between shots, and in the elliptical phrases commenting on the images, sense and meaning are exposed. Historical contingency surfaces: Could the workers not have left the factory? Could they have crashed the gate? Could they have appropriated technologies and machines? Could they have decided on forms of producing and distributing what they worked for amongst themselves, and could they then have exited the factory, emerging from self-imposed nonage, leaving in peace? History as the camera, or rather as cinema, records it, gives a relentless account of facts, moving objects, and persons, of situations, distances, light, and dark, thus recording reactions, behavior, attitudes of people in a situation. As a whole, cinema thus also records the visions people have, the actual and the virtual at the same time.

In *Workers Leaving the Factory*, Farocki addresses the topos as a rhetorical techne, a cultural technique to organize and preserve power relations as elements of images and imaginations. The confrontational *choque* between cinema's audience and cinematic image renders this relationship perceivable, makes it visible, yet hardly consciously so. In pointing towards the image of destruction and the *choque* or pleasure it evokes, Farocki points to the visibility and perceptibility of history beyond the obvious. In returning to the site of the factory gate, the scene addresses the frontier of interests at the interface between the production site and private lives, controlled labor time and uncontrolled leisure time, capitalist production modes and personal curiosities that drive all sorts of investigations, constructions, orders. At the factory gate, antagonist social forces clash.
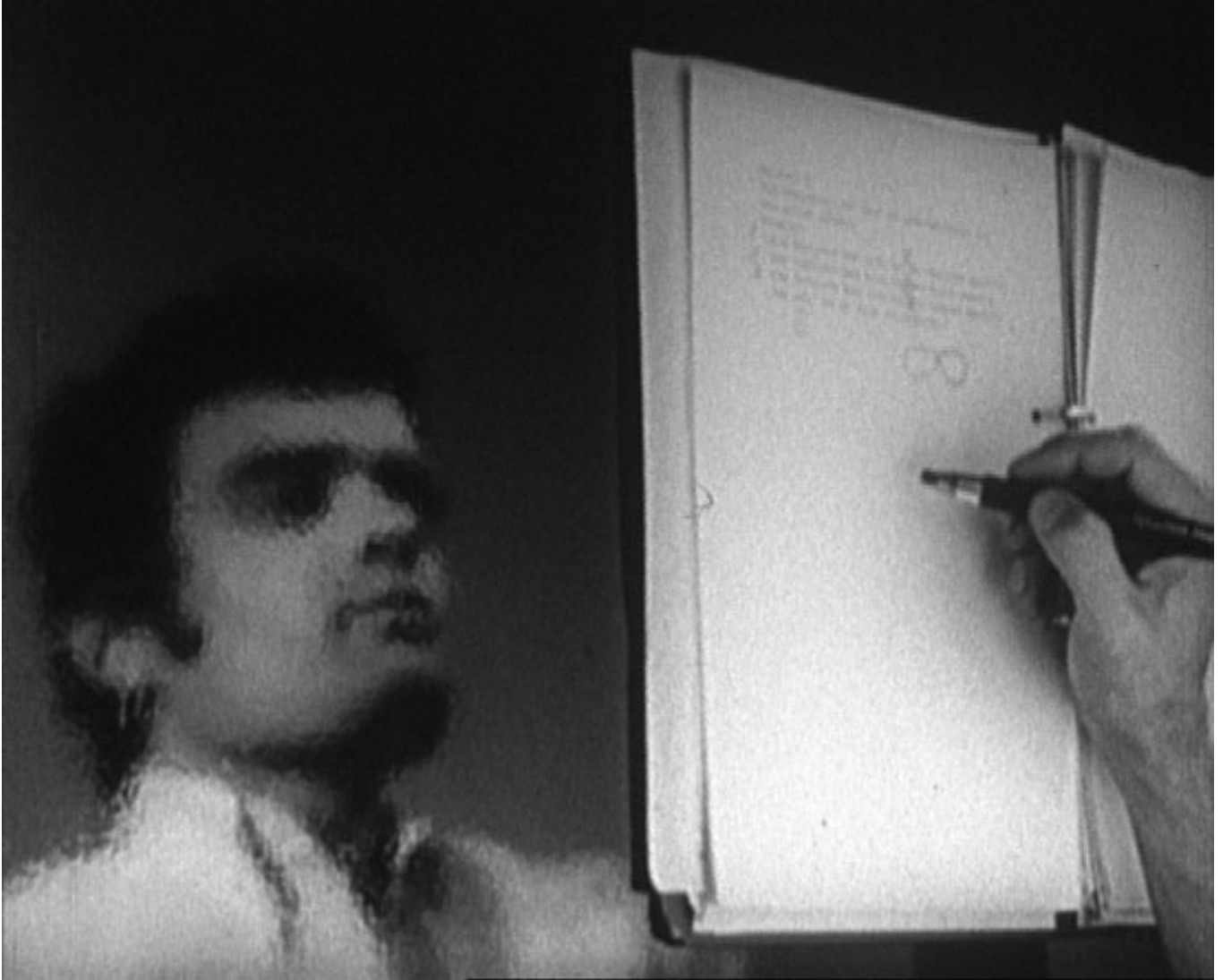
Harun Farocki, *Inextinguishable Fire*, 1969. Film still.

The series of different sequences focus our attention on a time-space constellation in which individual and collective systems collide, in different contexts but always in the same supercharged constellation. Therefore, the site of the factory gate is present in cinema as a topology of social relations as well as an emotional frame of reference. Farocki's analysis is not concerned with the essence of things or ontology, but with relations.

In his fragmentary *Notes sur le cinématographe*, Robert Bresson writes: "Film de cinématographe où les images, comme les mots du dictionnaire, n'ont de pouvoir et de valeur que par leurs position et relation."[3] What seems an eminently structuralist statement concerns the non-ontological concept of cinematic language in general. Cinematic images and cinematic historiography derive their impact from being a part of a larger cinematic memory, whose structure, positions, and values have charged our relationships and have directed our behavior, in private as in labor disputes.

According to Farocki's cinematic critique, filmic images deprive us of a stable center, a dependable matrix of fixed frames. In this, Farocki's work with images resonates with a deconstructive approach, mostly avant la lettre. This is not altogether surprising. Hanns Zischler, one of Farocki's early collaborators, translated Derrida's *De la grammatologie*. Philosophical discourse among the *Filmkritik* crowd was elaborate, theory highly valued. Cinema, however, added something to procedures of criticism and deconstruction that challenged political thought, especially for the generations that were experienced in new media. To think in films is to deal with a lack of security, of centers, of stable systems of thought. Filmic images call for supplements provided by imaginative minds, by a certain rage against injustice. They call for a conception of history as stories of transient and vulnerable beings, of unsheltered lives, minding the non-famous people and regarding oneself as mortal.

History is, as one of Farocki's earliest films, *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969), proves, a matter of living bodies linked to machineries of the visible – which are, as we now know, extensions of industrial weaponry. This early film defies television reports on the effects of napalm in the Vietnam War. But as Farocki shows by extinguishing a cigarette butt on his arm to allegedly evoke empathy, there is no such thing as empathy with inconceivable pain. Farocki, in the position of the omniscient news reporter, argues: "When we show you pictures of napalm victims, you'll shut your eyes. You'll close your eyes to the pictures. Then you'll close them to the memory. And then you'll close your eyes to

the facts." Depicting and showing the effects of violence will always come too late to prevent suffering and injustice. Farocki's concern is to compose images that will interfere with events, modify them. To do so, this early film returns or proceeds to the factory gates: "When napalm is burning, it is too late to extinguish it. You have to fight napalm where it is produced: in the factories." Recalling the series of workers leaving factories, we remember that the Lumière plant in Lyon produced photographic plates. It was, in a way, a chemical plant. Maybe the workers left happily because they knew that they were producing the light side of weaponry. Maybe they left happily because they didn't know about the social control that photography supplied to aid in preventing the sabotage of factory production. Maybe they left because in capitalism, the entertainment industry can never be separated from weapons production, as Farocki taught. Farocki's historiography lesson is topologically complex and politically simple: every shot contains a slight messianic trace of its own countershot. It is not evident. Find it!

✕

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1
See http://www.nachdemfilm.de/

2
In *Suchbilder: Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven*, eds. Wolfgang Ernst, Stefan Heidenreich, and Ute Holl(Berlin: Kadmos Verlag, 2003), 17–30.

3
Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 17.

Jan Ralske
Harun's Highway

If you photograph a bridge from below, where the clochards sit, it might appear like the arches of a church. More recently the bridges are covered on the sides, so that the drivers aren't distracted by the view of the valley below. Only a dog still notices that there's a drop of a few hundred meters below the highway, and he howls.
– Harun Farocki, *As One Sees* [Wie man sieht], 1986.

The impact of Harun Farocki's work was more than the howl of a dog in tune with his instincts. And although Farocki was certainly a partisan behind enemy lines, using archival and contemporary footage from the military, he was not simply that lone romantic fighter, once derisively described by Carl Schmitt as "a dog on the highway."

Harun Farocki's call was not for "more dogs on the highway": Farocki was more interested in why the highway was built in the first place, or in redesigning the highway. His analysis was usually so profound – or let us say "distracting" – that it truly affects the way one ultimately views the realties we are conditioned to accept.

✕

Constanze Ruhm
Attachment:

Clapping the Board / Hotel Utopia / Traces of a Staging / Fate of Alien Modes / Diagrams (Circles) / History and Production / Kids and Movies / Birds, Capitalism, Dreams / More on Animals (Donkeys), Capitalism, and Dreams / JLG / Flipcharts / Factory Walls, Secrets / Attachments

1. Clapping the Board
A simple lesson I learned from Harun Farocki: on set, you can clap the clapboard quietly too.

2. Hotel Utopia
The works discussed in this piece exemplify, in a necessarily fragmentary manner, how Harun Farocki's thought and oeuvre informed the way I think about images, film history, and contemporary political narratives, as well as my artistic and curatorial practices. They also touch on a matter of vital importance: how to transfer films into art spaces. As someone who comes from a visual art background, the question was more precisely how films can be transferred into the dispositiv of fine art.

I've been acquainted with Harun Farocki's films and installations since the nineties, thanks in no small part to a common friend, Christa Blümlinger, who has followed Farocki's work for decades in writing. Blümlinger's essay about his first installation, *Interface* (Schnittstelle, 1995), aroused my interest in his cinematic and artistic methods.[1] In 1999, I wanted to invite Farocki to a film program called "Hotel Utopia." Harun answered my email instantly, in a very friendly manner. He wrote that he liked the title of the program, as well as my introductory text. I was happy about that. We showed three films: *As You See* (Wie man sieht, 1986), *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges, 1988) and the single-channel version of the aforementioned *Interface* (1995).

Art and cinema have each brought forth their own methodologies of exploring and changing the origins and mechanisms of the images they create. On a horizon (which they have in common, and which could span a desert or a swamp, or a space to escape from that has no vanishing point: the white of a projection screen. It could be a photograph; or a still from a sequence that swallows itself like a Mobius strip, and so the final image becomes extinguished; A drive-in theater, a Memento Mori, a studio set, a strange memory. The illuminated frame of the projection screen captures in its glow all images in their respective durations, transforms them into an epitome of time, and so erases their history ... What

exactly are we seeing? A short flare in the darkness of a movie theatre, past moments contained in the archives of big news agencies, or captured in Okinawa on a French tourist's 35 mm film[2]

I haven't read that text in fifteen years. Today I understand what Farocki liked about it.

3. Traces of a Staging

In 2001, I curated a film program and exhibition called "Traces of Staging" (Spuren der Inszenierung) featuring works by Harun Farocki (*Inextinguishable Fire* [Nicht löschbares Feuer,*1969]; *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* [Ich glaubte, Gefangene zu sehen, 2001–4]; *The Machines No Longer Work Blindly* [Die Maschinen tun die Arbeit nicht länger blind,* 2001]).[3] On one night, we also showed *What Farocki Taught* (1998) by Jill Godmilow, as well as works by Wendelien van Oldenborgh (*It's full of holes, it's full of holes*) and Olaf Metzel (*Stammheim Dokumente*). This excerpt summarized our interest in these works:

> The new work can be described as a representational interplay, a breakdown of Farocki's recent investigations that link

with his new work on intelligent machines, intelligent weapons and how these mutually advertise each other. Seen together, the shift from a society of discipline towards a society of control is an essential part of Farocki's work and is accordingly represented as a line of thought along which both installations develop. Farocki writes: "The images produced by a surveillance camera could be called *operative*, as well as these of production control and material testing. It's just fine to call a testing that is operated through sensors 'damage free': gazes don't destroy anything."[4]

4. Fate of Alien Modes

In the exhibition "Fate of Alien Modes" (2003), I showed the film *Narrating* (Erzählen, Ingemo Engström and Harun Farocki, 1975).[5]

The exhibition reflected my interest in the relationship between art and cinema, and their respective modes of production and narration – particularly "the narrative style, the *how* of the narration" – instead of following the *what*, the story.[6] This, in film theory language, is the distinction Bakhtin and the Russian formalists

Harun Farocki, *Between Two Wars*, 1978. Film still, 16 mm, 83'.

drew between "fabula" and "syuzhet": from the raw material of the plot, the *syuzhet*, the story (*fabula*) arises in the mind of the viewer. The plot "is, essentially, the sequence of all causally effectual events as we see and hear them, the series of actions as they are arranged in the film … " – that is to say, the narrative mode, *how* the story is told. "Fate of Alien Modes" revolved around the thesis that an analysis of narrative modes (or "scripts"), as they occur in the institutions of cinema, art, psychoanalysis, and architecture, allows more insight into contemporary social, political, and economic conditions than, for example, using hermeneutical techniques for interpreting an oeuvre. Harun Farocki's work was never about interpretation (of images, texts, films). His goal was, rather, to pinpoint preexisting, structurally laid out constellations, which are hard to identify (or that which had been omitted from the images, as Farocki's work Images of the World and the Inscription of War [Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges] demonstrates so well), and that point to questions of interpretive power, symbolic representations, and of institutional discourses about images. He did this in order to make these systems visible not only for himself but for everybody else as well, and thus to create

linguistic but most of all, visual terms – tools with which one could continue working, thinking, and discussing.

5. Diagrams (Circles)

In Farocki's oeuvre, the diagram emerges as a possibility to formalize what has become visible, in a general configuration that isn't linguistic but pictorial and exemplary. The methodological diagram that underlies the film *Telling* (Erzählen) – a circular narrative model – became one of the base figures for the exhibition "Fate of Alien Modes," whose content and space developed in accordance with the notion of narrative and architectonic circles. Thus, the exhibition assumed the form of a *spatial narrative*,[7] thanks in no small part to a Farockian diagram on the wall.

Between Two Wars (Zwischen zwei Kriegen, 1978) – and one could name further examples – also depicts the circle in different variations, doubles, reflections, as a central motif. Take, for example, the scene with the roundelof children in the mirror, which inspires the engineer's concept of rationalization and eventually leads in an indirect way to fascism; or the chalk circle that a rollerskating girl leaves on the cobblestones (skatemarks as a symbol of eternity, or as a

Issue of *Filmkritik*, September 1975.

Constanze Ruhm and Christine Lang, *Cold Rehearsal*, 2013. Production still, 87'.

Constanze Ruhm and Christine Land, *Cold Rehearsal*, 2013. Film still, 87'.

mobius strip of history that must repeat itself); or, finally, the wristwatch on the window sill, itself a citation of Slatan Dudow and Bertolt Brecht's *Kuhle Wampe* (1932), which is put to the side before the character jumps out the window – a visualization of the symbolic circle that one has left: life.

"How to learn from the dying of the dead for the life of the living." Farocki wrote this line in a production note while shooting *Between Two Wars*. In this film, the diagram outgrows the paper (the theory), to emerge in different parts of its structure as a trail – but also, in particular, as practice. This is another aspect of Farocki's productions that was always of particular interest to me: the insoluble relationship between theory and practice, and the notion that artistic production is impossible without theory.

7. History and Production

From the production of history to "History and Production": at my request, Farocki selected eighteen issues of *Filmkritik*, the magazine he co-published and contributed to from 1974 to 1984, for the exhibition, and wrote about its history in the catalog:

> Cinema in the German Federal Republic of 1957 had nothing to do with Jutzi, Lang, Murnau, Pabst, or von Sternberg anymore, and writing about film had nothing do with Eisner or Kracauer. Those names were hardly in circulation anymore, and so it was incumbent on *Filmkritik* to spell them out again. Literature and art magazines also had to rebuild their connections with the world – severed by Hitler – but had already begun that process in 1945. When *Filmkritik* started in 1957, the Federal Republic had a film industry that pretended to be as confident as its car industry, except that it hadn't created a mass product like the Beetle or a work of art like the Porsche. The word "*Filmfreund*" (film friend) is likely a Germanization of the term "*cinéphile*."

> In Berlin of the 1920s, there had been an interesting connection between the intelligentsia and the cinema, just as there was in Paris with Cocteau, Man Ray, or Léger making films. Brecht made films, so did Moholy-Nagy; and Ruttman was a painter before he made the "Symphony." More importantly, maybe, Alfred Döblin was appropriating cinematic narrative techniques in his writing; he wanted to learn something from film. The writers and intellectuals of the time considered cinema

kitsch, as Wolfgang Koeppen demonstrated in his postwar novel *Pigeons on the Grass* (Tauben im Gras). In that book, cinema is depicted as a flight from reality, and the movie business is depicted as decadent. Adorno, as a proponent of the New Vienna School, also didn't think very highly of film, which seemed to him on par with operettas.

> *Filmkritik* certainly didn't want to be a pamphlet for the film industry. It also polemicized against a brand of feuilleton-style art criticism, which just noted ideas and impressions. The goal was to "expose structures." *Filmkritik* wanted to teach something, the love of film. It did so earnestly but with little enthusiasm, like it was a duty. In its early years, the magazine was a bit pedantic, reading films according to a very narrow formula, and judging, for example, a character's actions in allegorical terms; if it uncovered an unwitting attitude in a movie, this was explained in the tone of academic psychology. But it was able to change, and developed its own terms to criticize its early practice. During the first ten or twelve years, *Filmkritik* changed, steadily mostly, sometimes with a jolt, and in that way it was always ahead of its readership, to which I belonged, also.[8]

8. Kids and Movies

A few days after Farocki's sudden passing, I discovered the following letter-to-the-editor in an old copy of *Filmkritik*. I now consider it one of my favorite Farocki texts.

> dear filmkritik,

> the white rose youth center is on apostel-paulus street in schöneberg. it shows films once a week. today our kindergarden is meant to go there. i look into the schedule to know when to pick them up. it announces "keine angst vor großen tieren" [Don't be Afraid of Big Animals]. an hour of hectic activity follows to prevent our kids from getting screwed up by a film with heinz rühmann. but our kindergartner says that it's certainly not a feature film, the series only shows cartoons. no word on this in the program.

> ten pfennig entry. the hall is full. on screen: the disgusting studio black and white of the

1950s, which comes out of weak projectors provided by the *landesbildstelle* looking particularly disgusting. i ask the guy who is responsible for the program, who's still the old landlord type, not the new social worker type, what moved him to show a film with such a disgusting little-man message, and that, of all places, in a building that commemorates the scholl siblings. but the cast is good, he says, and there are no children's films, and it's rated 6, and when I ask whether he's seen it, he says nah, but we can discuss when it's over (he doesn't attend the screening).

shouldn't we now make an offer to all these institutions, offer them films and sources that enable our children to find the broadest solutions to the world's problems. couldn't gloria behrens, who comes to mind, maybe make a list of children's movies and we can keep it in a booklet, which at least could help us take advantage of the existing opportunities.

luckily anna got sick watching the movie, so that she didn't have to listen to the finale, *don't be afraid of big animals, nothing can happen to you, anymore*.

regards HF

Harun Farocki, *Between Two Wars*, 1978. Film still, black-and-white 16mm, 83'.

9. Birds, Capitalism, Dreams

Between Two Wars contains a dream sequence. The shot shows a young man recounting a dream, shortly after waking up. An apparently tame black bird (a daw) sits next to his bed on a small night table, beside a broken egg:

> I had a dream last night. I dreamt of a bird, which laid eggs and started brooding them. Then it got hungry. It pecked a hole in the first egg and slurped it empty. After a while, the brooding had so exhausted the bird that it pecked open the next egg. And in the dream I felt that I was becoming the bird that laid eggs and wanted to hatch them, but had to eat to brood them, and so in this way it devoured itself.

This scene not only recounts a dream, but the account of the dream is itself part of the dream. The symbolism of the account (the bird) materializes in what seems to be the narrator's waking state, on top of a night table, which, before the cut-in, had other objects on it: a shaving brush, a cup, a mirror. Now, a bird is sitting there instead. The retelling of the dream begins with a strange doubling, itself a dream – or as if elements of the dream are manifesting in reality.

Later in the film, the symbolism of the dream becomes even more pointed, a metaphor for capitalism itself. A drawing is held to the camera. On it, we see a bird eating the eggs in its nest, rather than brooding them. The words "Our Future" are inscribed on the egg it just broke. On another egg: "Our World." And on the bird's back, looking like a crest of feathers: "Capitalism."

A text in voice-over:

> The egotism of the moment arises from the fact that the capitalist mode of production wastes energies that, from a technical point of view, should have long been utilized in the production process. On one side, man gets squeezed and forced into the maelstrom of hard work; and, on the other, natural resources are overexploited if they aren't of use to private capital. That's the contradiction that Marx outlined – the forces of production are overburdening the relations of production.

Farocki's oeuvre is a kaleidoscopic constellation. Like the young engineer in *Between Two Wars* who wants to look at himself in the mirror but discovers something quite different, viewers will not discover themselves in Farocki, but rather a consistent array of motifs and subjects, which pervade the prisms of his oeuvre in countless adaptations, refractions, repetitions, and variations. His oeuvre itself seems to function
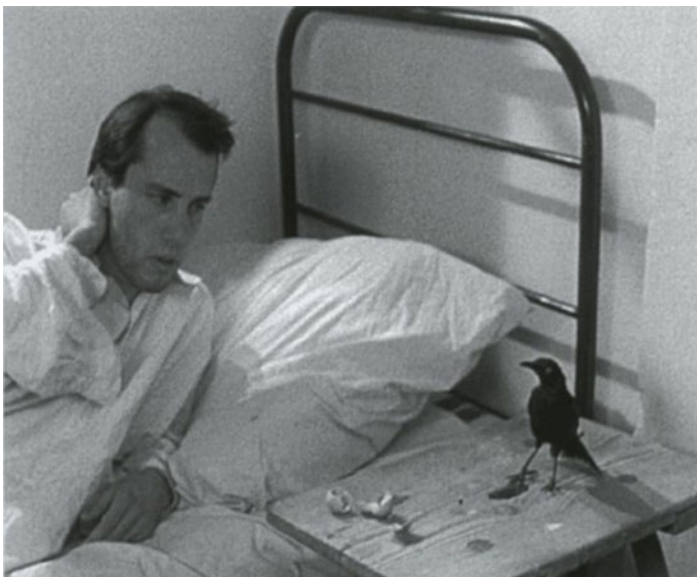
Constanze Ruhm, *X NaNa / Subroutine*, 2004. Film still, color, 30'.

Harun Farocki, *Nothing Ventured* (Nicht ohne Risiko), 2010 Film still

like an optical device at times.

Many of his subjects already emergedin *Between Two Wars*: war, arms production, the associated "theory of the gun,"fascism, factories, labor, narration, a critique of capitalism. One even finds nature footage in the film, which reminded me of depictions of artificial, digital nature in Farocki's last work, *Parallel I–IV* (Paralelle I–IV).

Nature as Farocki captured it, even in the city, was always in motion, always lively and soulful. A wind that's almost stormy blows through the trees and the bower, blows through branches and leaves. The wind says: things will not stay the way they are. They can change. In *Parallel I–IV*, Farocki advances ideas about the ontology of real and digital trees, about branches and foliage, about the way they move in the virtual wind, and he uncovers the operations and parameters that underlie these dynamics.

On a related note, I remember that HF criticized how we shot nature in our film *My Never Ending Burial Plot* (2010). At the time, he suggested we watch how Straub-Huillet filmed nature, and learn from them. I think I get what he meant only now. In fact, I think I would have already gotten it back then if he'd referred me to his own work, instead of to Straub-Huillet – to the trees in *Between Two Wars*, for example, their leaves swaying in the wind.

10. More on Animals (Donkeys), Capitalism, and Dreams

In an email last year, Harun Farocki wrote me:

> Dear Constanze,
>
> anyway, I dreamt that a donkey was licking my feet. "They're salty from sweat," I thought. The literary source is Grimmelshausen's Simplicius Simplizissimus, of course, the Germanist would say. I say: Your donkey,
>
> Your Harun

The donkey character in *Cold Rehearsal* (Kalte Probe), the film Christine Lang and I made together in 2012, was conceived in an artistic system of exchange, via a system that didn't squander energies, but recycled them, as references, quotes, testimonials – just as the young engineer in *Between Two Wars* demands. The donkey, which has two cameos in *Cold Rehearsal* – one as a living donkey and another as a papier-mâché statue – refers not only obviously to Bresson's Balthazar. It was inspired by Farocki and is firmly dedicated to him. It came

about like this:

In the publication *Das Erziehungsbild im Kino*, edited by Tom Holert and Marion von Osten, Farocki's essay with the wonderful Farockian title, *Learn What's Easiest!* (Lerne das Einfachste!), recounted the shooting of one of his first films, which he directed with Hartmut Bitomsky. He states:

> The second economic film marked the end of our didactic rigorism. The film was conceptualized as a film. We no longer wanted to predetermine the lesson of every part, and how it should be taught. The production was a massive effort. We totally overreached. Every morning before shooting we did several hours of moving. At one point, we shot a Roman banquet in an abandoned barracks – two Romans discussing the economy. I don't recall why we didn't co-opt the discourse of the Greeks, the way Marx did.[9]

We had wanted a palm tree and a miniature donkey for that scene, but, instead, our colleagues got a miniature palm tree, which looked like a room plant, and a full-sized donkey, who had no desire to let anyone push him up the stairs to the third floor, and even less desire to go back down.[10]

Jean-Luc Godard, *Vivre Sa Vie*, 1962. Film still, black and white 35mm, 80'.

Is that a rehearsal for the film, then – or the real thing? How many facial expressions can one have?

11. JLG

Ten years ago, I shot *X NaNa / Subroutine* in Berlin. The short film tells the story of Nana (Anna Karina), a character from Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie*, who has decided to leave Godard's film to

become real and manage her own affairs. In *X NaNa / Subroutine*, Farocki plays Frank I. Chou (an anagram of his name) – a mixture of Zeus (NaNa/Mnemosyne's lover), a parole officer, a psychoanalyst, and a filmmaker. He was endlessly patient with me and my predicament; as instead of directing, I was busy reparking cars, returning keys, and I-don't-know-what, stuff that's usually handled by production management or set runners, employees I couldn't afford. Only the clapboard was being clapped too loud for his taste; I was responsible for that too (see above). In the script, I put Godard's words in Farocki's mouth:

> **Chou:** I often watch people ... I look at them ... very particular faces, and I think: "I would need a camera to really see them." The problem is that directors not just use the camera, they put themselves in its place. But the camera needs independence. The "real" reverse shot has yet to be realized. The Americans have beaten the shot/reverse shot principle to death – they turned it into a trivial game of ping-pong, devoid of all meaning. The director no longer tries to have two people really look at each other, listen to each other, let alone think about each other ... imagine that, six possibilities squared. You could make years of film from that.

> **Nana:** A gunshot in a movie ... is also a shot. A gunshot is just one side of the truth.

> **Chou:** *[turns to her, touches her face] The truth always has two faces ... one image shows the shot, the other, the countershot.*

For his role as Frank I. Chou, HF – the owner of a carefully curated selection of very colorful Hawaiian shirts – wore his favorite shirt: James Dean and Marilyn Monroe's pink faces on a poison-green background. He was only partially agreed with the lines I had written for him. In an odd way, his performance in this short represented an indirect segue to our respective relationships to Godard (Godard himself was played by H. M. Rehberg in the film). Apart from our shared interest in the director – albeit, from very different generational perspectives – there was another thing we had in common regarding Godard. Once, we confessed to each other that we never wanted to get to know him.

I now realize that we didn't talk about Godard as much as one might assume. "Not Speaking About Godard," one might say. Farocki once wrote me the following.

Dear Constanze,

this morning I thought: you were taking on Godard, but nobody's taking on the Sopranos, which is similar to people boycotting H&M, but nobody boycotting Apple, whose crimes are well known.

– Harun Farocki in an email on April 22, 2014

12. Flipcharts
One of Farocki's methods of teaching us something consisted of showing us how something else is taught to others. His film *Die Bewerbung* provides a great example of this. Of that film, Farocki writes:

> In the summer of 1996, we filmed application training – courses that teach you how to apply for a job. We filmed long-term unemployed people who the welfare office had forced to participate; and we filmed managers with 200,000-mark salaries who hired private coaches in the same way that the free citizens of Athens received rhetorical instruction from house slaves.

An inevitable element in this world of schooling, retraining, and risk management negotiations – in workshops, staff retreats, and conflict-resolution seminars – is the flipchart. The flipchart is a sad, unsightly testament to contemporary existence and its work modes; it documents quiet dramas, the silent failures of countless useless business ventures and (probably fortuitously) unrealized management ideas; it is a performative tool of neoliberal self-expression. There doesn't seem to be a German translation of this term, but that doesn't mean that there are no flipcharts in Germany. In fact, we see them in many of Farocki's films.

13. Factory Walls, Secrets

> I've started taking photographs. At the moment, I'm photographing factory walls, because they are impermeable, unclimbable and so encapsulate the logic of capitalist production. The owner cannot rise above them. His own wall blocks his view of the rest of society. I've started taking photographs. A picture is not enough, by the way. You have to take two pictures of everything. Things move so

much that it takes at least two pictures to capture the direction of the movement.

This passage is also from the film *Between Two Wars*, and comments on a tracking shot along a factory wall. Many years later, in the course of preparations for his Documenta contribution *Deep Play* (2007), Farocki told us how complicated the research for the work had been, how uncooperative corporations and institutions were. Their company philosophies plastered the walls with terms like "transparency" and "openness." According to Farocki, the real problem was that these organizations had nothing to hide anymore: the thing that had to be hidden was that there was nothing to hide. The lack of secrets was the secret.

14. Attachments
We wrote each other a lot over the years – mostly emails, but sometimes letters too. If it was really important but there was no time to send a letter, and an email seemed inappropriately disdainful, we made use of a special method, or gesture, invented by Farocki – a way of returning to the letter form within the confines of a profane email. He sent the letter as an attachment, while the body of the email remained empty.

This text may be something like that – an attachment, which of course also expresses attachment:

I last encountered Harun at this year's documentary forum in the HKW in Berlin. We sat on the riverbank in the sun, with Christian Petzold,and spoke about Peter Lorre, Brecht's direction of *Man Equals Man* (Mann ist Mann), and Polish cinema (Farocki once told me that Poland had become a place of longing for him, like Paris, when he saw the film *Ashes and Diamonds* in 1961.[11] That at that time he read magazines with titles like *Polish Monthly* (Monatschrift Polen) with grainy photos of young people, and that he dreamed of maybe attending film school there one day. However, things turned out differently, he said). We spoke about Marey, about his recordings for deaf-mutes – a man moves his lips silently saying, *Bonjour Madame, Bonjour.* Farocki said that soccer players and coaches cover their mouths during World Cup games because lip-readers could otherwise decode what they're saying: *Let's smack him in the face. The ball is round. It's only offside if the referee blows his whistle.*

I took notes of our conversation, as I often did when we met and spoke in depth. It was a beautiful day, we laughed a lot, and later there was a guided tour through Farocki's latest installation, *Parallel I–IV* (Paralelle I–IV). Among other things, *Parallel* deals with the relationship of digital models to cinematic images. One sees

how clouds are constructed digitally, and then the picture cuts to real cloud formations. Black and white flickering, old film material, a beach, dunes, the sky – the picture is a bit sped-up, in my memory – a sky from the previous century, not yet inhabited by drones.

I always wanted to ask Harun what film that beautiful excerpt is from. And I kept forgetting. That, and many other questions, I will now have to answer myself.

I learned from HF how to sometimes see the world through his eyes; his films make that possible. His eye was sharp and inquiring; and even if it was ironic, it remained full of respect and genuine interest for his subject. Above all, it was full of warmth.

Even the protagonists of *Nothing Ventured* (Nicht ohne Risiko, 2004) are deeply moving. They spend their strange lives (they have no idea how strange their lives are) between fear (of the venture-capital project's failure) and hope (of taking part in the grand neoliberal game), between stubby, fear-scented office buildings (stuffed entirely, it seems, with needle felting carpet and flipcharts), and lonelypizzerias in the fleeting winter afternoon light, on the peripheries of midsized German cities. But they are deeply moving characters because we see them through Harun's eyes.

From HF, as e-mail attachment, November 21, 2013. Subject: Chirp.

An English translation of this cartoon reads, "He has WIFI!"

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Translated from German by Leon Dische Becker.

1
Christa Blümlinger, "Harun Farocki, circuit d'images" in *Trafic* 21 (Spring 1997): 44–49; "Harun Farocki, Bilderkreislauf" in *Ärger mit den Bildern. Die Filme von Harun Farocki* eds. Rolf Aurich and Ulrich Kriest (Konstanz: *UVK Medien*, 1998), 307–315 ; "Image(circum)volution: On the Installation *Schnittstelle* (*Interface*)," in *Senses of Cinema* [http://www.sensesofcinema.com]; as in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sight-Lines* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 315–322; "Bild[krets]lopp. Om installationen *Schnittstelle*," in *OEI* 37 & 38 (2008): 48–57 2
Constanze Ruhm, "Hotel Utopia," Summerstage Festival (Vienna, 1999). 3
For the haus.0-program of the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, which was run by Fareed Armaly at the time. 4
Fareed Armaly and Constanze Ruhm, *NICHT löschbares Feuer / Spuren der Inszenierung*, exhibition brochure (haus.0 and Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, 2001). 5
"Fate of Alien Modes" was an exhibition I curated at Vienna Secession. 6
In Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Filmtheorie zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag GmbH, 2011), paraphrase. 7
Mark Rakatansky, "Spatial Narratives," 1999 / "Räumliche Erzählungen," translation and publication on the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart website (www.haussite.net/site.html) , German and English text. 8
Harun Farocki in *Fate of Alien Modes*, ed. Constanze Ruhm (Vienna: Secession Wien, 2003). 9
In the anthology *The Education Image* (Das Erziehungsbild), eds. Tom Holert and Marion von Osten (Vienna: Schriften der Akademie der bildende Kunste Wien, 2010). 10
Harun Farocki and Hartmut Bitomsky, *Eine Sache, die sich versteht*, 1971. 11
Andrzej Wajda, 1958.

Trevor Paglen
Operational Images

Something new was happening in the world of images, something that the theoretical tools of visual studies and art history couldn't account for: the machines were starting to see for themselves. Harun Farocki was one of the first to notice that image-making machines and algorithms were poised to inaugurate a new visual regime. Instead of simply representing things in the world, the machines and their images were starting to "do" things in the world. In fields from marketing to warfare, human eyes were becoming anachronistic. It was, as Farocki would famously call it, the advent of "operational images."

The first time I saw Farocki's *Eye/Machine III* at the Pacific Film Archive, I was confused. Moving and squiggly arrows on a video screen show how a robot "sees" and navigates a landscape. Animated dashes show the trajectory of a cruise missile. Green boxes float around the screen, showing how a computer vision system tracks and targets moving objects. I couldn't quite understand why he thought these bits of visual military-industrial-complex detritus were worth paying much attention to. In retrospect, perhaps I was meant to be baffled by the images in *Eye/Machine III* because, in fact, they're baffling to human eyes. Farocki's was trying to learn how to see like a machine.

Throughout his career, Farocki's method was to look into the dark and invisible places where images get made. Insisting on the material processes that construct images and the materiality of images themselves, Farocki entered the sound stages, editing rooms, post-production houses, and techno-military laboratories. In works like *An Image* and *Deep Play* Farocki turned his lens towards the creation of spectacles. In other works like *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* and *Ausweg/A Way,* he located image-making within apparatuses of surveillance and domination. Farocki's work consistently showed how seeing itself is continually destroyed and reconfigured in the service of militarism and capitalism. He looked around, he watched, he documented, he demystified.

A lot has happened since Farocki's turn toward "operational images" in the early 2000s. Images are at once becoming more powerful, and the means through which they're produced have become ever darker.

We're quickly approaching (and have in fact probably long past) a moment where most of the images in the world are descendants of the "operational" images in *Eye/Machine*: namely images made by machines for other machines. From quality control systems in manufacturing to Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) throughout cities, and from retail motion
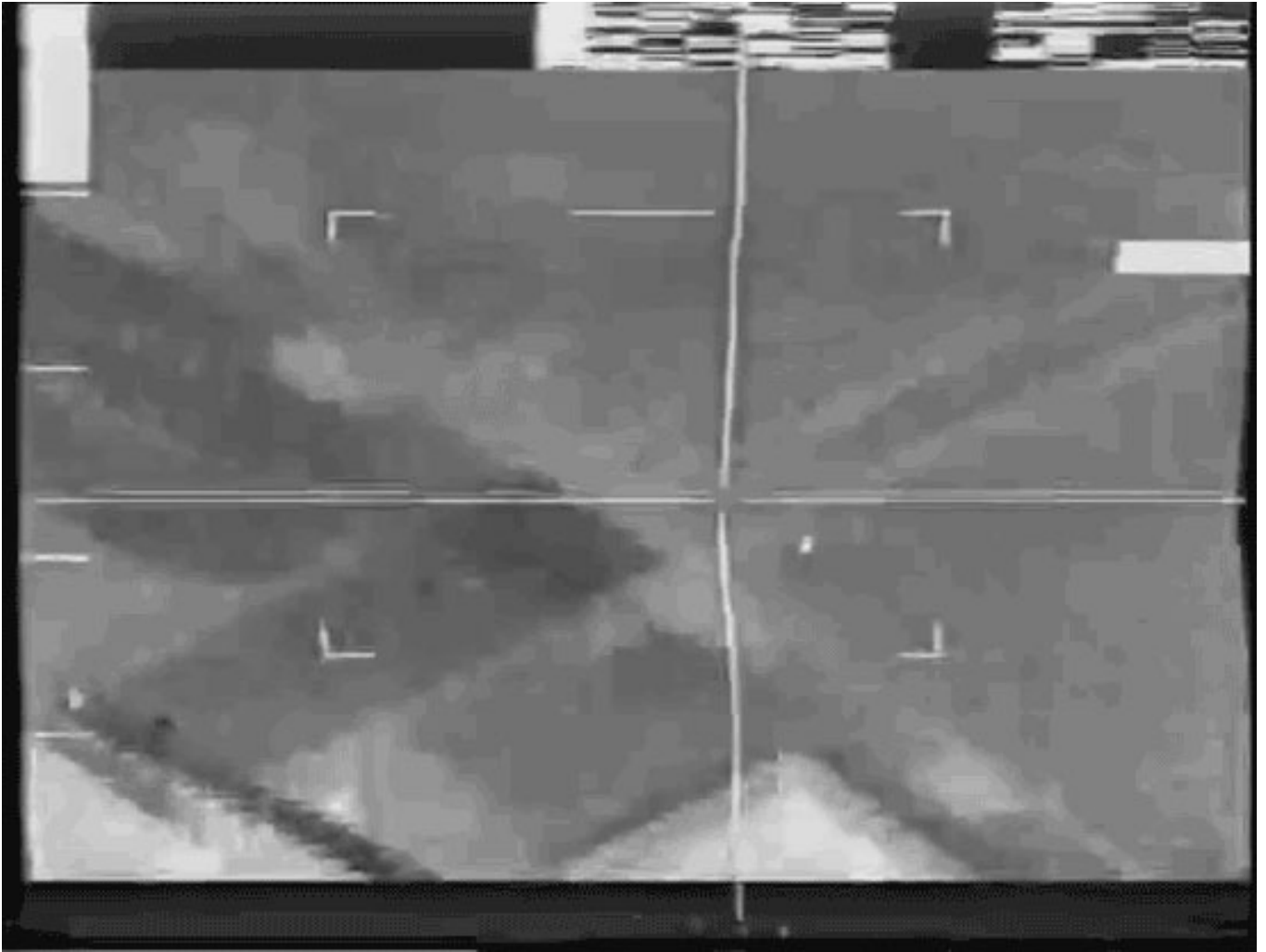
Farocki opens *War at a Distance*, 2003, with missile footage from the Iraqi war.

tracking systems in supermarkets and malls to automated pattern-recognition systems in military drones, images are operating upon the world on a scale orders of magnitude greater than at the moment of *Eye/Machine*. Farocki's dramatic exploration of the emerging world of operational images is now anachrononistic.

An anecdote: a few years ago, I began a little research project into operational images. The task was to ask what a contemporary version of Eye/Machine would look like (the decade that had passed since *Eye/Machine* is an awfully long time in technology). After about six months of research, I came to a rather dramatic conclusion. Increasingly, operational images are not simply alien to humans – they are literally invisible. In retrospect, there's a kind of irony in Farocki's *Eye/Machine*. Farocki's film is not actually a film composed of operational images. It's a film composed of operational images that have been configured by machines to be interpretable by humans. Machines don't need funny animated yellow arrows and green boxes in grainy video footage to calculate trajectories or recognize moving bodies and objects. Those marks are for the benefit of humans – they're meant to show humans how a machine is seeing.

My research project didn't get very far. After scores of phone calls and emails to the laboratories and companies where operational images get made, it became clear that machines rarely even bother making the meat-eye interpretable versions of their operational images that we saw in Eye/Machine. There's really no point. Meat-eyes are far too inefficient to see what's going on anyway. Nowadays operational images are overwhelmingly invisible, even as they're ubiquitous and sculpting physical reality in ever more dramatic ways. We've long known that images can kill. What's new is that nowadays, they have their fingers on the trigger.

The spaces that give rise to these trigger-happy images are getting darker and darker, both through military and corporate secrecy and the mechanics of seeing-machines themselves that no longer design to make human-interpretable versions. I don't know how we will learn to see this world of invisible images that pull reality's levers, but I do know that it's imperative for other artists to pick up where Farocki left off, lest we plunge even further into the darkness of a world whose images remain invisible, yet control us in ever-more profound ways.

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Trevor Paglen's visual work has been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Tate Modern, London; The Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis; The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Institute for Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Istanbul Biennial 2009, and at numerous other solo and group exhibitions. He is the author of five books and numerous articles on subjects such as future warfare, state secrecy, experimental geography, anthropogeomorphology, deep-time, and cave art. He spends more time thinking about modernist painting than he would like to admit. Paglen holds a B.A. from UC Berkeley, an M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Ph.D. in Geography from UC Berkeley.

"In our hands they must become weapons
… "
– Harun Farocki, *The Words of the
Chairman*, 1967.

Bani Khoshnoudi
Watch and Learn

Using controlled methods, sometimes even irony,
Farocki takes apart over and over again, piece by
piece, our place as victim as well as culprit in
this age where the image is loaded like a gun. It
is a rage that is not violent, yet clearly spoken,
and which is resting behind Farocki's camera,
not necessarily front and center on the screen.
Demonstrating, describing, pointing out, and
gesturing: his hands and his words shock,
confuse, stir, and arouse us. But let us not get it
wrong: it is not about what or how we are feeling,
but more specifically, about how we see and how
this is fabricated, and then asking ourselves
"what do we do about that?"

Throughout Farocki's work, cinema and
video become looking glasses into themselves;
into images and the demons set free when
imbuing them with so much power. Despite the
rage, there persists a retained vision – calm and
confident, yet never arrogant – of the state of
things. Yet, there is nothing esoteric or
mysterious to it; images are powerful, and power
does not hesitate to use them.

For me, this is the most humbling
experience to be had through Farocki's work, as
he reminds us of our role in image making.
Somewhere, he himself said that it is not what is
in a picture, but what lies *behind* it that counts;
that this should not stop us, as it never stopped
Farocki, from using and showing images, as if
they are the only source of proof we have for
certain things.[1] Georges Didi-Huberman also
depicts this phenomenon in his book *Images
Malgré Tout* (2003), which describes the context
of four blurry photographs desperately smuggled
out of Auschwitz-Birkenau by the
Sonderkommando, the inmate Jews forced to aid
with the disposal of gas chamber victims. These
four photographs, however sparse, became proof
of the event, though they are beyond words. No
picture could ever describe nor retain the actual
meaning of those atrocities, nor is the idea of
proof even a valid one in this context. In the
context of such violence and tragedy there
should be no necessity for visual material in
order to convince us, at a later date, of what took
place there, but it is crucial to note that these
photographs do give us, in the end, a startling
glimpse into the human nature behind those
actual murders, if not into the circumstances of
actually capturing that moment. It is not only
because of the angle from which they were taken
nor the frenetic quality of the pictures, that we
can confer that these people were taking a risk

Harun Farocki, *The Words of The Chairman,* 1969. Film stills

and making an act of resistance when they captured these images and somehow had them smuggled out of the camps. The simple idea that those inmates, although themselves faced with unavoidable extermination after being forced to participate in the disposal of the bodies of their kin, were worried about the image that could survive is remarkable. If we think again to Farocki's idea of what lies behind the image, then we can understand image-making as not only visual document, archive, or evidence, but precisely as proof that something has been done or an act of resistance has occurred.

In his writing on prisons and his work with surveillance images, Farocki insists on how a paradoxical act of watching and documenting can become an opportunity for resistance. Describing the state of prisons today, he says that prisoners are "withdrawn from the gaze, made invisible" while each "picture from prison is a reminder of the cruel history of the criminal justice system."[2] An example is from his video installation *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* (2000), where Farocki does just this: he reminds us of the surveillance mechanisms that we have created and that are imbued with our own confusion and perplexity. The surveillance cameras allow us to engage in an exercise where we gaze at inmates who have been reduced to points and shadows on a screen, while at the same time giving us the necessary pictures that attest to our society's cruelty. It would be unjust to compare these images to those of the Sonderkommando, but the juxtaposition reveals something about the image itself and attests, although from a different perspective, to the cruelty that we are still capable of. If we reconsider our role as those who believe we create images as "proof," then it seems almost perverse to see how these images can be emptied of their intent to document or archive and become another *dispositif* in our liberal society's self-numbing. In the case of surveillance cameras, we have relegated our active role to machines that do the work for us, thus giving us a degree of separation that ultimately protects us by allowing us to deny our responsibility in the atrocities. Taking a lesson from Farocki, maybe the only way to deal with this is to reconsider these pictures, this proof, and to show them to the world and to ourselves through repetition. In Farocki's work, the urgency is not just about making the images, but about watching again and again, about seeing the details and thinking through these events over and over.

As we try to make meaning of this ever more chaotic and absurd modern condition, and our participation in it, it is maybe only through filmic acts that we can maintain some urgency where

numbness tends to reside. Just as Didi-Huberman insists on the necessity of the image, no matter what brutality surrounds us, I believe that Farocki also lived urgently and in the moment, teaching us that if we do not make (or re-make) these pictures, then who will?

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Born in Tehran, <u>Bani Khoshnoudi</u> is a filmmaker and artist working in documentary, fiction, as well as with sound and video installation. Her work explores questions related to revolution and modernity and its impact on memory, exile and migration. She was studio artist at the Whitney Museum of American Art ISP. Her films have played in festivals, galleries and alternative spaces around the world. Khoshnoudi currently lives in Mexico City.

1
Thomas Elsaesser, "Harun Farocki: Filmmaker, Artist, Media Theorist," *Afterall* 11 (Spring/Summer 2005).

2
Harun Farocki, "Controlling Observation," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004).

Harun Farocki sitting in his reading chair with his
reading light,
showing some of his favorite books,
and his editing computer.
　　– Armin Linke, Berlin 2011

Armin Linke
In His Reading Chair

Armin Linke was born in 1966 and lives in Milan and Berlin. As a photographer and filmmaker he combines different mediums in order to blur the borders between fiction and reality. His artistic practice is deeply concerned with different possibilities of dealing with photographic archives and their respective manifestations, as well as with the interrelations and transformative powers between urban, architectural or spatial functions and the human being's interacting with these environments. Through work with his own archive, as well as with other historical archives, the questions of how photography is installed and displayed become increasingly important. Where the artist takes over the role of an exhibition maker in a collective approach, together with other artists, designers, architects, historians and curators, narratives are procured on the level of multiple discourses. He was Research Affiliate at MIT Visual Arts Program Cambridge, guest professor at the IUAV Arts and Design University in Venice and is currently professor at the HfG Karlsruhe.

Hito Steyerl
Beginnings

How to begin? The first sentence sets the scene. It is a building block for a world to emerge in between words, sounds, and images. The beginning of a text or film is a model of the whole – an anticipation.

A good beginning holds a problem in its most basic form. It looks effortless, but rarely is. A good beginning requires the precision and skill to say things simply. Like the crafts of making bricks, weapons, or files on hard drives, there is an art of creating beginnings.

One of Harun Farocki's beginnings:
We can drop right into the middle of events.[1]

Harun Farocki's legendary works – as filmmaker, writer, and organizer – are full of exemplary beginnings. From agitprop shorts to film essays and beyond. From didactic fiction to cinema verité. From single channel to multi-screen. From Kodak to .avi, from Mao to mashup. From silent films to hyperventilating talkies. From close reading to distanced comment. From interview to intervention, from collaboration to corroboration. On July 30, Harun Farocki died.

Over more than four decades, Farocki produced an extraordinary body of work that, for someone who continuously compared things, situations, and images to one another, is paradoxically incomparable. In all he did, he kept it simple, clear, and grounded. In cinematic terms: at eye level. His legacy spans generations, genres, and geographies. And the abundance of ideas and perspectives in his work does not cease to inspire. It trickles, disseminates, perseveres.

Farocki's practice was not about perfecting one craft – it was rather about perfecting the art of inventing and adding new ones. Even when he became a master of his craft he didn't stop. He just kept going. He became an eternal beginner. Had he lived another 25 years he might have started making Theremin films with bare hands, by focusing his mind, paying attention to the glitches of a new technology most probably developed for a stunning form of consumer-oriented warfare.

How to begin, again?

In 1992, a title of one of Farocki's texts makes a curious declaration: "Reality would have to begin."[2] It implies that reality hasn't even started. It is a puzzling statement indeed; especially from someone already considered an influential documentary filmmaker. Farocki suggests that reality might have to be brought about by resisting military infrastructure, its tools of vision and knowledge. But the quote also clearly declares that reality does not yet exist; at least not in any form that deserves the name. And let's face it: Aren't we still confronted with the same wretched impositions trying to pass as reality these days? Just now it's being sweated

over at Foxconn and sedimented on secret Snapchat servers: a Netflix soap featuring ISIS as teenage Deleuzian war machine. In earlier decades, Facebook might have been called Springer Press (not least in West Germany), ISIS called SA, and the USAF, well, USAF. The names of war change just as as war itself does. Reality's absence stays put.

This beginning takes the form of a statement:

The hero is thrown into his world. The hero has no parents and no teachers. He has to learn by himself which roles are valid.[3]
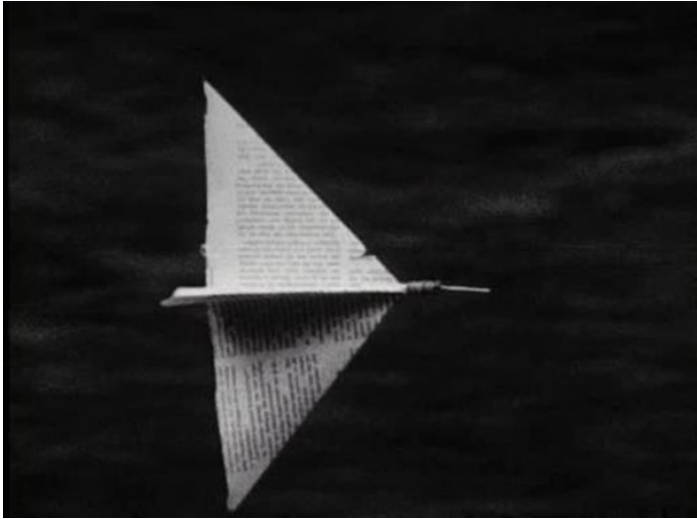
Harun Farocki, *The Words of the Chairman* [Die Worte des Vorsitzenden], 1967. 16mm, 3".

One of Farocki's first films, *The Words of the Chairman* (Die Worte des Vorsitzenden), is a legendary agitprop short. A Mao bible is torn up, its pages folded into a paper airplane hurled at a Shah dummy.*Words...* argues that statements by authorities need to be messed with and set in motion. Texts and images must be used unexpectedly, tossed into the world – both commandeered and set free. Settings, views, and attitudes taken for granted have to be rigorously dissected, torn apart, reconfigured. There are no teachers or parents to lead the way. Throughout Farocki's work, conflict will continue to manifest in mundane objects and situations.[4] In this case, a simple sheet of paper. Conflict is not only part of the content, but also of the production setting. *Worte des Vorsitzenden* is made in collaboration with both Otto Schily – later to become German interior minister – and Holger Meins, who died in a prison hunger strike as a member of the Red Army Faction. One would become the face of the state, the other would die as its enemy. Production holds conflict. It is its most basic form.

Another beginning:

Does the world exist, if I am not watching it?[5]

This beginning is among his last: it is part of the brilliant series *Paralell I–IV* dealing with computer generated game-imagery. This series reflects on elements of game worlds, on polygons, NPC's, 8-bit graphics, arse physics and unilateral surfaces. Ok, I made up the arse physics, sorry. *Paralell I–IV* sketches the first draft of a history of computer-generated images that is still emerging as we speak. It skims the surfaces of virtual worlds and coolly scans their glitches. *Paralell I–IV* is so humble, so concise, so charming and bloody fantastic that I could go on about it for hours. You are so lucky it hasn't got arse physics or else I would.

In 1992, *Videograms of a Revolution,* codirected with Andrei Ujică, captured a similar moment of emergence. The seminal work compiles material from over 125 hours of TV broadcasts and amateur footage of the '89 Romanian uprisings. It demonstrates how TV stops recording reality and starts creating it instead. *Videograms* asks: Why did insurgents not storm the presidential palace, but the TV station? At the very moment the social revolution of 1917 ended irrevocably, a new and equally ambivalent technological revolution took place. People ask for bread: they end up with camcorders. TV studios host revolts. Reality is created by representation[6] – Farocki, Flusser, and others were among the first to report this sea change as it happened. As things become visible, they also become real. Protesters jump through TV screens and spill out onto streets. This is because the surface of the screen is broken: content can no longer be contained when protest, rare animals, breakfast cereals, prime time, and TV test patterns escape the flatness of 2D representation.[7] In 1989, protesters storm TV stations. In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee invents the World Wide Web. Twenty-five years later, oligarchs start to ask: If people don't have bread, why don't they eat their browsers instead?

These works are building blocks. One can start building now. But what, exactly? Farocki starts building parallels. Shot on left monitor, countershot to the right. Montage arranged as solid bricks of spatialized narration. *On the Construction of Griffith's Films* uses Hantarex cubes as construction material. Cinema is now rephrased as architecture.[8]

There used to be one TV per flat. Now there are many. Political systems dwindle; screens multiply.*Workers Leaving the Factory* begins several times: a perfect grammar of cinema's spatial turn.[9] The first version of the work is single screen. The second version turns into twelve monitors simultaneously playing workers leaving the factory in different periods of twentieth century film history.[10] Dialectics explodes into dodecalectics. Farocki multiplies

the exits and the worlds of labor multiply in turn. Workers leave the factory to become actors – and to play themselves. Factories turn into theaters of operation. From 1987 on, Farocki also filmed how work puts on a show by way of exhibition. More than a dozen cinema verité films exhibit training, pitches, meetings, people striving to perform: *The Appearance*, *The Interview*, *Nothing Ventured.*[11] People pitch campaigns and projects as if their life depends on it. The staging of labor precedes commodity infatuation. *The Leading Role* (*Die Führende Rolle*,1994) shows the design of GDR May Day parades while the Berlin wall was already crumbling. Think of a televised ballet performed by a fantasy military sports brigade.

Another group of works investigates how buildings train bodies, reflexes, and perception. A prison: how to lock up by looking; a shopping mall: how to choreograph clients; brick factories around the world: how to make bricks manually, by machine, and through 3D printing.[12] This was the plan at least. The 3D printed bricks didn't make it into the film after all – the technology was too slow to keep up with Farocki's furious pace.

In its inception, parallel montage arose alongside conveyor belts – an industrial form of production across different locations arranged one after another. Its spatial turn arrived with major transformations: deindustrialization. Labor as spectacle. Factories turned museums. Conveyor belts dismantled and reinstalled in China, where mega-museums rise in parallel. Production persists in worlds split off by one-way mirrors. Surfaces glisten, spaces disconnect amongst commodity addiction, cheap airfare, and attention deficit: the new normal. Farocki looks, listens, demonstrates, aligns. At one point, he goes quiet. *Respite*[13] has no soundtrack whatsoever. In the video, Farocki shows silent footage extorted from a detainee at Westerbork deportation camp for purposes of Nazi infotainment. He peels away the staging of normalcy covering genocide layer by layer. The absence of sound is the film's most striking documentary layer; it records the silence of the audience that took Nazi stagecraft for reality.

Reality would have to begin.

Another of Farocki's beginnings:

Looks like it might have just been a glitch.[14]

A soldier drives a tank through a virtual landscape. After asymmetrical US warfare in Vietnam, the ongoing Cold War of the '80s has given way to a permanent asymmetrical war against "Terror." War has changed. It also remains the same. In the twentieth century, Farocki suggests resisting a military reconnaissance that uses analog aerial photography. In the twenty-first century, Farocki

observes armies that rely on simulations. Photography records a present situation. Simulations rehearse a future to be. They push out representations and make worlds, pixel by pixel, bit by bit – building by destruction and subtraction. Cameras do not only record, they also track and guide. They scan and project. They seek and destroy. War has changed. It also has remained the same: complicit with business interests, deeply entrenched within the most mundane details of everyday reality – now generated by images.

Like warfare, Farocki's work has changed. Like warfare, it has remained the same. Harun's latest works were always the most advanced, pushing the edge of analysis and vision. One can't afford nostalgia when dealing with the tools of permanent workfare: transmission, rephrasing, modeling. Like in *Words of the Chairman* when a page of paper is folded to become a weapon. The printed page has turned into a set of polygons. It can be folded into fighter jets, runway handbags, or furry Disney creatures. They could be part of education, games, or military operations. Just like the paper airplane, by the way.

In an interview published after his death, Farocki says of *Words of the Chairman*:

> It was about a utopian moment suddenly projected into the world. One couldn't see it in the outside world; at least one couldn't record it with a camera. And in this case – and I still feel this way – I was able to produce an entirely artificial world, something like a 3D animation.[15]

Filmmakers have hitherto only represented the world in various ways; the point is to generate worlds differently.

Paradoxically the beginning is also often the last part to be created, since it has to anticipate everything. But Farocki's late works are not just new versions of old beginnings. They started smiling. The late works radiated playfulness not in spite of their profoundness or seriousness but precisely because of it: from *Serious Games* to just games. From *Deep Play* to play proper. They also became more relevant and exciting by the minute. Farocki got closer to the beginner's spirit day by day.

Today, workers are leaving the factory to play Metal Gear Solid in the parking lot. They got confused because the disco grid installed for office raves was hacked and now shows ISIS fashion week ads.[16] Today workers are players, proxies, pitchers, soldiers, dancers, spammers, bots, and refugees. Ballistics is upgraded with arse physics. TVs are built with Minecraft blocks. Reality is still missing in action. Harun's work is

more necessary than ever and I am gutted that he is no longer here.

I know I am not alone in this. From Berlin to Beirut to Kolkata, Mexico, Gwangju, and wherever airlines and wi-fi travel, Harun's work struck a chord and brought people together: from Straub and Huillet nerds to Tumblr impressionists and drone opponents. From West Berlin to the West Bank. From salon bolsheviks, dialup activists, and SketchUp gallerinas. From portable film clubs to mobile phone browsers. I personally know at least one militia member who was floored by his work. Harun was his own UN smoking lounge in an imaginary corridor shared by the offices of the technology, Security Council, soccer, and moving image subcommittees. His work lives on invincible; his convertible is killing it still. People faint every time it comes down Karl-Marx-Allee.[17]

All of us are now in a position to answer your question:

Does the world exist, if I am not watching it?[18]

Reality would first have to begin. And perhaps, by beginning over and over again, reality can finally be brought about.

✕

Note: This text is written in the mode of fan prose. Of all Farocki's 120 or so moving image works, I have seen only about two thirds. People who have written on his work with expertise, lucidity, and insight include Thomas Elsaesser, Christa Blümlinger, Tilman Baumgärtel, Nora Alter, Georges Didi-Huberman, Olaf Möller, Volker Pantenburg, Tom Keenan, and many others. Please read their writings for a comprehensive overview of Harun Farocki's body of work spanning almost five decades. For biographical background please watch Anna Faroqhi's outstanding short video that gives a most beautiful account: *A Common Life* (Ein gewöhnliches Leben) (2006–07, 26 minutes). Thank you to Harun Farocki's longtime collaborator Matthias Rajmann for providing instant access to online downloads.

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1
Parallel II, 2014. One-channel video installation, color, sound, 9 minutes.

2
Harun Farocki, "Reality Would Have to Begin," *Imprint: Writings / Nachdruck: Texte*, ed. Susanne Gaensheimer and Nicolaus Schafhausen (New York: Lukas & Sternberg; Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2001), 186–213http://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Farocki_Harun_1988_2002_Reality_Would_Have_to_Begin_Die_Wirklichkeit_haette_zu_beginnen.pdf

3
Parallel IV, 2014. One-channel video installation, color, sound, 11 minutes.

4
There is a strong parallel to Martha Rosler's work *Bringing The War Home*, made in the same year, which also insists on the domesticity and ubiquity of warfare.

5
From *Parallel I,* 2012.Two-channel video installation, color, sound, 16 minutes.

6
This work is preceded by "Ein Bild," a conversation with Vilem Flusser about a cover of *Bild Zeitung*. Also, obviously reality has always been created by representations to an extent, but this period marks the emergence of reality being created by digital imagery.

7
At some point during the stampede cinema becomes a casualty too. It ceases to be a place where production condenses social conflict.

8
On the Construction of Griffith's Films (Zur Bauweise des Films bei Griffith), 2006. Two-channel video installation, black and white, 8 minutes.

9
Workers Leaving the Factory (Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik), 1995. Digital video, sound, 36 minutes. *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades (Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik in elf Jahrzehnten)*, 2006. Twelve-channel video installation, 36 minutes.

10
Another version is installed in Essen right now, showing actual workers leaving factories in fifteen different countries, as part of the work *Labour in a Single Shot* codirected with Antje Ehmann. I haven't seen it yet.

11
The Appearance (Der Auftritt), 1996. Video, sound, 40 minutes; *The Interview (Die Bewerbung)*, 1997. Video, sound, 58 minutes; *Nothing Ventured (Nicht ohne Risiko)*, 2004. Video, sound, 50 minutes.

12
I Thought I was Seeing Convicts (Ich glaubte Gefangene zu sehen),2000.Video, sound, 60 minutes; *The Creators of Shopping Worlds (Die Schöpfer der Einkaufswelten)*, 2001. Video, sound, 72 minutes; *In Comparison (Im Vergleich)*, 2009. Video, sound, 60 minutes.

13
Respite (Der Aufschub), 2007. Video, sound, 38 minutes.

14
From *Serious Games I: Watson is Down.* 2010. Two-channel video installation, color, sound, 8 minutes.

15
Philipp Goll, "Harun Farocki: Ein posthum erscheinendes Interview über Fußball, Mao und das Filmemachen," *Jungle World* no. 32 (August 2014) http://jungle-world.com/artikel/2014/32/

16
A reference to recent conversations with Brian Kuan Wood and Andrew Norman Wilson's work,*Sone* http://www.andrewnormanwilson.com/Sone.html

17
Harun's Volvo cabrio might have singlehandedly saved the GDR if strategically deployed at May Day parades.

18
From *Parallel I*, 2012. Two-channel video installation, color, sound, 16 minutes.