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The Writings of Dziga Vertov

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University of California Press • Berkeley • Los Angeles • London



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WE: VARIANT OF A MANIFESTO

We call ourselves *Kinoks*—as opposed to “cinematographers,” a herd of junkmen doing rather well peddling their rags.

We see no connection between true *kinochestvo* and the cunning and calculation of the profiteers.

We consider the psychological Russo-German film-drama—weighed down with apparitions and childhood memories— an absurdity.

Glosses followed by “ed.” or “trans.” are additions by the present editor or the translator. Glosses which are not so marked are taken from the Moscow edition without substantial alteration.

Kinoks. (“cinema-eye men”). A neologism coined by Vertov, involving a play on the words *kino* (“cinema” or “film”) and *oko*, the latter an obsolete and poetic word meaning “eye.” The -ok ending is the transliteration of a traditional suffix used in Russian to indicate a male, human agent.

Kinoglaz (“Kino-Eye”) is the name Vertov gave to the movement and group of which he is the founder and leader. The term was also used to designate their method of work. It is, as well, the title of the feature-length film that, in 1925, initiates the period of his maturity. We have chosen to use the Russian title in all cases involving specific reference to that film, since it is by its Russian title that the film is generally known to scholars and archivists. This work was the culmination of a development begun in 1922 with the production of a series of shorter newsreel films bearing the same title and devoted to aspects and problems of the new Soviet society. When reference is made to the group or movement as such, we have used the name *Kino-Eye*, both in order to distinguish it from the specific productions and to stress the continuity involved in the production, by Vertov and his group, of the *Kinonedelia* (“Kino-week”) and *Kinopravda* (“Kino-truth”) chronicles, which preceded the appearance of the film *Kinoglaz*—trans. and ed.

kinochestvo. Another of Vertov’s neologisms; the suffix *chestvo* indicates an abstract quality, therefore, the quality of the cinema-eye. While its



Vertov and Mark Magidson on location for *Three Songs of Lenin*

To the American adventure film with its showy dynamism and to the dramatizations of the American Pinkertons the kinoks say thanks for the rapid shot changes and the close-ups. Good . . . but disorderly, not based on a precise study of movement. A cut above the psychological drama, but still lacking in foundation. A cliché. A copy of a copy.

Precise signification is rather vague, it would appear from the context that Vertov is using it, by analogy with *kinok*, in contrast to *cinematography*. In his journal of 1924, he writes, "We almost never used the term *kinochestvo*, as it says nothing and its gratuitous word building." Film theory of the period is characterized, internationally, by a proliferation of terminology, and this particular instance recalls the elaborate speculation surrounding the notion of "photogénie" proposed in France by Vertov's contemporary, Jean Epstein. —trans. and ed.

WE proclaim the old films, based on the romance, theatrical films and the like, to be leprous.

—Keep away from them!

—Keep your eyes off them!

—They're mortally dangerous!

—Contagious!

WE affirm the future of cinema art by denying its present.

"Cinematography" must die so that the art of cinema may live.

WE call for its death to be hastened.

We protest against that mixing of the arts which many call synthesis. The mixture of bad colors, even those ideally selected from the spectrum, produces not white, but mud.

Synthesis should come at the summit of each art's achievement and not before.

WE are cleansing *kinochestvo* of foreign matter—of music, literature, and theater; we seek our own rhythm, one lifted from nowhere else, and we find it in the movements of things.

WE invite you:

—to flee—

the sweet embraces of the romance,

the poison of the psychological novel,

the clichés of the theater of adultery;

to turn your back on music,

—to flee—

cut into the open, into four-dimensions (three + time), in search of our own material, our meter and rhythm.

The "psychological" prevents man from being as precise as a stopwatch; it interferes with his desire for kinship with the machine.

In an art of movement we have no reason to devote our particular attention to contemporary man.

The machine makes us ashamed of man's inability to control himself, but what are we to do if electricity's unerring ways are more exciting to us than the disorderly haste of active men and the corrupting inertia of passive ones?

Saws dancing at a sawmill convey to us a joy more intimate and intelligible than that on human dance floors.

For his inability to control his movements, WE temporarily exclude man as a subject for film.

romance. Vertov is referring to a type of sentimental film based on songs ("romances"), popular at that time.—trans.

Our path leads through the poetry of machines, from the bungling citizen to the perfect electric man.

In revealing the machine's soul, in causing the worker to love his workbench, the peasant his tractor, the engineer his engine—we introduce creative joy into all mechanical labor, we bring people into closer kinship with machines, we foster new people.

The new man, free of unwieldiness and clumsiness, will have the light, precise movements of machines, and he will be the gratifying subject of our films.

Openly recognizing the rhythm of machines, the delight of mechanical labor, the perception of the beauty of chemical processes, WE sing of earthquakes, we compose film epics of electric power plants and flame, we delight in the movements of comets and meteors and the gestures of searchlights that dazzle the stars.

Everyone who cares for his art seeks the essence of his own technique.

Cinema's unstrung nerves need a rigorous system of precise movement.

The meter, tempo, and type of movement, as well as its precise location with respect to the axes of a shot's coordinates and perhaps to the axes of universal coordinates (the three dimensions + the fourth—time), should be studied and taken into account by each creator in the field of cinema.

Radical necessity, precision, and speed are the three components of movement worth filming and screening.

The geometrical extract of movement through an exciting succession of images is what's required of montage.

Kinosheshto is the art of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the properties of the material and the internal rhythm of each object.

Intervals (the transitions from one movement to another) are the material, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movements themselves. It is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to a kinetic resolution.

montage. In Russian a single word conveys notions that in English are rendered by the two words *montage* and *editing*. In most instances, one English meaning has been chosen according to the context.—trans.

material. This term is frequently used by Vertov and others to mean film footage, its constructivist connotation is significant with respect to Vertov's theory and practice.—trans.

The organization of movement is the organization of its elements, or its intervals, into phrases.

In each phrase there is a rise, a high point, and a falling off (expressed in varying degrees) of movement.

A composition is made of phrases, just as a phrase is made of intervals of movement.

A kinok who has conceived a film epic or fragment should be able to jot it down with precision so as to give it life on the screen, should favorable technical conditions be present.

The most complete scenario cannot, of course, replace these notes, just as a libretto does not replace pantomime, just as literary accounts of Scriabin's compositions do not convey any notion of his music.

To represent a dynamic study on a sheet of paper, we need graphic symbols of movement.

WE are in search of the film scale.

WE fall, we rise . . . together with the rhythm of movements—slowed and accelerated,

running from us, past us, toward us,

in a circle, or straight line, or ellipse,

to the right and left, with plus and minus signs,

movements bend, straighten, divide, break apart,

multiply, shooting noiselessly through space.

Cinema is, as well, the *art of inventing movements* of things in space in response to the demands of science; it embodies the

inventor's dream—be he scholar, artist, engineer, or carpenter; it is the realization by Kinosheshtvo of that which cannot be realized in life.

Drawings in motion. Blueprints in motion. Plans for the future. The theory of relativity on the screen.

WE greet the ordered fantasy of movement.

Our eyes, spinning like propellers, take off into the future on the wings of hypothesis.

WE believe that the time is at hand when we shall be able to hurl into space the hurricanes of movement, reined in by our tactical lassoes.

Hurrah for dynamic geometry, the race of points, lines, planes, volumes.

Hurrah for the poetry of machines, propelled and driving, the poetry of levers, wheels, and wings of steel, the iron cry of movements, the blinding grimaces of red-hot streams.

The Fifth Issue of *Kinopravda*

Because of the framework and the requirements imposed on *Kinopravda*, the screen newspaper, the creative spirit of its newsreel director is bound hand and foot.

With one half confined to political events, it's forced to devote the other half to commercial profit.

Neither political filming nor filming done under economic pressure takes into account the cinematic interest of a subject, and this necessarily results in the recording of static moments together with the dynamic—which is inadmissible in the poetry of movement.

Despite the above-mentioned conditions . . . *Kinopravda* no. 5, like the preceding issues, gradually manages to break the old newsreel routines, controlling the images and rhythms of each separate theme and anxiously seeking out the overall pulse of the *Kinovedelia*, the rhythmic unity of heterogeneous themes.

The link between the separate rhythms introduced into issue no. 5 (a man absorbed in reading *Kinopravda*) is merely a temporary device to soothe the viewer's eye.

The man sees the testimony of witnesses at the trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries; becomes acquainted with a People's Commissariat train in Siberia; is gently transported to health resorts in the Caucasus; and finally, half out of his chair, follows intently the quick, clear pulse of "The First Derby," with which the issue concludes.

Step by step, deep-rooted methods of shooting and editing are changing in favor of the revelation of pure movement, the celebration of movement on the screen.

Great attention is paid to the design of titles (since titles are unavoidable for the present).

Kinopravda. ("Kino-truth.") A film journal directed by Vertov, named after the newspaper founded by Lenin. Each edition treated two or three subjects. Initiated by Goskino in June 1922, twenty-three irregularly appearing issues were made before its disappearance in 1925. With this journal, Vertov's theoretical position began to become known. The journal served as a laboratory for the development of Vertov's filmic vocabulary and as a stock of footage for use in later feature-length work—ed.

Kinonedelia. ("Kino-week.") A weekly newsreel journal, scripted and directed by Vertov, begun in June 1918 and issued through December 1919. A scarcity of film stock occasioned by an embargo organized by anti-Soviet European film monopolies resulted in irregular production. Fourteen issues were completed—trans. and ed.

The newsreel should feed on reality, and, given the slightest economic freedom, it will immediately open wide its eyes, triumph as well in art (whose creative growth is now stronger than ever before), and be supported by the broad, gesticulating throng of workers, bringing that throng closer to the iron rhythm of advancing—crawling, driven, and flying—machines.

Hundreds of thousands, millions of citizens of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic]—uneducated or simply hiding from the noisy advance of "today"—will have to sharpen their senses before the shining screen of Cinema.

1922

Kinoks: A Revolution

(From an *Appeal at the Beginning of 1922*)

You—filmmakers, you directors and artists with nothing to do, all you confused cameramen and writers scattered throughout the world,

You—theater audiences, patient as mules beneath the burden of the emotional experiences offered you,

You—impatient proprietors of theaters not yet bankrupt, greedily snatching at leftovers from the German, or more rarely, the American table—

You—exhausted by memories, await with dreamy sighs the moon of some new six-act production . . . (nervous folk are requested to shut their eyes).

You're waiting for something that will not come; the wait is pointless.

A friendly warning:
 Don't hide your heads like ostriches.
 Raise your eyes,
 Look around you—
 There!
 It's obvious to me
 as to any child
 The inards,
 The guts of strong sensations

are tumbling out
of cinema's belly,
ripped open on the reel of revolution,
See them dragging along,
leaving a bloody trail on the earth
that quivers with horror and disgust.
It's all over.

(From a Stenographic Record) To the Council of Three—Dziga Vertov

Psychological, detective, satirical, travel film—it doesn't matter what kind—if we cut out all the themes, leaving only the captions, we get the picture's literary skeleton. We can shoot other themes to go with that literary skeleton—realist, symbolist, expressionist—what have you. This situation will not change. The correlation is the same: a literary skeleton plus film-illustrations—such, almost without exception, are all films, ours and those from abroad.

The Council of Three. A policy-making group drawn from the knicks, Vertov's staff of collaborators. The Council articulated Vertov's projects and imperatives through published statements and manifestos. The group is generally assumed to have been composed of Vertov, Mikhail Kaufman, his chief cameraman and brother, and Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov's editor and wife. Georges Sadoul, in his *Histoire générale du cinéma. L'art muet*, vol. 5 (Paris: Editions Denoel, 1975), lists in addition the painter, Belyaev—ed.

Elizaveta Svilova (1900-1976), Vertov's wife and lifelong collaborator, began her career in film as a photographic printer and editor for Pathé Frères in Moscow, also working for other foreign film companies represented in Tsarist Russia. In 1919 she participated in the nationalization of the film industry and in 1921 began work on a long-term project of collecting all available film material on Lenin. From the results of the first year's research she made a compilation film, released in 1922 in celebration of the anniversary of Lenin's birth as a special issue of the Goskino Kalendar series. From 1922 to 1924, she was chief editor for Goskino, the state film production agency. Svilova was a creative collaborator and chief editor for some of Vertov's major work. She acted as co-director on four of Vertov's later films, made during the 1920s. She worked as Assistant Director in the Mezhdunarodnyy Studios at VUFKU, and finally, from 1940 to 1941, acted as the director of SovuzkinoKhronika. In 1944 and 1945 she directed the Central State Studio of Documentary Film. Her filmography lists a great many directorial assignments. She is an outstanding example of the interesting development and realization of careers for women in a cinematic tradition which was grounded in an aesthetically innovative and politically revolutionary era—ed.

(From an Appeal of January 20, 1923) To Cinematographers—The Council of Three

Five seething years of universal daring have passed through you and gone, leaving no trace. You keep pre-revolutionary "artistic" models hanging like ikons within you, and it is to them alone that your inner piety has been directed. Foreign countries support you in your errors, sending to a renewed Russia the imperishable relics of film-drama done up in splendid, technical sauce.

Spring arrives. The film-factories are expected to resume work. The Council of Three observes with unconcealed regret film production workers leaving through literary texts in search of suitable dramatizations. Names of theatrical dramas and epics proposed for adaptation are already in the air. In the Ukraine, and here in Moscow, several pictures with all the signs of impotence are already in production.

A strong technological lag: a loss of active thinking, lost during a period of idleness; an orientation toward the six-act psychodrama—i.e., an orientation toward what's behind you—all these factors doom each attempt [at adaptation] to failure. Cinema's system is poisoned with the terrible toxin of routine. We demand the opportunity to test the antidote we've found upon its dying body. We ask the unbelievers to see for themselves: we agree to test our medicine beforehand on "guinea pigs"—film études.

The Resolution of the Council of Three, April 10, 1923

The situation on the film front must be considered inauspicious. As was to be expected, the first new Russian productions shown recall the old "artistic" models just as Nepmen recall the old bourgeoisie.

"artistic". In Russian, the fictional, narrative film is designated *in contrast to documentary*—trans. **Nepmen, NEP.** NEP is the acronym of the New Economic Policy instituted in 1921 after the period of War Communism with a view to stimulating the economy of the Soviet Union. The policy's emphasis on market demand and market requirements involved making concessions to private agriculture and reordering many aspects of the country's industrialization. It created, as well, a class of middlemen to organize the exchange between urban and village production and consumption. The "Nepman's" speculative ventures involving quick, high profits are often alluded to by Vertov in his castigation of the effects of a revival of bourgeois norms and practices within the film industry—ed.

The repertoire planned for summer production, both here and in the Ukraine, does not inspire the least confidence.

The proposals for broad experimental work have been passed over.

All efforts, sighs, tears, and expectations, all prayers—are directed toward it—the six-act film-drama.

Therefore the Council of Three without waiting for the Kinoks to be assigned work and ignoring the latter's desire to realize their own projects, are temporarily disregarding authorship rights and resolve to immediately publish for general use the common principles and slogans of the future revolution-through-newsreel; for which purpose, first and foremost, Kinok Dziga Vertov is directed, in accordance with party discipline, to publish certain excerpts from the pamphlet *Kinoks: A Revolution*, which shall sufficiently clarify the nature of that revolution.

The Council of Three

In fulfillment of the resolution of the Council of Three on April 10 of this year, I am publishing the following excerpts:

Upon observing the films that have arrived from America and the West and taking into account available information on work and artistic experimentation at home and abroad, I arrive at the following conclusion:

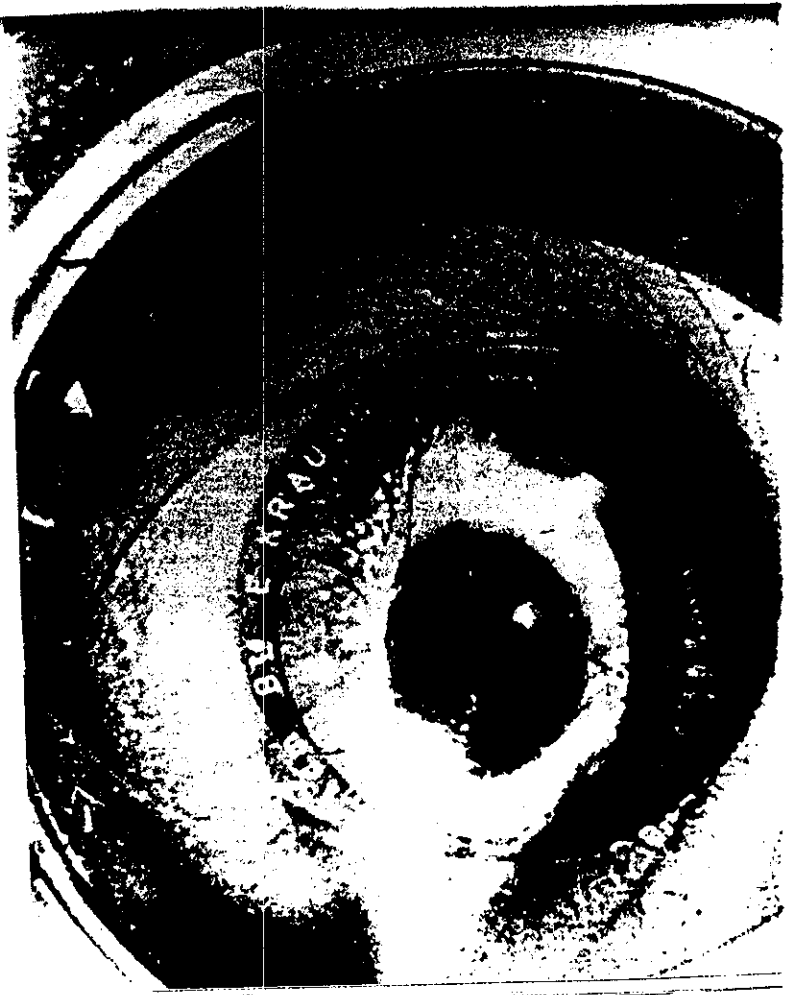
The death sentence passed in 1919 by the Kinoks on all films, with no exceptions, holds for the present as well. The most scrupulous examination does not reveal a single film, a single artistic experiment, properly directed to the emancipation of the camera, which is reduced to a state of pitiable slavery, of subordination to the imperfections and the shortsightedness of the human eye.

We do not object to cinema's undermining of literature and the theater; we wholly approve of the use of cinema in every branch of knowledge, but we define these functions as accessory, as secondary offshoots of cinema.

The main and essential thing is:

The sensory exploration of the world through film.

We therefore take as the point of departure the use of the



The Man with a Movie Camera

camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye, for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills space.

The kino-eye lives and moves in time and space; it gathers and records impressions in a manner wholly different from that of the human eye. The position of our bodies while observing or our perception of a certain number of features of a visual phenomenon in a given instant are by no means obligatory limitations for the camera which, since it is perfected, perceives more and better.

We cannot improve the making of our eyes, but we can endlessly perfect the camera.

Until now many a cameraman has been criticized for having filmed a running horse moving with unnatural slowness on the screen (rapid cranking of the camera)—or for the opposite, a tractor plowing a field too swiftly (slow cranking of the camera), and the like.

These are chance occurrences, of course, but we are preparing a system, a deliberate system of such occurrences: a system of

seeming irregularities to investigate and organize phenomena.

Until now, we have violated the movie camera and forced it to copy the work of our eye. And the better the copy, the better the shooting was thought to be. Starting today we are liberating the camera and making it work in the opposite direction—away from copying.

The weakness of the human eye is manifest. We affirm the kino-eye, discovering within the chaos of movement the result of the kino-eye's own movement; we affirm the kino-eye with its own dimensions of time and space, growing in strength and potential to the point of self-affirmation.

2

I make the viewer see in the manner best suited to my presentation of this or that visual phenomenon. The eye submits to the will of the camera and is directed by it to those successive points of the action that, most succinctly and vividly, bring the film phrase to the height or depth of resolution.

Example: shooting a boxing match, not from the point of view of a spectator present, but shooting the successive movements (the blows) of the contenders.

Example: the filming of a group of dancers, not from the point of view of a spectator sitting in the auditorium with a ballet on the stage before him.

After all, the spectator at a ballet follows, in confusion, now the combined group of dancers, now random individual figures, now someone's legs—a series of scattered perceptions, different for each spectator.

One can't present this to the film viewer. A system of successive movements requires the filming of dancers or boxers in the order of their actions, one after another . . . by forceful transfer of the viewer's eye to the successive details that must be seen.

The camera "carries" the film viewer's eyes from arms to legs, from legs to eyes and so on, in the most advantageous sequence, and organizes the details into an orderly montage study.

3

You're walking down a Chicago street today in 1923, but I make you greet Comrade Volodarsky, walking down a Petrograd street in

1918, and he returns your greeting.

Another example: the coffins of national heroes are lowered into the grave (shot in Astrakhan in 1918); the grave is filled in (Kronstadt, 1921); cannon salute (Petrograd, 1920); memorial service, hats are removed (Moscow, 1922)—such things go together, even with thankless footage not specifically shot for this purpose (cf. *Kinopravda* no. 13). The montage of crowds and of machines greeting Comrade Lenin (*Kinopravda* no. 14), filmed in different places at different times, belongs to this category.

I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I've created today, in an extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by me in various parts of the world. In bringing together shots of walls and details, I've managed to arrange them in an order that is pleasing and to construct with intervals, correctly, a film-phrase which is the room.

I am kino-eye. I create a man more perfect than Adam. I create thousands of different people in accordance with preliminary blueprints and diagrams of different kinds.

I am kino-eye.

From one person I take the hands, the strongest and most dexterous; from another I take the legs, the swiftest and most shapely; from a third, the most beautiful and expressive head—and through montage I create a new, perfect man.

I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it.

Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility. I am in constant motion. I draw near, then away from objects. I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse. I plunge full speed into a crowd. I outstrip running soldiers. I fall on my back. I ascend with an airplane. I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now I, a camera, film myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations.

Freed from the rule of sixteen-seventeen frames per second,



Mikhail Kauffman

free of the limits of time and space. I put together any given points in the universe, no matter where I've recorded them.

My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you.

Once more let us agree: the eye and the ear. The ear does not

spy, the eye does not eavesdrop

Separation of functions

Radio-ear—the montage "I hear!"

Kino-eye—the montage "I see!"

There you have it, citizens, for the first time: instead of music,

painting, theater, cinematography, and other castrated outpourings.

Within the chaos of movements, turning past, away, running into and colliding—the eye, all by itself, enters life.

A day of visual impressions has passed. How is one to construct the impressions of the day into an effective whole, a visual study? If one films everything the eye has seen, the result, of course, will be a jumble. If one skillfully edits what's been photographed, the result will

Mikhail Kauffman

be clearer. If one scraps bothersome waste, it will be better still. One obtains an organized memo of the ordinary eye's impressions.

The mechanical eye, the camera, rejecting the human eye as crude sheet, gropes its way through the chaos of visual events, letting itself be drawn or repelled by movement, probing, as it goes, the path of its own movement. It experiments, distending time, dissecting movement, or, in contrary fashion, absorbing time within itself, swallowing years, thus schematizing processes of long duration inaccessible to the normal eye.

Aiding the machine-eye is the knock-pilot, who not only controls the camera's movements, but entrusts himself to it during experiments in space. And at a later time the knock-engineer, with remote control of cameras.

The result of this concerted action of the liberated and perfected camera and the strategic brain of man directing, observing, and gauging—the presentation of even the most ordinary things will take on an exceptionally fresh and interesting aspect.

How many people, starved for spectacles, are wearing away the seats of their pants in theaters?

They flee from the humdrum, from the "prose" of life. And mean-

while the theater is almost always just a lousy imitation of that same life, plus an idiotic conglomerate of balletic affectation, musical squeaks, tricks of lighting, stage sets (from daubs to constructivism), and occasionally the work of a talented writer distorted by that nonsense. Certain masters of the theater are destroying the theater from within, shattering old forms, and advancing new slogans for theatrical work; to further their rescue they've enlisted biomechanics (in itself a worthy pursuit), and cinema (honor and glory to it), and writers (not bad in themselves), and constructions (there are some good ones), and automobiles (how can one not admire the automobile?), and gunfire (something dangerous and impressive at the front); and by and large not a damned thing comes of it.

Theater and nothing more.

Not only is this no synthesis; it's not even a legitimate mixture. And it cannot be otherwise.

We kiroks, as firm opponents of premature synthesis ("For synthesis must come at the summit of achievement!"), understand that it's pointless to mix scraps of achievement: the little ones will immediately perish from overcrowding and disorder. And in general—

The arena's small. Come out, please, into life.

This is where we work—we, the masters of vision, the organizers of visible life, armed with the omnipresent kino-eye. This is where the masters of word and sound, the most skillful editors of audible life, work. And I make bold to slip them the ubiquitous mechanical ear and megaphone—the radiotelephone

This is:
newsreel,
radio-news.

I promise to drum up a parade of kiroks on Red Square on the day when the futurists release the first issue of a radio-news montage.

Not the newsreels from Paltché or Gaumont (newspaper chronicle), not even *Kinopravda* (political newsreel), but a real kink newsreel—an impetuous survey of visual events deciphered by the camera, bits of real energy (as opposed to theater) joined through intervals into a tectonic whole by the great craft of montage.

Such structuring of the film-object enables one to develop any given theme, be it comic, tragic, one of special effects, or some other type.

It's entirely a question of the particular juxtaposition of visual details, of intervals.

The unusual flexibility of montage construction enables one to introduce into a film study any given motif—political, economic, or other. And therefore:

- As of now, neither psychological nor detective dramas are needed in cinema,
- As of now, theatrical productions transferred to film are no longer needed,
- As of now, neither Dostoyevsky nor Nat Pinkerton are to be put on the screen.
- Everything is included in the new conception of the newsreel. Into the jumble of life resolutely enter:
 1. kino-eye, challenging the human eye's visual representation of the world and offering its own "I see," and
 2. the kink-editor, organizing the minutes of the life-structure seen *this way* for the first time.

1923

On the Organization of a Film Experiment Station

The film office and editorial staff of *Kinopravda* are being eliminated. A small nucleus of workers, united by inner discipline, is being formed—the first film experiment station.

By organized work, the agency aims to break through the front of despair caused by idleness, among other factors, if only on one sector of this front—that of the newsreel and of experimentation. In addition, experimentation is also to be regarded as a kind of ferment that involves interested colleagues in intensive cooperation—a method that is tried and true.

Prospects for the future (a high objective): an institute for continuous invention and perfection, a stake in the worldwide quality of production, the cinema-lighthouse of the USSR.

Let those inclined to smile take note: the higher the objective, the

Consciousness or the Subconscious

(From a kinok proclamation)

We oppose the collusion of the "director-as-magician" and a bewitched public.
 Only consciousness can fight the sway of magic in all its forms.
 Only consciousness can form a man of firm opinion, firm conviction.
 We need conscious men, not an unconscious mass submissive to any passing suggestion.
 Long live the class consciousness of the healthy with eyes and ears to see and hear with!

Away with the fragrant veil of kisses, murders, doves, and sleight-of-hand!

Long live the class vision!

Long live kino-eye!

III

The Basis of Kino-Eye

The establishment of a visual (kino-eye) and auditory (radio-ear) class bond between the proletariats of all nations and kinks on a platform of the communist decoding of world relations.

The decoding of life as it is:
 Influence of facts upon workers' consciousness.
 Influence of facts, not acting, dance, or verse.
 Relegation of so-called art—to the periphery of consciousness.
 Placing of society's economic structure at the center of attention.
 Instead of surrogates for life (theatrical presentations, film-drama, etc.) carefully selected, recorded, and organized facts (major or minor) from the lives of the workers themselves as well as from those of their class enemies.

From a Talk by a Group Leader

Through this visit we learned how films are made. From production to screening, the fellows followed the making of an artistic drama. They saw for themselves a studio, actors, and directors. They saw the construction of films by kinoks; and as a result, for the seventh anniversary of the October Revolution, the group put up a huge poster on their car: "Down with actors and artistic dramas—"

give us a new cinema!" And in bracket: eleven and ninety-third detachments.
 Young Pioneers."

The group has about fifteen active members. Among a number of girls received on the detachment's anniversary was one from the kinoks: a real still camera with all the accessories. There was no end to our joy.

Fight now the fellows are putting out a weekly newspaper of their own, *Photo-eye*, consisting of their own photographs (every photograph, even those that have not turned out, is included). Through this newspaper they can gauge their progress in photography, and, in addition, illuminate all the main events in their lives each week.

The detachment corresponds with the countryside and with pioneers in other cities of the Soviet Union—Rybinsk, Voronezh, Barnaul, etc.—and they feel it's their duty to tell everyone about their group and about *Photo-eye*.

In order to review our work a diary is kept by each in turn. Certain interesting moments in the life of the group are described in it.

Provisional Instructions to Kino-Eye Groups*1. Introduction*

Our eye sees very poorly and very little—and so men conceived of the microscope in order to see invisible phenomena, and they discovered the telescope in order to see and explore distant, unknown worlds. The movie camera was invented in order to penetrate deeper into the visible world, to explore and record visual phenomena, so that we do not forget what happens and what the future must take into account.

But the camera experienced a misfortune. It was invented at a time when there was no single country in which capital was not in power. The bourgeoisie's hellish idea consisted of using the new toy to entertain the masses, or rather to divert the workers' attention from their basic aim: the struggle against their masters. Under the

Young Pioneers. The Young Pioneers were established by the fifth Komsomol Congress in 1922 for children between the ages of ten and fourteen. The organization stressed collective action rather than individual incentive and competition. In Vertov's *Kinoglaz* of 1924, members are active in campaigns for price control, the elimination of alcoholism, and in other aspects of public education—ed.



Mikhail Kaufman

electric narcotic of the movie theaters, the more or less starving proletariat, the jobless, unenclosed its iron fist and unwillingly submitted to the corrupting influence of the masters' cinema. The theater is expensive and seats are few. And so the masters force the camera to disseminate theatrical productions that show us how the bourgeoisie love, how they suffer, how they "care for" their workers, and how these higher beings, the aristocracy, differ from lower ones (workers, peasants, etc.)

In prerevolutionary Russia the masters' cinema played a precisely similar role. After the October Revolution the cinema was faced with the difficult task of adapting itself to the new life. Actors who had played Tsarist civil servants began to play workers; those who had played ladies of the court are now grinning in Soviet style. Few of us yet realize, however, that all this grinning remains, in many respects, within the framework of bourgeois technique and theatrical

form. We know many enemies of the contemporary theater who are at the same time passionate admirers of cinema in its present form. Few people see clearly as yet that nontheatrical cinema (with the exception of newsreel and some scientific films) does not exist.

Every theatrical presentation, every motion picture is constructed in exactly the same way: a playwright or scriptwriter, then a director or film director, then actors, rehearsals, sets, and the presentation to the public. The essential thing in theater is acting, and so every *motion picture constructed upon a scenario and acting is a theatrical presentation*, and that is why there are no differences between the productions by directors of different nuances.

All of this, both in whole and in part, applies to theater regardless of its trend and direction, regardless of its relationship to theater as such. *All of this lies outside the genuine purpose of the movie camera—the exploration of the phenomena of life.*

Kinopravda has clearly shown that it is possible to work outside theater and in step with the revolution. *Kino-eye* is continuing the work, begun by *kinopravda*, of creating *Red Soviet cinema*.

2. The Work of Kino-Eye

On the basis of reports by film-observers a plan for the orientation and offensive of the movie camera in life's ever-changing environment is being worked out by the Council of Kino-Eye. The work of the movie camera is reminiscent of the work of the agents of the GPU who do not know what lies ahead, but have a definite assignment: to separate out and bring to light a particular issue, a particular affair.

1. The kink-observer closely watches the environment and the people around him and tries to connect separate, isolated phenomena according to generalized or distinctive characteristics. The kink-observer is assigned a theme by the leader.
2. The group leader or film [reconnaissance] scout distributes themes to the observers and, in the beginning, helps each observer to summarize his observations. When the leader has collected all the summaries, he in turn classifies them and rearranges the individual data until a sufficiently clear construction of the theme is achieved.

Themes for initial observation can be split into roughly three categories:

- a. *Observation of a place* (for example, a village reading room, a cooperative)
- b. *Observation of a person or object in motion* (examples: your father, a Young Pioneer, a postman, a streetcar, etc.)
- c. *Observation of a theme irrespective of particular persons or places* (examples: water, bread, footwear, fathers and children, city and country, tears, laughter, etc.)

The group leader must teach them to use a camera (later, a movie camera) in order to photograph the more striking moments of observation for a bulletin-board newspaper.

A bulletin-board newspaper is issued monthly or every two weeks and uses photographs to illustrate the life of a factory, plant, or village; it participates in campaigns, reveals surrounding life as fully as possible, agitates, propagandizes, and organizes. The group leader submits his work for approval by the Goskino cell of the Red *kinoks* and is under the immediate supervision of the Council of Kino-Eye.

3. The *Council of Kino-Eye* heads the entire organization. It is made up of one representative from each group of kinok-observers, one representative of the unorganized kinoks, and, provisionally, three representatives of the kinok production workers. In its practical, everyday work the Council of Kino-Eye relies upon a technical staff—the Goskino cell of Red kinoks.

The Goskino kinoks' cell should be regarded as one of the factories in which the raw material supplied by kinok-observers is made into film-objects.

The Goskino kinoks' cell should also be regarded as an educational, model workshop through which Young Pioneer and Komsomol film groups will be drawn into production work. Specifically, all groups of kinok-observers will be drawn

into the production of future kino-eye series. They will be the author-creators of all subsequent film-objects.

This departure from authorship by one person or a group of persons to mass authorship will, in our view, accelerate the destruction of bourgeois, artistic cinema and its attributes: the poser-actor, fairy-tale script, those costly toys—sets, and the director—high priest.

3. Very Simple Slogans

1. Film-drama is the opium of the people.
2. Down with the immortal kings and queens of the screen! Long live the ordinary mortal, filmed in life at his daily tasks!
3. Down with the bourgeois fairy-tale script! Long live life as it is!
4. Film-drama and religion are deadly weapons in the hands of the capitalists. By showing our revolutionary way of life, we will wrest that weapon from the enemy's hands.
5. The contemporary artistic drama is a vestige of the old world. It is an attempt to pour our revolutionary reality into bourgeois molds.
6. Down with the staging of everyday life! Film us as we are.
7. The scenario is a fairy tale invented for us by a writer. We live our own lives, and we do not submit to anyone's fictions.
8. Each of us does his task in life and does not prevent anyone else from working. The film workers' task is to film us so as not to interfere with our work.
9. Long live the kino-eye of the proletarian revolution!

4. The Kinoks and Editing

By editing, artistic cinema usually means the *splicing together of individual filmed scenes* according to a scenario, worked out to a greater or lesser extent by the director.

The kinoks attribute a completely different significance to editing and regard it as the *organization of the visible world*. The kinoks distinguish among:

1. *Editing during observation*—orienting the unaided eye at any place, any time.
 2. *Editing after observation*—mentally organizing what has been seen, according to characteristic features.
 3. *Editing during filming*—orienting the aided eye of the movie camera in the place inspected in step 1. Adjusting for the somewhat changed conditions of filming.
 4. *Editing after filming*—roughly organizing the footage according to characteristic features. Looking for the montage fragments that are lacking.
 5. *Gauging by sight (hunting for montage fragments)*—instantaneous orienting in any visual environment so as to capture the essential link shots. Exceptional attentiveness. A military rule: gauging by sight, speed, attack.
 6. *The final editing*—revealing minor, concealed themes together with the major ones. Reorganizing all the footage into the best sequence. Bringing out the core of the film-object. Coordinating similar elements, and finally, numerically calculating the montage groupings.
- When filming under conditions which do not permit preliminary observation—as in shadowing with a movie camera or filming unobserved—the first two steps drop away and the third or fifth step comes to the fore.
- When filming short moments, or in rush filming, the combining of several steps is possible.
- In all other instances, when filming one or several themes, all the steps are carried out and the editing is uninterrupted, *beginning with the initial observation and ending with the finished film-object*.

5. The Kinoks and the Scenario

It is entirely appropriate to mention the script here. Once added to the above-mentioned editing system, a literary scenario immediately cancels its meaning and significance. Because our objects are

constructed by editing, by organizing the footage of everyday life, unlike artistic dramas that are constructed by the writer's pen. Does this mean that we work haphazardly, without thought or plan? Nothing of the kind.

If, however, we compare our *preliminary plan* to the plan of a commission that sets out, let us say, to investigate the living quarters of the unemployed, then we must compare the scenario to a short story of that investigation *written before* the investigation has taken place.

How do artistic cinema and the kinoks each proceed in the present case?

The kinoks organize a film-object on the basis of the factual film-data of the investigation.

After polishing up a scenario, *film directors* will shoot some entertaining film-illustrations to go with it: a couple of kisses, a few tears, a murder, moonlit clouds rushing above, and a dove. At the end they write "Long live . . ." and it all ends with "The Internationale."

Such, with minor changes, are all film-art-agitdramas. When a picture ends with "The Internationale," the censor usually pass it, but the viewers always feel a bit uneasy, hearing the proletarian hymn in such a bourgeois context.

A scenario is the invention of an individual or a group of people; it is a short story that these people desire to transfer to the screen.

We do not consider this desire criminal, but presenting this sort of work as cinema's main objective, ousting real film-objects with these kittle film short stories, and suppressing all the movie camera's remarkable possibilities in worship of the god of art-drama—this we cannot understand and do not, of course, accept.

We have not come to cinema in order to feed fairy tales to the Nepmen and Nepwomen lounging in the loges of our first-class movie theaters.

We are not tearing down artistic cinema in order to soothe and amuse the consciousness of the working masses with new rattles. We have come to serve a particular class, the workers and peasants not yet caught in the sweet web of art-dramas.

We have come to show the world as it is, and to explain to the worker the bourgeois structure of the world.

We want to bring clarity into the worker's awareness of the phenomena concerning him and surrounding him. To give everyone working behind a plow or a machine the opportunity to see his



Top Five with a Movie Camera

Footnote at work with him simultaneously in different parts of the world and to see all his enemies, the exploiters.

We are taking our first steps in cinema, and that is why we are called Kinok's. Existing cinema, as a commercial affair, like cinema in a sphere of art, has nothing in common with our work.

I even in technique we only partially overlap with so-called artistic cinema, since the goals we have set for ourselves require a different technical approach.

We have absolutely no need of huge studios or massive sets, just as we have no need for "mighty" film directors, "great" actors, and "amazing," photogenic women.

On the other hand, we must have:

- 1. quick means of transport;
- 2. more sensitive film.

- 3. small, lightweight, hand-held cameras,
- 4. lighting equipment that is equally lightweight,
- 5. a staff of lightning-fast film reporters,
- 6. an army of kinok-observers

In our organization we distinguish amongst:

- 1. kinok-observers,
- 2. kinok-cameramen,
- 3. kinok-constructors (designers),
- 4. kinok-editors (women and men),
- 5. kinok laboratory assistants

We teach our methods of cinema work only to Komsomols and Young Pioneers; we pass on our skill and our technical experience to the rising generation of young workers in whom we place our trust.

We venture to assure both respectable and not-so-respectable film directors that the cinema revolution is only beginning.

We will hold out without yielding a single position until the iron shift of young people eventually arrives, and then, all together, we will advance, over the head of bourgeois art-cinema, toward the communist October of the whole Soviet Union, of the whole world!

6. Kino-Five on the First Reorganization

Part One of the Film-object Life Caught Unawares

The

editing of *Kinodiaz*, Part One, was done according to the editing scheme set forth in an earlier section of the present article. In Part One we note the following themes:

- 1. The "new" and the "old"
- 2. Children and grown-ups.
- 3. The cooperative system and the market place
- 4. City and country
- 5. The theme of bread
- 6. The theme of meat
- 7. A large theme: home-brew—cards—beer—study business: "Ernakovka"—cocaine—hipercubists—madness—death. A theme to which I find it difficult to

"Ernakovka." A hostel on Kalanchukovsky Street in Moscow and