

REWIND 007

Enrico Ghezzi

I Thought I Saw
a Pussy-cat

Fondazione Antonio Ratti
Archive 02.12.2007

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Enrico Ghezzi: Good evening. The images you are seeing now are literally extraordinary. They are the first images of cinema history as we know it. It wasn't 1895, but 1894, a year before the first public screening by the Lumière brothers. I think it is no coincidence that the Lumière's first images were taken repeatedly, five, six, seven times from different angles: the famous Workers Leaving the Factory. Now these are the even more famous images of the Train Arrival. If anyone of you has read something about the beginnings of cinema, you will certainly remember how cinema has often been associated with the image of the train, with its somewhat futuristic quality, the speed, the machine, the fear of seeing the train approaching. However, the images show a train approaching the platform at a very slow pace. I have always found quite curious and fascinating the fact that this train – futuristically depicted as the cinema's destiny, the machine, the speed – approaches the platform so slowly, almost sadly, entering the station to stop. As if cinema, from its beginning, had been still. And I find it even more fascinating that the first image ever shot was that of the workers leaving the factory. An exiting we are still somehow living – or dying – today. We do not really know what it is, but for sure that is what was happening to the Lumière's factory workers, filmed while they were leaving work. I am surely stretching the meaning of this scene, yet the first ever filmed images of cinema as we know it today – the Lumière's cinema, created for the big screen and a paying audience – are images of workers leaving a factory, the same factory where images were produced. Workers coming out of work: a Fourth, Fifth Estate, a sort of post-Pellizza da Volpedo. These workers situate themselves where we are now: off-screen. They leave their work and step into a new work: the show, what we today could call the reality show. But this reality show is the planet's life itself, watching itself over and over again every moment and that could even watch itself implode, explode, and burn. It could watch itself while it happens. Why did I choose such a comic title I thought I saw a pussy-cat, the famous line Tweety says when Sylvester the Cat is around? I thought I saw a pussy-cat is about the passing of something that should be fast and flashing but that is far too evident. But irony aside, I think that I thought I saw a pussy-cat could be one of the possible meanings of cinema, of the double imposture of cinema.

The first is that of the imposture of movement. We all know that the movement of cinematographic film is the movement of film and not the image of movement.

The image of movement is paradoxically produced by us – the subjects supposed to be watching. Even if cinema gives us a much more ironically tragic image, because it is more likely that our role as subjects is to be machines working within a frame interval, as it happens in cinema. An extremely intensified frame interval. We perceive as continuous what cinema creates with just 24 frames per second, which is not a very high frequency. But as we know, it is already enough to make us believe that the movement is continuous, since it is subliminal compared to our perception. We can't see, we can't perceive, we can't fix that single frame, that twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth (on television) of a second. After years of editing I was able to understand if there was one more or one less frame. It's just sensitivity, nothing to be proud of. It means that we are more similar to machines than we think. Anyway, this little scam of cinema, the sequence of fixed frames creating movement in the intensification, is nothing compared to the greatest scam of cinema, that of making us see, the illusion of being able to open up an infinite, unleashed, prodigious visibility. Cinema actually opens an absolute realm of invisibility, almost an anguish of invisibility, connected to a plurality of points of view, almost an explosion of points of view, not necessarily depending on an optical device. The optical become essential later, systematized between the early twentieth century, with The Lord Chandos Letter by Hofmannsthal, and Jorge Luis Borges' Funes the Memorious, a very simple tale about Ireneo Funes who loses his mind living like an intellectual, like Lord Chandos in the sublime letter written by Von Hofmannsthal. Here the meaning of modernity translates in being sentenced to experiencing in every moment the immense plurality of points of view, of visual and sensorial experiences that can be perceived in every spatial situation. In a much simpler way, in Borges' short story, Ireneo Funes goes crazy because he can't help perceiving every single leaf on a tree, every single rustling. It would be as if instead of looking at one of the faces I can see here in the front row, I would be able to perceive all the faces in this room with the same intensity. It would be a blow in the face. I would be dazzled by the intensity. And yet, this is the experience of modernity, much before the introduction of any optic device, be it photographic or cinematographic. Hegel identified it in his Aesthetics in the early 1830s, and so did Balzac to some extent – especially in his The Unknown Masterpiece: a short story

about an old-time painter – and Dickens, the great detector and preceptor of modernity, the author who made a quantum leap into nineteenth-century narrative, the one who most felt industrial society (automatically leading to industrial culture). With Dickens' *Oliver Twist* or any other of his stories, for the first time in the history of humanity and literature, the plot takes place in an arbitrary setting: we have the clear feeling that the same story could be happening in ten, fifteen other neighborhoods in London. The author's choice of setting was a random choice. That same story was happening everywhere in the city, everywhere in England, everywhere in the relentlessly triumphing industrial-capitalist society. Speaking of the train, there is a coincidence related to the Lumière brothers that has always struck me. The first line of Franz Kafka's diary in 1910 reads as follows: "The onlookers" – hence those who are watching – "become rigid when the train goes past". Words in which we read the opposite of horror, of enthusiastic fear, and rather a sense of being blocked, of being seen by film as by Medusa's eyes. There's another beautiful aphorism by Kafka about cinema from the Zürau period: "We are instructed to do the negative; the positive is already within us". While on the one hand it clearly sounds like a post-Hegelian philosophical statement, on the other it could be easily read from an optical and photographic angle. The world exists as a positive, so the only paradoxical possibility we are left with is to reinvent the negative, to find the negative, as a matrix of sorts, or perhaps unfolding a form of revenge through negative. I quote Kafka because in many of his stories there is a strong cinematographic quality. Especially one of his very short stories which I won't tell you because it would take too long although the text is just four lines long. I am talking about one of the most extraordinary stories of the twentieth century: *The Wish To Be A Red Indian*. Here, the image is narrated as something which forms and dissolves, not as something certain, as something finally able to give us a stable vision – a photographic image, so to speak – no longer a drawing depending on a subject that deforms, reinterprets it. As a great French theorist said, photographic image still represented a *doute sur l'image à cause de la présence de l'homme*, a doubt about the image because of the presence of man, who ultimately draws the image. Even in the most objective, most realistic, naturalistic painting, which Hegel wrote about in his *Aesthetics* (where it sounds like he is writing about cinema): "Pictorial technique is now so advanced and can reproduce any vision with such precision, that the subject doesn't matter anymore. There are no longer more or less important subjects. All the subjects are levelled by the technical ability of reproduction". This is literally Benjamin, this is already about cinema and photography. As I told you, this short story by Kafka is a sort of subjective, strong, intense sensory experience. It sounds like a video game. We can imagine we are riding a horse, with no saddle but with spurs. Or not, not even with spurs, and then we hear the thumping of the hooves and the other horsemen's cries. It all happens in two lines, its already taking me too long to say. But then, while all this is going on, the sound of the horse fades, there are no more reins, no more horse, no more grassland, and so it ends. The moment the image forms is the moment in which it fades. This is one of the most poignant examples in the history of image description, the description of an image as a process of simultaneous formation and dissolution. Image has always had a paradoxical status. Interestingly, since the end of the nineteenth century, the so-called image society, has certified itself on the most mysterious propositions of the world's existence: images. Images, that since the Middle Ages, from Duns Scotus to Eckhart, have always walked the fine line between being too similar (and therefore no longer an image by becoming undistinguishable from the original depicted subject – the nightmare of an excessively perfect, exact image. This is what happens today with 3D images, with virtual reality created *ex nihilo* that does not need to be filmed but that can reach the same level of evidence as if it had been recorded from reality) and being too imperfect, an image that does not resemble enough, that is too subjective and therefore is not an image. But if it becomes too accurate, again it is not considered an image any more. It is as if images, to be defined as such, required a certain level of imperfection, a certain deficiency, but not too much. This uncertain status still predominates today. It even predominates in the realm of the image I've just mentioned: the digital image, which doesn't need to be recorded or to record us.

You might have missed it, but in the images you have just seen, there was the first look into the camera in the history of cinema. I am not talking about the mindless glimpses of some of the workers walking out of the Lumière Factory or of some of the characters – all friends of the Lumière brothers – alighting a train in the perfectly fictional reconstructed scene of *L'Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*. This was a direct look into the camera by a character

walking along a street of Berlin, on the right, suddenly turning around and breaking the forth wall. Probably he didn't recognize that device that looked like a photographic camera and wanted to find out what he was being photographed with, what kind of picture it was. I believe this is the first intentional direct look into the camera in the history of film. I find it quite moving.

This is the ending of an amazing film by Alexander Sokurov. The movie starts with the lack of vision, with blindness, with darkness, with the story of an accident, a voice, the voice of the director himself. It is Sokurov's famous uninterrupted subjective camera take, a single subjective shot that somehow sums up the whole history of Russia in the interiors of the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg. The result is extraordinary because it is not a film about time at all. On the contrary time is entirely translated into a spatial image, almost like in the most ancient hypotheses of Indian philosophy, the Vedas, Akasha, with the co-presence of past, present and future in a sort of single space asteroid, a crystallized but also slightly mobile, plastic situation, a sort of gumminess where all the points that some illuminated and wise men can recall at any moment. This hypothesis later blends with other hypotheses, which are certainly not more trivial but surely more recurrent in the only theological culture of the twenty-first century – science fiction – Philip K. Dick comes to my mind. It stirs up all the theological hypothesis and obsessions, including this Nostradamic conception of the cinematic model as the model of the history of the world, humanity or of human spirit as a sort of film with an uncertain dragging, with holes, with tears, where a model can be seen, but not its visibility, since only the thinkability of this model is given. And this promise of seeing cinema is in fact denied by the current technical development. So, the most celebrated cinematic trick that occurs without even needing to know cinema, the very first desire you have the first time you watch a movie as a child – who knows how many of you have experienced it – is to imagine a movie through subjective shots, as if everything was seen and lived by us. What would it mean? An all-subjective movie should be the closest to our own experience. Our own experience would the experience of being a machine perceiving everything as subjective, with no possibility of escaping this vision. This very trivial experience is actually impossible through cinema. Optically speaking, every film privileging subjective shots is destined to fail. It immediately becomes a sort of game. Many noir movies were produced this way, like *The Lady in the Lake*, one of detective Marlowe's stories. It's also the beginning of a wonderful movie by Delmer Daves, *Dark Passage* – such a wonderful title. Here, the protagonist becomes Humphrey Bogart only after plastic surgery. What we can see before is just a series of images in subjective, starting from his escape from Saint Quentin prison. We are thus asked to share his journey subjectively. However, this identification cannot happen for trivial technical and optical reasons. Because our eye vision is much more prehensile than we can see in a film, it spans a 180-200-degree angle. We can't really perceive it as an optical machine, even though we might know it is. In the early years of modernity, between the end of eighteenth and early nineteenth century, famous French physiologist Bichat – who died very young, only thirty years old, during the French Revolution – in a note defined life as every operation and function opposed to death. He also wished his thoughts had the same agility and ability to focus as his sight. This is an extremely romantic vision, not at all physiological, but actually physiological. It seems like a sort of Freudism of vision. I mention Freud because one hundred years later, at the end of the nineteenth century, we have another extremely important moment: we have cinema on one side and Röntgen with X-Rays on the other. Freud's sublime yet unavoidably and so far artisanal attempt to read dreams as a sort of unfolding of our internal memory, a sort of recording, we don't know whether of the past or future. This is the meaning of psychoanalysis, time is abolished, there is no duration, no direction of time, there is co-presence, layers and superimpositions. Then there is sound recording. The twentieth century is considered the century of images, but in fact it was the century of recording. This is crucial. The century of recording means the century of repetition, a first in the history of humankind. This was the real discontinuity, a discontinuity brought about by cinema more than by photography. Even though today we know well that film is really an illusion of animated frames – a form of animation basically – for the first time in the more than millenary, multi-millenary history of humankind, with cinema, the world (not just a single subject) the world can see itself on repeat. It is a minimal yet incredible leap. A discontinuity created by the possibility of seeing the repetition of continuity, somehow infinitely repeatable. This had never happened before. It is not an abstruse, philosophical thing, this is exactly fifty percent of the filmic experience. The DNA of cinema contains the experience of panoramic

painters and great masters of entertainment leading to Méliès' work, in the magic of make-believe, of imagining things distant, invisible and astonishing. The wonderful.

On the other side we have Étienne-Jules Marey, the French genius far more brilliant than the Lumière brothers. They too were brilliant of course, starting from their name and their invention of cinema. But Étienne-Jules Marey, the inventor of chronophotography and of the chronophotographic gun, was the crazy pioneer, the foreteller of cinema, but not as we know it, but as we would like it to be and has not yet become. Or else there was Eadweard Muybridge – not that brilliant after all – the American photographer whose inventions are connected to his attempt to win a few bets about the movements of the discus thrower or of a trotting or galloping horse, to determine whether its hooves continuously touched the ground or if there was a moment of complete suspension. These all sound like banalities to us today, but that was the first time in the history of humankind that a movement could be watched again and again as if – this was the great leap – it was observed, as if it was seen, by a machine. It was not the hallucination of a single subject, an anticipation, an individual concentrated effort. The real difference introduced by cinema, regardless of its different levels of accuracy depending on its technical means, was that it created an additional gaze. At first there were the operators, who were soon followed by the poets, the hallucinated men, Murnau, Chaplin. But the most important aspect was the existence of a machine watching on behalf of man, a machine ensuring a sort of intermediate neutral quality – then of course there were the focal lenses, the deformations and all the technical information that had to be taken into account, predicted, reused, modified, – but nonetheless there was an automatic instance. Humankind's ability to see, the greatest mirroring of the world, of humanity and of individuals could take place through a machine, a sort of active mirror. Today, over a century later, we don't realize how much this vision that seems to us always on the edge of explosion – what I was saying about Von Hofmannsthal and Borges today can be verified by a two-year old, simply by looking around, watching television, or the digital images on whatever camera he might happen to see. He can see his own gaze. A two-year-old child today is more accustomed to images than a filmmaker, philosopher, or actor of the Twenties, Thirties, Forties and Fifties. Yet in the Forties, during the early years of World War II, in a very brief yet sublime article published in the first issue of *Cinema*, the magazine of *Idhec* (Institut des hautes études cinématographiques), Paul Valéry wrote something that even now is not only valid, but that we now somehow have the possibility to read automatically and innocently. Here, after praising the technical abilities of cinema, its possibility to cancel and reverse the direction of time, somehow making it palindromic, back and forth – divers coming out of the water, aging that can become rejuvenation, the dead coming back to life, the reversible quality of recordable time therefore space. Yet all the fascination of cinema lies in its capacity to repeat and subvert, to subvert by repeating those data of human experience, that although being observed, recognized and described, had never really been re-watched – an action also expressing a sort of anguish and casting a sort of shadow on the future. Valéry concluded his forty-line long article – written about fifty years after cinema had been first invented, so before half the time cinema has been around today – with a sublime sentence that read as follows: I know the future by heart. Meaning: the result of all this is that I already know how the story ends. Not the fairy tale that has been told hundreds and hundreds of time: my story, my everyday life story. I already know it for having seen all the options, for having seen so many stories, for having seen so many ways of walking, so many ways of breathing, so many ways of looking, so many ways of touching, so many human forms. It's a sort of exploded anthropology: *je sais l'avenir par coeur*. A sort of exhaustion, of infinite tiredness. There is a great director, Fritz Lang, who said practically the same thing.

Meanwhile, among the images I'm inflicting on you tonight, you are seeing the crucial scene of all Kubrick's cinema: the killing of HAL 9000. Actually I'm not inflicting them on you, I'm giving you images that allow you to move away from my voice and concentrate elsewhere, which seems to me something beneficial.

Fritz Lang, in an interview taken in the late fifties, early sixties with Bogdanovič I guess, recalls an experience he had already briefly mentioned in the nineteen thirties in another interview.

Meanwhile you are seeing an image I'm very fond of, because I remember seeing it when I was ten years old. I saw it one afternoon in a program called

After a fake rumble, I remembered a voice saying: "This avalanche killed the operator who was filming it". It's a piece of information that we could deduce by ourselves, even if it could have been a camera put there like a control camera, recording this kind of event. Instead it was an operator. There's also a nice color version, even if it's a video from the fifties. Then you see this Don Quixote scene and I'll maybe tell you later about it. Now, I'll go back to Fritz Lang. Fritz Lang told Bogdanovič about his surprise at the astonishment of American columnists and sociologists at the news of marriages of young couples in the United States becoming increasingly shorter. It was the early sixties and the average duration of these marriages was already much less than six or seven years. He said "I think it is a very long time, they must be saints. I remember when I was the same age of people getting married now, I was in Vienna and would go to the cinema everyday, to see up to five movies a day – they were short films, 20-minute reels – and I would take them all in, even though they were rudimentarily narrated and the actors were often the same, without manifesting any particular involvement in the characters, but I absorbed dozens of stories and many life situations – somehow like Valery said. Yet I remember that in the same years, when would come home in the evening, my parents and their friends and aunts were always talking about the play they had seen the day before, about the beautiful, even complex, bourgeois theatre, and they would talk about it for two, three days, even a week until the next performance. First they discussed the quality of the lights, the staging, the actors' skills, and then the characters, their destinies. Each destiny condensed on the theatre stage was fiercely, passionately commented, even imagining different alternative endings. My friends and I, on the other hand, would move beyond these aspects in the continuous, convulsive, compulsive vision of dozens of film stories. Although seemingly more rudimentary, cinema had a greater physical evidence thanks to close-ups, editing, and a certain artificial intensification".

This can happen today, too. I remember that one of the few things I wouldn't watch twenty years ago – I had recently moved to Rome – were soap operas, Capitol in particular, because it was on around 2pm. Once, I stayed home for three days and I finally watched it. That was how I discovered that some guys – whom I thought were friends of some girls who used to travel on my same route from Trastevere – were actually characters from this soap opera! Those girls used to talk about them with such participation, intensity, enthusiasm and contempt! I finally understood why there were so many foreign names. I already had some doubts because I began to realize that it seemed like different people all had the same friends, like a conspiracy. Names and situations were always the same: "Do you know who he ended up with? With Jane, that bitch!". Only later I realized it was a soap opera, but it sounded like they were talking about their friend's boyfriend. There was no difference in intensity. This is something that Fritz Lang genially felt and told in this interview – in a more advanced way than many sociologists – saying that in his opinion marriages were even too long, because these youths at the age of sixteen had already seen twenty amazing male or female beauty models, so the continuous comparison happens with these models or with these types of beauty. Everything gets inevitably relativized. Why should they settle on something, as if they lived in the mountains, alone in a hut? It may seem a trivial observation, but I think it is one of the most filmic observations you can make about cinema.

This scene we see in slow motion is a subjective shot. I do not think the operator stood there, dazzled, to make this recording, maybe he did try to escape. Probably at first he enjoyed the scene he was filming and then he realized that it was too fast for him to escape. I honestly do not know what he did. This image – like the one by Bogart – is one of the many images that make us doubt about who he is seeing. A large part of cinema education – especially the more sophisticated, more conscious, more critical, more historical etc. – claims to understand what an author's intervention is, the syntagma, the styles, the great deception of style, the personality and so on. Actually, all great directors are great because they have somehow caught a glimpse, intercepted the impersonality of cinema, its impersonality and involuntariness. The enormity of uncontrollable layers of meaning residing in the most banal images, from the simplest pornography to the most constructed auteur image. The author can build what he wants, but he will always have to deal with pre-existing materials. Let's take a very simple example: a farmhouse in a virgin forest and a sky with not even a cloud. The shape of the forest comes from two hundred, three hundred, five hundred,

one thousand, two thousand years of accumulation and formation, certainly not dependent on the director. Of course, one director can shoot it so to make it look exciting, playful, Rembrandtian or even simply Fordian, another may choose a frontal shoot, to make us better see the protagonist coming out of the door. But the difference is minimal in this spectrum of vision. We can think that auteur cinema is the ability to give shape to vision, but it is certainly within a very small range that we can really find a difference between an image and another, between a film and another, between a scene and another. It is significant that the greatest directors and auteurs in the history of cinema had the same perception. Let's take two cases from the early thirties and late twenties: Jean Vigo, who we can consider a lyrical pre-Rossellini, and Dziga Vertov, the brilliant Russian constructivist genius, actually a bomber who was tragically defeated by history. They were curiously united by Vertov's brother, Boris Kaufman, who worked as Jean Vigo's cameraman in *À propos de Nice*, *L'Atalante* and in all the three or four other films by Vigo. Then he emigrated to America and became a great photographer of American cinema, cameraman and director of photography. These two filmmakers used almost the same expressions in defining their role. In two separate occasions, during the twenties or thirties, they affirmed that they felt to be little more than carriers, sherpas, slaves joyfully serving a form of vision, a network of vision, a vision machine, a system that is not theirs, that is not human or in any case that is not theirs as human beings. They thought of themselves as just water carriers of this new network of visions. They were two of the most extreme filmmakers in the history of filmic image and yet they were so humble about their role. Let's not even talk about their artistic roles, let's just talk about their role as filmmakers, without even considering art or non-art. I insist on this also thinking about much less complicated filmmakers. Let's take the perhaps best-known film director among the great academic and American filmmakers: John Ford. Academic referring to an aesthetic worth acknowledged even by those who perhaps do not like Ford's stories or American cinema. John Ford always simply declared he had only one quality, the only one he cared about and that he could only define very simply as having "a good eye". I apologize in turn for the banality. A "good eye" doesn't mean illustration Visconti-style, it doesn't obviously mean awareness of image history. Ford had seen Remington, had seen the great American painters, he was not uncultured. But having "a good eye" meant finding instantly on set, a beautiful, sublime composition, beyond everyday figuration. Almost a spiritualist event and at the same time, a sort of materialist definition of this subject, telling and filming a story about Indians or three scouts crossing the desert. And he managed to shoot this set which was to become one of his favorites over the following years: Monument Valley – a name that is in itself a paradoxical, astonishing definition: the valley of monuments, or the monument of a valley, in any case a purely natural monument, eroded by wind and water, on which human intervention is minimal or inexistent. The only human intervention is the intervention of his eye, of his glance, therefore without time for reflection, virtually instinctive or in any case immediate. It imitates the immediacy of the camera – therefore of the speed of light. It imitates the immediacy of the human machine. Seeing, by definition, doesn't happen at an infinite speed, but at the speed of light, which is still difficult for us to overcome, even if each one of us could have experienced moments perhaps not necessarily mystical, but so fast that it would probably take a lifetime to narrate and explain them. If one wanted to describe the two or three times he has fallen in love, it would probably take a lifetime – and it might not be worth it. And cinema works the same way. We see lots of images passing by, and if we had to distinguish, describe and define all the images we see in the 24 frames per second and state the way they unfold, the first two minutes of the first Lumière film that we saw would take not only this evening, but would take over the whole thinking of cinema or our thinking of our life as cinema. When I say "as cinema", I don't mean it reductively, as entertainment, two-dimensional, trivialized, Hollywoodized cinema. Cinema is an extremely simplified, banal, very material model. We know how it works. By the way, the technology that was used before digital images remained unchanged for about one hundred years. Yet this mechanism – beyond the model – is in itself explosive. experienced moments perhaps not necessarily mystical, but so fast that it would probably take a lifetime to narrate and explain them. If one wanted to describe the two or three times he has fallen in love, it would probably take a lifetime – and it might not be worth it. And cinema works the same way. We see lots of images passing by, and if we had to distinguish, describe and define all the images we see in the 24 frames per second and state the way they unfold, the first two minutes of the first Lumière film that we saw would take not only this evening, but would take over the whole thinking of cinema or our thinking of our life as cinema. When I say "as cinema", I don't mean it

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But let's go back to the possibility of reproduction, of re-watching: there is a very beautiful and apparently enigmatic quote by Buñuel that says: "If cinema, if the projector had the power to reflect the intensity of the light projected by the image, the world would explode" because the world would recognize – and let's end this way – the divide created in every moment since cinematic images have existed – so the image of continuity, even if artificial and fictional – therefore the hypothesis that every moment is just a repetition (a purely crazy, paradoxical and science-fictional hypothesis, but linked to the prosaic every-day experience of recording). Suddenly, all instants can be thought of as repeatable. Above all, at these conditions, the direction of time no longer matters – every instant may already seem to us, albeit in a hallucinated way, a repetition of something. The present itself may seem to us a repetition of something.

I wonder if there are any questions, otherwise I can continue.

Question from the public: What you said about a plurality of viewpoints, made me think of surveillance camera footage and the way this material is used in Harun Faroki's works. Could you talk about him or other filmmakers?

Enrico Ghezzi: This kind of work has been made since the massive spread of surveillance cameras. Especially in Germany where besides Harun Faroki, there was a very famous fantasy horror movie, *Giant*, entirely made with surveillance camera footage. I think that this film typology has developed over the last two or three years, with a prodigious auteur movie by Éric Rohmer, *Triple Agent*, which in an apparently very simple way shows how every agent in cinema is at least triple. In one scene, there is always someone observing from inside, someone who is observed and someone who is imagining (and making us imagine) the point of view of the scene itself. Everyone in cinema, even the spectator, is at least triple. This film typology developed at the beginning of this millennium, with two films I find quite modest, if not ugly, but infinitely more intense than most of the films we see in cinemas these days: *The Lives of Others*, a German movie, and also a movie by De Niro, who is not the finest of filmmakers. This film was produced by Coppola. Actually, while watching it, I thought it was by Coppola himself, who directed *The Conversation* and *Youth Without Youth*, a wonderful movie, one of the most beautiful in the history of film. But these two films are somehow shy, not as intense as the subject. The subject is the very subject of cinema itself, the evidence that lives are always the lives of others, are being seen by others. Your own life is already the life of others. Of course, it is not necessarily like this, not everyone ends up in a reality show. We have known for years now that this could be technically possible by activating some cameras on some satellites in a certain way. We all could be in something similar to Google Earth. Then, luckily or (not) by chance, we are unable to find the Bin Ladens. Maybe the focus is on the ground, so a bush is enough to hide and everything happens by chance. I really don't know. But the non-human eye of the surveillance camera is curiously a double obsession. On the one hand, this is exactly what cinema is, the Lumière brothers' cinema is basically this. On the other hand, fiction kicks in destroying everything in a way I find very fertile – for political reasons it is then convenient to pretend that there is fiction and non-fiction cinema. Actually, early cinema was manifestly fiction and non-fiction in every moment at the same time, in every frame – all documentary footage has been rigged, it's all impossible, otherwise most of the war or catastrophic event documentaries would end up like that footage I showed. So we could even say that the surveillance camera model, the control network model is a lazy model. If we think of it this way, all cinema, western movies included, that has been made during the first three decades of the twentieth century is far more remarkable, if we see it as the unfolding of a mechanism of re-presentation rather than reproduction, of passing in front of the camera, a sort of continuous spectacle made by people we can call actors or actants – subjects anyway – that end up creating a flowing river. Somehow, the surveillance cameras, the control images of banks and streets, are almost reassuring. Of course it's an Orwellian nightmare, but I don't know if it's worse than being placidly inserted in the possibility of a continuous show.

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Rewind

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Looking back, re-hearing, re-learning become strategies to move forward and the archive is activated as a fundamental tool to imagine ourselves in the future.

Rewind

Il periodo di chiusura temporanea è stato per la Fondazione Antonio Ratti l'occasione per rendere attivo il proprio archivio. Nel corso dei suoi trentacinque anni di attività, la FAR ha promosso numerosi incontri, conferenze, workshop, seminari e pubblicazioni, invitando alla riflessione esperti di ambiti diversi, dall'arte contemporanea alla storia del tessuto, dall'antropologia alla letteratura fino alla cultura d'impresa.

Il progetto *Rewind* ha come scopo la diffusione e la condivisione di questa straordinaria risorsa. Il materiale selezionato, presentato con cadenza bisettimanale, spazia fra periodi e discipline diverse, offrendo una nuova prospettiva su tematiche e idee ancora attuali.

Guardare indietro, ri-ascoltare, re-imparare diventano così strategie per andare avanti e l'archivio si attiva come strumento fondamentale per immaginarsi nel futuro.