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2+2=22 [The Alphabet]

Heinz Emigholz

Producer Heinz Emigholz, Andreas Reihse. **Production companies** Heinz Emigholz Filmproduktion (Berlin, Germany), Kreidler (Berlin, Germany). **Written and directed by** Heinz Emigholz. **Director of photography** Heinz Emigholz, Till Beckmann. **Editor** Heinz Emigholz, Till Beckmann. **Music** Kreidler. **Sound design** Jochen Jezussek. **Sound** Till Beckmann.

Colour. 88 min. German.

Premiere February 11, 2017, Berlinale Forum

Worn-down pavements, broken paving stones. Trees that jut out of the concrete, casting shadows on to crumbling façades. The centre of Tbilisi in the summer of 2013. Glimpses of side and main streets, over railings and under balconies, of an architectural cacophony. The voiceover spoken by Natja Brunckhorst reflects on the nature of streets and public spaces. In an oak-panelled sound studio, the Düsseldorf band Kreidler records their album „ABC“. The drummer wears headphones; his drum kit is placed on a carpet whose colour matches the mosaic floor, which is covered with a tangled collection of cables and electronic equipment. Only the complex geometry of the soundproofed ceiling is white. The atmosphere is focused; the musicians often communicate without words.

The third element between which the film cross cuts are the director's familiar notebooks, being rapidly leafed through as always, with their close scrawl and the cinema tickets or catalogue clippings pasted inside. Each notebook carries a letter and they appear in alphabetical order.

With this first part of the „Streetscapes,“ Heinz Emigholz reboots his „Photography and beyond“ series and opens up a fascinating new chapter.

Christoph Terhechte

Streetscapes – Chapter 1 Photography and beyond – Part 24

Filed at Kartuli Pilmis Studia Tbilisi and in the streets of Tbilisi, Georgia, in October 2013 / Notebooks Nos. 222 a–z by Heinz Emigholz from 30 July 2012 to 23 December 2013

A city portrait

The film documents the genesis of the recordings and production of some music pieces by the band Kreidler that were released on their album *ABC* in May 2014. Long, observing filmic shots were taken. The recordings were made from 8 to 12 October 2013 in the recording studio of the Georgian film production complex Kartuli Pilmi in Tbilisi, Georgia. A large, wood-panelled hall outfitted with moveable walls was used. The room was originally conceived as a recording studio for a film orchestra; the board of censors used it as an internal screening room.

About twenty sequences from the documentary footage of the creation of the music pieces were selected to form the backbone of the film. Interstitials are added before and between the musical sequences. These interstitials consist of two components: first, documentary footage of architectonic situations in Tbilisi; and second, notebooks leafed through by means of film-technical animation. The notebooks were written and illustrated by Heinz Emigholz in the course of one year.

The basic structure of the film is shots alternating between the musical recordings and the city and notebook insertions. The film is a reply to Godard's *One Plus One* inasmuch as the main part of each film consists of the documentation of the work of a contemporary music group. The simplified, political-pop-ideological macramé of *One Plus One* makes way for an objectifying city portrait in *2+2=22 [The Alphabet]*. In contrast to Godard's construct, here 'propaganda' results not from acted sketches and sarcasms, but relatively reservedly from the declamation of municipal surfaces coupled with text-image collages.

The film is not an advertising film or a music clip for a pop band, but creates a new relationship between music and documentation. It contrasts the real work on pieces of music with the documentary footage of the site of the music's creation, a former Soviet republic on the southern edge of the Caucasus, and with the poetic notes of a more Western-style commentary. The observation of a collective creative process and its pauses stands at the centre of the film. Rudiments of reality and its sound scenarios interrupt these studies, and poetic declamations form ideological opposite poles to it. That these can no longer operate as a politically generally understandable language is just one of the truths that have emerged since the release of *One Plus One*. That the work of the Rolling Stones shown in it has gained increasing dignity through its calm continuation, while, in contrast, Godard's productions have aged poorly as historical documents, could be regarded as a remarkable contrary correlation movement in time. That could happen with this film, as well.

Pym Films, Berlin

The off-screen voice

There are streets, lanes, paths, alleys, boulevards and motorways. Highways, promenades, avenues, arcades and thoroughfares. Side streets, high streets, ring roads, grand boulevards, village roads, play streets, crossroads, country roads, coast roads, asphalt roads, parallel streets, one-way streets and through roads. Bypasses, intersections, serpentine, gravel roads, roundabouts, footpaths, forest paths, sandy paths, labyrinths, beaten tracks, city squares, whole networks and whole traffic arteries.

And there are life paths, dead ends, barren stretches, paths of suffering, the stations of the Cross, detours, escape routes, sacrificial paths, pilgrimage routes, highways to hell, paths of love and paths of yearning. Journeys from A to B. In the case of actual streets, these journeys take place in a network that makes countless connections possible. In the case of metaphors, a course toward a desired or unavoidable end is projected.

The streets offer themselves as set and theatre on which all of life's possibilities are performed; their networks are the model for streams of consciousness in literature. Devotion to the flow of thoughts, pleasure in the course of writing, the automatic writing of the Surrealists, the Beat Poets, writing on the road, the endless possibilities of writing, which are coupled with landscape modules and urban particles: this blurring effect, the overlaying and re-emergence of scraps of memory, the extinguishing and evocation of recollections, the refreshing of the eyes, are also pleasures.

Main streets and main clauses, subordinate clauses and side streets, paragraphs and neighbourhoods, chapters and districts. The geometric figure of streets and the syntax of sentences. Traffic signs and punctuation. The urban street network as a narrative from district to district, from chapter to chapter. The street vendor interrupts my thought or offers the right wares at the right moment. He profits from this moment of correspondence, from someone finding what he didn't seek. Reaching a point, concluding a paragraph, making a turnaround: 'And then... and then... and then...'

Entering a street, walking it, walking down it, strolling and staggering. The writings of the street, living and writing on the street. The world is inscribed in a round-robin circulation. The unshaped collision of architectonic intentions at the sides of the roads, the typography of the road, its forests of signs. On the streets, we become extras performing life. We become the passive audience of a staging, of trade and of actions. If the street is a stage, then it performs the drama of the simultaneity of events – their emergence and their submergence again. The ceiling that seems oppressively low here is then like the heavens.

Being pulled into the streets as if into an eddy, from symbol to symbol. History continues, from traffic sign to traffic sign. Cities, suburbs, landscapes, mountains and deserts. Added to that, people's sentences about their relationships, their travels, their crises and the latter's duration: the endlessness of streets collides irreconcilably with the finiteness of people.

Whole empires derived their power from the transport systems they developed: Roman road construction, the military planning of the Autobahn, the Chinese trade via transport networks. The international standardisation of roads in their anonymity and their particularities.

Roads have bilateral symmetry. Along their longitudinal axis, the two frontages allow views of buildings and glimpses of construction processes or prospects of the lines and horizons of the surrounding landscapes. On their lateral axis, they offer outlooks and retrospective glimpses of the course of the road, head-on. Distant points unfold into complex, architectonic structures and landscapes. They move sideways past us, then contract again to a point into a distance that remains behind.

The street is also a non-theme. It appears as a run-of-the-mill site and, in its ubiquity, as a genre worn and overrepresented to the point of triviality. Streets are considered filmed to death and the standpoints one can take toward them as already parsed without remnant. Their courses, like media in general, are disdained in their particularities, and the goals that can be reached on them are idealised.

Buildings that stand on streets have a tough time. People like real estate on cul-de-sacs. The house represents the 'bound' story, one 'tied down' if possible. And the street represents the 'free' story, an experiment, and hence, under some circumstances, nothing.

Streets are containers for feelings one will pass by again later. Unlike houses, they represent the variable parts of history. As media, they are extremely transient; they must be constantly repaired.

Seen positively, writing and driving are practices of overwriting; seen negatively, of erasure. But out of the anonymous mass of memory material that cannot be actively called up, sites and streets suddenly rear up. As if out of nothing, the memory of an intersection pushes into the centre of consciousness, and one can't say why.

Every thought arises from a crossing of place and time. A specific thought can have originated only from a very specific landscape, from a place to be described precisely or from its recollection. If one had lost belief in this site-dependence of thoughts, no thoroughly constructed image of reality would make sense anymore. A pictorial language that does not feel obligated to the given sites of reality is nonsense.

Heinz Emigholz



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Heinz Emigholz was born in 1948 in Achim, near Bremen. Since 1973, he has worked as a freelance filmmaker, artist, writer, cinematographer, producer, and journalist. In 1974, he began an encyclopaedic series of drawings, *Die Basis des Make-Up*, which was the subject of a major exhibition at Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof museum in 2007/08. In 1978, he founded his own production company, Pym Films. In 1984, he began a film series called *Photographie und jenseits/Photography and Beyond*. From 1993 to 2013, he held a professorship in experimental filmmaking at the Berlin University of the Arts, where he is a co-founder of the Institute for Time-Based Media and the university's art and media course. Since 2012 he has been a member of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. His publications include *Krieg der Augen, Kreuz der Sinne; Seit Freud gesagt hat, der Künstler heile seine Neurose selbst, heilen die Künstler ihre Neurosen selbst; Normalsatz – Siebzehn Filme* and *Das schwarze Schamquadrat* (all four published by Martin Schmitz); *Die Basis des Make-Up (I) und (II); Der Begnadete Meier; Kleine Enzyklopädie der Photographie; Die Basis des Make-Up (III)* and *Sense of Architecture*.

Films (selection)

1973: *Schenec-Tady I* (27 min., Berlinale Forum 1975). 1974: *Arrowplane* (24 min., Berlinale Forum 1974), *Tide* (33 min., Berlinale Forum 1976). 1976: *Hotel* (27 min., Berlinale Forum 1976). 1981: *Normalsatz* (105 min., Berlinale Forum 1982). 1985: *Die Basis des Make-Up* (85 min.). 1987: *Die Wiese der Sachen/The Meadow of Things* (87 min., Berlinale Panorama 1988). 1999: *Maillarts Brücken (Photographie und jenseits – Teil 3)/Maillart's Bridges* (24 min., Berlinale Forum 2001). 2003: *Goff in der Wüste (Photographie und jenseits – Teil 7)/Goff in the Desert* (110 min., Berlinale Forum 2003). 2005: *D'Annunzios Höhle (Photographie und jenseits – Teil 8)/D'Annunzio's Cave* (60 min., Berlinale Forum 2005). 2008: *Loos ornamental (Photographie und jenseits – Teil 13)* (72 min., Berlinale Forum 2008). 2012: *Parabeton – Pier Luigi Nervi und römischer Beton/Parabeton – Pier Luigi Nervi and Roman Concrete* (100 min., Berlinale Forum 2012), *Perret in Frankreich und Algerien/Perret in France and Algeria* (110 min.). 2014: *The Airstrip – Aufbruch der Moderne, Teil III/The Airstrip – Decampment of Modernism, Part III* (108 min., Berlinale Forum 2014). 2015: *Le Corbusier [IIIIII] Asger Jorn [Relief]* (29 min., Berlinale Forum Expanded 2016). 2017: *2+2=22 [The Alphabet], Bickels [Socialism], Streetscapes [Dialogue], Dieste [Uruguay]*.