

kunsthalle wien



**zimir
zilnik:**

**shadow
citizens**

FRONT COVER

Early Works

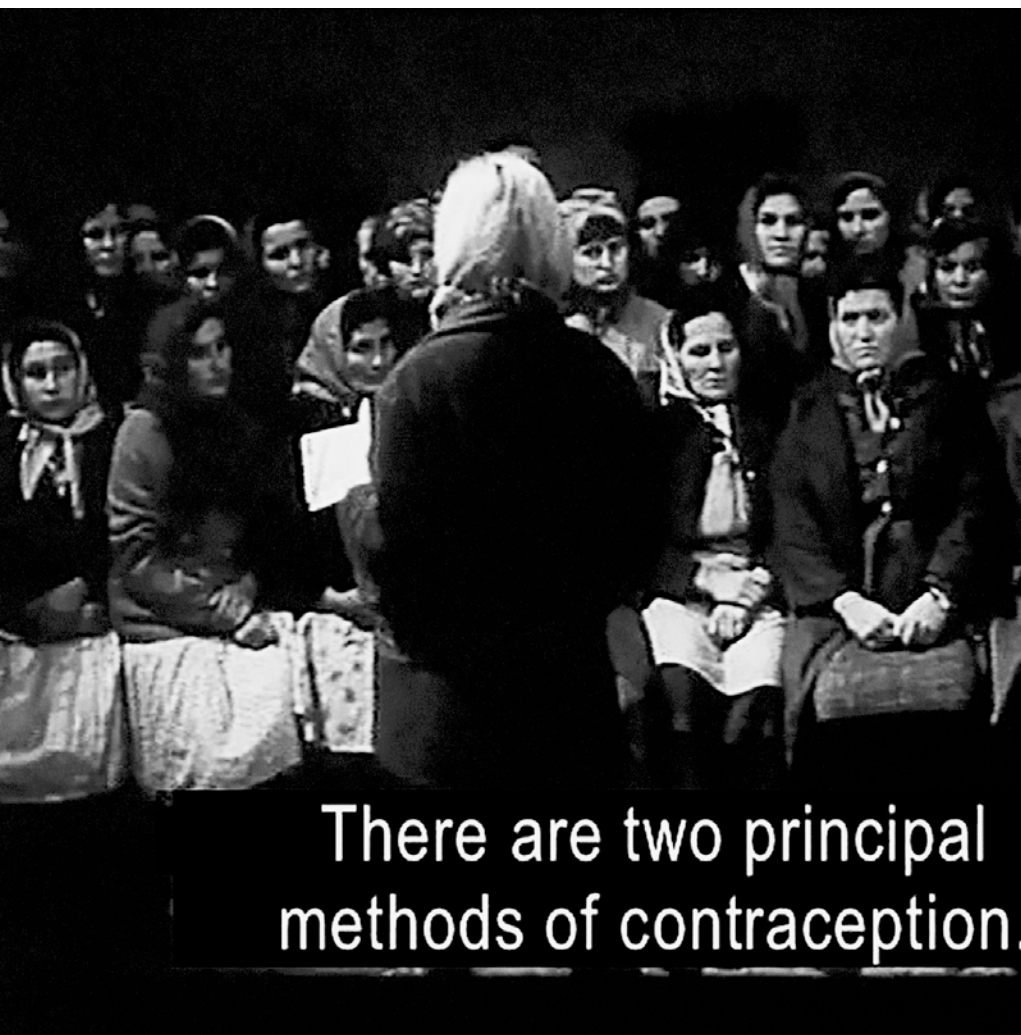
(on-set photo), 1968

PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

želimir
žilnik:
shadow
citizens



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There are two principal
methods of contraception

Early Works (film still), 1969



In my movies, I take my hat off to the peasants, the workers, the unemployed, to the mothers and fathers that are putting their kids through school. [...] I bow my head to their ingenuity and resilience in surviving all the misfortunes brought upon us by the ruling class.

— Želimir Žilnik, "The Original Power of Moving Images,"
interview by Teofil Pančić and Nebojša Grujičić,
Vreme, December 1, 2005

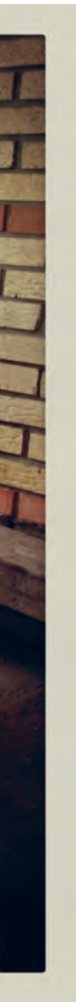


*Illness and Recovery
of Buda Brakus*
(film stills), 1980



shadow citizens: an introduction





Logbook_Serbistan
(on-set photo),
2014, PHOTO: ORFEAS
SKUTELIS

shadow citizens offers insight into the radical film praxis and extensive oeuvre of filmmaker Željimir Žilnik (b. 1942, based in Novi Sad, Serbia). From his beginnings in the lively amateur film scene of Yugoslavia in the 1960s, Žilnik has gone on to make more than fifty films, including a number of feature films and TV productions, often in the genre of docudrama. He received international recognition early on, winning the Golden Bear for Best Film at the 1969 **Berlin International Film Festival** for *Early Works*. In the 1970s, his films encountered political opposition, and he left Yugoslavia for West Germany, where he realized several independent films, including some of the earliest films dealing with the topic of guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*). In the 1980s, after leaving Germany – due to his films once again facing political opposition and censorship – and returning to Yugoslavia, he made numerous TV and feature films in which he portrayed early symptoms of the country's growing social conflicts, continuing in the 1990s and 2000s with films dealing with the maladies of the post-socialist transition as well as questions of migration.

Many of Žilnik's films have precisely anticipated real-world events such as the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the economic transition from socialism to a neoliberal order, the elimination of workers' rights, and the wider social erosion related to labor and migration. The exhibition's title, **shadow citizens**, reflects Žilnik's lifelong focus on invisible, suppressed, and under- and misrepresented members of society and relates to themes that run through the director's filmography, such as questions of shadow economies, borders, migration, labor, terrorism, revolutionary fatigue, clashes of parallel modernisms, and more. As a concept, "shadow citizens" points to a form of political engagement toward "amateur politics" – the imaginative and subversive non-normative knowledge and alternative sensibilities that always lie dormant in a society and occasionally visibly push back against "politics as usual." According to urban theorist **Andy Merrifield**, amateur and professional politics are in fact political divisions that can be reclaimed and moved like tectonic plates.⁰¹ Courageous amateurism is prominent in Žilnik's films, both as a concept and as a

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Andy Merrifield,
*The Amateur: The
Pleasures of Doing
What You Love*
(London: Verso, 2017).

method. The notion of "shadow citizens," conceived as different minorities that are increasingly becoming majorities everywhere, runs through Žilnik's oeuvre, where it is taken up as a possibility to imagine a new concept of citizenship that pushes current limits and borders. Different facets of the potentials of "shadow citizens" and the pressures of the amateur undercurrent in emancipatory politics and artistic production tackled in Žilnik's films also shed light on contemporary social and political urgencies.

This exhibition is an expanded version of a show developed in partnership with the **Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art** in Oldenburg, Germany, in 2018 and later also shown at **Gallery Nova** in Zagreb. One line of research added to the iteration of the exhibition being shown here at **kunsthalle wien** focuses on the context within which Žilnik got his start: the amateur cine clubs. This section has been curated by **Ana Janevski**. A variety of exhibited films produced in the 1950s and '60s within the clubs in Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, and Split show how these films are linked to the strongly international and avant-garde context of **GEFF – Genre Experimental Film Festival**, which was organized from 1963 to 1970 in Zagreb. The other new element in this version of the **shadow citizens** exhibition is a film essay by film curator **Jurij Meden**, *Želimir Žilnik: The Films in My Life*, created in close collaboration with Žilnik, that shows how his works intersect with the wider context of film history.

This exhibition relies on the research and writing of numerous colleagues. Particularly precious are the continuous research and publishing efforts of the Novi Sad-based organization **kuda.org**. Through their project *For an Idea – Against the Status Quo: An Analysis and Systematization of Želimir Žilnik's Artistic Practice*, they laid immense groundwork and created an essential resource for anyone interested in Žilnik's practice.⁰² The project both provides access to archival information and original materials and gathers together the insightful voices of many researchers in the accompanying publication, the first extensive survey of Žilnik's work, published in 2009. This work on Žilnik continued through the book *An Introduction to the Past*, written by **Boris Buden**

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Želimir Žilnik's website (www.zilnikzelimir.net) was initially launched in 2009 on the occasion of the project *For an Idea – Against the Status Quo*. The site was extensively updated for the exhibition *Shadow Citizens* at Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg, April 19–June 17, 2018.



Marble Ass (on-set photo), 1995. PHOTO: MIODRAG MILOŠEVIĆ

and published by kuda.org in 2013, which stands as a crucial political and theoretical contribution to the understanding of Žilnik's work within the Yugoslav context.

The research organized by Gal Kirn and Dubravka Sekulić and presented in the book *Surfing the Black: Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and Its Transgressive Moments*, which was published by Jan van Eyck Academie in 2012, was also a source we constantly went back to while curating the **shadow citizens** exhibition. We also want to acknowledge the years of research and writing on Žilnik by Boris Buden, Jurij Meden, Branislav Dimitrijević, and Pavle Levi, whose texts have been crucial to our understanding of Žilnik's work.

Much of the above-mentioned research on Žilnik was carried out under circumstances of official institutional ignorance toward such critical and experimental practices. This is something that many similar initiatives operating in the territory of former Yugoslavia have experienced. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, most cultural institutions displayed either amnesia or open animosity toward the progressive voices that had arisen during the socialist era, which were clearly critical of the new nationalist regimes that

ruled during the harsh and corrupted decades of new nation-state building. Many initiatives have and continue to support each other in their efforts, sharing both the claim that post-Yugoslav generations have a right to be interested in this period and in experimental practices, as well as the political perspective from which we look back at the preceding era. This is why it is worth mentioning that part of the research on this history was done within the collaborative project *Political Practices of (Post-)Yugoslav Art*, organized by **Prelom kolektiv** (Belgrade), **kuda.org** (Novi Sad), **SCCA/pro.ba** (Sarajevo), and **WHW** (Zagreb), which from 2006 to 2010 looked into numerous cases of joint and neglected history. Although over time a lot of this work got picked up and appropriated by institutional structures, the groundwork laid by independent initiatives has rarely been acknowledged and often ends up framed without sufficient political and critical coherence.⁰³

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The lack of serious institutional support for Žilnik's work is also reflected in the fact that his old films are in dire need of restoration and available copies are often in bad condition.

We are happy that this exhibition has come to Vienna, where Žilnik filmed his latest feature film, *The Most Beautiful Country in the World* (2018). In collaboration with the **Austrian Film Museum** and **Viennale**, we will organize a series of screenings and events to present Žilnik's work to a wide circle of various audiences.

A wonderful and inspiring red thread in Žilnik's work is a deep and committed interest in the stories of the people he meets and works with. With a decline in social and economic conditions, the position of what we term "shadow citizens" is becoming increasingly common in societies across the world. As curators, we have had the privilege of knowing Željimir Žilnik for many years, and more than ever we see the relevance of his artistic and political vision for our present times. We have never stopped learning from his political clarity, his tenderness, and his uncompromised integrity. The experiences and voices of the people we encounter in his films can inspire us all to be more responsible, thoughtful, and caring toward our fellow human beings and the planet we share. ●

— what, how & for whom/WHW



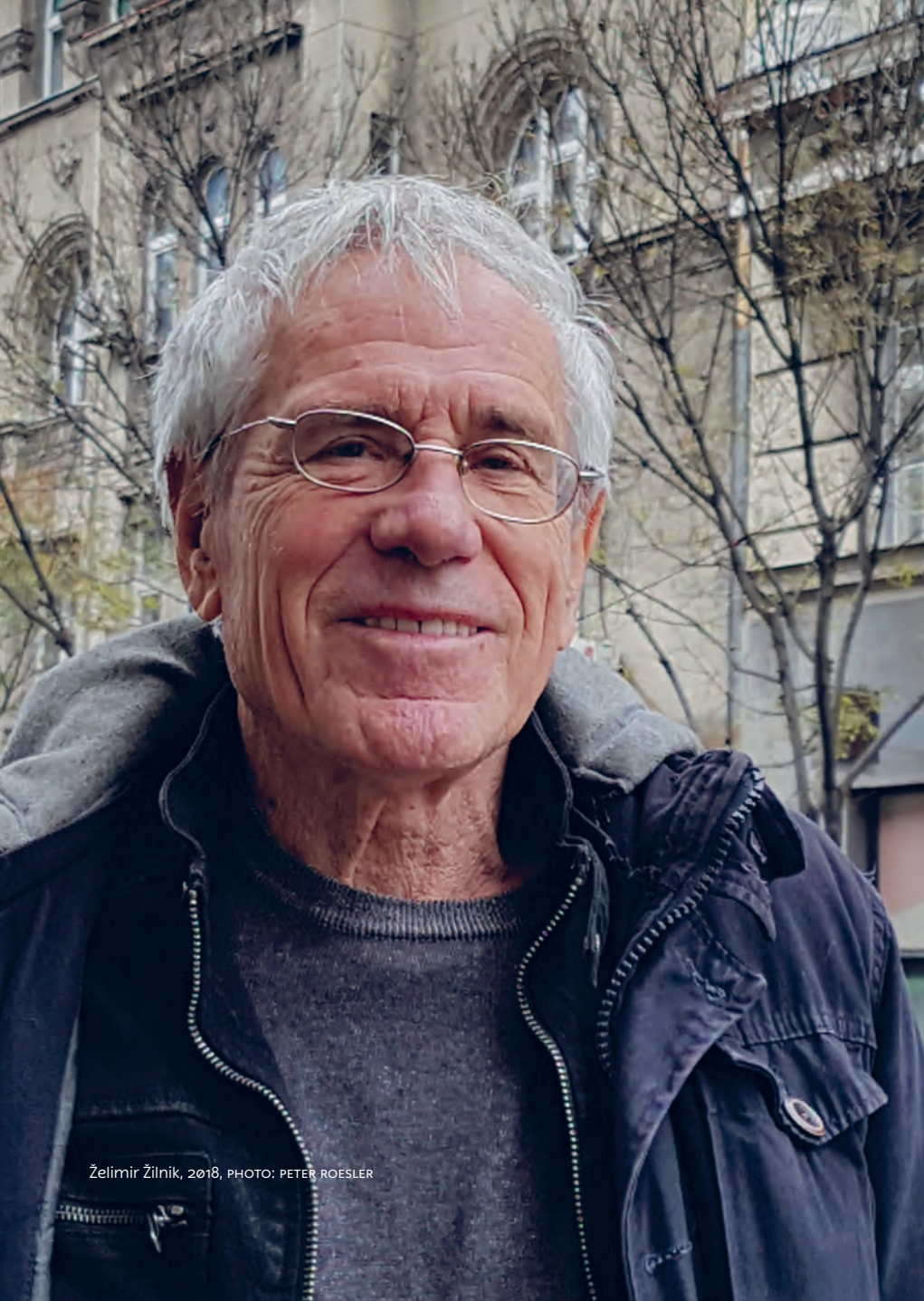


Pretty Women Walking through the City (on-set photo), 1985





June Turmoil (film stills), 1969



Želimir Žilnik, 2018, PHOTO: PETER ROESLER

Želimir Žilnik in conversation with WHW

APRIL 2018

WHW: Since we are trying to touch upon the entirety of your work and engagement through the exhibition **shadow citizens**, let's start from the beginning. How did you become interested in movies?

ZZ: At the time when my generation was growing up in the mid-1950s, watching films was an obsession, like gadgets for today's digital generation. At that time, the cinema was the only window open into the world. There were ten times more cinemas than there are today, and the repertoire was very rich. In one cinema they showed cowboy sagas by **Howard Hawks**, **John Ford**, **Fred Zinnemann**; in another cinema they showed dramas, Italian beauties, palaces, and the Mediterranean – **Vittorio De Sica**, **Federico Fellini**, **Luchino Visconti**, **Michelangelo Antonioni**. By the end of the '50s, more realistic films emerged with which we identified: **François Truffaut**, **Jean-Luc Godard**, **Louis Malle**, and others.

When I finished high school, I was invited to be the editor of programs at a youth cultural center in Novi Sad called the **Youth Tribune**. This place was as interesting as the cinema. It hosted experimental independent theater groups. We were exhibiting the latest visual trends. The film department exposed us to experimental films. I met filmmakers who were ten years older than me – **Dušan Makavejev**, **Živojin Pavlović**, **Marko Babac**, **Mihovil Pansini**, **Vladimir Petek**, **Ivan Martinac**, and so on. They had not been involved with professional film studios yet. Films were shot in 16 mm and 8 mm in cinema clubs. Participants in philosophical and sociological debates were people who would in a couple of years establish the **Korčula Summer School** and *Praxis* magazine: **Rudi Supek**, **Gajo Petrović**, **Taras Kermauner**, **Veljko Rus**, **Danko Grlić**, **Zagorka Golubović**, **Nebojša Popov**, **Milan Kangrga**, and others. Simultaneously with my work at the **Youth Tribune**, I went to law school. There was no faculty of fine arts in Novi Sad, and these studies and completion of the law program

helped me to cope and defend myself when I had problems with censorship and with court procedures in the years to come.

WHW: What beyond the Youth Tribune and the cinema clubs influenced you?

ZZ: From my earliest days, I used to spend a lot of time at the theater. My uncle Milenko Šuvaković was a theater director and the art director of the most important Yugoslav theater festival, *Sterijino pozorje*. I visited the rehearsals, went to workshops where costumes and sets were made, and I also met many actors. Then, at the production house *Avala Film* in Belgrade, I became an assistant director upon Dušan Makavejev's invitation. Apart from local films, *Avala Film* also worked on big coproductions. For example, in collaboration with Artur Brauner's German production house, *CCC Film*, costumes, props, and huge set designs were made at *Avala Film* for *Die Nibelungen*, in the mid-1960s, which was the most expensive postwar German film at the time.

I learned there what a complex job a feature film is; that the preparation is essential as well as the coordination of the team and the willingness of the director to make decisions, yet to be open to listening to his associates. I witnessed very awkward situations, conflicts, bullying, nervous breakdowns, and the loss of a lot of time and money – when unprepared bosses shouted at the crew and made demands, and did not know what they were saying. I learned then to focus my energy and time into preparation, into the choice of actor-interpreters and crew.

WHW: One notices a certain fascination with manual work in your oeuvre. You have shot horseshoeing, dough kneading, working in mines, and the like for a long time and with much love.

ZZ: We live in a time of virtual jobs, but fifty years ago we all defined ourselves according to what we were doing. Craftsmen not only served people but also were the most respected people in a village. When you needed to find out some information, you would be sent to a barber's shop; people gathered there, so he knew most.

Craftsmen built cities, or rebuilt them after invaders had passed through. Novi Sad, where I live, was appointed the status of a city in 1749 by Empress Maria Theresa of the Habsburg monarchy. Before that, on the southern bank of the Danube, the huge Petrovaradin Fortress had been built, on the border with the Ottoman Empire. Novi Sad was then given its official Latin name,

Neoplanta (New Garden); it was built as a center for craftsmen, vegetable growers, and administrators who served the needs of the fortress staff. Every couple of years, the soldiers were replaced or killed. The streets of Novi Sad had names like Shoemakers' Street, Saddlers' Street, Carpenters' Street. If peace lasted, they would build schools, marketplaces and fairs, brothels and theaters.

Half a century ago, working on film also required various knowledge of machines, electricity, optics, and chemicals. When I started working in the professional 35 mm format, the camera required a cameraman with seven or eight assistants. One would put negative into the camera, take it out, pack it, and send it to the laboratory. Another one was needed for sharpening – taking care of the sharpness of the shot. A third one for panning – camera movements left and right, up and down. Four men were needed to set the rails for the camera, because it weighed 250 to 300 kilograms (this is the Arri Blimp 300). The cameraman, who was the head of that division, was called the director of photography. He mingled around the actors and sets with a light meter, measuring how the reflectors illuminated the faces. He made corrections. Shouted to his assistants telling them which lens to fit on the camera. He did not touch the camera. There were five or six electricians working on lighting, and they followed the directions of the director of photography.

WHW: Let us continue with the topic of work. Already in 1967, you made *The Unemployed*. Why were you interested in the topic of the unemployed so early in your career, and was it connected later with the many stories you told about guest workers, refugees, and so on?

ZZ: From the mid-1960s onward, it seemed to us that the cultural policy was rather relaxed, that dogmatic party apparatchiks were less influential. Filmmakers, visual artists, and other such types of makers were not employed; theirs was an independent status, and they were paid under authorship contracts. This provided a chance for film projects to be done as joint investments of a team of authors and a film studio that possessed incredibly expensive technology – laboratory, cameras, sound, and lighting. Financial parameters of the investment would be calculated, and the authors and the team would be “coproducers” and co-owners of the film. So both the risk and the responsibility were shared. Some of the most important Yugoslav films were made following this model of coproduction, which was called a “film working community.”

The “liberal moment” of Yugoslav socialism was epitomized in the proclamation of the new program of the League of Communists from those years: “Nothing that has been created should be so sacred to us that it cannot be transcended and superseded by something still freer, more progressive, and more human.” At the same time, factories were being modernized, and companies started doing business with the newly liberated countries of Asia and Africa, but also with the West, which called into question the “state-orchestrated general employment and prices.” Adaptation to market conditions was demanded. Trained professionals were employed. The egalitarian principle that the “working class is in line with progress” ceased to exist. In those years, agreements were signed with Germany and Austria under which they took in tens of thousands of Yugoslav workers in an organized manner based on needs for the reconstruction of infrastructure and to work in factories in the West.

I often passed by the Novi Sad Employment Center, and for days I watched the assembled unhappy workers, who said they were made redundant in their companies and now were waiting for the Germans to hire them. And, indeed, the representatives of the trade unions from Germany and the medical commission arrived, too. They talked with people, assigned them to work posts. They organized their transport, accommodation, worker status, and employment. It was not just a situation of novelty and hope; for many it meant stressful changes in rhetoric and memory, because there were a fair number of them who remembered the Second World War. There was little news and explanation in the media about this “new phase of our development.” Like most projects, we did *The Unemployed* to hear the whole story from the people who were confronted with an unknown and dramatic situation.

WHW: Later on, you dealt often with the topic of guest workers, including in the television productions of the 1980s. Do you think that you may have anticipated what the film industry is going through today, where an increasing number of respected directors are doing television or internet series, which are often more brave than mainstream films?

ZZ: When I was in Munich in the 1970s asking around for producers, I noticed that filmmakers and teams were communicating through television without any fear. I went to Telepool, and several other companies whose addresses and telephone numbers I had. They

used to buy ten to fifteen Yugoslav films annually. As I was waiting for the director Siegfried Magold to see me, I heard that there were directors and producers of German and French films coming to see him to discuss coproductions. The director received me warmly, said he appreciated my short films and *Early Works* (1969), and asked me what I had that was new. I explained that I would like to work on a couple of documentaries with guest workers as protagonists. He referred me to Filmverlag der Autoren, which was a kind of film working community where Alexander Kluge, Werner Herzog, Edgar Reitz, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder worked on their films at that time. I had already met these filmmakers at festivals. I learned that if I were to do a feature film, I could send the project to Telepool and they would decide whether they would come on as coproducer, and also that once I finished my short film, I should offer it to them, so it could be bought for television. At that time in Yugoslavia, film production was oriented toward cinema distributors, both in the country and abroad, and new films (part of the so-called Black Wave), which I myself worked on, were very rarely shown on television.

Several years after my return home, I had in mind the Western European practice of creating for television, so I contacted Television Novi Sad. The main reason I did this, however, was the fact that I saw that all the other production doors were closed to me. Television had two extraordinary advantages: first, technology – from the laboratory to the studios, cameras, and lighting, everything was in-house. And most of the technicians were permanently employed and available. Another advantage was that when a film or a show was made, the audience was secured. In the late 1970s, when I started offering and realizing projects for the Novi Sad and Belgrade television houses, feature films that we had shot for drama departments were shown at eight in the evening and were seen on the Yugoslav Radio-Television network by four to five million people. It was then that I faced a very difficult problem: How was I to keep dealing with destinies and topics that interested me and still be watched not only by people who appreciated such an approach but also by families with three or four generations living in one household? The answer was found in a hybrid genre: docudrama.

And we managed to do several titles that were really innovative, critical, and outside the mainstream, which we would not have been able to do in the film industry: *Brooklyn – Gusinje* (1988),

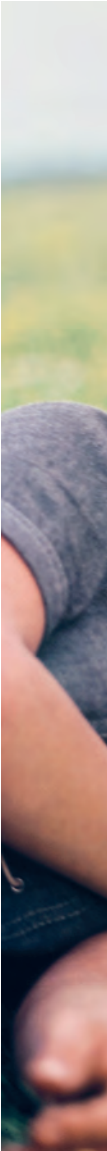
Hot Paychecks (1987), *Pretty Women Going through the City* (1986), *Oldtimer* (1989), and others.

WHW: We are curious about your attitude toward female characters. For example, in *Vera and Eržika* (1981), we have two women fighting for their rights. You portray them with great tenderness and affection. Your films also have scenes like the one with the patriarchal father of a Roma family who wants to marry off his daughter against her will, and she escapes and tries to cope. There are also stories about female friendships in your films. But in *Early Works*, you kill the main character, Jugoslava.

ZZ: There are fewer female characters in my films than I wanted. I wanted to have more of them because they fight in their lives on several fronts: they must eliminate the combination of male inferiority and aggressiveness; a husband's frustration and neglect of children; being thrown out of the house; their sons becoming criminals; and alcoholism and domestic violence. In addition to all this, they have to feign seduction, and according to the current Balkan fashion, they also must be harem divas. Mission impossible. For example, for *Logbook_Serbistan* (2015) we were looking for female characters because they had been through the trauma of war, famine, and threats of rape. But the male refugees would not let the women be in front of the camera. One agreed, provided the woman always held her child in her arms.

As far as *Early Works* is concerned, the protagonists were portrayed using a specific language, where visual and rhetorical symbols were used, with lots of proclamations and citations. The characters were outlined as a sketch and in a schematic manner. Only the main heroine had enough space to reflect the conundrums of what it means to be a "girl in socialism" and the hypocrisy of the proclaimed freedom of speech and socialist slogans. She has to wade through the mud of male unfulfilled ambition and power. *Early Works* was shot in the autumn of 1968, after the tank intervention in Prague, against Alexander Dubček's "socialism with a human face." That film was a question mark. Could the current state of socialism be repaired, or would it disappear in the flames that took Yugoslavia away?

WHW: It seems to us that your political position has had incredible consistency throughout all your films.





Freedom or Cartoons (on-set photo), 1971, PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

ZZ: I cannot say anything about that. In my political position or attitude, I endeavor to maintain a kind of independence that matters to me. Without compromise, I will not put up with anything that I find to be dull, rotten, and suspicious. Here I am ready for what is called a “sacrifice” in bourgeois life; that is, I am willing to give up or lose my position, or to be removed by someone somewhere, which does not seem such a bad consequence to me. It depends on one’s character, and everyone’s is different. Some fantastically intelligent and fine people have a need to follow authority. I’ve had several such friends. They are not bad people; they just feel safer when they are under someone’s authority. And I feel as if I were chained under that authority. It is completely individual, and there is no answer to this. I would even find stating some political credo to be absurd. Look at the films – maybe I have somehow taken a position that some people liked, and in many situations I took a stance that many people did not like. I spent most of my life as a man regarded to be an eccentric who is always doing some kind of loser stuff. Even those television dramas and films that you consider today to be good were sincerely despised by many of my colleagues.

WHW: You wrote a manifesto that accompanied *Black Film* (1971), and at the 1971 International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, you even showed the movie with the manifesto written over it. How does the manifesto sound to you today?

ZZ: It sounds pretty OK to me. If I used the same methodology to analyze the present situation, I would find today’s situation to be drastically more inhumane in terms of social difference and basic human rights than it was back then. In ex-Yugoslav countries, there are millions of unemployed people, without any prospects for themselves or for their children. Pension funds have been looted. Factories have been seized in which workers invested their incomes to expand the production and technological innovation, as we did in the film working communities. The new “democratic national-capitalist” authorities do not acknowledge all this. Today’s corruption is several dozen times more brutal. Affiliation to the ruling party is more important for promotion in life than it used to be in socialism. The space for culture in the media has been reduced, as has advocacy for workers’ rights.

Client-friendly sponsorship of cultural institutions, including support for films, eliminates works that criticize, which is worse

than before. The facts show that in the last twenty-five years of “freedom and democracy,” there have been no better and more critical films than *When I Am Dead and Gone* (1967) and *The Ambush* (1969) by Živojin Pavlović; *Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967) and *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971) by Dušan Makavejev; *The Feast* (1967) and *The Trek* (1968) by Đorđe Kadijević; *The Handcuffs* (1969) by Krsto Papić; *Sunday* (1969) by Lordan Zafranović; *The Living Truth* (1972) by Tomislav Radić, and so on.

WHW: Can you tell us something about the figure or position of the dissident? From today's sadly widespread anti-socialist and anti-communist perspective, it is as if this label has been attached to many positions that have not actually had dissident content. Were you seen as a dissident, too?

ZZ: Of those who say they had a critical attitude in the time of socialism, two-thirds are complete liars. Some of them were even placed high up in the bodies of cultural repression, as part of various commissions. My colleagues and I did not call ourselves dissidents. “Dissident” is a term from so-called prison camp socialism, where these artists were forced out of the country, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, for example. Or they were imprisoned. We had our passports with us in the early 1970s when several of us, all film directors, went abroad. I had the impression that the neo-dogmatic group had nothing against us leaving. On the contrary, it was as if they were expecting us to perform some sort of “enemy activity,” so they could arrest us. When we returned, Dušan Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, and some writers and painters and I – we were not given the status of dissidents, but were considered “unsuitable,” because of our “conceptual errors.”

When I arrived in West Germany as a guest worker, I could not say that I was a banned artist in Yugoslavia, because no one would have believed it. In those years, Yugoslavia produced films that received awards at the biggest festivals and that appeared on television in many countries. I was asked by the director Alexander Kluge – an important representative of the German independent film movement – to provide him with Yugoslavia's policy on stimulating film production. He had heard that this policy had been greatly successful. We translated it in a week, and significant parts influenced the development of Germany's new policy on film.

WHW: What do you think of our exhibition title, **shadow citizens**, as a suggestion for a through line that connects your work?

ZZ: The lives and fates of people who live off their work are constantly threaded through my movies. People in this category live in precarious conditions, without security and privileges, and they can rely only on themselves and the people closest to them. What is most important when you make a film based on those stories is that you work with people with nothing to lose. They are the people who should be given a medium through which they can express themselves in some way, by communicating their own attitudes or their feeling of being forgotten. When working with them, you are working with the oppressed and poor people who are least afraid of endangering their status in any way. They have this position of freedom.

I will give you an example from when I worked in Austria on a new film a year ago, *The Most Beautiful Country in the World* (2018). The producer raised the funds to make a film about migrants who had received documents and were preparing for a longer stay in Austria and about how they were “becoming EU citizens.” With my associate **Jasmina Janković**, who is a court interpreter, we visited asylum centers to find people who wanted to participate in the film. The loudest ones approached us first, with their agendas: some wanted to form separate ethnic clubs, and they wanted us to promote them. Others changed their political favorites every couple of days – in late 2016, Syrian president **Bashar al-Assad** was declared a defeated party. But those who declared themselves as his opponents began to praise Iran and Russia in early 2017, while Assad was their “legitimate president.” When they heard I was from Serbia, they suggested we speak in the Russian language. I realized that we were wasting our time in the labyrinths of geopolitics between **Donald Trump**, **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**, and **Vladimir Putin**.

But then we started talking to those who were going through the real administrative labyrinths so they could learn German, present their trades or professions, and get residence permits. Men and women told us stories that were new, stories that described the relations and tensions that had not been present either in the war at home or on the road, such as misunderstandings in the family between authoritarian fathers and children or between relatives who found it difficult to grasp language lessons. The older





Kenedi Goes Back Home (film still), 2003

men felt uncomfortable being taught and evaluated by women. On the other hand, there were young people who found friends and integrated faster; they wanted to live alone, away from their families, in “freedom,” as they said. Then girls and women told us about situations they had not expected. For example, that the parents of a young refugee would not allow their son to marry a woman whom he had met as a refugee seeking asylum, because she was “unclean” – she had been through hell and back – and they coerced him to marry a bride he did not know, who was “a virgin,” and whom they would bring in illegally.

Based on these stories and with the help of those who wanted to take part in the film, we drew up a concept and a shooting schedule. We edited the film a couple of months ago. I told the team and the producer that the first viewers should be the people in the film and those of us who gathered them, because if any of us have any objections to the final edit, we have to correct them. If *we* accept the film that we have been working on, experience tells me that others will accept it too, and maybe it will travel around the world.

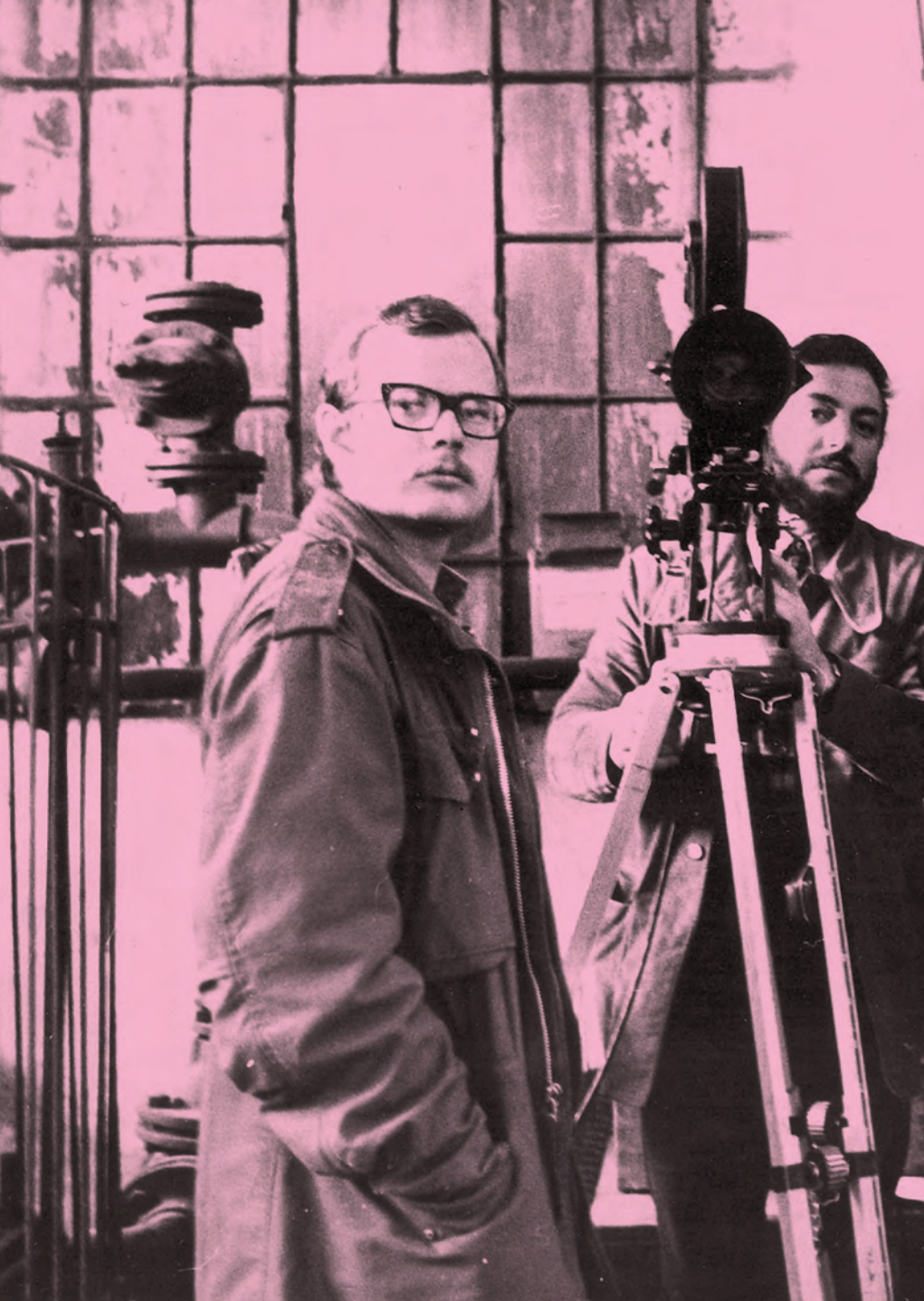
WHW: Would you agree with us if we said that you constantly choose to stay “in the shadow”?

ZŽ: It’s not simply a matter of choice – it is the real position I am in. I come from a country that has a small marginal market and where a marginal language is spoken. For example, regardless of my rather comprehensive film oeuvre, I cannot answer the simplest question that is being asked in America. They say there: “Do not bother us with all these many titles. Make a list only of films that earned \$15 million and more.” My answer is: “I do not have such a film.” This is my real position. I do not want to say that it does not suit me. It does, because it allows me to do what really interests me. ●

This conversation originally appeared in *Želimir Žilnik. Shadow Citizens* (Berlin: Sternberg; Oldenburg, Germany: Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, 2020), 25–37. The book was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Želimir Žilnik: Shadow Citizens* at the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, generously supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

I make movies because we're still not in communism. I make movies to warn about how many things we still need to do in order to get there. I am not interested in art film. When it comes to documentary film, we really don't have time to talk about art. The documentary film is, primarily, a possibility given to a man, a woman, or a child to impart in one breath the pain that sits in one's stomach, and which obviously is not only their own private thing. This "possibility," this is actually the sensitivity of silver bromide to light, and nearly all the rest I leave up to the personalities that my documentaries are concerned with.

— Želimir Žilnik, interview, "Art Film Does Not Interest Me,"
Susret, April 5, 1968





Freedom or Cartoons
(on-set photo), 1971,
PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: DUŠAN NINKOV,
KARPO AČIMOVIĆ-GODINA, ŽELIMIR
ŽILNIK, IVAN ČIRKOVIĆ



Logbook_Serbistan (on-set photo), 2014, PHOTO: ORFEAS SKUTELIS

EDITORS' NOTE: The descriptions of the films published in this booklet were composed using material provided by Želimir Žilnik, primarily obtained through several long conversations in Novi Sad and Zagreb, which extended over many months. They follow the curiosity of the curators surrounding Žilnik's memories of the experiences of making each film, which he patiently and generously shared. As personal traces such as these open up future research and interpretations, the particular method of their collection, if there was one, was described by Žilnik with yet another story: "As **Mao Zedong** said to his successor **Hua Guofeng**: With you in charge of business, I can relax."

The film descriptions and filmography in this publication indicate the original format in which the films were shot. The exhibition presents digital copies.

Among the People: Life & Acting

Serbia • 2018 • 83 min. • HD video • color

This video assemblage features memories and commentaries of nonprofessional actors combined with excerpts from films in which they participated as "protagonists," mixed with footage made of crews working on the sets of Žilnik's films.

It acts as a reminder for Žilnik of the talents and real-life experiences of his participants, which inspired the filmmaker to articulate their narrative threads and also define his fictional characters. At the same time, the video documents how the film participants experienced new encounters and solidarity in the "film collective."

Participants:

PIROŠKA ČAPKO | participated as child actor in two of Žilnik's films made in the late 1960s (*Little Pioneers* and *Early Works*), and fifty years later starred in *Pirika on Film*

GABRIELLA BENAK | musician and singer; participated in *Pirika on Film*

SVETISLAV JOVANOVIĆ | dramaturg and commissioning editor in the drama department of TV Novi Sad from the mid-1970s to mid-'80s

DRAGOLJUB MIĆUNOVIĆ | Serbian politician and philosopher and one of the founders of the modern Democratic Party in 1989, as well as its first president (1990–94); as a member of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, he was speaker of the Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro between 2000 and

2004; participated in *June Turmoil* as one of the main speakers at the student protests

NÉMETH ÁRPÁD | director of photography for *Seven Hungarian Ballads*

VÉGEL LÁSZLÓ | writer and commissioning editor in the drama department of TV Novi Sad from the mid-1970s to mid-'80s

NENAD RACKOVIĆ | writer, actor, and visual artist; starred in *Marble Ass*

LIKANA BRUJIĆ | transgender sex worker; participated in *Marble Ass*

BORIS ČEGAR | philosophy professor; as a student, attended Žilnik's master class in filmmaking, and later participated in *Wanderlust*

STIPAN MILODANOVIĆ | filmmaker; as a student, attended Žilnik's master class in filmmaking, and later assisted him in several projects as a location manager and fixer

HATIJA HASANI | mother of Kenedi Hasani; participated in *Kenedi Is Getting Married*

BANU CENNETOĞLU | visual artist based in Istanbul; assisted Žilnik as a fixer and translator during the filming of *Kenedi Is Getting Married* in Turkey

ZORAN PAROŠKI | worker and amateur actor in community theater in Turija (Serbia); participated in *The Old School of Capitalism*

SLOBODAN NENADOV | worker and amateur actor in community theater in Turija (Serbia); participated in *The Old School of Capitalism*

ŽIVOJIN POPGLIGORIN | lawyer and amateur actor in community theater in Turija (Serbia); participated in *The Old School of Capitalism*

IVICA SCHMIDT | director of Radio Srbo-bran; assisted in location and set management for *The Old School of Capitalism*

RATIBOR TRIVUNAC | antiquarian bookseller, publisher, and Belgrade anarchist; participated in *The Old School of Capitalism*

MILOŠ MILIĆ | English language instructor and general secretary of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative in Serbia; participated in *The Old School of Capitalism*

ANDRIJA ČOLAKOVIĆ | student and member of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative in Serbia; participated in *The Old School of Capitalism*

MIODRAG MILOŠEVIĆ | director of photography for fourteen of Žilnik's films

BRIAN SCHWARZ | translator and English language instructor; participated in *Logbook_Serbistan*

GUY MAESTRACCI | cartoonist, illustrator, and painter; participated in *Logbook_Serbistan* ●



That's the home of the village lads.



Among the People: Life & Acting was commissioned for the exhibition *Želimir Žilnik: Shadow Citizens* at Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg.

A Newsreel on Village Youth, in Winter

Žurnal o omladini na selu, zimi

Yugoslavia • 1967 • 15 min. • 35 mm • black & white

This documentary was shot in villages on the outskirts of Novi Sad – Bukovac, Krčedin, and Futog. The camera is focused on young people, their leisure time in wine cellars, at dances, in village streets, and in pubs. The participants are witty, energetic young men and women; they are having fun but would rather be somewhere else.

This was Žilnik's first professional film, shot on 35 mm negative for a newly established production house, **Neoplanta Film**, which turned to local amateur film clubs for directors and crews. While Žilnik was in school, his classes were attended by many pupils from nearby villages, and he started researching their home environments. He then approached **Neoplanta** with the request to shoot this film with a sound camera. The big camera Arri Blimp 300, which weighed about 250 kg, could be rented from the official newsreel production company. During the Christmas holidays, a slow period, **Neoplanta** managed to both rent the camera and hire the newsreel crew of about

fifteen people. In those days, this was considered a small, highly mobile crew. It was a cold, snowy winter and the crew, which traveled by bus, slept in the villages where they were filming. The farmers offered up their kitchens and spare rooms for the cameramen and technical staff to sleep in, as they were impressed by their equipment and considered them to be doing important work. They asked Žilnik what he did, and he told them he was a director. They asked which machines he used, and he showed them a pen and notebook. They concluded that he was not contributing much, and only let him have the basement, giving him a fur coat and a pile of corn to sleep on.

The film premiered at the **Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival**, where it was rejected from the competition but supported by young critics and audiences. It later received two prizes: one from the film magazine *Ekran/Screen* and the award of the **Central Committee of the Socialist Youth Association**. ●

*A Newsreel on Village Youth,
in Winter (film stills), 1967*

Black Film

Crni film

Yugoslavia • 1971 • 14 min. • 16 mm (transfer to 35 mm) • black & white

One night in the late 1960s, Žilnik picks up a group of homeless men from the streets of Novi Sad and takes them to his house. While they make themselves at home, the filmmaker tries to "solve the problem of the homeless," carrying along a film camera as a witness. He speaks to social workers and ordinary people. He even addresses policemen. They all shut their eyes to the "problem." Two days later, at the end of the film tape, Žilnik explains that the chances of solving this problem are grim, and politely asks the guests to leave his house.

The film was produced by **Neoplanta Film**. The title, *Black Film*, is a tongue-in-cheek reference to Black Wave, a name coined through an official critique of a number of films made by young Yugo-

slav filmmakers in the late 1960s and early '70s. The phrase first appeared in a special supplement, titled "Black Wave in Our Film," published in the August 3, 1969, edition of the newspaper *Borba*, the official gazette of the **Communist Party of Yugoslavia**, and it was the first major orchestrated attack on the filmmakers of the new generation. It is believed that the article was prompted by several awards that Žilnik's *Early Works* (1969) and **Aleksandar Petrović's** *It Rains in My Village* won at Pula Film Festival that year.

In 1971, Žilnik was invited to the **International Short Film Festival Oberhausen**, but he was unable to attend because he was on location filming *Freedom or Cartoons*. Instead of addressing the Oberhausen audience and media in person, he wrote a manifesto (based on his talks at press conferences in Belgrade). The German translation of the manifesto was printed onto the film itself and so became part of the film's structure. In the exhibition we are screening the Oberhausen version with the "Black Film Manifesto" overlaid. ●



Black Film (on-set photo), 1971,
PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

RIGHT *Black Film* (film stills), 1971



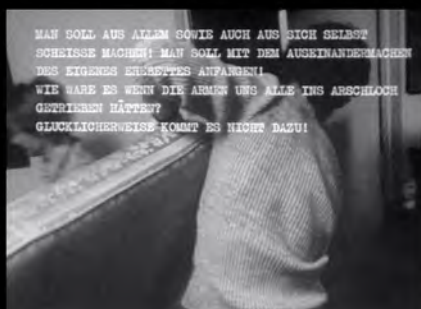
SIE SEHEN GERADE AN
DIE KLASSENSTRUKTUR DER JUGOSLAWISCHEN GESELLSCHAFT
LIMFEPROLETARIAT UND "HUMANITÄRISCHE INTELLIGENZ"
TECHNOLOGIE DER KLEINBURGERSCHAFT BENUTZUNG DER ARMEN
IM FILM, LEKTION DER AUSGEROTTETEN, BEKÖPFTEN,
SCHREISSSTINKENDEN, GEHEBEN DER FAMILIE ŽELJKI
DEM KIND SOLL MAN ZEIGEN WIE DAS LEBEN IST.



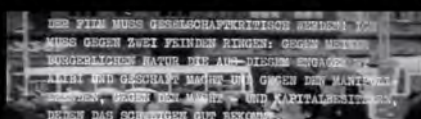
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SCHREISSSTINKENDEN, GEHEBEN DER FAMILIE ŽELJKI
DEM KIND SOLL MAN ZEIGEN WIE DAS LEBEN IST.



IM LANDE DASS MIT EIGENEM NAMEN, MIT EIGENER HIMME
UND EIGENEN MACHT NICHT IN KLAREN IHR,
IM MOMENT WENN DIE GRUNDARBEITEN /BROD, MILCH UND
DOLAS/ TÄGLICH FERTIG WERDEN, GENIESST DIE FILMAKTE
GEGENSTÄNDLICH DIESE ARBEITUNG DER LEIDENDEN DER
ARBEITER + UND BAUERNSCHAFT, DAS GIBT IHR - DEM
TEIL DER BÜRGERLICHEN STRUKTUR, EINE ILLUSION DES
ENGAGEMENT UND BARMHERZIGKEIT.



MAN SOLL AUS ALLEN GOTTES AUCH AUS SICH GELIBT
SCHEISSE MACHEN! MAN SOLL MIT DEM AUSGEINANDERMACHEN
DES EIGENEN ERSCHEFFEN ANFANGEN!
WIE WARE ES WENN DIE ARMEN UNS ALLE INS ABSCHLOCH
GETRIEBEN HÄTTEN?
GLÜCKLICHERWEISE KOMMT ES NICHT DAZU!



DER FILM MUSS GESELLSCHAFTSKRITISCH WERDEN! ICH
MUSS GEGEN ZWEI FEINDEN RINGEN: GEGEN MEINER
BÜRGERLICHEN NATUR DIE AUS DIESEM ENGAGEMENT
ALIBI UND GESCHAFT MACHT UND GEGEN DER MANIPULI-
ERENDEN, GEGEN DEN MACHT - UND KAPITALSITZERN,
DEBEN DAS SCHWEIGEN GUT BEKOMMT.



DER FILM MUSS GESELLSCHAFTSKRITISCH WERDEN! ICH
MUSS GEGEN ZWEI FEINDEN RINGEN: GEGEN MEINER
BÜRGERLICHEN NATUR DIE AUS DIESEM ENGAGEMENT
ALIBI UND GESCHAFT MACHT UND GEGEN DER MANIPULI-
ERENDEN, GEGEN DEN MACHT - UND KAPITALSITZERN,
DEBEN DAS SCHWEIGEN GUT BEKOMMT.



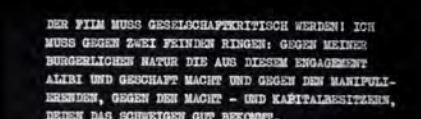
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MUSS GEGEN ZWEI FEINDEN RINGEN: GEGEN MEINER
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ALIBI UND GESCHAFT MACHT UND GEGEN DER MANIPULI-
ERENDEN, GEGEN DEN MACHT - UND KAPITALSITZERN,
DEBEN DAS SCHWEIGEN GUT BEKOMMT.



FILM - WAFFE
ODER SCHEISSE?



DER FILM MUSS GESELLSCHAFTSKRITISCH WERDEN! ICH
MUSS GEGEN ZWEI FEINDEN RINGEN: GEGEN MEINER
BÜRGERLICHEN NATUR DIE AUS DIESEM ENGAGEMENT
ALIBI UND GESCHAFT MACHT UND GEGEN DER MANIPULI-
ERENDEN, GEGEN DEN MACHT - UND KAPITALSITZERN,
DEBEN DAS SCHWEIGEN GUT BEKOMMT.

Black Film Manifesto

1

You are observing the class structure of Yugoslav society. The lumpenproletariat and "humanist intelligentsia." Instrumentalized exploitation of the poor for filmic purposes. A lesson to family Žilnik regarding the hungry, the dirty, and the stinky. The child needs to be shown what life really is.

2

In the country that is not quite sure in its name, anthem, or government, at the moment when basic needs (bread, milk, and dollars) are becoming increasingly expensive, the film caste is narcissistically enjoying the "elaboration" of the workers' and peasants' suffering. This enables them, as constitutive elements of the part of civic structure that manipulates society, an illusion of engagement and compassion.

3

Everybody should be screwed, including oneself. Starting with scattering one's own marital bed! How would we feel if the wretches really started putting it up our asses? Luckily that is not going to happen.

4

I still need to make socially engaged films though. Because I am confronting two enemies - Firstly, my petit bourgeois nature that transforms my engagement into an alibi and a business opportunity, and secondly, the powerful manipulators and structures of power who would only benefit from my silence. This is why I say "fuck you" to my feeling of guilt.

5

FILM - WEAPON OR BULLSHIT?

6

Look again at point 4.

Black and White

Crno i belo

Yugoslavia • 1990 • 60 min. • Betacam • color

Reuben, an African student at **Novi Sad University**, returns to Yugoslavia from visiting his parents back home. He is met with a completely altered political climate. In the atmosphere of a "national awakening," dark-skinned students from Non-Aligned countries are no longer welcome. **Reuben** meets **Sasha**, a young man who has no racial prejudices, who has just returned from Europe, where he had been working for a while. **Reuben** stays with **Sasha** and tries to get in touch with his girlfriend, **Milena**. **Sasha's** father, a retired policeman, has a rock band, and his former colleague (who is now a restaurant owner) is **Milena's** father. He opposes **Reuben** and **Milena's** relationship, and this leads to a showdown with revolvers. **Reuben** and **Milena** manage to escape and they leave the country, which slides downhill toward hysterical nationalism.

Black and White was one of the first TV films to articulate the topic of the so-called "transition toward capitalism" in television fiction programs. It was produced by the public broadcaster in Novi Sad and shown on public TV throughout Yugoslavia. ●



Black and White (film stills), 1990

Brooklyn - Gusinje

Brooklyn - Gusinje

Yugoslavia • 1988 • 87 min. • 16 mm • color

Ivana, a young seamstress, quits her job in a sweatshop in Novi Pazar and accepts an offer to become a waitress in a joint privately owned by Mr. Šečo in Gusinje, a Montenegrin village at the Yugoslav-Albanian border. She and the head waitress quickly become friends. Brothers Škeljzen and Bećir come to Gusinje from New York on a holiday; they meet the waitresses, and romances ensue. We watch the meeting of Serbian and Albanian cultures, languages, customs, and family traditions in the fascinating, mountainous landscape. While the men promise the girls marriage and life in America, there are numerous obstacles in the realization of the plan, and the brothers return to New York alone.

This is one of Žilnik's bigger TV productions, as he was given a decent budget after the success of his previous films. He also garnered a lot of support from the local community, which was happy about his interest in them. Žilnik had heard about an Albanian village with a large number of emigrants to New York and went to investigate it. He was introduced to the head of the village,



Brooklyn - Gusinje (film still), 1988

who said he had four sons in the US, and that if Žilnik wanted to show how good, strong, and honest this community was, they would all be glad to help. They saw the film before it was publicly broadcast and "approved" it. In a time of rising nationalist tensions, the film offered a precious appreciative view of the Albanian minority and relations between different peoples in the Balkans. ●

We would like to thank Radio Television of Serbia for granting us permission to screen this film.

Dragoljub and Bogdan: Electricity

Dragoljub i Bogdan: struja

Yugoslavia • 1982 • 85 min. • 16 mm • color

A vast power plant is being built on the Drina River, which is famous for its hundreds-years-old tradition of rafting timber downstream to Belgrade. Working on the construction of the power plant's dam connects the two protagonists of this story: **Bogdan**, one of the last rafting masters on the Drina, and **Dragoljub**, one of the oldest explosive experts, who has built dams all over the world, including in Africa, and who wants to get an apartment from the

company before he retires. Problems occur when **Bogdan** writes a poem about the decline of working conditions and is prosecuted for criticizing the system.

This is one of the first films in which **Žilnik** includes another set of protagonists, here a young couple from Africa who have come to Yugoslavia to study and work as part of the state-supported Non-Aligned Movement. ●



Dragoljub and Bogdan:
Electricity (film still), 1982

We would like to thank Radio Television of Serbia for granting us permission to screen this film.



Early Works (on-set photo), 1968,
PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

Early Works

Rani radovi

Yugoslavia • 1969 • 78 min. • 35 mm • black & white

In an allegorical manner, *Early Works* recounts the story of young people who took part in student demonstrations in June 1968 in Belgrade, and, as its opening credits state, it includes "additional dialogue by Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels." Three young men and a girl, *Jugoslava*, defy the petit bourgeois routine of everyday life. Wishing to "change the world," inspired by the writings of the young Marx, they go to the countryside and to factories to "wake up people's consciousness" and to encourage them to fight for emancipation and a life worth living. In the countryside, they face traditionalism and squalor, but they show their own limits, weaknesses, incapacities, and jealousy. They get arrested. Frustrated because the planned revolution has not been realized, the three young men decide to eliminate *Jugoslava*, who is the witness of their impotence. They shoot her, cover her with the Communist Party flag, and burn her body. A dark pillar of smoke rising into the sky is the only thing that remains of the intended revolution.

This was Žilnik's first feature film, produced by the biggest production house in Yugoslavia, *Avala Film* in Belgrade, and coproduced by *Neoplanta Film* in Novi Sad. The film passed the censorship commission in early March 1969

and premiered in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Skopje. After four months of successful screening in cinemas throughout Yugoslavia, extensive polemics in the media, and the film's acceptance as an official selection of the Berlin International Film Festival, Žilnik was summoned to the office of the director of *Avala Film*. The night before, the film had been screened at the presidential residency. The screening was interrupted, and President Josip Broz Tito allegedly asked, "What do these lunatics want?" At *Avala Film*, Žilnik was asked to sign a statement that the film was still in the editing stage. He refused, arguing that both the professional and general public would see through it as a lie. That same day, all copies of the film were confiscated and the "Decision on the temporary ban on public screening of *Early Works*" was issued. Court proceedings started just a few days later. Since he had a law degree, Žilnik defended himself and the film in court. The accusations were dismissed and the film was shown at the Berlin International Film Festival a week later, where it won the Golden Bear for Best Film and an Award for Young Generation. That same summer, the film won several awards at Pula Film Festival.

Early Works stirred up much controversy among Yugoslavia's political establish-

ment, particularly due to symbolic, but also fairly explicit, reflections on the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops in August 1968, as well as due to portraying the manipulation and persecution of the student activists who organized protests in Belgrade in June 1968. As a consequence, the **Party Committee** in Novi Sad organized an ideological campaign that proclaimed the movie to be anarchistic. **Žilnik** was criticized as being "under the influence of [Leon] Trotsky and Rudi Dutschke" and was expelled from the **Communist Party of Yugoslavia**. The film was withdrawn from domestic movie distribution, but at the same time, the official state exporter, **Yugoslavia Film**, distributed it in more than thirty countries around the world. The next time *Early Works* was to be shown in Yugoslavia was nearly twenty years later, in 1987, on state television.

The debate surrounding *Early Works* was huge across all parts of Yugoslavia and in various media, from daily newspapers to popular and specialized magazines. Many of the articles also published **Žilnik's** closing arguments of his court defense:

The prosecutor is trying to prove the political offense of the film *Early Works*. He is mystifying the content of the film and its protagonists, and is trying to present it as a document about a particular event, and then claiming that the event did not take place as it was presented. The prosecutor does not even understand the medium of the feature film at

all. He does not realize that the only possible offense of the film is its artistic failure. But if it really is a bad film, it is not for the prosecutor to prove it.

However, all the prosecutor's actions – a motion for a temporary ban, an unsupported argument, his refusal of evidence, etc. – these are no longer things from an artistic film, these are things from our real life, these are the political acts that we should seriously think about. By these political acts, the prosecutor really is deeply depreciating, I would not say all the contemporary settings of social relations, as he claims *Early Works* does – I would be even more specific: by acting in such a political manner, the prosecutor is severely depreciating the progressive, anti-dogmatic, self-management principles of social relations. By acting in this way, he is glorifying, supporting, and developing other types of "modern principles" of social relations: bureaucratic, dogmatic, anti-self-managing. With his actions, he is trying to prove the following in real life and not in an art film: that confusion and irresponsibility rule the authorities who practice self-management in this country; that "we are not yet ready for self-management;" that the social authorities comprising professionals and politicians do not worry about social interest, and that, instead of them, only the state authorities should be in charge of the social interest. This is what the



Early Works (on-set photo), 1968, PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

prosecutor is trying to say by banning the film four months after it has been part of the regular cinema repertoire, and after it has been approved and evaluated by the competent bodies of self-management and social authorities.

Furthermore, the prosecutor is trying to prove that irresponsibility prevails in the information media of this country, that there is incompetence, and that "things should be put in order here, too." He doubts the value of the principles of freedom and responsibility of the press. He ignores the fact that the film has been rated by fifteen news media, three of them bodies of the Socialist Alliance of

Working People of Yugoslavia, and two bodies of the Youth Alliance. He believes that state control should be established over these media. Thirdly, the prosecutor doubts the international reputation of Yugoslavia. He claims that when, in his opinion, a bad Yugoslav film appears abroad, the world will immediately identify this film with Yugoslavia and its politics, and that we will consequently suffer. The prosecutor obviously does not know the scope of film and does not understand how his dogmatic political behavior not based on real arguments is far more dangerous for the reputation of our country than any film. ●

Freedom or Cartoons

Sloboda ili strip

Yugoslavia • 1972 • unfinished • 35 mm & 16 mm • color

Through the story of **Svetozar**, a successful independent salesman from Vojvodina, and the children he had out of wedlock in several cities in Yugoslavia (Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, and Skopje), *Freedom or Cartoons* recounted the turbulent political events of the summer of 1971. The film incorporated documentary footage of events in Zagreb, capturing a wave of national awakening and the arrival of young politicians as the leaders of the students' organization; the pro-Mao student demonstrations in Ljubljana; and, in Belgrade, the inflammatory debates for and against the changes to the Yugoslav Constitution.

After heated public debates surrounding Žilnik's *Early Works*, released in 1969, and Dušan Makavejev's *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism*, released in 1971, as well

as attacks on both films for their anarchism and supposed anti-communism, the director of the production house **Neoplanta Film**, **Svetozar Udovički**, was removed from his position. The new director requested that Žilnik remove from *Freedom or Cartoons* the footage of the events in Zagreb and Ljubljana, which at that time were under police investigation, as well as the "parts with unacceptable political allusions." Although the premiere was expected to take place at **Pula Film Festival**, after Žilnik refused to make these cuts, the film was stopped in its editing process in 1972 and never finished. Recently, part of a non-edited film negative was found, the sound of which has been lost, and Žilnik is now looking into the possibility of making a reconstructed version. ●





Freedom or Cartoons (on-set photos), 1971, PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ



Good Morning Belgrade (film stills), 1985

Good Morning Belgrade

Beograd dobro jutro

Yugoslavia • 1985 • 57 min. • Betacam (transfer to 16 mm) • color

At the center of this docudrama are the events and tensions that occur during the shooting of a feature film about the Belgrade of a speculative future. The director of the film sets up unrealistic expectations of the producer. The producer engages workers of the city utility services as extras and to help her with set design. These people work for waterworks, sewer systems, and sanitation units. In this drama, we are immersed in their lives and the problems they face while trying to keep Belgrade a functioning city. By overstepping the budget of the film, the producer breaks the law, and during a court trial where the crew members are in the witness stand, we follow the drama of how a film is made.

Although this is not mentioned explicitly in the film, the science fiction film that the director is making is in fact Žilnik's *Pretty Women Walking through the City* (1986); *Good Morning Belgrade* is its companion piece and a commentary on the working conditions in film production at the time. Both films – *Good Morning Belgrade*, made as a docudrama for television, and *Pretty Women*, made as a feature film intended for cinemas – were produced so that the budget of one supported the making of the other. This was a rather standard procedure at

the time, as republic TV stations had high demand for a constant influx of new programming, and therefore had flexibility in commissioning new works and distributing the funds. At today's rates, the budget procured for a TV film would be approximately €150,000, and as such required radical thriftiness – for example, there was one cameraman working both the movie and Beta video cameras for both films. *Good Morning Belgrade* was filmed during the day and *Pretty Women* during the night. A fortunate circumstance was that the architect **Bogdan Bogdanović** was the mayor of Belgrade at the time, and he agreed to give access to the civic services. ●

We would like to thank Radio Television of Serbia for granting us permission to screen this film.

I Do Not Know What That Should Mean

Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten

Germany • 1975 • 9 min. • 35 mm • color

This film collage is based on Heinrich Heine's poem "Lorelei" (1824). It uses traditional German postcards showing images of the siren of the Rhine, who lured fishermen and sailors to their death with her beauty and song. The "stop-trick" technique was used to film the participants who recite the poem, as well as the old beer drinkers who sing in beer cellars. The postcards came from the Valentin-Karlstadt-Museum in Munich, dedicated to the comedic entertainer Karl Valentin.

This is the first film Žilnik made when he arrived in Germany, where, while residing in Munich, he spent a lot of his time visiting Bavarian flea markets, breweries, and museums. For a short time he worked as a car mechanic, but soon, together with his colleague Andrej Popović, who worked as a cameraman, he decided to approach various film production companies. He encountered a few colleagues he knew from attending the Oberhausen and Berlin film festivals, and they told him that there was a high demand for short films because of a state-supported production program. Through

the program, a film that received a high enough approval rating from the state committee (*Bewertungsstelle*) would immediately be screened in numerous cinemas across Germany, and its director would win a grant of 30,000 DM to make another film. The reputation of Yugoslav filmmakers was excellent at the time, and a number of Žilnik's films received both outstanding recommendations (*besonders wertvoll*) and financial backing. In 1975, he had five shorts in the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, representing Germany. ●



Illness and Recovery of Buda Brakus (on-set photo), 1980,
PHOTO: VLADIMIR ČERVENKA

Illness and Recovery of Buda Brakus

Bolest i ozdravljenje Bude Brakusa

Yugoslavia • 1980 • 89 min. • 16 mm • color

The protagonists of this docudrama are old farmers who migrated to the region of Banat in Vojvodina in 1922, getting the land for their merits in the First World War. One of these farmers, **Buda Brakus**, is injured while feeding his bulls and taken to hospital for surgery. During his recovery, his old friends visit him and evoke memories from the war. He remembers being wounded, lying in a hospital bed in North Africa, and crossing Albania on foot, as well as his time spent in America in 1910. To create these segments, Žilnik used archival material. **Brakus** then goes to a spa town, where he meets Hungarian people who are the same age as him. At the time **Brakus** first settled in Vojvodina, these Hungarian workers mainly worked in mills or helped the newcomers as bricklayers when they were building their houses. The impressive lives of all the protagonists are woven into a multifaceted recounting of the lives of people in this region.

This is another of Žilnik's productions for TV, and the first one done in the docudrama format. The television production teams and their way of working were quite fixed, and Žilnik did not want to be restricted by the screenplay writers with whom he was obliged to collaborate. The docudrama format allowed him more freedom, with him



Illness and Recovery of Buda Brakus (film stills), 1980

doing the research and proposing a screenplay, and then still being able to improvise with the protagonists. Žilnik became interested in First World War soldiers while working on his previous film *Volunteers* (1979), realizing that their stories are very invisible in the public sphere, which is more focused on the Second World War. The film was highly praised by critics, who stressed its truthfulness, empathy, and tender approach toward the protagonists. ●



Inventory

Inventur – Metzstraße 11

Germany • 1975 • 9 min. • 16 mm • color



Tenants of an old building in the center of Munich are featured in this film. Most of them are foreigners from Yugoslavia, Italy, Turkey, Greece, and elsewhere who work in Germany as *Gastarbeiter*, or “guest workers.” In their mother tongues, each tells who they are and briefly talks about their major worries, new hopes, and plans for the future. This film was shot in a just a few hours shortly after Žilnik moved to Germany. The process of communication with the protagonists and persuading them to take part in the movie offers a precious view into many issues that Žilnik would later face himself, also being a “guest worker.”

Žilnik continued working with the *Gastarbeiter* community in other films he made during this period. One of the most prominent and best reviewed of these films was the now lost *Antrag* (1974), in which he dealt with the dispute around the 1974 invasion of Cyprus among Turkish and Greek workers on a construction site. Four of Žilnik’s documentaries from the German period are lost, partly because he had to leave the country abruptly in 1976 and partly because one of his producers, F. T. Aeckerle, moved to Africa. ●

Inventory (film stills), 1975

June Turmoil

Lipanjaska gibanja

Yugoslavia • 1969 • 10 min. • 35 mm • black & white



This film documents student demonstrations in Belgrade in June 1968, the first mass protests in Yugoslavia after the Second World War. Students were protesting the move away from socialist ideals, the “red bourgeois,” and economic reforms that had brought about high unemployment and emigration to Western Europe. During the protests, they also called for repercussions for the police officers who attacked the students on the first day. Prominent public figures and artists joined the protest in solidarity with the students. The film ends with a speech from the dramatic play *Danton's Death* by Georg Büchner, delivered by the famous stage actor Stevo Žigon, who at the time was performing the role of Robespierre. The political elite reacted very negatively to the protests. The police were sent to prevent the students from communicating their messages to the wider public. On the sixth day of demonstrations, President Josip Broz

June Turmoil (film stills), 1969

Tito made a speech on TV saying he understood the students' dissatisfaction and that the government would act on it, and through this the students felt as if they had achieved their goal. Quite a few filmmakers were shooting the protests, but Žilnik's was some of the rare footage that survived, since it was brought back to Novi Sad and wasn't developed in Belgrade.

June Turmoil returned to Belgrade to be screened in 1969, and from the official point of view, it was criticized as being one-sided, while the students felt it was a reminder of the unrealized promises made to them. That same year, it received a special mention at the **International Short Film Festival Oberhausen**. It remains one of the rare documents of the 1968 student protests and has been screened on numerous occasions over the past five decades. ●

Kenedi Trilogy / Kenedi Goes Back Home

Kenedi se vraća kući

Serbia and Montenegro • 2003 • 75 min. • DV (transfer to 35 mm) • color

This is a story of Yugoslavs who left the country during the war and spent over ten years in Western Europe as refugees or in asylum. In the second half of 2002, the European Union sent many of these people back to Serbia and Montenegro together with their families, believing there was no longer any reason for their stay. Procedures for their return were usually very strict. Families were gathered during the night, transported to the airport, and sent to Belgrade on the first flight. To make things more dramatic, the majority of children born in Western European countries could speak and write the other language better than their mother tongue. As these families often had to sell everything they owned when leaving, they faced a situation back home where normal life was practically impossible.

Kenedi Goes Back Home follows two friends, Kenedi and Denis, as well as the Ibinci family from Kostolac, during the first couple of days after arriving at Belgrade Airport. We see them trying to find accommodation and searching for friends and other family members. Kenedi goes to Kosovska Mitrovica, where his family used to have a house, to which he now does not have access. The film focuses on the position of the Roma people as the most vulnerable part of the returned population.

The making of this film began with research into the situation of children who were born or grew up in Germany and were now being forcibly deported back to Serbia. Žilnik filmed the kids as they sent regards to their former classmates and when shown in public discussions and forums, this footage stirred public outrage. Žilnik was contacted by the German authorities and it came to light that the German government had given monetary support for each family to the Serbian government, but it never made its way to the deported families to assist their return. Consequently, Žilnik was not allowed at





Kenedi Goes Back Home (film stills), 2003

LEFT

Kenedi Goes Back Home (poster), 2003

the airport to film the returnees, and by sending out a casting call for someone who spoke German, Serbian, and Romani, he met **Kenedi Hasani**, who could pretend he was at the airport to wait for relatives.

At the same time, Žilnik was contacted by the German **Green Party**, which sent five parliament members to Serbia to look into the embezzlement of the support funds for the refugees. When they visited expelled families and saw the dire situations in which they were living, the delegation asked Žilnik if he could put together a feature-length film to show at public cinemas in Germany. The **Green Party** held the opinion that good students and pupils should not be expelled from the country, as Germany needed educated workers. They paid for the production house **Terra Film** to produce a 35 mm print, and the film went on tour in North Rhine-Westphalia, Hessen, and Berlin. It stirred a lot of debate in the cities where it was screened, and even led to decisions in certain cities to stop the deportation of young people. The film was also shown in regional parliaments and at the **European Parliament**, discussed at the **Asylpolitisches Forum Deutschland**, and won awards at film festivals in Herceg Novi and Novi Sad. Žilnik went on to make two more films with Kenedi. ●

Kenedi Trilogy / Kenedi, Lost and Found

Gde je dve godine bio Kenedi

Serbia and Montenegro • 2005 • 26 min. • DV • color

After his participation in *Kenedi Goes Back Home*, Kenedi Hasani decides to illegally go to EU countries where his father, mother, brothers, and sisters still live. During one of his illegal crossings of the Hungarian-Austrian border in 2003, he is captured by the border police and spends a couple of months in a refugee camp. He manages to escape to Austria and then make his way to Germany and Holland. Žilnik meets up with him in Vienna in January 2005 at a screening of *Kenedi Goes Back Home* at the University of Vienna.

This documentary recounts Kenedi's experience of his two-year refugee status and witnesses his return to Serbia. The protagonist decides to build a house in Novi Sad, because the other members of his family are in the "process of re-admission" and will be arriving soon.

The film was made in three days, with no budget. ●



Kenedi, Lost and Found (film stills), 2005

Kenedi Trilogy / Kenedi Is Getting Married

Kenedi se ženi

Serbia • 2007 • 80 min. • DV (transfer to 35 mm) • color

Kenedi Hasani is in huge debt after building a house for his family. He finds himself searching for any kind of work to support himself, for as little as €10 per day – an amount that will scarcely help to relieve his debt. Ultimately, Kenedi decides to look for money in the sex industry. Initially offering his services to an older lady, he expands his “business” to offer sex to wealthy men. When he learns of new liberal European laws on gay civil partnership, Kenedi sees prospects in looking for “marriage material” as a way to renew his pursuit of getting legal status in the EU. The opportunity arises during EXIT Music Festival in Novi Sad, where he meets Max, a guy from Munich. But will their promising relationship bring the solution to Kenedi’s problems?

The making of *Kenedi Is Getting Married* at the same time acted as a fundraiser for the Hasani family, who needed funds to construct the roof for their house, which was built after their return from Germany from the brick collected from demolished houses.

At the Cinema City Festival in Novi Sad in 2007, the international jury president, Fridrik Thor Fridriksson, proclaimed Kenedi Hassani the best Serbian actor of 2007 and awarded him €5,000. The



Kenedi Is Getting Married (film still), 2007

professional actors in the audience started shouting: “He is an amateur!” and Fredriksson answered, “Yes, I know. But the most talented one.” Kenedi took the microphone and made a plea: “Dear colleagues, do not be angry! Throw away more garbage and paper on the streets, so I can collect it and won’t have to look for a job among film crews.”

The Kenedi Trilogy has been extensively shown on TV, as well as at more than thirty international festivals and exhibitions, including the Roma Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011. ●

Logbook_Serbistan

Destinacija_Serbistan

Serbia • 2015 • 94 min. • HD (transfer to DCP) • color

Illegal migrants and asylum seekers are housed in refugee centers in Serbia following dramatic flights from the wars and destitution gripping areas of North Africa and the Middle East. These people must pass through a complex period of adaptation to life in Serbia, though in most cases their aim is to arrive in countries within the **European Union**. This incisive docudrama highlights the sociopolitical context in which they show their individual worth, in the process becoming protagonists with whom viewers can identify and whose struggles with adversity and uncertain fates they can understand.

While filming this movie, *Žilnik* realized that many local people were friendly to the migrants partly because of the fact that several of their own family members had emigrated to the countries that these people were trying to reach and also because, for the elderly, they remembered the friendly relations established during the Non-Aligned Movement, when students from decolonized countries studied in Yugoslavia. While working on the film, the crew also witnessed the rising tide of hate speech coming from right-wing parties, just as in the 1990s, when the same strategies were used to add fuel to the wartime ideology of hate. ●



Logbook_Serbistan (film still), 2015

Marble Ass

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia • 1995 • 84 min. • Betacam (transfer to 35 mm) • color



Marble Ass (on-set photo), 1995,
PHOTO: MIODRAG MILOŠEVIĆ

Merlin has been helping to pacify the Balkans by turning tricks with countless Serbian men. She acts as a lightning rod that shelters Belgrade – calming violent nighthawks, swanky big spenders, miserable loners, and horny young studs, and taking on the charge that would otherwise befall little girls, unprotected mothers, and helpless old women. Combined with guns, this un-

bridled energy would otherwise eventually lead to bloodshed. Merlin cools the boiling blood of violent men and enriches it with love. Džoni (Johnny) returns from war and arrives home in Belgrade. His motives are apparently similar to Merlin's – he also wants to cool boiling blood, but he does it by letting it out through holes in the human body, which he makes with bullets and knives. *Marble Ass* is a treatise on the different methods of resolving conflicts, as resorted to by Merlin and Džoni.

The semifictional character of Merlin is played by actor Vjeran Miladinović, who also appears in a few of Žilnik's previous movies, and with whom a chance encounter prompted the making of this film. She was the one who introduced Žilnik to Belgrade's trans bars and hangouts, where Žilnik realized that, in the midst of the war, this felt like the most normal and level-headed community. The movie was funded by the earnings of *Tito among the Serbs for the Second Time* (1994). It was very successful, receiving the Teddy Award at the 1995 Berlin International Film Festival, and shown in numerous LGBT film festivals around the world. ●

One Woman - One Century

Jedna žena – jedan vek

Serbia • 2011 • 110 min. • HD • color

One Woman - One Century is a documentary film based on statements, interviews, and reconstructions of real-life events. The life story of **Dragica Vitolović Srzentić** casts light on a number of events and people relevant to Yugoslav history before and after the Second World War. The film's look at the century-long life of this woman-hero provides insight into the rarely mentioned segments of the ex-Yugoslav intellectual and ideological maze that traverses all the states in which this Istrian-born woman lived (Austria-Hungary, Kingdom of Italy, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, NDH, FNRJ, SFRJ, Croatia, and Serbia).

One Woman - One Century (film stills),
2011





In view of Vitolović Srzentić's experiences as a member of the Yugoslav Partisans resistance group during the Nazi occupation, the phrase "One Woman - One Century" is more than a comment on the protagonist's personal longevity. Rather, her particular account is inseparable from the turbulent history of Eastern Europe during the Second World War and its aftermath. The documentary's subject went underground, fled, was arrested and tortured, and cheated death more than once. Yet her words resonate with humor and dignity rather than anger or sadness. Žižek gives Vitolović Srzentić's stories ample time, supple-

menting them with footage of her journey to a parade in Moscow and inserting animated sequences that underscore her achievements.

The film was so well received that a local TV broadcaster commissioned an extended series, which was produced in three episodes and includes longer excerpts of Vitolović Srzentić's interview. *One Woman - One Century* is considered a strong defense against the falsification of historical facts around the Partisans' struggle, which is a mainstream tendency in post-socialist states. ●



*Paradise. An Imperialist
Tragicomedy (film still),
1976*

Paradise. An Imperialistic Tragicomedy

Paradies. Eine imperialistische Tragikomödie

Germany • 1976 • 60 min. • 16 mm • color

A multinational company owned by **Mrs. Judit Angst** is facing financial difficulties. She decides to hire a group of young anarchists to fake her kidnapping. After a couple of weeks spent in confinement, she will be able to justify the downfall of her company before the people, and at the same time it will also build her status as an opponent of destruction and chaos. A direct inspiration for the film was the kidnapping of **Peter Lorenz**, a center-right politician from West Berlin, in 1975. **Lorenz** spent five days in the captivity of the terrorist group **Bewegung 2. Juni** (2 June Movement), from which he was released after the government met the kidnappers' demands. The case was subsequently exploited for the benefit of his election bid to become the mayor of Berlin.

The film was planned as a big production with a 250,000 DM budget, and **Žilnik** had already extensively scouted various locations in Munich and was negotiating the participation of prominent actors such as **Hanna Schygulla** and **Rainer Werner Fassbinder**. The atmosphere in the city was tense due to concerns around terrorism and the growing prominence of the **Rote Armee Fraktion** (Red Army Faction). Because of the political dynamics at the time, Bavarian television withdrew its sup-

port for the film. As a result, **Žilnik** lost both his funding and the producer who facilitated the TV collaboration, so he decided to do the film in a more low-key manner. His production budget shrank to 60,000 DM, which came from some previously confirmed sponsors, and he moved forward with a team of people who were enthusiastic about making the movie happen – such as, for example, his costume designer, **Gisela Siebauer**, who agreed to play the leading female role. During the editing process, done at **Filmverlag der Autoren**, colleagues were already warning **Žilnik** that the film would get him into trouble.

Paradise premiered at **Werkstattkino** in Munich. Although the audience was enthusiastic, **Žilnik** learned that the police came the day after and asked that the film be removed from the cinema's repertoire. To evaluate the response his film might receive upon wider release, **Žilnik** decided to show it to a committee of prominent film critics who worked for the broadcaster **ARD** in Frankfurt. After watching the film, they advised him not to show it to anyone. Upon **Žilnik's** return to Munich, he was almost immediately visited by the police. They couldn't find anything to link him to terrorism, but saw receipts that showed that some of the film's collaborators had been

paid in cash. Claiming this amounted to tax fraud, they arrested Žilnik and his cameraman, Andrej Popović, and took them to police headquarters at midnight. Žilnik called Alexander Kluge, who at the time was the president of Filmverlag der Autoren (Directors Association), and also a lawyer to help them out. Kluge negotiated that the police would drop charges and release Žilnik and Popović from jail, on the condition they would leave the country. They had twelve hours to pack before the police escorted them to the Austrian border. They were never officially registered as expelled or banned from returning. ●



Pretty Women Walking through the City (on-set photos), 1985

RIGHT: Tomislav Gotovac and Ljubiša Ristić



Paradise. An Imperialist Tragicomedy (film still), 1976



Pretty Women Walking through the City

Lijepe žene prolaze kroz grad

Yugoslavia • 1986 • 103 min. • 35 mm • color

Belgrade in 2041 is an abandoned and devastated city covered in garbage. A handful of old men live there: a former journalist with his daughter, an ex-politician with his wife, and a former policeman who guards a boarding house where eight girls live. The old men bring up the girls in the spirit of the traditions of the former Yugoslav nations, which is a risky business because Southern Europe is being ravaged by a group that forbids any sort of remembering of the past.

While the "good guys" in the movie are played by established Yugoslav actors, or in many cases by nonprofessional actors, the "bad guys," referred to as the inspectors of Southern Europe, are

played by artist Tomislav Gotovac, the-ater director Ljubiša Ristić, and movie director Goran Marković. Yugoslav Partisans fighter, politician, human rights activist, and historian Vladimir Dedijer, expelled from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1954, also appears in the film, playing a 127-year-old version of himself.

The story starts at the moment when the former journalist and the other remaining survivors start an action to revive Belgrade in order to mark the hundredth anniversary of July 4, 1941, the people's uprising against Yugoslavia's German occupiers in the Second World War. The main character recounts the events of his youth, in the 1990s, when hatred and destruction prevailed and brought about the war and dissolution of the country. Upon the movie's premiere at the 1986 Pula Film Festival, the media reported that it was clear from the film that Žilnik had lost connection to both reason and reality. Alas, the future in fact proved Žilnik right. ●



Public Execution

Öffentliche Hinrichtung

Germany • 1974 • 9 min. • 35 mm •
black & white

This documentary film essay analyzes controversial police procedures used in Germany in the autumn of 1974, when a number of suspects being held by police for various offences were killed before being arrested or tried. The film is made up of film archive records of real police actions, which were purchased from television, and recorded witness reports. The footage is overdubbed with commentary from lawyers and political analysts, who come to the conclusion that, with the procedures used in 1974, the police exceeded their authority and broke the law.

Public Execution is a rarely screened film, as in 1974 it was not granted screening permission by the Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (FSK, the German motion picture rating organization), with the explanation that it was disturbing and misrepresentative of social relations. The only surviving copy of the film is this "working" version in black and white (the original was in color), which was actually preserved in the archives of the FSK. ●



The Comedy and Tragedy of Bora Joksimović
(film stills), 1977

The Comedy and Tragedy of Bora Joksimović

Komedija i tragedija Bore Joksimovića

Yugoslavia • 1977 • 30 min. • 16 mm • color



The film portrays the amateur writer Bora Joksimović, who works by day as a heating maintenance mechanic at the Zrenjanin theater. Unhappy with the shows he sees at the theater, he decides to try his luck as a playwright. He ends up writing fifty-three plays with "mighty plots," including *Hitler and Stalin: Conversations in Hell*, *Life of a Croatian Woman in Belgrade*, *Fratricide*, and so on. In the film, some of the scenes from his plays are staged.

When, in the autumn of 1976, Žilnik returned to Yugoslavia from Germany, he was asked to make a film for television. There was high demand at the time for

original programming in the drama department, which was broadcast every Monday at 8 PM, and each Yugoslav republic was required to produce a certain amount of this programming. Žilnik was immediately intrigued by the fact that, after the evening news, a broad audience would continue watching this program (the average number of viewers was between three and four million people), and he would have to figure out how to maintain his critical interest in portraying neglected topics and people while entertaining such a wide audience in prime time. Because of his controversial reputation, he was first asked to produce a comedy, so he became interested in investigating the amusing story of Bora Joksimović, who later also played in Žilnik's docudrama serial *Hot Paychecks* in 1987. ●



We would like to thank Radio Television of Vojvodina for granting us permission to screen this film.

The First Trimester of Pavle Hromiš

Prvo tromesečje Pavla Hromiša

Yugoslavia • 1983 • 87 min. • 16 mm • color

In this documentary, fifteen-year-old **Pavle Hromiš**, obeying the will of his parents, leaves Germany and goes to live in Yugoslavia with his grandmother in the village of Kucura. He attends secondary school and lives in a boarding house where he meets new friends, but has problems with the language and different school curriculum. He wants to go back to Germany, and he gets involved in many discussions about that.

Žilnik's interest in children going off to school in different cities and living away from their families was personal, because his aunt, who raised him, was the director of a big boarding house in Novi Sad. When Žilnik started researching the pupils who would appear in his documentary, he was surprised to find many couldn't speak the Serbian language well and were lost between two identities. ●





Not really "danger free",
like for filming...



Then it's a foul. If you don't have the ball and
he tackles you then it's yours... understand?

*The First Trimester of
Pavle Hromiš (film stills),
1983*

We would like to thank Radio
Television of Vojvodina for
granting us permission to screen
this film.

The Gastarbeiter Opera

Gastarbajterska opera

Yugoslavia • 1977 • theater play

The first project Žilnik undertook after his return to Yugoslavia from West Germany was this theater play, staged at the Experimental Scene of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad. It is a singing play in five scenes, following several women from rural areas in Yugoslavia as they travel to West Germany as *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers).

They encounter new working conditions, a new culture, and a new language. While the younger women are able to adjust, the older ones experience shock and conflict. After a period of time, the entire group decides to return home to Yugoslavia. At the border, before entering the country, the main protagonist dies.

The play was both a critical and a popular success. It was performed over eighty times and won awards at several festivals. However, a few months after the premiere, the West German cultural attaché to Yugoslavia wrote a formal complaint, as he realized after seeing the play that it featured the Nazi anthem "Horst Wessel Lied," and he understood this as an anti-German provocation. He requested the removal of the play from the theater's repertoire. In response, the theater sent an audio recording that made it clear that the song in question was in fact a Bertolt Brecht quote in which the playwright mocks the Nazi song, and the lines are changed to "das Kalb marschier" (a calf marches). As a result of this dispute, several German newspapers wrote about the play and a report was also broadcast on German television. ●



Gastarbeiter Opera, 1977.
PHOTOS: MIOMIR POLZOVIĆ



The Most Beautiful Country in the World

Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia • 2018 • 101 min. • HD video • color

The film follows a group of young migrants in Vienna who break through the administrative labyrinths of check-ins and gaining status and residence. We see their anxieties, mutual encouragement, and achievements. While mastering a foreign language, they demonstrate skill in their professions and clarity and knowledge in their entrance exams for schools and universities. *The Most Beautiful Country in the World* is also a story about new and old friendships, about the feeling of freedom in a new environment without the threat of war or the patriarchy

of family life. The main hero is twenty-three-year-old **Bagher**, who embarked on his journey from Afghanistan as a seventeen-year-old, leaving behind a family devastated by war. After three years of travel – through Iran, Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans – he arrived in Austria as part of a great migrant wave in 2015.

In this film, Žilnik continues his decades-long collaboration with migrant communities. He was specifically interested in making a film with people who had been granted permission to stay in Austria. The period before 2018 – before stringent anti-immigration policies began to be brought in – stands in stark contrast to the current refusal of the Austrian government to accept even unaccompanied refugee children from the Moria camp in Greece, which completely burned down in September 2020. In 2017, Austria granted asylum, subsidiary protection, and humanitarian residence permits to 30,428 people, and in 2019, to only 13,927.⁰¹

In preparation for the film, Žilnik posted a Facebook announcement asking people to come and talk about their experiences of migration and expectations of life in Austria. More than a hundred people responded, and dialogues



The Most Beautiful Country in the World (poster), DESIGN: PETER ROEHLER

⁰¹ Data from the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.



and scenes in *The Most Beautiful Country in the World* were developed based on interviews and discussions with them. However, rather than provide witness accounts of their own experiences onscreen, the film's protagonists chose to interpret each other's stories through acting.

The film was coproduced by Nanook Film Vienna with Radio Television of Vojvodina, Tramal Films in Ljubljana, and Factum Documentary Film Project in Zagreb and was made with a budget of about €120,000. Initial funds were provided by the **Austrian Federal Chancellery**. ●

The Most Beautiful Country in the World
(film still), 2018

We would like to thank Sixpackfilm for granting us permission to screen this film.

The Second Generation

Druga generacija

Yugoslavia • 1984 • 87 min. • 16 mm (transfer to 35 mm) • color

In 1984, Žilnik made a documentary about fifteen-year-old **Pavle Hromiš**, who, by the will of his guest-worker parents, leaves Germany, where he has

lived most of his life, and goes to live in Yugoslavia, where he goes to school and has trouble fitting in. This film, produced by Novi Sad Television, was so



well received that the Belgrade-based production company **Art Film 80** asked Žilnik to make a docudrama based on it. He shot 30 percent more material, and the following year completed the movie *The Second Generation*, following the same plot. It was also highly successful and was broadcast on many public TV stations in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere.

For this film, as with many others, Žilnik renounced his director's fee and instead agreed to a percentage from the sale of the film rights. ●



The Second Generation (film still), 1984



The Unemployed
(film stills), 1968



The Unemployed

Nezaposleni ljudi

Yugoslavia • 1968 • 13 min. • 35 mm • black & white

This film presents a series of portraits and situations people found themselves in after being made redundant during a time of economic reform, which was a move toward establishing a market economy in Yugoslavia. In the interviews, people speak about their doubts and confusion arising from the fact they had been expecting socialism to give them more social security. They criticize parasitic bureaucracy as well as the neutralization of unions and the revolutionary moment. They opt to leave for West Germany and to work there, since around that time Yugoslavia and Germany signed an agreement allowing a number of Yugoslav guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*) into the German workforce.

The film was produced by Neoplanta Film in Novi Sad. The original version was twenty minutes long and consisted of two parts: *Men* and *Women*. *The Unemployed - Women* was partly shot in the bar of the Hotel Putnik in Novi Sad and includes interviews with sex workers and strippers. Before becoming a stripper, one of the protagonists was a trade union functionary in a textile factory. The first part of the film, with men preparing to go to Germany, was approved by the review committee, but the second one with women was censored and never screened. Filmmak-

ers were allowed to be present during the review screenings of their films by the censorship board, and during the meeting Žilnik was told:

We can see that the workers are unhappy, but we are sending them to Germany, ruled by Willy Brandt's Social Democratic Party. There they will continue their education and their class consciousness will get stronger. But women, they are steeped in immorality and lechery. They will hardly regain their belief in socialism and communism. Cut the women, or we will not approve the film.

Žilnik found the original footage in 2010, when the archive of Neoplanta was moved from Novi Sad to the Yugoslav Film Archive in Belgrade, but decided to leave the film in its shorter version.

The Unemployed won the Silver Medal at the March Festival in Belgrade (Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival) and the Grand Prix (Der große Preis) for documentary film at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. ●

Uprising in Jazak

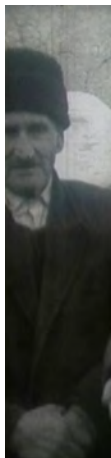
Ustanak u Jasku

Yugoslavia • 1973 • 18 min. • 35 mm • black & white and color

People from the village of Jazak, located on Fruška Gora mountain in Vojvodina, show how they fought underground against the occupying forces during the Second World War. They speak of dramatic events such as how they helped to hide Partisans and how young people joined Partisan units in Bosnia. We listen to people's recollections of the arrests, persecution, and torture. In the last quarter of the film, the participants speak about the events that

took place in the autumn of 1944, when the village was liberated and Russians passed through the area. They remember the joy and great expectations they had for the forthcoming freedom and socialism.

The film was produced by Cinema Club Pančevo, with which Žilnik had collaborated earlier, as an amateur. This production house had a job filming a commercial for a hotel close to





Uprising in Jazak (film stills), 1972

LEFT *Uprising in Jazak* (on-set photo), 1972, PHOTO: MILIVOJE MILIVOJEVIĆ

Jazak. During the day, the crew and the equipment were used for that job, and during the evening hours, Žilnik used them to make his movie.

Žilnik's approach to this film was motivated by a political shift in the cultural sphere in Yugoslavia, since the interference of party apparatchiks was becoming more direct. The space for critical films was shrinking, and even award-winning movies were taken out of distribution. This included some of Žilnik's films, such as *The Unemployed* (1968), *Black Film* (1971), *June Turmoil* (1969), and others. State-sanctioned cinema emphasized expensive Hollywood-like Partisan spectacles, which starred foreign actors (for example, Richard Burton played Tito in *Battle of Sutjeska*, 1973) and which presented Partisan guerrillas in a way that was

far from any reality. *Uprising in Jazak* is Žilnik's answer to that trend.

The committee for evaluating films banned it, saying that Žilnik had gathered a bunch of thugs and made them play Partisans. Žilnik returned to Jazak to inform the protagonists of the film that it had been banned. They were extremely offended, so they gathered up their old guns and all their official war honors and stormed to the city together with Žilnik, directly to the Ministry of Culture. The minister now recognized a few of them, who were prominent Partisan fighters, and became frightened by their shouts of "fascist traitor" and threats to sue him. He found the official paper banning the movie, tore it apart in front of them, and said, "Comrades, this was a mistake." ●



Vera and Eržika (film stills), 1981

Vera and Eržika

Vera i Eržika

Yugoslavia • 1981 • 75 min. • 16 mm • color

The two protagonists of the film, *Vera* and *Eržika*, have been working for the Trudbenik textile factory in Pančevo since they were thirteen. Now that they are about to retire, they face numerous problems and misunderstandings. According to the newly adopted law regarding pensions, only work from the age of fifteen is recognized. In order for the two of them to retire, they

need to complete two more years of work, but *Vera* and *Eržika* want the first two years to be taken into account instead. Starting from this problem as the source of the dramatic conflict, the film shows the emotional states of the protagonists, their families and their communities (one being Serbian and the other Hungarian), their relationships with their colleagues, and the various officials with whom they try to speak.

This is another example of Žilnik's TV productions that were realized with the broadcaster's permanent team and within their studios, as well as with a very limited budget and time frame, usually between two weeks and a month. Many filmmakers didn't like these working conditions and the much



Vera and Eržika (on-set photo), 1981,
PHOTO: VLADIMIR ČERVENKA

smaller fees than those paid for feature films, but for Žilnik this was a very stimulating environment that enabled him to follow up the stories of people he would become interested in, as in this case of the two hardworking women fighting for their rights.

As television crews had easy access to the factories, Žilnik's plan was to make a series of movies on workers' rights, which were declining in the unstable political situation that followed President Josip Broz Tito's death in 1980. The movies *Dragoljub and Bogdan: Electricity* (1982) and *The Way Steel Was Tempered* (1988) are also part of this series. ●

We would like to thank Radio Television of Vojvodina for granting us permission to screen this film.

I started making films a long time ago, and I realized that it is the only art in which life enters directly, in pieces. So everything I have done has never attempted to follow mainstream aesthetics; for me it was incidental. Rather, I have always tried to put on film what I found important in my life at the moment when the film was made. Everything I have done, either documentary or feature, was something of a happening when it was being made. That is the thing I find challenging, and not the mere imitation of reality through “the realization of the text.”

— Željimir Žilnik, interview (untitled), *Reporter*, August 1986

Želimir Žilnik: the films in my life

jurij meden

“Every filmmaker is inspired or encouraged by other people’s films. This is as clear as day. Not a single filmmaker exists who was never excited, intrigued, moved or angered [...] in a movie theater.”

—ŽELIMIR ŽILNIK

Zelimir Žilnik is one of the most important political filmmakers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. This is not a subjective opinion. He has been filming ceaselessly since the mid-1960s, creating a vast body of work that comprises over fifty titles.

The oft-abused word “political” should be explained here in more detail. Jean-Luc Godard once famously declared that “the problem is not to make political films, but to make films politically.” Žilnik has effortlessly resolved this problem ever since he first picked up a film camera, and he has always made films politically (“participatory management” and “democracy” were never buzzwords for him, simply a way of existing as an artist and as a human being).

Žilnik does not care about etching a career for himself, nor does he care about such fancy things as creating spatial relationships between bodies, paving the way for new conceptions of cinema, exhibiting an artful emotional restraint, brooding over the pains of bourgeois alienation under late capitalism, or anything else of a similar nature to please any critical establishments.

At the beginning of his creative career, Žilnik made movies “because we are still not in communism. I make movies to warn about how many things we still need to do in order to get there.” Today he makes movies because he cares about people. As simple, and as infinitely complex, as that.

ŽELIMIR ŽILNIK: THE FILMS IN MY LIFE

text ŽŽ
edit JM
idea WHW
2020





Every filmmaker is inspired or encouraged by other people's films. This is as clear as day. Not a single filmmaker exists who was never excited, intrigued, moved or angered... in a movie theater.

I remember two occasions when I openly discussed film influences with my director of photography.

Filmski uticaji su svakom filmašu inspiracija, ohrabrenje, podsetnik. To je jasno kao dan. Nema nikog ko pravi filmove a da nije bio uzbuđen, zainteresovan, sentimentaln ili ljut... u kinu.

Sećam se dva naslova kada sam sa snimateljem razgovarao koji bismo film uzeli kao uzor.

He shot on film until shooting on film was no longer viable, and at the turn of the century he switched to video. Obsessing over the materiality of his tools was never of any importance to him.

Želimir Žilnik makes imperfect films, because the world around him – around us – can only exist in an imperfect state. His films reflect that.

In early 2020, the directors of **kunsthalle wien**, the **WHW** collective, invited me to think about **Žilnik**'s position in film history: To which cinematic traditions, if any, does he belong? Who has inspired him and how? Who has been inspired by him? Instead of determining this position as a film historian, I thought it perhaps would be both most elegant and most accurate to ask **Žilnik** himself.

So, I asked him if he could provide not more than ten sentences, ten examples, of how his work intersects with film history, which I would then illustrate with corresponding images. Of course **Žilnik** would not be **Žilnik**, the most generous man alive, if he did not reply within twenty-four hours, and not with ten sentences but with ten pages containing the most precise chronicle of his cinematographic career in the wider context of international film history. The resulting video collage consequently and hopefully achieves a little bit more than just illustrating the role of **Želimir Žilnik** in the jaws of film history: perhaps it even preserves his own voice, and his own story. ●

“We rarely made films in a classic way – by casting everyone before the shooting begins, by having strict deadlines and contracts, by feeding actors their lines. My anarchic methodology has, overall, proven to be productive, and capable of delivering the final product more efficiently and far cheaper than working under strict rules. How and why? I don't have an exact explanation.”

—**ŽELIMIR ŽILNIK**

Jurij Meden works as a curator at the Austrian Film Museum, Vienna.





Branko Vučićević and Želimir Žilnik, Munich 1971, PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

cine clubs

ana janevski

Cine Club Belgrade

Dušan Makavejev, *Don't Believe in Monuments* (*Spomenicima ne treba verovati*) • 1958 • 5 min.

Živojin Pavlović, *Triptych on Matter and Death* (*Triptih o materiji i smrti*) • 1960 • 9 min.

Sava Trifković, *Hands of Purple Distances* (*Ruke ljubičastih daljina*) • 1962 • 10 min.

Cine Club Split

Dunja Ivanišević, *Woman* (*Žemsko*) • 1968 • 5 min.

Ivan Martinac, *I'm Mad* • 1967 • 6 min.

Ante Verzotti, *Twist-Twist* • 1962 • 3 min.

Lordan Zafranović, *Concert* (*Koncert*) • 1965 • 12 min.

Cine Club Zagreb

Tomislav Gotovac, *The Forenoon of a Faun* (*Prijepodne jednog Fauna*) • 1963 • 8 min.

Zlatko Hajdler, *Kariokinesis* (*Kariokineza*) • 1965 • 2 min.

Mihovil Pansini, *Scusa signorina* • 1963 • 7 min.

Mihovil Pansini, *Toilet* (*Dedicated to Dušan Makavejev*) (*Zahod [posvećeno Dušanu Makavejevu]*) • 1963 • 16 min.

Vladimir Petek, *Encounters* (*Sretanje*) • 1963 • 8 min.

Milan Šamec, *Termites* (*Termiti*) • 1963 • 1 min.

Želimir Žilnik started his film career within the lively amateur film scene of numerous cine clubs (*kino klubovi*) that developed in all major cities of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1960s.⁰¹ The chance to pursue film was primarily taken by young people, often students and film buffs, who were given an opportunity to create important centers for experimenting and redefining the conventional filmic language. They had vast knowledge of the first avant-garde films from the 1920s and '30s and had hearsay information about the American avant-garde, but their main impetus rather came from the modernist models of other arts: visual arts, theater, and literature, especially anti-theater and stream-of-consciousness novels. Žilnik was a member of the cine club in his hometown of Novi Sad and he also was aware of the activities of the other cine clubs through film festivals and screenings by mainly youth organizations all over the country. The rise of cine clubs coincided with the establishment of broader cultural freedom in the country and an openness to various international cultural influences in every field of art.

01

According to the official system – the socialist self-management of that age – self-organization was also present in the field of culture. Even more so, cine clubs were part of the socialist project to bring technical culture and achievements closer to all citizens, not only professionals. Thus forming amateur societies (amateur film, amateur photography, amateur visual arts groups, “colonies,” and so on) was systematically



Vladimir Petek in front of the GEF poster, designed by Ivan Picelj, Zagreb, 1963

encouraged. In 1946, a special institution was established: Narodna tehnika (People's Technology), with the aim of organizing, sponsoring, and promoting various amateur activities.

02

In parallel, the international manifestations of the Music Biennale and the exhibition *New Tendencies* were also established.

This section of the exhibition focuses on the 1960s activities of the cine clubs in Belgrade, Ljubljana, Split, and Zagreb, as major centers of film innovation and experimentation, as well as on GEF – Genre Experimental Film Festival in Zagreb.

The filmmakers in Cine Club Zagreb – Mihovil Pansini, Vladimir Petek, and Tomislav Gotovac, among others – were interested in experimenting with the structural properties of film, and some of them came up with the concept and term "anti-film." The main postulate of anti-film is its negation of film as an expression or communication between the artist and the viewers, considering it instead as an act of disclosure, of research and reduction. The lively conversations among the cine club members were gathered in the publication *Anti-film and Us*, which opened up a space for the establishment of GEF in 1963.⁸² The festival proved to be popular and brought together many different actors of the Yugoslav cinema community, from professional filmmakers to cine club amateurs as well as many artists, important figures from cultural life, and foreign guests. In this way, the festival contributed to the creation of formal and informal cinematic networks. As early as the first edition of the festival, titled *Anti-film and New Tendencies in Cinema*, GEF's inclination was to connect all human activities. Thus the themes of the following festivals were: *Exploration of Cinema and Exploration through Cinema* (1965), *Cybernetics*



and *Aesthetics* (1967), and *Sexuality as a New Road towards Humanity* (1970). The rich archive material available from these four iterations of the festival, consisting of posters and other ephemera designed by the well-known and progressive graphic designer Mihajlo Arsovski, testifies to the rich local and international program as well as the importance of GEF 69 as an interdisciplinary discursive platform.⁸³

Cine Club Split was formed in 1952, and it launched four generations of amateur filmmakers – including Ivan Martinac, Ante Verzotti, Lordan Zafranović, and one of the few female protagonists, Dunja Ivanišević, among others. The films made in the Split club are mostly distinguished by a rigid visual and editing structure that focuses on framing, and they have a pronounced absence of narration. This structuralist approach is characterized by the so-called “editing in frame” introduced by Martinac, one of the central figures in the cine club. His films, noted for their contemplative style and strict form, often deal with the atmosphere, moods, and feelings of his native Split.

03

The festival was accompanied by thematic discussions with the participation of filmmakers, philosophers, and artists, while the informative section included retrospectives of avant-garde films from the 1920s and screenings of foreign avant-garde films. In the first edition of GEF 69, a Belgrade-based Yugoslav Film Archive program included a selection of French, German, and American avant-garde features and a set of movies by the Scottish Canadian animator Norman McLaren. In 1967, the guest of honor was film historian Paul Adams Sitney, with a ten-hour program of the American avant-garde, including films by Stan Brakhage, Robert Breer, Bruce Conner, Jonas Mekas, and the *Fluxfilm Anthology*. In the last GEF 69, one of the guests was the American director Paul Morrissey, with films from Andy Warhol's workshop and the sexual-diary movies *Fuses* by multimedia artist Carolee Schneemann.



About GEF 69, *Studentski list*, no.10, Zagreb, April 1970

04

Želimir Žilnik, "In Socialism's Firm Embrace," interview by Marina Gržinić and Hito Steyerl, *Zarez*, 2007, 134-35.

Opposed to the "pure film" of Cine Club Split and the "anti-film" tendencies of Cine Club Zagreb, two Belgrade-based clubs – Cine Club Belgrade, founded in 1951, and the Academic Film Club Belgrade, founded in 1958 – produced films of symbolic and expressive cinematography. Under the influence of Russian expressionism, the Polish Black Series, and French New Wave, the Belgrade films reflect human anxiety in search of the surreal and the absurd. The first antagonisms with the Zagreb circle already started during the first GEF discussions, when Belgrade-based cinema makers like Dušan Makavejev stressed their interest in researching reality and distancing themselves from pure experimentation.

Cine Club Belgrade gave rise to the new major film paradigm of the 1960s and '70s, which would later come to be called New Yugoslav Film. Namely, this cine club's activities proved to be a very important working context for future professional filmmakers like Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Živojin Pavlović, and Aleksandar Petrović, as well as Karpo Acimović-Godina in Slovenia. Žilnik very quickly came to see film as a tool of criticism, and has shared this view about the advantages of "amateur" film:

Very early I was forced to use all the methods of movement of amateur film. This environment of amateur film enabled me to rid myself of administrative labyrinths, which were the only way of acquiring money to make film. It was a form of freedom.⁰⁴ ●

Ana Janevski is Curator in the Department of Media and Performance at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

We would like to thank the following for granting us screening permissions:

Academic Film Center
Belgrade for *Hands of Purple
Distances • Triptych on
Matter and Death*

Bojana Makavejev for *Don't
Believe in Monuments*

Cine Club Split
for *I'm Mad • Concert •
Twist-Twist • Woman*

Croatian Film Association
for *Encounters • Kariokinesis
• Scusa signorina • Toilet
(Dedicated to Dušan
Makavejev) • Termites •
The Forenoon of the Faun*

Karpo Aćimović-Godina at Cine Club Odsev

Cine Club Odsev (Reflection) from Ljubljana is represented by four films by Karpo Aćimović-Godina:

Phobia (Fobija) • 1965 • 5 min.

Dog (Pes) • 1965 • 8 min.

Game (Divjad) • 1965 • 6 min.

A.P. (Anno Passato) • 1966 • 5 min.

The film selection from Ljubljana's Cine Club Odsev is entirely dedicated to the filmmaker and cinematographer Karpo Aćimović-Godina. In late 1960, Željimir Žilnik saw Godina's early films at an amateur film festival in Novi Sad. Žilnik was so impressed that he decided to ask Godina to apply his rule-bending skills as a cinematographer to his first feature film, *Early Works* (1969), inaugurating a long-standing friendship and professional collaboration.

In 1963, twenty-year-old Godina became the youngest member of Ljubljana's amateur cine club, Odsev (Reflection). Unlike similar cine clubs in Croatia and Serbia, which upon their founding quickly became local hubs of lively experimental film activity and started emitting waves of collective creativity, one can hardly say the same thing for Odsev. Ljubljana's cine club remained, above all, a collective of individuals who were primarily preoccupied with "amateur filmmaking" and were not too interested in defining themselves as avant-gardists or in inventing new theories and practices of filmmaking akin to Cine Club Zagreb's "anti-film" or Cine Club Belgrade's "alternative film." However, this lack of

institutional ambition did not prevent Godina from using the basic technical facilities offered to him by the club to create, in just two years, a surprisingly homogeneous and playful body of 8 mm works.

Godina is best known for a trio of early 1970s masterpieces shot on 35 mm: *The Gratinated Brains of Pupilija Ferkeverk* (1970), *Litany of Happy People* (1971), and *About the Art of Love or a Film with 14441 Frames* (1972). What characterizes this series is a solemn succession of exclusively still, carefully framed, monumental shots that mock the official ideology of their time, while bursting with an infectious, humorous *joie de vivre*.

On the other hand, Godina's earlier 8 mm films, shown as part of **shadow citizens** at kunsthalle wien, are composed of anything but still shots. In fact, none of them contain even a single fixed shot. They explode with motion: constant motion of the gaze, constant motion in front of the gaze, constant motion in all possible and impossible directions. And all this grainy commotion is linked together through furious in-camera editing and an absence of



any logical narrative. It's almost as if the young *Godina* was deliberately trying to unlearn any rules that applied to filmmaking.

Želimir Žilnik and Karpo Aćimović-*Godina* on the set of *Freedom or Cartoons*, 1971, PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

Žilnik and *Godina* are currently working together on a reimagining of *Freedom or Cartoons*, a famously banned project that they started in 1972 but were never able to finish. ●

We would like to thank the Slovenian Cinematheque for granting us permission to screen these films.

biography

želimir žilnik

Želimir Žilnik (b.1942, lives and works in Novi Sad, Serbia) has written and directed numerous feature and documentary films. From the very beginning, his films have focused on contemporary issues, featuring social, political, and economic assessments of everyday life (*A Newsreel on Village Youth, in Winter*, 1967; *Little Pioneers*, 1968; *The Unemployed*, 1968; *June Turmoil*, 1969; *Black Film*, 1971; *Uprising in Jazak*, 1973).

The student demonstrations of 1968 and the turmoil that followed the occupation of Czechoslovakia are at the center of Žilnik's first feature film, *Early Works* (1969), which was awarded the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) and four prizes at Pula Film Festival that same year.

After facing problems with censorship in Yugoslavia during work on his second feature film, *Freedom or Cartoons* (1972, produced by Neoplanta Film, not completed), Žilnik spent the mid-1970s in West Germany, where he indepen-

dently made seven documentaries and one feature film, *Paradise. An Imperialist Tragicomedy* (1976). These films were among the first ever to touch on the foreign workforce, or *Gastarbeiter*, in West Germany, and they continue to be shown to this day at various retrospectives and symposia.

Following his return to Yugoslavia at the end of the 1970s, he directed a substantial series of television films and docudramas for TV Belgrade and TV Novi Sad (*Illness and Recovery of Buda Brakus*, 1980; *Vera and Eržika*, 1981; *Dragoljub and Bogdan: Electricity*, 1982; *The First Trimester of Pavle Hromiš*, 1983; *Stanimir Descending*, 1984; *Good Morning Belgrade*, 1985; *Hot Paychecks*, 1987; *Brooklyn – Gusinje*, 1988; *Oldtimer*, 1989; *Black and White*, 1990; and others).

By the end of the 1980s, Žilnik was making films through a cooperative production structure of television and cinema, each work foreshadowing the growing tensions and looming political and social changes that were to affect the country (*The Second Generation*,

1984; *Pretty Women Walking through the City*, 1986; *The Way Steel Was Tempered*, 1988).

Turning to independent film and media production in the 1990s, he went on to make a series of feature and documentary films revolving around the cataclysmic events in the Balkans (*Tito among the Serbs for the Second Time*, 1994; *Marble Ass*, 1995; *Throwing Off the Yolks of Bondage*, 1996; *Wanderlust*, 1998). In 1995, *Marble Ass* won the prestigious Teddy Award at the Berlinale.

The breakdown of the system of values in post-transitional Central and Eastern European countries and the problems concerning refugees and migration in the new circumstances of an extended Europe became the focus of Žilnik's most recent films, from *Fortress Europe* (2000), to *Logbook_Serbistan* (2015), to *The Most Beautiful Country in the World* (2018).

Films by Željimir Žilnik have won numerous awards at national and international film festivals. Recently, his work has been the subject of major career film retrospectives at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2019; Cinemateca Argentina, Buenos Aires, 2018; Mar del Plata International Film Festival, Argentina, 2017; Anthology Film Archives, New York, and Harvard Film Archive, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2017; Ankara International Film Festival, Turkey, 2016; Doclisboa, Portugal, 2015; Arsenal - Institute for Film and

Video Art, Berlin, 2015; Cinusp, São Paulo, 2014; Thessaloniki International Film Festival, Greece, 2014, and more.

Since 2010, his work has also been featured in the programs of art galleries, museums, and art institutes around the world, including documenta, Kassel, Germany; Venice Biennale, Italy; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; mumok - Museum Moderner Kunst Foundation Ludwig Wien, Austria; MACBA - Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, Spain; MUAC - Museo Universitario Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City; and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

Most recently, in 2018-2019, Žilnik's films and video installations have been featured in the programs of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Renaissance Society, Chicago; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Flaherty Seminar, New York, Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg; Lentos Art Museum, Linz; MMK - Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt on the Main; German Historical Museum, Berlin; Arsenal, Berlin; and Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome, among others.

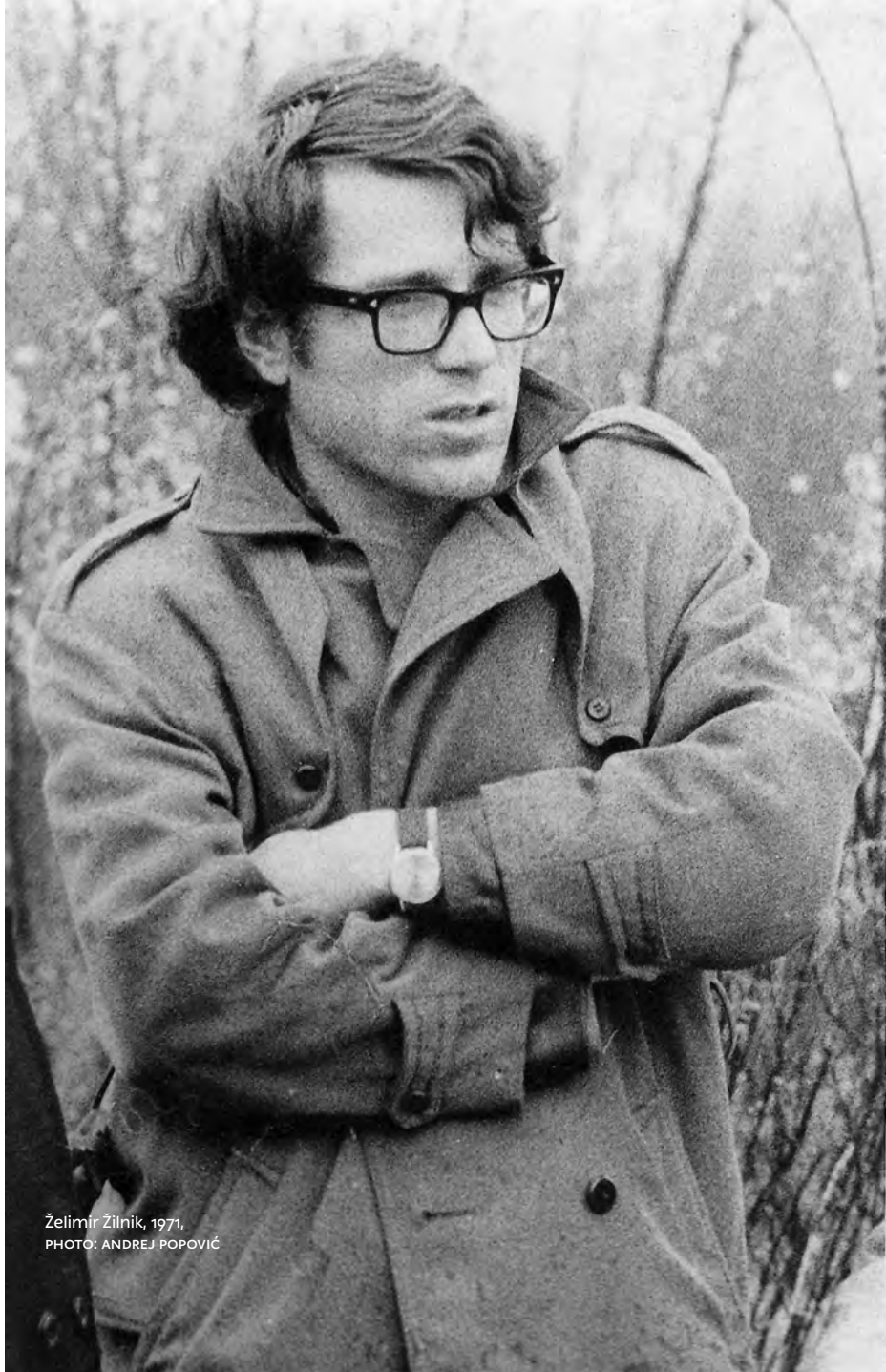
Alongside his ceaseless filmmaking and production work, Žilnik has been active in educational areas: since 1997 he has been a mentor and executive producer in many international workshops, in both Europe and the United States. ●

The number of works by Želimir Žilnik that have been professionally, properly, actively preserved – and as such exist as more than fragile, sole surviving prints, occasional incomplete negatives, or even more fragile files on a domestic hard drive – equals precisely zero.





Early Works (on-set photo), 1968, PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ



Željimir Žilnik, 1971,
PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ

filmography

1967

Žurnal o omladini na selu, zimi / A Newsreel on Village Youth, in Winter
15 min. • 35 mm
Neoplanta Film

1968

Pioniri maleni mi smo vojska prava, svakog dana ničemo ko zelena trava / Little Pioneers
18 min. • 35 mm
Neoplanta Film

Nezaposleni ljudi / The Unemployed
13 min. • 35 mm
Neoplanta Film

1969

Lipanjaska gibanja / June Turmoil
10 min. • 35 mm
Neoplanta Film

Rani radovi / Early Works
78 min. • 35 mm
Avala Film & Neoplanta Film

1971

Crni film / Black Film
14 min. • 16 mm ▶ 35 mm
Neoplanta Film

1972

Žene dolaze / The Women Are Coming
12 min. • 16 mm
Neoplanta Film

Sloboda ili strip / Freedom or Cartoons
unfinished
35 mm & 16 mm
Neoplanta Film

1973

Ustanak u Jasku / Uprising in Jazak
18 min. • 35 mm
Panfilm

1974

Antrag / Request
10 min.
16 mm ▶ 35 mm
Vlada Majic Filmproduktion
KG

Öffentliche Hinrichtung / Public Execution
9 min. • 35 mm
Vlada Majic Filmproduktion
KG

1975

Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten / I Do Not Know What That Should Mean

9 min. • 35 mm
Vlada Majic Filmproduktion
KG

Abschied / Farewell
9 min. • 16 mm
Vlada Majic Filmproduktion
KG

Inventur – Metzstraße 11 / Inventory
9 min. • 16 mm
Alligator Film

Unter Denkmalschutz / Under the Protection of the State
11 min. • 16 mm
Alligator Film

Hausordnung / House Orders
12 min. • 35 mm
Vlada Majic Filmproduktion
KG

1976

Paradies. Eine imperialistische Tragikomödie / Paradise. An Imperialist Tragicomedy
60 min. • 16 mm
Alligator Film

1977

Placmajstori /
Market People
29 min. • 16 mm
TV Novi Sad

Komedija i tragedija
Bore Joksimovića /
The Comedy and Tragedy
of Bora Joksimović
30 min. • 16 mm
TV Novi Sad

1978

Naše zvezde sa ekrana
duševna su naša hrana /
Stars of 45 Turning in Your
Mind
10 min. • 35 mm
TV Novi Sad

Sedam mađarskih balada
/ Seven Hungarian Ballads
30 min. • 16 mm
TV Novi Sad

1979

Dobrovoljci govore /
Volunteers
30 min. • 16 mm
TV Novi Sad

1980

Bolest i ozdravljenje Bude
Brakusa / Illness and
Recovery of Buda Brakus
59 min. • 16 mm
TV Novi Sad

1981

Vera i Eržika /
Vera and Eržika
75 min. • 16 mm
TV Novi Sad

1982

Dragoljub i Bogdan: struja
/ Dragoljub and Bogdan:
Electricity
85 min. • 16 mm
TV Beograd

1983

Prvo tromesečje Pavla
Hromiša / The First
Trimester of Pavle Hromiš
87 min. • 16 mm
TV Novi Sad

1984

Druga generacija /
The Second Generation
87 min. • 16 mm ▶ 35 mm
Art film & TV Novi Sad

Stanimir silazi u grad
Stanimir Descending
69 min. • 16 mm
TV Beograd

1985

Beograde dobro jutro /
Good Morning Belgrade
57 min. • 16 mm
TV Beograd

1986

Lijepe žene prolaze kroz
grad / Pretty Women
Walking through the City
103 min. • 35 mm
Art Film

Posrnule ovčice /
Stumbling Sheep
46 min. • Betacam
TV Novi Sad

1987

Vruće plate / Hot Paychecks
103 min. • Betacam
TV Novi Sad

1988

Bruklin – Gusinje /
Brooklyn – Gusinje
87 min. • 16 mm
TV Beograd

Tako se kalio čelik / The Way
Steel Was Tempered
101 min. • 35 mm
Terra Film

1989

Stara mašina / Oldtimer
81 min. • 16 mm
TV Ljubljana

1990

Crno i belo /
Black and White
60 min. • Betacam
TV Novi Sad

1993

Silos Dunav, Vukovar /
Silo Danube, Vukovar
1 min. • 35 mm
Terra Film

1994

Tito po drugi put među
Srbima / Tito among the
Serbs for the Second Time
43 min. • Betacam
B92

1995

Marble Ass
84 min. • Betacam ▶ 35 mm
B92

1996

Do jaja / Throwing Off
the Yolks of Bondage

12 min. • Betacam
B92

1997

Za Ellu / For Ella

10 min. • Betacam
Terra film

1998

Kud plovi ovaj brod /
Wanderlust

91 min. • Betacam ▶ 35 mm
Teresianum b.t., VP Kregar,
Terra Film, Kvadrat & TV
Crna Gora

2000

Tvrđava Evropa /
Fortress Europe

80 min. • Betacam
Low Budget Production &
RTV Slovenia

Cosmo Girls

27 min. • Betacam
Teresianum b.t.

2002

EXIT ujutru / EXIT in the
Morning

12 min. • Betacam
Terra Film & Radio 021

2003

Kenedi se vraća kući /
Kenedi Goes Back Home

75 min. • DV ▶ 35 mm
Terra Film & Multiradio

2005

Evropa preko plota /
Europe Next Door

61 min. • DV
Terra Film

Gde je dve godine bio

Kenedi / Kenedi, Lost and
Found

26 min. • DV
Terra Film

2006

Dunavska sapunska opera
/ Soap in Danube Opera

70 min. • DV
Terra Film

2007

Kenedi se ženi / Kenedi Is
Getting Married

80 min. • DV ▶ 35 mm
Terra Film & Jet Company
VKTV

2009

Stara škola kapitalizma
/ The Old School of
Capitalism

122 min. • DV & HD ▶ 35 mm
Playground produkcija

2011

Jedna žena – jedan vek
/ One Woman – One
Century

110 min. • HD
Playground produkcija

2013

Pirika na filmu /
Pirika on Film

54 min. • HD
Playground produkcija

2014

Naš čovek u Gabonu /
Our Man in Gabon

66 min. • HD
Žilnik produkcija

2015

Destinacija_Serbistan /
Logbook_Serbistan

94 min. • HD ▶ DCP
Playground produkcija

2018

Among the People:
Life & Acting

83 min. • HD
Žilnik produkcija & Edith-
Russ-Haus for Media Art

The Most Beautiful
Country in the World

101 min. • HD ▶ DCP
nanookfilm, Tramal Films,
Factum & RTV Vojvodina

2019

Où en êtes-vous, Želimir
Žilnik? / Where Do You
Stand Today, Želimir Žilnik?

20 min. • HD ▶ DCP
Playground produkcija &
Centre Pompidou

EDITORS' NOTE: The English
film titles listed here
are the international
distribution titles.

public programs

The following offers an overview of programming for the exhibition, with more to be confirmed.

Please see our website for regular updates and further details:

www.kunsthallewien.at

online book launch

Želimir Žilnik. *Shadow Citizens*

Thu 22/10 2020 • 7 PM

As an expansion of the exhibition **shadow citizens** at the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art in 2018, a book of the same title was published by Sternberg Press and the Edith-Russ-Haus, with generous support by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

For the first time in English and German, the publication offers insight into the radical film praxis and extensive oeuvre of filmmaker Želimir Žilnik.

For the launch, the authors of the texts – Boris Buden, Greg de Cuir Jr, Ana Janevski, Dijana Jelača, Edit Molnár, Bert Rebhandl, Marcel Schwierin – discuss different aspects of Žilnik's body of work.

opening

Fri 23/10 2020

kunsthalle wien museumsquartier

Želimir Žilnik at the viennale

Within the framework of its KINEMATOGRAPHY series, the Viennale (October 22–November 1, 2020) will feature the works of Želimir Žilnik. A cross-section of his diverse oeuvre will be shown, illuminating his stirring, undogmatic belief that he can change the world through film.

Early Works • Yugoslavia • 1969 • 78 min.

The Way Steel Was Tempered • Yugoslavia • 1988 • 101 min.

Tito Among the Serbs for the Second Time • FR Yugoslavia • 1994 • 43 min.

Kenedi, Lost and Found • Serbia and Montenegro • 2005 • 26 min.

Fortress Europe • Slovenia • 2000 • 80 min.

The Old School of Capitalism • Serbia • 2009 • 122 min.

Further information and all screening dates can be found at www.viennale.at

Želimir Žilnik in conversation with Karpo Godina

Six Decades of Filmmaking,

Six Cases of Censorship

Thu 5/11 2020 • 7 PM

An overview of an extraordinary artistic career through an encounter between two old friends – and six examples of censorship under two different political regimes.

artist talk with Želimir Žilnik

Fri 13/11 2020 • 6 PM

In the framework of Vienna Art Week 2020, WHW – the curators of the *Shadow Citizens* exhibition – will be joined by Želimir Žilnik for a conversation about his life and career.

feminist takes

Thu 10/12 2020 • 7 PM

Feminist Takes, a long-term exercise in feminist epistemology initiated by Antonia Majača, is based on the study of Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works* (1969). Canonical within the New Yugoslav Film of the late 1960s and '70s, the film follows the female revolutionary Jugoslava as she leaves her lumpenproletariat family to lead a group of vagabonds and spread the teachings of young Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels among the peasants and factory workers. This iteration of *Feminist Takes* will take place online as a close reading session led by invited interlocutors – filmmakers, theorists, writers, and

artists – but is open to a wider audience. Continuing the discussion on the filmic – and historical – fate of Jugoslava, the gathering sets the stage for collectively imagining the prospects of revolutionary feminism.

Antonia Majača is a curator and researcher based in Berlin.

Želimir Žilnik at the austrian film museum

Radical Political Film for the Masses.

Želimir Žilnik's 1980s TV Films

– A Selection

Mon 11/1 2021 • 6:30 PM

Illness and Recovery of Buda Brakus • 1980 • 89 min.

Wed 13/1 2021 • 6:30 PM

Vera and Eržika • 1981 • 75 min.

Thu 14/1 2021 • 6:30 PM

The First Trimester of Pavle Hromiš • 1983 • 87 min.

Fri 15/1 2021 • 6:30 PM

Stanimir Descending • 1984 • 69 min.

Sat 16/1 2021 • 6:30 PM

Brooklyn – Gusinje • 1988 • 87 min.

Sun 17/1 2021 • 6:30 PM

Oldtimer • 1989 • 81 min.

Austrian Film Museum,
Augustinerstraße 1 • 1010 Vienna

All films are screened with English subtitles. For more information, please visit www.filmmuseum.at

tours

All tours are free with an admission ticket.

Advance registration is required for all tours and public programs.

my view tours

In the series *My View*, we invite experts, amateurs, and people of interest to present their personal perspectives on the exhibition. For this exhibition we are looking forward to tours with: **Jana Dolečki** (theater scholar, choir conductor of **Hor 29. Novembar**) • **Nada El-Azar** (head of the culture department of **BIBER** magazine) • **Johannes Gierlinger** (artist, filmmaker) • **Tina Leisch** (film and theater director, author) and **Simonida Selimović** (actress, musician, theatre director, founder of the association **Romano Svato**) • **Barbi Marković** (writer) • **Jurij Meden** (curator at the Austrian Film Museum).

Further information and dates will be announced at www.kunsthallewien.at

curators' tours

The curators of the exhibition, **What, How & for Whom/WHW** (Ivet Ćurlin, Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić, and Sabina Sabolović), discuss topics addressed by the presented works of Želimir Žilnik and elaborate on the works' background.

Dates will be announced at www.kunsthallewien.at

sunday tours

Every Sunday at 3 PM, you will discover the exhibition with our art educators during thematic overview tours and discuss different perspectives on the rich cinematic oeuvre of Želimir Žilnik.

WITH: **Wolfgang Brunner** • **Michaela Schmidlechner** • **Michael Simku** • **Martin Walkner**

We kindly ask you to sign-up in advance for public programs and guided tours: besucherservice@kunsthallewien.at

The admission ticket remains valid during the exhibition.



23.10. BIS 26.11.2020

RECYCLED CINEMA

Filmmuseum-Viennale-Retrospektive

27.11. BIS 19.12.2020

VALIE EXPORT

11.1. BIS 17.1.2021

RADICAL POLITICAL FILM FOR THE MASSES

Želimir Žilnik's 1980s TV films – a selection



Augustinerstraße 1, 1010 Wien, T 01/533 70 54, www.filmmuseum.at



VIENNA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

VIENNA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

22. OKTOBER – 1. NOVEMBER

PROGRAMM AB 13. OKTOBER, 20 UHR

TICKETS AB 17. OKTOBER, 10 UHR

viennale.at



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intro

▶ der kultur- öffner



▶ **Ö1 intro**, der neue Club für alle bis 30, öffnet Türen zur Welt der Kunst, Kultur, Wissenschaft und zu neuen Ideen. Mit bis zu 50 % Ermäßigung, Events, Freikarten u. v. m.

Mehr auf [oe1.ORF.at/intro](https://oe1.orf.at/intro)



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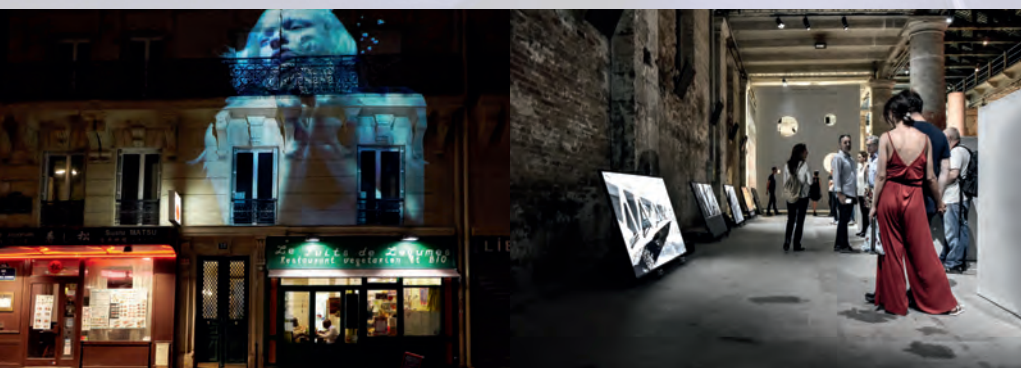
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THE ART OF PROJECTION

Europa Zumtobel Licht Tour | Paris. Susanne Stemmer | Venedig Biennale. Marte Architekten



WIEN
MODERN
33

ST

IM

**NEUE MUSIK
FÜR DIE STADT**

**104 VERANSTALTUNGEN
IN 9 BEZIRKEN**

**29 OKT
BIS
29 NOV
2020**

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Stimmulung beim Woodstock Festival, 17. August 1969
Foto: James Shelley, The Museum of Modern Art
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EXHIBITION

kunsthalle wien GmbH

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What, How & for Whom /
WHW (Ivet Ćurlin • Nataša
Ilić • Sabina Sabolović)

CFO

Sigrid Mittersteiner

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What, How & for Whom /
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FUNDRAISING & SPONSORING

Maximilian Geymüller

This exhibition is an expanded version of a show curated by WHW, previously on view at Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art in Oldenburg and at Gallery Nova in Zagreb, with generous support from the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

THANK YOU

Austrian Cultural Forum, Belgrade • Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art • Sunčica Fradelić • Zora Cazi Gotovac & Sarah Gotovac • Karpo Godina • Tatjana Günter • Darja Hlavka Godina • Vladimir Kecmanović • Jozef Klem • Mira Komadina • Ana Kovačić • Vanja Kranjac • Dejan Kršić • Milan Milosavljević • Edit Molnár • Ivan Nedoh • Diana Nenadić • Zoran Pantelić • Marcel Schwierin • Sternberg Press • Borka Stojić • Darko Šimičić • Tomislav Gotovac Institute • Ivan Velisavljević

We would like to thank the following people, production houses, film distributors, and festivals for granting us the following screening permissions:

Academic Film Center, Belgrade:

- *Hands of Purple Distances* by Sava Trifković
- *Triptych on Matter and Death* by Živojin Pavlović

Bojana Makavejev:

- *Don't Believe in Monuments*

Cine Club Split:

- *I'm Mad* by Ivan Martinac
- *Concert* by Lordan Zafranović
- *Twist-Twist* by Ante Verzotti
- *Woman* by Dunja Ivanišević

Croatian Film Association, Zagreb:

- *Encounters* by Vladimir Petek
- *Kariokinesis* by Zlatko Hajdler
- *Scusa signorina* and *Toilet (Dedicated to Dušan Makavejev)* by Mihovil Pansini
- *Termites* by Milan Šamec
- *The Forenoon of the Faun* by Tomislav Gotovac

Hessischer Rundfunk:

- *Rebels and Poets – Young Yugoslav Film (Rebellen und Poeten: Der junge jugoslawische Film)*, ARD TV report

Radio Television of Serbia:

- *Good Morning Belgrade*
- *Brooklyn – Gusinje*
- *Dragoljub and Bogdan: Electricity*

Radio Television of Vojvodina:

- *The Comedy and Tragedy of Bora Joksimović*
- *The First Trimester of Pavle Hromiš*
- *Vera and Eržika*
- *Volunteers*

Sixpackfilm:

- *The Most Beautiful Country in the World*

Slovenian Cinematheque, Ljubljana:

- *A.P. (Anno Passato)*, *Dog, Game & Phobia*, by Karpo Ćimović-Godina

International Short Film Festival

Oberhausen:

- *Black Film* (with manifesto)

ZDF:

- *Cultural Scene in Yugoslavia (Jugoslawische Kulturszene)*, ZDF TV report

Special thanks goes to the organization kuda.org (Novi Sad), whose many years of research and publishing about Želimir Žilnik we continuously relied on.

Our utmost gratitude goes to Sarita Matijević and Želimir Žilnik, without whose openness, support, and infectious enthusiasm this exhibition would not have been possible.

PUBLISHER

kunsthalle wien GmbH

What, How & for Whom / WHW

TEXTS

Ana Janevski • Sarita Matijević • Jurij
Meden • *For an Idea – Against the Status
Quo: An Analysis and Systematization of
Želimir Žilnik's Artistic Practice*, research
platform initiated by New Media Center_
kuda.org and Playground produkcija,
Novi Sad • WHW • Želimir Žilnik

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CONVERSATION WITH WHW)

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Jaclyn Arndt

DESIGN

Dejan Kršić & Lana Grahek

TYPEFACES

KhW Ping • Brioni Text [TYPOTHEQUE] •
Egyptienne Bold Condensed

PRINT

Gugler print GmbH, Melk, Austria

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BACK COVER

Early Works

(on-set photo), 1968

PHOTO: ANDREJ POPOVIĆ



Free admission
every Thursday 5-9 PM
FOR PROGRAM UPDATES:
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#ZelimirZilnik

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