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**GLAWOGGER-THALER:
AUTEURS NON PLUS ULTRA**

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FILMOVÁ A TELEVIZNÍ FAKULTA

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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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D e c l a r a t i o n

I declare that I have prepared my Master's Thesis independently on the following topic:

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

Prague, date:

Signature.....

Warning

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Abstract:

I have always been irritated by the general acceptance that documentary film is somewhat of a subordinate genre in terms of cinematography. With analysing the documentary body of work of the Austrian director/cinematographer duo Glawogger/Thaler I want to prove that documentary film cinematography is as worthy as fiction film cinematography. By investigating the visual aspects of their work which are also used as tools in fiction films I hope to bring a closer view on the importance of observance, constructive contextualisation of the images, visual narrative techniques and the cinematographer's approach to different documentary topics. The main objective of the thesis is to analyse various visual components in the films: *Megacities* (Glawogger, M., 1998), *Workingman's Death* (Glawogger, M., 2005) and *Whore's Glory* (Glawogger, M., 2011) with the intention to point out how the cinematographer successfully advocated outright imagery without having the same apparatus for controlling the visuals as one would have in fiction films.

Abstrakt:

Vždy mě rozčilovalo, že se dokumentární film obecně chápal jako něco podružného, co se týče kamery. Touto analýzou dokumentárních filmů rakouského dua Glawogger/Thaler (režisér/kameraman) chci prokázat, že kamera v dokumentárních filmech je stejně hodnotná, jako ve filmech fikčních. Věřím, že zkoumáním konkrétních vizuálních aspektů jejich práce, které jsou často používány i ve filmech fikčních, osvětlím, jak je důležité pozorovat a kontextualizovat obrazy, narativní techniky a přístup dokumentaristy k jednotlivým tématům ve filmu. Hlavním cílem mé práce je analyzovat různé vizuální prvky ve filmech *Megacities* (Glawogger, M., 1998), *Workingman's Death* (Glawogger, M., 2005) a *Whore's Glory* (Glawogger, M., 2011), a ukázat, jak kameraman úspěšně využívá komplexní záběry, aniž by měl k dispozici stejné podmínky k manipulaci s vizuálem, jako je to běžné u fikčních filmů.

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PREFACE

As I started writing this thesis many great things in the world of documentary film happened, especially for us cinematographers. For the first time in history the world witnessed a documentary film being nominated in two categories for *The Academy Awards*: one for Best “Documentary Feature Film” and the other for “Best International Feature Film”. Shortly before the Oscars ceremony we witnessed one more important step for the medium of documentary film. After thirty-three years of existence of the *American Society Of Cinematographer Awards*, two new categories were established: “Best Documentary Feature Film” and “Best Student Documentary Film”. The cinematographers that won the inaugural “Best Documentary Feature Film” were Samir Ljuma and Fejmi Daut for their work on the film *Honeyland* (2019) directed by Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov. This outstanding documentary was the same one that was nominated for the two *Oscars* on this year’s 92nd Annual Academy Awards .

It brought me great pleasure to see a film from my small country of Macedonia being recognised on such a high level, but at the same time it brought me even greater pleasure that it was a documentary film. Being involved myself in the world of creative documentary film from the early years of my studies as part of the *Association For Distribution And Promotion of Creative Documentary Films* called *MakeDox* really helped me grow as a cinematographer and a critical creative thinker. Within these years I somewhat developed a new way of looking at and understanding documentary films. What dazzled me at first was the purity of the narratives, but the most impactful hit came from the most important organ of sense in the human body: the eyes. I remember walking in the cinema to watch Michael Glawogger’s film *Whore’s Glory* (2011) on the national premiere back in 2011 in the city of Skopje. The images I saw were so new and raw, unlike anything I would have been able to see in my youth through the conventional cinema distribution back home. It got me intrigued in how this magic happened. How does one create such new worlds in within the boundaries of the existing?

The word document(ary) consists of two parts: the latin *doceō*, meaning “to teach” and *mentum* which means “instrument”. Deducting from the etymology of the name of this film genre we can say that it is one breed of a teaching instrument and informative tool. Unarguably from the birth of cinema in the “Grand Cafe” in Paris on that cold December

night in 1895, where the spectators were shown a brief document of life on the screen, it was exactly that: an informative tool. The creation of cinema in analogy represented the birth of documentary film itself. All of this was possible due to the mechanical wonder which was the *Cinématographe*. The Lumière brothers were not only the inventors of the new craft of “recordists of movement”, but they also personified the first documentary cinematographers and authors of film.

Throughout the the 20th century we have seen many great examples of documentary films and at the same time we have witnessed how transformative this genre is. As early as the 1920s great film authors like Dziga Vertov with his film *A Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) and John Grierson with his film *Drifters* (1929) started questioning and pushing the boundaries documentary genre with their creativity. At this point the documentary film no longer stood only in within the margins of a mere informative homage of past events, but it took a new form, or method if you like, of treating the actual reality as a tool for creation of a unique artistic expression. Grierson who is credited with inventing the term “documentary film” when he wrote of the documentary value of Robert J. Flaherty’s *Moana* (1926), in his theory defines it as a “creative treatment of actuality”. Trying to construct a more accurate definition of the genre in his book *Introduction to Documentary* the documentary film theorist Bill Nichols noted:

“...documentary is not a reproduction of reality, it is a representation of the world we already occupy. It stands for a particular view of the world, one we may never have encountered before even if the aspects of the world that is represented are familiar to us. We judge a re-production by its fidelity to the original—its capacity to look like, act like, and serve the same purposes as the original. We judge a representation more by the nature of the pleasure it offers, the value of the insight or knowledge it provides, and the quality of the orientation or disposition, tone or perspective it instills. We ask more of a representation than we do of a re- production.” (Nichols 20)

Nichols’s perspective of viewing the documentary film as a “representation” and judging it by the “nature of the pleasure it offers” leads me directly to the importance of the visuals. This is the subject I will concentrate on. Every theoretician has the preference of choosing a specific craft and method throughout which he/she can define and explain their vision of a genre. Unlike the film theoreticians I will not fixate on figuring out a genre definition, rather than that I will indulge myself into a journey to find out more about the

role, methods and tools of interpretation of reality which a documentary cinematographer holds in his or her hands.

In my view the role of the cinematographer in the documentary films should not only be perceived as a mechanical extension of the the directors vision, but as someone that can see more than that which is already in front of them. I will try to convey the “truth” behind the image and the action that is needed to define the specific one on the silver screen. The English pictorialist photographer Henry Peach Robinson in his guide to good photography *The Elements of a Pictorial Photograph* warns beginners that:

“Imitative illusion is a trap for the vulgar. A scene may, and should be represented truthfully, but some artists can see and represent more and greater truths than every passer-by will notice... The photographer who sees most will represent more truths, more truthfully than another” (Robinson 39)

For analysing how one can see “more truths, more truthfully than another” I will concentrate on the body of work of the cinematographer Wolfgang Thaler in his documentary film collaborations with the director Michael Glawogger. Their work is based on a strong visual narratives, distributing a panoramic view of human activity that is rare in its diversity, brought on the screen and associated with the adjective “creative”, as in: creative documentaries. Glawogger in one masterclass, together with his cinematographer Thaler, says: “At the moment you put a camera up you change the perception just by framing - the first step of creativity and the first step of showing the world”¹

But, what comes before putting up the camera? Firstly, one needs to see reality before they can create “a new mechanical image of reality”. In the next chapter I will try to analyse the process and methods of observation the cinematographer needs to refine, or in other words, I will deal with: the importance of looking and how it reflects on the creative eye.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOOKING

“My task when I set out to do this film (*Megacities*) was to look at cities and to look at the world that I didn't know so far - so, my first approach was to start looking”

Michael Glawogger

The process of seeing begins with with transduction of energy into neural signals. Our eyes are the sensory organ that allows us to process light and turn it into neural signals which in the brain are encoded and asserted with context and meaning. Therefore we are able to distinct luminosity, shapes and colours and create a cerebral picture of what is in front of us. It is a very similar principal to that of how a motion picture camera works. It has a lens system which harnesses the light, photo-sensitive system which records the differences in colour and luminosity, and an encoding system which allows the photons traveling throughout the visual system to end up as information which we later interpret by means of our knowledge and experiences. Margaret Livingstone in her book *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing* makes a very peculiar point when she says:

“Some people even think of the entire visual system as a kind of fancy camera or image transmission system. This misperception is so common that it has a name: the homunuculus fallacy. (*Homunuculus* is Latin for “little man.”) The fallacy is the idea that when we see something, a small representation of it is transmitted to the brain to be looked at by a “little man”. The fact is, of course, that there is no little man in the brain to look at that or any other image.” (Livingstone 24)

Let's say that the the belittled person which fills the auditorium in our brain is the sight, and the big man, which is our physical selves in the actual world, is the the master of the looking. The 14th century Old English language definition of the verb “to look” is described somewhat most accurate towards the point I want to make. It is entitled with the meaning to “seek, search out”.

Each one of the seven billion *homo sapiens* specimens walking the face of the earth today is an individual entity. This means that all of us have different genetical information which is unique to each. Accordingly to this we all have a different system of perception. As being conscious beings we choose what we see and how we interpreted it. My question is: how

should a person entitled as a “cinematographer” see? Should we have a different way of looking? In my opinion the answer is yes, we should. Looking or “searching out” is what should preoccupy our sight, but what specifically we look for is what differentiates us from the average passer-by. I remember one lecture with the cinematographer Christian Berger which I attended in Prague where he was showing us photographs, more honestly just simple snapshots which he was taking on his morning walks. With the greatest enthusiasm he would shout out to us, the students: “Look! Look how the light reflects from the windows of that building and falls on the trees across the street. Isn’t it magical?”. And it truly was magical when you took the time to carefully inspect the situation. The sunlight in the picture was a warm morning ray reflected from what I presume were some copper tinted windows from an office building and that super warm ray of sunlight was falling on the brightly coloured yellow-green leaves of the maple trees on the pavement. From the low street view angle he took the photo it looked divine. This was a very simple, but very meaningful observation of the nature of light and its movement through an urban landscape. My point is that “the big man” consciously choose what he will observe and gave importance to frame something and deliver it to the “little man” who encoded it as an image which offered a certain amount of pleasure Henceforth he judged the representation by the nature of the pleasure it offered him. In essence this is a method which we as cinematographers should utilise. The importance of the way we observe our environment is crucial to the understanding of the cinematic elements we later apply onto our visual work. Or as the visual anthropologist David MacDougall noted: “The insertion of the body into the process of seeing - its processing of vision, both physically and imaginatively - can be taken as a possible starting point for the cinematic.” (MacDougall 247)

In other words, we should be able to specify what to “search out” for beforehand, so we can later transform it into meaning on the screen. A documentarist eye, in my opinion, should be the sharpest most carefully designed tool that one posses, because cinematographers in this genre are dealing with something that is usually not controllable or it is controllable, but to a limited extent. Having in mind that documentary camera crews are commonly very few in numbers and the technical tools available to control light, framing, colour and movement are very limited, what one has observed and how they did that is crucial to what they produce as an image. It is a fraction of time in which the cinematographer needs to carefully observe human life, but at the same time conduct their knowledge of framing, composition, colour, camera movement, light and atmospheres, so

they can convey an interpretation of reality which beholds, not a singular body of meaning, but an eloquent multi-layered semiotic portion of symbols engraved on the emulsion or the digital sensor of the camera. Therefore the process of “looking” is the foundation stone of every cinematographer’s creative approach.

Often times in the past I have found myself in a situation where I unconsciously avoided to capture some part of a scene, no matter how thoroughly I thought I “looked” through it. I would formulate those “situations” and motifs as being simply unattractive for me at that given moment. After more than a few times having repeated this and not capturing something in the field which later made the editors literally scream at me, I realised that I have to leave my egoistical point of view aside as a cinematographer and reassess this attitude. One of my university screenwriting professors always reminded us as students: “Not all cliches are bad. They exist and have become cliches only because they have worked over and over again!”. I completely agree with his opinion. When we are indulging ourselves into looking we can more in depth consume a situation aesthetically, but this does not always work out and reflect on the material as a whole. We have to remember that as cinematographers we are in one way also editors, especially in the creative documentary because these films do not follow a specific screenplay, nor do they have any kind of storyboarding done beforehand. What we observe and capture is the mosaic of frames which editors later on have as the body of material. So, we have to above all understand what the story might need visually from the scene so the narrative is clear, even though that might not satisfy our immediate creative appetite. At the end, what we do needs to reach some kind of a theatre audience.

Here is a simple example: imagine shooting an interior (documentary) scene with two characters and in the whole narrative we have to understand that these two characters had to be inside of this space because it was heavily raining outside and they could not continue to do their normal work in the exterior. We might understand this throughout their dialogue or the sound design, but as things go in film it is better to show it, not tell it. Having an insert shot of some rain drops sliding down one of the windows in the space, or an insert shot of the wet boots drying in the hallway will most probably be a better indication for the audience than just the sound design or verbal affirmation. It is because this is something that is a familiar sight to all of us, i.e., the viewers brain will create a cognitive response to what they see and will convey the meaning of the situation more easily. In my opinion what we should

search for while looking is a potential emotional bond that can enchant the spectator's vision and create a relationship with something familiar to their eye and themselves. Although finding these familiarities is not exclusively the cinematographers responsibility, what counts and plays a major part in it is our awareness of the same. A smart director will point out situations he or she knows we might avoid because of our somewhat naive photographic nature of putting visual forms over content, but if the cinematographer's instincts are refined to a point where contextualisation of the image is as important as the aesthetics, only then one can bring the images closer to the audiences. For this to come forth we have to really understand what we have in front of us and what is worth telling visually. People in the cinema like to feel close to the people and places they see on the silver screen, and we have the duty to provide them this bond with the images we present to the narrative.

In the films which I will later analyse the main subject is human activity in mostly urban surroundings or if not, surroundings which were directly influenced by human needs to exploit a specific environment. The two authors have indulged into observing *sociotopes*: social spaces which consist of entire complexes of relations directly influenced by human behaviour. Because Glawogger is not a purely ethnographic filmmaker, but he is considered to be an artistic or creative documentarist, his film's purpose is to give a greater sensory experience than the purely observational ethnographic film. In many of his interviews the director mentions that his films are about "looking". Because reality does not present itself in a suitable order or structure ready for the filmmaker to document, he needs, together with his cinematographer Thaler, to create visual narratives which analyse, and represent the reality we the viewers encounter while watching it on the screen as something that is able to ignite emotion and convey a greater message than the one available at first sight. Visually they are dealing with the aesthetics of the everyday life of working people and within this environments exploit symbolic systems familiar to the general public. Or as the director likes to put it "I alter reality to show reality" and the only way to achieve this is to know what you are looking for or looking at, and then transfer it through an artistic medium. As David MacDougall noted whilst writing on the technological phenomena of the camera and Leon Moussinac's view of *photogénie*:

"What is extraordinary about it is not its transmission of reality, but its new mechanical image of reality. If we simply wanted to see reality, it is all around us, but seeing a film presents us with a strange apparition, a photochemical imprint

of the world. Although this image may extend normal optical vision through magnification, slow motion, and so on, these are secondary effects. Its primary is triumph over actual, direct vision. The resulting image does not so much transcend reality as produce an alien perception of reality, sensitive to unknown qualities.” (MacDougall 17)

This alien perception of reality is what preoccupies my thoughts when speaking from a cinematographer’s point of view. Let’s say that I have in one way concluded on the observational qualities that one should possess to successfully reproduce (in fiction) or selectively present to the audience (in documentary). Now I am asking myself how can one do it better? Is it simply just by looking or there is something more? In my opinion this is where the big man *looking* stops and *auteur* approach begins.

THE GLAWOGGER-THALER DUO

“Plato says beauty is the splendour of truth—I really believe that. People accuse me sometimes of making things beautiful, but that is utterly impossible: you cannot make anything beautiful. Things either have beauty or they don't. If it's not out there in the world, we can't film it, and Wolfgang, my cameraman, knows that. We do what we can to enhance the exposure and so forth, but otherwise we don't make anything: we just film the stuff. The beauty is out there, and is the splendour of the truth that comes across.”

Michael Glawogger

Tom & Jerry, Mario & Luigi, Pat & Mat, R2d2 & C-3po... all of these famous characters duos mean or are somehow connected to each one of our life stories. Such “star quality” duos have also existed in cinema from the mere beginning of it and for us —the film enthusiasts, they have acquired a whole opus of meaning behind them. What crosses your mind when you hear Orson Welles & Gregg Toland, Ingmar Bergman & Sven Nykvist or Jean-Luc Godard & Raoul Coutard? When I hear these names mentioned together my brain goes through a cathartical explosion of stories, images, sounds and emotions. But, what is most captivating towards hearing these two names put together is that I have created a complete semantical meaning of my own. A meaning and an understanding of a certain energy and style which only those people working together could evoke in me as an audience. Their artistic imprint in the films they made is so strong that we usually recognise it at first sight. Analogous to this it would mean that the cinematographer-director duos have a specific way of storytelling which personally I would best describe as a unique chemistry in between two people. Whilst love is an abstract noun of one kind of chemistry between two persons, cinema gives us quite a materialised version of a romantic bond.

The same goes for the Michael Glawogger & Wolfgang Thaler duo. I decided to write about them, more specifically about Thaler's work, simply because I could smell every frame of their films carried a fragrance of the “uniqueness” him and his director had transcended onto the screen. But, what is important to understand is the old “cinematographer's handbook” saying: “You are only as good as your director!”. For me this is one kind of a greater truth. The director would not have been able to tell the story without his or hers cinematographer, neither would the cinematographer been able to create such memorable images without his or her director. It is a bond which is unbreakable. This unique style most

often comes with spending a lot of time working with each other, having a similar sensibility towards art and most importantly listening to each other. Thaler in one of his interview notes on this subject: “You know, if we talk about the colour green (with a director), you may have a completely different perception of green than I do. But we think we are talking about the same colour. So to get in sync is the difficult part.” (Tabu). Michael and Wolfgang had the opportunity to meet as early as their study years. They both went to the *Vienna Film Academy* during the 80s and worked together until the tragic death of Mr. Glawogger in 2014. This, of course, helped a lot for them to be in a continuous sync, but in my opinion two filmmakers do not necessarily have to come from the same educational nor cultural background to create a strong bond. In my view they just simply need to in one way develop the same perception of the colour green as Thaler mentions in the interview.

What interests me in this section is finding out what is so specific in their approach. How they do the pre-production and how they act while filming. What is interesting about the three films I am going to analyse is that they were all made with budgets exceeding one million euros and were shot on 16mm colour motion picture film. When one analyses the immensity of their work in terms of locations and duration of filming it is visible that they are both extremely enthusiastic about their work. It is rare to see documentary films being filmed on such a colossal scale and still have such a strong *auteur* imprint. Of course we have examples of documentary films like the “Quatsi” films by Godfrey Reggio, or the films by cinematographer/director Ron Fricke which were filmed on 65mm film and distributed in IMAX cinemas which surpasses the scale of Glawogger’s films. But what is crucial to understand is that these are non-narrative observational documentary films. On the other hand, Glawogger together with Thaler succeeded to be more expressive and playful with the film medium as such and managed to create and conduct a unique style. In my view if Fricke was the rockstar of non-narrative cinematography, Thaler is the punkhead of this kind of cinema. He shows us how you can do more with less and most importantly how much a good connection with your director is important and can influence your style.

What I also find very intriguing about their process of work is how they prepare their films. In one masterclass Michael Glawogger gave in Poland, he was explaining more in detail how this takes place. In the midst of the immense research before they head out shooting he had almost always requested for a local photographer to go and scout places that he or she

might find interesting. All of this of course was conducted under the director's baton. He said that he would later on collect this photographs and sometimes together with Wolfgang sit and discuss on the positive and negative sides of the locations. He would later go on deciding which locations are visually and story-wise worth it and how are they to be engraved on the emulsion. Because all of the three films I am writing about are somewhat thematic, i.e., because they know the subject is concentrated around some field of human labour work I find this way of pre-production absolutely first-rate. Budgets for pre-production of documentary films are usually small and it is very difficult to afford flying to places and spending a lot of time there, so this kind of visual communication method comes very useful. As a cinematographer myself I would always rather rely on someone that is a local and especially someone that does visual arts him or herself to show me around or if the budget does not allow —to send me some photographs. This way I would be better prepared to indulge myself in process of looking.

This is very important for me as a visual artist and most importantly as a filmmaker to understand because I do not like viewing a film only within the margins of the frame on the screen. In my view, the awareness of the entire creative process, especially in the realm of creative documentary, is a key point towards refining my senses and learning so I can later apply the positive things I get from it in my future work. The next thing that captivated me about these two associates is how they approach the situation when they are shooting. In an interview Thaler gave for *Film Comment Magazine* he briefly describes this process when asked if he was always involved in the research and location scouting in Glawogger's films:

“No, unfortunately not. at would have been a luxury. Usually, I'd come in and he'd give us at least one day to adjust to our surroundings. So most of the time we'd arrive, unload the equipment, and get ready to shoot. But this is okay by me, to be fresh and thrown into a situation. I like it. If I know what a film is about and how to shoot it, I like to decide things very spontaneously on the set, in the situation. We run a rehearsal with the actors, and then I know exactly where to place the camera and what kind of lens we need to get the scene done. Other people work in completely different ways—they need storyboards and a more elaborate preparation. My prep work is mainly to get to know the director well enough that I can catch his intentions and feelings; how he likes to tell the story.” (Talu)

In the same interview he adds:

“I knew Michael for a very long time and I knew what he was expecting from my camerawork and what he likes to have in his films. So we didn’t really have to talk... And as far as nonverbal communication goes, there’s one scene in Bangladesh, for example, when a young man wants to buy a girl to marry her. We of course didn’t speak the language, so I had to read through the camera what was going on. I had to read the body language to know, “Okay, now is the right moment to pan to the girl and her mother,” and catch the next very important moment. I try to pick up on things and understand when there’s an emotional moment I’m not supposed to miss.”

The nonverbal communication in my opinion is what led them to make such vivid pieces of art. The importance of them “looking” in a similar way and sharing emotional and observational qualities was the essence of them achieving what they had pre-visualised or intuitively absorbed on the spot. If they would not have been able to cultivate their mutual system of understanding of what is important to capture for a certain scene, or where to look at what moment, what we would have perceived from the films would be a subjective craftsman’s desynchrony rather than a concrete style embodied in a coherent entity.

By now I think I have said enough of how important their bond is towards the creation of a unique style and as of now I would like to concentrate more on the visuals of their so-called “Globalisation Trilogy”. They shot these three films in a span of more than twenty years and knowing that they are all considerably similar in their narrative motifs by some analogy they are also very visually akin. Although both of the authors are not strictly working in documentary films, nor the films were shot one right after the other, these three stand out and in a way create a whole because of their similarities. That is why I decided to analyse different visual characteristics in each of them. I will start chronologically with *Megacities* (1998) where I will talk about the usage of framing and composition, after that I will take on *Workingman’s Death* (2005) where I will speak about the usage of location and visual leitmotifs and at the end I will concentrate on the work with colours in the film *Whore’s Glory* (2011). Because all of the above mentioned elements interact with each other i will not exclude mentioning them in the sections where they are not the main body of analysis. In this way i believe that I can bring closer the cognitive response we as an audience annex from their body of work as one assembly of symbols, rather than a monograph deconstruction of each of the films to better understand the cinematographer’s methods of work. As I started this chapter with duos I shall now continue with the next number in the numerical sequence: three as in **trilogy**.

MEGACITIES: FRAMING A WORLD OF TROUBLED BEAUTY

“My business is to go out there and see reality and to think about how I can put it on the screen. I didn’t become an artist to obey rules. If you read the documentary books, do the do’s and avoid the don’ts, you’re fucked.”

Michael Glawogger

This film is probably Glawogger’s most infamous one amongst film critics from the whole trilogy. After its premiere in the year 1998 it was submitted to strong criticism, but at the same time praised amongst film enthusiasts. The main conflict mentioned over and over again in multiple reviews is the undefinable form of this film. Questioning the boundaries of the documentary genre the director took the liberty to intervene, opposing to only observe and created a new spectrum of his own reality. The fiction-like elements led the audiences to clobber the authenticity of the film often saying that it is completely staged and directed. The director never denied these allegations of him intervening and altering the purely observational “reality”. In the past years we have been witnessing more and more unconventional and experimental films that found their way into the cinema theatres and throughout film festivals, but of course someone had to “break the rules” so others can continue doing it. Glawogger has been “breaking the rules” since his student days in Vienna and at the *San Francisco Institute of Art* where he made such experimental films as *Street Noise* (1982) and *Haiku* (1987). His fascination with manipulating the so-called “classical approach” was inspired, as he himself recalls, by the radiant imagery and editing dynamics from the films of authors like Peter Kubelka and Stan Brakhage. In my view this kind of approach is exactly what captivates the viewer in this film. The blurred boundaries between fiction and reality bring an undeniable advantage in the creativity of the cinematographer especially in the freedom of composition and framing and with that augment the storytelling methodology of the director.

Megacities is a film portraying low-class working people from four gigantic urban agglomerations: Bombay, Mexico City, New York City and Moscow. It is subtitled *12 Stories of Survival* referring to the “twelve episodes about people struggling to survive with resourcefulness, humour, and dignity, yet there is one illusion they all share: the dream of a better life.”, as written in the synopsis on the author’s website. The whole film was shot on

16mm film colour negative and later blown up to 35mm. It was shot in a wide frame aspect ratio of 1.66:1. The journalist Sheila Seacroft in her review from 2006 gives quite a alluring sublimation of this film:

“A documentary about the poor and dispossessed of the great cities of the world, it asks the question, why do we live, how do we get from day today? Stunning images of people's lives across the world, from metal-beaters and dye-workers in India to hustlers in New York to a burlesque dancer in Mexico City. It's a total onslaught on the senses: visually amazing images of beautiful squalor and horror pin you back in your seat. How can the lingered-on image of still-twitching slaughtered chickens spattering their blood onto the wall behind the bin into which they're thrown be so lyrically beautiful? But it is... beauty is truth? The lucky ones, perhaps, have a reason for getting through the days, like the Mexican mother of three who divides her time between helping her kids out with their homework and being touched in every intimate part of her body onstage. But for most, work is a dreadful, hard, killing ordeal, like the dye-stained men or those who sift through the foul rubbish in Mexico City. It's a devastatingly depressing film, morally and physically painful to watch. Whether the final images are optimistic for the future or are doubly depressing as we think what future the beautiful unscathed children really have in store is doubtful. But see it if you can..” (Seacroft)

Being such a shockingly beautiful homage of human life with a variety of subjects both narratively and visually, what struck me the most was the creativity of the compositions and the choice of framing it has. Documentary films heavily rely on this two visual elements because of the lack of control of lighting and set design. Controlling the frame means that it has to convey a specific message about a character or a scene and all of that captured in a space not specifically built or set up for the purpose of filming. In many cases throughout the film the composition of the shots tells more about the characters or situation within with its semiotic subtext than there is verbally told about them. The frames carry a story of their own specifically intended to tell more about the distinct situation that is in front of the camera.

This is visible from the right beginning of the film. In the opening credits sequence Thaler's camera is moving in between the people on the busy night streets of Bombay at eye level bringing the viewer very close to the hectic surroundings. After this boisterous handheld sequence comes a wide shot from a high angle on those same streets. This crescendo shot of the opening title sequence is also where the title of the movie appears.



The framing of the shot seen in picture 1.0 creates a closed space with little depth. The movement of the people in a perpendicular to each other creates an “X” shaped clash of the four diagonals pushing the viewers eye in the centre of the frame where later on the title of the movie appears. What is so ingenious about this composition is usage of **strong visual movement**. As the author Bruce Block noted in his book *The Visual Story*:

“Movement is the one visual component that is missing in frame lines so it’s the most likely weapon against closed space. Movement that is visually stronger than the frame line can create open space. The screen’s frame lines are solid, locked down visual anchors that enclose the picture. An extremely dynamic movement or set of movements within the picture can overwhelm the frame line and give the audience a sense that movement is occurring both within and beyond the picture frame.” (Block 76)

This kind of composition sends a message to the viewer of what to expect in the following hour and a half: a mosaic of human activity in its endless cycle, both inside and outside the frame. It gives a sensation of disorientation, inequality and colossalness and perfectly lines in semiotically with the subject of the film.

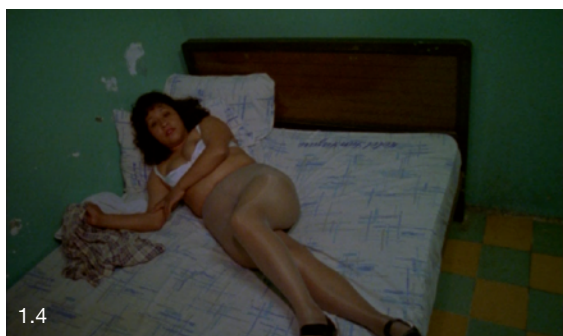
Another example of how movement directs our eye is in the shot seen in the picture 1.1. This shot is from the opening sequence of *Bombay* where there is a collage of portraits of street workers. In the shot we see two characters one of which is smoking a cigarette and the other one, most probably his apprentice, shaping a tin barrel by hitting it with a hammer. With framing the older man smoking the cigarette from his waist up and putting him in the foreground of the shot, just by his size and position in the frame we understand that he is the one in charge or as Hitchcock’s rule states: "The size of an object in the frame should equal its importance in the story at that moment.". The boy in the second layer of the composition is framed on the left half of the shot. By his size in the frame we understand that he is not as

important as the man in the foreground, and by creating a repetitive movement in the lower third of the frame our eye is easily lured towards this action. What comes next is the third layer of movement which also helps accentuate the deep space in the composition. It is the moving train in the background which finds its place exactly at the perspective's vanishing point between the two walls. This well balanced composition tells us three different stories and at the climax of our eye's voyage gives us a hint that the city is all present and it is always moving somewhere around them. By this we get the sensation of no escape from the aggravating chaos which is the megacity.



A further storytelling method Thaler exploits is the use of **deep and flat space** in the composition to tell a contrasting situation. An example of this comes while following one of the Moscow characters. The two contrasting scenes portray the character in her home environment and in her work environment. What came to my interest in these two sequences is the difference in composing the shots related to the two contrasting environments. While in her home the cinematographer chooses to create a more shallow depth composition. There is very often a wall in the background which in very close proximity to the character. With closing the perspective like this he creates a more two-dimensional image and makes the character feel somewhat more imprisoned in the space. In addition, this creates a more simple image which relates to the simple life they are having in the tiny space with her daughter. If we consider that the cinematographer had the opportunity to compose the shots in this sequence with more depth, for example with a window in the background, or in a hallway, or even placing her and her daughter further away from each other to create a deeper sensation of the space, we can clearly conclude that this kind of framing was deliberate. On the other hand, while portraying her at work he completely avoids closing up the perspective. Even when he is framing close-ups of her hands or her face, though there is a shallower depth of

field, there is always a deep perspective. In the shot seen in picture 1.3, which is the opening shot of the actual work scene, we see her climbing on some kind of moving platform which she later operates. The shot starts with her silhouette climbing in the cabin and then moving away towards the depth of the shot. With the change of her size in the frame we get the feeling of her individuality slowly disappearing and her becoming one of the many working ants in the factory. In this sequence the deep space is always present and we see how the character is slowly whittling down in the big space becoming a constitutional part of it. With the choice of framing and composition he clearly depicts the two different realities of the same character.



When we are speaking about composition it is worth mentioning the use of the **unbalanced composition**. Because of the ruthless nature of many of the characters this tool comes as one of the most useful ones of depicting the momentary state of the same in this film. In many scenes, which are quite graphic by nature, the cinematographer uses this kind of composition to tell the viewer that the character or multiple characters are, in a way, in a state of no return. This is visible in the 1.4 and 1.5 frame grabs. On the shot on the left side we can see a prostitute in Mexico City contemplating whilst lying half naked on a bed. This shot is quite long in duration in the film and makes the viewer feel quite uncomfortable and outset to think of how difficult the character must be feeling at that moment. That state is also depicted visually with the unbalanced composition and the use of the wide lens. Because the camera is so close to the character and the lens so wide we can see the barrel distortion of the lens which distorts the contouring lines of the objects in the frame making them seem more crooked than they actually are while viewed with the eye or a tighter lens. In addition to the barrel distortion, the placement of the main character is such that her body creates a strong diagonal representing her instability or insecurity. Her feet are not fully framed and she as an element in the frame is bleeding very lightly at the bottom frame line. This creates a sensation

that she is somehow pinned on the frame, almost like a fish on a hook. The whole composition weighs significantly more to the left leaving a greater negative space on the right of the frame which is in one way pushing the character more into the bottom left corner. The shot represents quite an expressionistic depiction of the character reminding me of some portraits from the German painter Otto Dix.

On the other side, in the shot in the picture 1.5 we can see a completely unbalanced composition. This is a frame grab from a scene where there is an ongoing dog fight in the slums in Mexico City. The person in the yellow shirt is one of the dog owners and he is shouting to his dog in an attempt to motivate it. As we can see in the image there is nothing that is right about this situation nor the composition of its depiction. The cruelty of the act is brought in the the frame by displacing the key elements in it. The dog handler on the right is cut almost in half by the right edge of the frame, the two people above him intrude the space and seem to be almost like little imaginary angels, or devils in this case, floating around his head. While this is pulling the whole composition to the right, in the left bottom third of the image we see the two dogs brutally biting each other, composed in such a way that the cross and graffiti “tienda” are right above them. The four elements in this shot are placed in such way that it brings complete disorientation to the viewer which is left puzzled where to direct his or her attention. This is an effective method for illustrating the gruesomeness of a character or a situation which Thaler uses throughout the film.

In other situations in the film we can see great examples of well balanced compositions. It is not uncommon to manage the visual elements in such a way, but what comes to my attention is the cinematographer’s tendency to create **tableaux vivant** shots. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the phrase “tableau vivant” as:

“a representation of a personage, character, scene, incident, etc., or of a well-known painting or statue, by one person or a group of persons in suitable costumes and attitudes, silent and motionless.” (OED)

This method is often used in the film to portray a situation or describe a character. In these delicately staged static shots the characters very often look directly into the lens. It gives the sensation of the presence of the camera and direct contact with the viewer. Other than the informative function, the tableau vivant gives the cinematographer a chance to have a

greater control the frame and explore painting-like compositions. This method is often used by documentary film directors like the Austrian Ulrich Seidl, which Thaler also collaborates with, or the Slovenian documentarist Karpo Godina. In Glawogger's film there are multiple examples of these kind of shots as we can see in the pictures 1.6, 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9 which are all from the Mexico City part of the film.



In my opinion, these kind of shots are worth mentioning because they are one of the few where a cinematographer has the chance to take his time and carefully compose the image. Choosing the right location to tell the story and then arranging the characters in such a way to create the wanted composition is almost a luxury in documentary filmmaking. From the pictures above we can clearly see that they were all intentionally set up. What really catches my eye is the 1.9 frame grab. The little boy holding the young chick in his hands framed from waste up and the older child embracing the younger one in the background. The balance in between these two elements is perfect as they both align in the thirds of the frame. Their size in the frame tells us the story of who is more important for the shot and the gaze in the camera directs the viewer essentially to back off from the screen. Almost like they were saying “Hey! This is our space and we don't want you here!”. The depth of the perspective is created by the second layer where the two children are embracing each other. Without them it would have been a flat space composition which would not have been as much as attractive.

Even though we do not have some kind of horizon where the perspective lines can converge, the stacks of rubble filling out the space around the characters defines their living conditions in a perfect sense. It seems like they are trapped by it with no further horizon, nor escape to anticipate. In the other frame grabs we can see: the sense of unity as a group in 1.7, who is in charge in the situation in 1.8 as the man in the blue t-shirt dominates the centre of the frame, or as seen in 1.6, who hides behind the slaughter with placing the main character behind the product of his work.

In the previous examples we have seen what the cinematographer is able to achieve simply by placing the camera in the wanted position in correlation with the scene and elements within it. The creative essence of framing and composition can tell us great stories in just a single shot. This layered meaning also depends on few other factors which can contribute to the composition of the image. In the next example I want to concentrate on how **light and colour** can enhance the compositional qualities of the shot. For that I have two examples, one of which the light is directing the viewers eye and in the other the colour.

In the wide-shot seen in picture 1.10 we can see a one man shaving another while sitting on the ground in some kind of improvised covered space. They are composed almost in the left corner of the frame with their bodies touching the low frame line. This kind of composition in my opinion would have been quite unappealing if it was not for the rays of sun coming diagonally from the top right corner of the frame directly on them in spite of the perfect alinement with the thirds of the image . The dust in the air makes these rays visible to the eye. They create a strong and clear diagonal in the foreground of the image. The cinematographer by deliberately slightly underexposing the image made the rays of light pop out from all the dark surroundings and direct our attention towards the characters. As seen, the light is not used only as an atmospheric augmentation, rather than that it is used as a physical compositional element. It is rare to materially see the direct sunlight, but situations like this give us cinematographers a chance to create this kind of pictorial imagery. With a little help from some dust the light rays became a storytelling device.



In the example presented in picture 1.11, on the other hand, we see a situation where colour enhances the compositional qualities of the shot. The shot itself is a wide-shot of a man who is a dyer. The whole observational sequence of this character in the film is a fantastic example of the usage of colour. Still, what comes to my attention in this specific shot is how colour can help to create volume and three dimensionality in the composition of the image. Unlike the example seen in picture 1.10 this shot is more vivid in terms of colour and saturation. Three colours and their various tonalities: blue, yellow and red. The way this shot is framed gives us a perception of a flat space in the image. The subject and the background are quite close to each other, but what gives us the perception of space and perspective is the juxtaposition of the colours yellow and blue. The two colours are complementary colours and they create a colour contrast. The yellow around the subject which is with higher value and more saturated, creates the feeling that the character is more up front. Even though being heavily surrounded by the cold blue tones, because of the tonal and pigment qualities of the yellow the subject does not seem confined at all in the space. The red cloths which are touching the frame lines, because of their position and our eyes ability to pick up differences with only one per cent variance in wavelength of this colour making it the most vividly perceivable one next to the cooler green, the whole shot gets some life outside the frame. By this I mean that does two spots of red on the lower edge of the shot are creating a sensation of space outside the frame by directing our eyes attention towards them and leaving us wondering what is beyond. In my view this is a great example of how colour can influence your composition and help create space in especially in non-fiction film where this visual parameter is rarely controllable and most of the work we cinematographers are left to do relies on our visual knowledge and experiences.

Megacities (2005) is a film which covers many themes of the human struggle throughout a huge range of locations and different spaces. I believe that in the past five examples we saw how purely by placing the camera in the right spot one can distribute a multilayered, contextual image which serves the narrative as a storytelling device. Composing and framing the shot are the essence of the cinematographer's work and undoubtedly with the right knowledge behind the lens it can augment the aesthetic qualities, but also create expressive images with a thought-through system of semiotical value. As I mentioned before creative documentary films like this one rely heavily on the framing and composition due to the lack of absolute control of the image. Thaler in this film created his own system of "looking" within the four corners of the image frame and used it to tell the stories of the subjects within the layers of composition brilliantly. In my opinion this film is a great example how one can do more with less resources and still create images worth attention and analysis. Not all paintings are made in an artist's studio, in this case the artist, which is the cinematographer, has the world as his or her studio and with the right knowledge and experience brings painting-like compositions to the screen without necessarily having ultimate control of the image, but simply by controlling the frame and elements within it. Moving on, we will now see how one can manipulate and use visual leitmotifs in Thaler's non-fiction gem *Workingman's Death* (2005).

WORKINGMAN'S DEATH: WHERE THERE IS WORK, THERE IS FIRE

“In Nigeria, I drew for Wolfgang a map of where the important parts of the process of animal slaughter take place: the goats come in *here* and they go *here* and they are killed *here* and they are roasted *there* and they are washed *there*—he films one circle every day. I don't do much while he's filming; I just watch him ”

Michael Glawogger

How to depict work? How does one set out and make it visible? With the premise that hard labour work is disappearing in the 21st century, both visually and symbolically, Glawogger set out on a quest to document the lives of the workers which go “to hell and back” on a daily basis trying to provide for themselves and their families. The film which premiered on the 62nd Edition of the *Venice International Film Festival* in 2005 is a poetic portrait of work in five chapters portentously titled: heroes, ghosts, lions, brothers and future. Unlike the previous film which I analysed, this one has somewhat more of a “classical” observational approach. The director choose not to intervene with the situations which he is shooting as he did with some in *Megacities*, but on the contrary completely indulged himself and the cinematographer into an observational process and visceral documentation of the extreme conditions and the peculiarities of the situations the workers have to go through while performing their daily tasks. The director in an interview which can be found on the website of the *Austrian Film Commission* briefly reflects on what he set out to capture as he was starting with the production of the film:

“One aspect that interested me a great deal during preparations was the question of how physical labor can be depicted. I also watched various old documentaries and fiction films about workers or their heroism and realised that the work itself was almost never shown. Even in newsreels that were merely intended to idolise workers, the actual labor process was nearly always absent. Work was interesting only as a way to introduce the worker, who in fact served in the classic worker film as an ideological vehicle. In contrast I've always been interested in making physical labor itself the subject of a film, and by means of this sensual experience determine its social and political position.” (Schiefer)

With the intention to move as far away as possible from creating an idolised image of the worker as seen in many propaganda and broadcast documentary films from the past century, the director brought us a melange of stimulating imagery followed by an unprecedented tenderness in the approach to his subjects and their work. In a short review for the *San Francisco Chronicle* the journalist Walter Addiego writes: “The visuals are everything here. Despite the hardships depicted, many sequences have a dreamlike beauty.” (Addiego) This statement got me interested to investigate, why are the visuals “everything” in this film? What do they carry which is so substantial?

Unlike the previous chapter where I spoke about the framing and composition in *Megacities*, for this chapter I have chosen not to grasp myself onto such a concrete visual element as a subject of analysis. Rather than doing that I chose to dig into the essence of the documentary camera work, which in my view, is how the locations can bring visual aspects, in this case I named them **visual leitmotifs**, which influence the nature of the camera work and aesthetics. In this kind of observational creative documentary the cinematographer does not always bring the “aesthetics”, rather than that I would say that the “aesthetics” are brought to him or her. With this I want to imply on the significance of how the body of work executed in front of the camera and the location where it is shot can influence the artistic imprint on the emulsion. *Workingman’s Death* is a film which themes are directly connected to a physical endeavour and every type of work in the film brings its own natural elements which the cinematographer can work with. Luckily this film has an abundance of distinct atmospheres and locations with breathtaking views. The *hero* miners in Ukraine which are surrounded by the darkness of the narrow mining pits, the *ghosts* carrying sulphur rocks up and down a volcano amidst the clouds of steam in Indonesia, the Nigerian *lions* in the open-air slaughterhouse which get their dark skin sprayed with blood from the animals, the Pakistani *brothers* dismembering the giant metal ships and the Chinese steelworkers surrounded by the embers of the hot melting steel machinery sharing their thoughts on the *future* of their profession. All of these chapters bring a specific element that influences the visuals. As the director gave the contextual synonyms I will similarly divide this chapter into four elements which contribute to the visual consistency of the relating stories: coal, steam, blood and fire.

The first chapter of the film takes place in Donbass, Ukraine. In this section the filmmakers are following the life of a group of Ukrainian illegal coal miners which left with no jobs provided by the state had to find an alternative to make some money. After finding out that there is still some coal left in the old closed mines in the area they endeavour into digging it out using only their bodies and a handful of tools to do the job. In an interview, one of the miners declares that without that coal they would “freeze to death”. The whole sequence was shot amidst the cold winter.

When I think of **coal** the first association that comes in my mind is darkness. The sedimentary rock which is providing about a two-fifths of the world’s electricity when burned as a fossil fuel, brings light to millions of people. Ironically, in its basic form it is as dark as the winter’s night sky. In this part of the movie we can see thought-provoking examples of how the cinematographer Thaler is using the darkness to advocate the narrative.



How do we treat light where there is none? Although darkness can bring great problems with elementary aspects of the camera work as having the right exposure to actually record an image, this lack of light can also bring a mystique and greater expression to the imagery. The coal pits where most of the scenes in Donbass were shot are only forty centimetres high and with near to no natural light coming inside except for the entrance and exit of the mine. Imagine being cramped inside with the 16mm camera trying to get all the shots you need and in the meanwhile being able to reload magazines, control the frame and light needed for exposure. The director Glawogger recalls this experience in one interview: “I didn’t consider it horrible to go into that mine. In fact, that sequence was easy to do because the moment those guys realised that we also worked with our bodies, they connected with us.” (McDonald).

The location brought its difficulties, but the limitations also brought the cinematographer in a position where he had to get more creative.

In the frame grab in picture 2.0 we can see how immanent light is used to create a trustworthy atmosphere. The headlamps from the miners are the primary source of light in this scene, giving authenticity to the image without almost any kind of intervention with additional lighting. The only additional source of light which I noticed is also a “headlamp” which is placed on the camera just above the lens. This warm spot-light goes almost unnoticed and in one way impersonates the camera as if it was one of the miners. At the same time it is helping to get some basic exposure of the image. Dealing with a leitmotif such as the coal, what it brings to the image is a dark tint which is seemingly desaturated and in absence of vivid colours. The coal dust is all over the man’s clothes and faces making them almost blend into their surroundings. Camouflaged as they are the spot lights create lighting zones which usually are their faces, as they are often talking (facing) to each other. These higher exposure areas give greater local contrast and with having the light sources in shot shining towards the lens it creates even greater subjective contrast in the image. In this way the exposure layers are not as bipolar as one may think they would have been. Rather than that they show more of the micro exposure value differences in the lower part of the gamma curve of the negative and with this imprint more fertile information on the emulsion. As a creative output we get a seemingly dark image but with visible details. The game of light and shadow creates a *chiaroscuro* effect where the viewer interprets the meaning through the lines created by the juxtaposition of dark and light and the presence of colour, however limited, effects an emotional reaction.

We can also see such a game of light and shadow in the frame grab in picture 2.1. The light source in this shot is most probably a hole on the top of the pit which breaches to the surface. The composition of the shot closely resembles some of Caravaggio’s paintings and the top light carries almost a so-called “Rembrandt light” sort of quality. The absence of highly saturated elements in the image brings a sense of unity between the characters and their surroundings and the gentle top light adds a mystical feeling. Presuming it is a light from the outside it can be translated as a “heavenly light” coming down onto the mortals of the material world. It is a great concordance of the cruel nature of the character’s lives. Thaler in this sequence becomes a “painter of life” who feels with the greatest intensity, and from it results a theatricality of emotions of light and colour. With the coal sequence we can clearly

see how a challenging location can bring out the creativity of the cinematographer, therefore giving a new dimension of contextualised meaning in the image with the treatment of light or in this case absence of the same.



Moving forward from the “hellish” abandoned coal pits in Ukraine the filmmakers continue their journey further to a more eastern part of the world. This time they find themselves at the edge of the volcanic crater of Kawah Ijen in Indonesia. The steam coming out of the crater creates heavenly clouds of vapour. In this place the earth spits out molten sulphur in hissing yellow fumes that quickly harden in to slabs. Those slabs are collected by the “ghosts” of the mountain —the workers, and then carried in handmade bamboo baskets all the way down the rocky volcano slopes to collectors who give them money for the load. On average, a bundle of sulphur rocks which they carry only with their bodies weighs around one-hundred kilograms. Ascending from the “heavens” they bring material goods to the simple world to earn a living. A truly poetic sight, yet so unimaginably difficult. What I chose to analyse for this section is the effect the steamy clouds can bring to the visuals and how they can be creatively used. The subtitle of this whole chapter is “where there is work, there is fire” and in such a word game we can say that “where there is fire, there is smoke” or in this case **steam**.

In cinema steam/smoke special effects have been widely used throughout its history. Whether is to create a special kind of atmosphere, make rays of light visible to the camera, as we saw in the example from the previous chapter, or just soften the image, this kind of SFX are widely present and used to adhere the cinematographer's wishes in fiction film and commercial cinematography. But what happens when you encounter the worlds largest smoke machine and it is something you cannot fully control? How can one use this majestic beast of nature to their own advantage? I believe this went through Thaler's thoughts at least once.

The examples in the frame grabs 2.2 and 2.3 show us an illusion of depth created by the so-called aerial or atmospheric perspective. Whilst linear perspective relies on converging the perspective lines into vanishing points the atmospheric relies on diminishing details, contrast and size to show how the appearance of the objects is affected by the space (atmosphere) between them. The two pictures differ in that that the shot seen in picture 2.3 has a horizon line in the background and bigger linear depth, whereas in 2.2 we have a closed perspective with a shallower depth. Yet, in both cases this is not playing the major factor in the creation of depth. The element that is giving volume to the space is the steamy background. In both of the shots we have two persons which are in the foreground and are the closest objects to the camera lens. With their placement we can observe how the texture and contrast is more apparent than the one in the background. No matter how complicated the surface in the background would be, in this case being heavily textured rock, the diminishing of detail is inevitable when seen through the steam. This also goes for the contrast. The light and dark tones gradually start to merge and create a soft *sfumato*-like effect. This gives the image three-dimensionality and creates a greater presence of depth. What happens is that the light passing through the haze scatters in the line of sight of the viewer. Because the light gets scattered the effect of the direct light is weaker, hence the contrast is lower and because the skylight which is consisted of shorter wavelengths is more dominant it usually gives a blue tone to the background. Unlike seen in paintings or landscape photography, this blue tint is not visible in the shots seen above because of the immediate distance between the subjects and background, consequently this effect of aerial perspective is brought not solely by the distance and atmospheric light scattering, but it is delivered almost as a special effect deliberately constructed for the compositions with the steam from the volcano.

We can notice similar approaches in the wide-shots seen in picture 2.4 and 2.5. These shots differ in their framing and also by the amount of visual movement. Even though the steam coming out of the ground has a stronger visual movement than the workers walking across the rocky landscape, the clarity of the atmosphere in the foreground of the image draws the viewers attention more quickly to them. Other factor is the contrast of their clothing opposite the lighter rocks and the compositional arrangement, but still, the softening of the details in the background is what dictates the eye's path most forcefully. With closely observing and "looking" with the proper attitude the image-maker used this atmospheric element to his advantage as a leitmotif in the scenes and successfully created beautiful images of this dreamlike place.

The next chapter of the film takes us to Port Harcourt in Nigeria. The director in an masterclass which he gave for the *Scottish Documentary Institute* recalls how he found this place. While scouting for a different location he saw a group of vultures flying above a specific area in the distance. He then asked the locals what is going on there? They replied that it is a meat market/open-air slaughterhouse. After hearing that it was clear to him that he should go there and shoot the place. It is a disturbing sight for most viewers, yet it carries such a cruel truth about poverty and the absurdity of the world we live in. Basically what happens in this place is that the locals bring live cattle and goats which get slaughtered, skinned, some of them get roasted and then sold. The whole process takes place in an open space plain where every step of the work is in close proximity to the other. Don't even let yourself think about "sanitary regulations", it is total madness. Staying truthful to his goal to portray the work, the director navigates Mr. Thaler to walk in circles with the camera everyday following the whole process. How this is executed from the perspective of the director is mentioned in quote right under this chapter's title. In my view this is the craziest and most challenging location of all in this film. Something I did not mention until now is the psychological stress one can collect from filming in such difficult locations. Imagine being thrown amongst hundreds of people and animals (dead and alive), dirt, garbage, blood, fire, smoke and absolute chaos of movement around you, and you need to focus on the frame, movement, lensing and exposure at the same time while carrying the camera. This is quite difficult to apprehend, but that's why not anyone is made for this kind of projects. In my opinion strong moral and a fighter's

spirit is crucial to survive this kind of process. Let's now see what this location has to offer except mental pressure and anxiety.



When thinking on how this open-air market and the whole atmosphere around it can influence the visuals, the main element for me is the the **blood**. Although most of the living things on this planet carry it inside of them, including us humans, the display of blood in our daily lives has decreased throughout the centuries. The modern, especially western man, is somewhat protected from its sight and it is almost considered offensive to even talk about it. So, in our little overly conscious brains the symbolical meaning of blood has reduced to a meaning that translates to danger. In my view blood globally should represents life itself, as the element of divine life that functions within the human and animal body. In this scene from Glawogger's film it represents the end of the divine and life itself. What I see in this scene is one kind of combination from the darkness in the first part of the film and the steam, or in this case smoke, from the second part of the film amplified with the presence of the colour red in the form of blood.

As we can see in picture grab 2.6 we have all the three elements used wonderfully. The smoke from the burning tires in combination with the wet ground and dirty surroundings make the whole market look like an inside of a coal mine. All of the various textures and

shapes are covered with a black complexion. The smoke adds the effect of areal perspective and the blood, hoisting out with its saturation points out exactly where the point of interest in this shot should be. Similar to this, in one of my favourite shots from this sequence, in picture 2.7 we can see the effect of contrast of saturation. The diluted dark ground layers an exceptional background to the clean brown-white fur of the goats making them clearly defined as shapes against it. The drips of blood dominate over the brown and white and create a third layer of saturation. Even though the blood is not covering a large area of the composition by contrast of saturation it is provokingly more attractive to the eye than the rest of the composition. This is because the blood is the most highly saturated element in the shot and creates a larger mental volume in the viewer's mind. Unlike this example, in the frame grab seen in picture 2.8 we can see a case where the blood covers a larger part of the frame. In this shot we can observe how it moves in the space and we can also understand the nature of its texture and the reaction when in contact with different surfaces. In the wholesome picture this might be quite a heavy sight for the viewers as they are able to see it coming directly out of the throat of the slaughtered animal mixing with the air from its lungs, scattering all over the ground and the man's feet. What I admire in this shot, and many similar like it in the sequence, is how the cinematographer put us so close to the work of this people. The camera is not shy at all and with great clarity shows us the course of action from up close.

In the frame grab seen in picture 2.9 we have an example where the blood comes in a shape that is fairly usual for us to see —as meat. The man carrying the two large pieces of meat is walking out towards a more urban area outside the market. In the composition we can see how the imperative of the blood visually weakens. When put in the scheme of black and red, as in the inside of the market, the meat would have been more noticeable due to the dichromatic character of the scenery. In this shot we see the blood symbolically departing from the dichromatic black/red market and entering the more urbanised area. By its size in the shot and sharpness we understand that the pieces of meat are the main subject in focus, but we can also notice other red coloured objects as the man's shorts, the car, plastic basin and the metal fence to the right. With this the composition gets richer with saturated elements and the bloody meat is not as much accentuated as in the inside of the market. It is a great contrast of the two spaces and an excellent visual metaphor of the ending of the whole process and the sequence.

In this sequence while following the “lions”, we are able to observe how the cinematographer used the element of blood and turned it into a main visual leitmotif, contextualising the imagery in synchrony with the narrative once again successfully. With having in mind the freedom given to Mr. Thaler, mentioned by the director when he says: “I don’t do much while he’s filming; I just watch him.”, in my view we can conclude that the experience behind the camera leads to a greater understanding on how to harness and handle an element found in the surroundings. In this case it was blood, which visually translates in the colour red with which the cinematographer worked in such a way that he found various methods how to emphasise and bring importance to it, with absolutely no control in terms of placement and amount. I believe it is worth mentioning that this sequence is almost like an homage to the documentary *Le Sang des bêtes* (1949) by the French director Georges Franju.

I started this chapter with the subtitle “where there is work, there is fire”. It is interesting that until now I have not mentioned fire as a driving visual component in any of the scenes. When I set out to analyse this film it was evident from first sight that the nature of the work the people are completing is not in any terms industrialised and most of the activities are executed with simple tools and their bare hands. What was brought to my attention is that the mutual element for the five sequences of work is exactly fire. For example the miners use the coal to heat up their homes during the winter, the sulphur rocks that the Indonesians carry on their backs comes from a sublimation of volcanic gases derived from the heat of the earth’s core, the Nigerian workers have it all around the market space and use it to roast goats and burn garbage. In these three sequences it is almost completely hidden from the camera’s point of view, but unlike that in the last two parts of the film we can see it more clearly in a form that is easier for us to rely to. Because both the Pakistani ship dismembers and the Chinese steel workers use it in a more direct way I decided to combine the both. Although they do not depend directly on fire, the association in terms of colour, luminance and lighting influence comes in the form of grinding sparks and melting metal. Whether it is used as a main source of light or as an always present reminder of the nature of their work in the visuals, it is a semiotic artery of the two scenes.

As the legend goes, Prometheus defied the Gods by stealing **fire** and giving it to the human civilisation. After that we learned how to harness it and use it in various shapes and forms. Being such a big part in our lives, whether we use it for cooking, heating, light or destruction, it is an element of our lives which is undoubtedly one of the most common sights for the human eye. On the shores of Pakistan workers mainly from the north of the country gather to work on dismembering massive tankers and other ships throughout the year. They take on the task of dismantling these massive steel giants using flame and grind cutters. Working as a collective, hence the subtitle “brothers” for this sequence, they manage to cut and take apart huge pieces of metal which drop to the ground like apples from a tree. Similar to them the Chinese handle the big steel furnaces inside the factory whilst sharing thoughts about the future of their work and modernisation of the process. What they share from a cinematography viewpoint is this golden-yellow and orange light coming from the melting steel. In the world of blacksmiths exists a colour chart which depicts the temperatures of melting steel. Just by observing the colour of the steel the blacksmith can conclude on the approximate temperature of it. Similar to this cinematographers judge the colour temperature of the light using the kelvin scale.

“If we heat an object up to about 1500 degrees Celsius we will begin to see a dull red glow and we say the object is red hot. If we heat something up to about 5000 degrees Celsius, near the temperature of the sun's surface, it radiates well throughout the visible spectrum and we say it is white hot.” (Branon)

And this “object” we call a black body radiant. In physics it is described as an idealised physical body that absorbs all incident electromagnetic radiation, regardless of frequency or angle of incidence and then analogically radiates electromagnetic waves which we transcribe as full-spectrum light. This principal is used in the common incandescent light bulb that we have in our households. To put it simple, this is how we use heat to create light. Why I am mentioning this is because I think it is crucial to understand the character of the light Mr. Thaler was using, or to put it better, utilising and working around it to create the images in the two last sequences. In my opinion, what he had as a leitmotif were these flickering, kinetic warm lights.



What we can see from the frame grabs is the different ways the cinematographer used the light source to his advantage. As seen in picture 2.10 one method he uses is creating silhouettes of the workers by framing them against the source of light. What is crucial to understand in this kind of images is the use of the right exposure, or how I like to put it: exposing to feel, not to see. If one were to expose such a shot “to see” we would have been able to see the details of the worker’s uniforms and most of the dark areas in the shot. But then we would have highly overexposed the light source and the image would not have carried such an expressionist feeling. By underexposing the image we are able to have the sparks, steam and heated metal presented to us in a more vivid colour. Being the most luminous part of the shot we clearly understand that it is the main focus of interest, i.o. the work itself rather than the workers. With this silhouette game, we can observe how the dark image foreground is separated from the light background, hence giving a greater scene depth and emotional trigger.

In the frame grab seen in picture 2.11 we can see another example depicting the dance of light and shadow. In this wide-shot taken during the night while the Pakistani workers cut pieces of metal, we can see that there is no additional lighting except the light coming from the heated steel. The workers being differently positioned in a 360 degree radius around the sources of light are lit from different angles. With this we can see different effects

the angle of the the light can produce. With having nowhere to bounce from except when diffused in the steam, the image is very high contrasted. We can see workers being lit with a side light, others put against it seen as silhouettes and some are front lit, but because it is coming from a low angle it has a more captivating effect. As a whole, the composition has a variety of exposure layers which with their placement create the depth in the image. It is a very “moody” lighting composition which has a strong emotional output which in fiction films one would spend hours of planning and massive lighting set-ups trying to recreate such a scene.

In the other two examples in picture 2.12 and 2.13 we can see how the cinematographer uses the source to light the workers in more close-up shots. He mainly uses side lit compositions with the light source inside or outside the frame lines. In shot 2.12 we can notice that is shot during the dusk. This gives us the opportunity to have the sky and the ground in a closer exposure value proximity. With the nature of the dusk creating a more blueish atmosphere with the reflected skylight, the cinematographer had the chance to play with the complementary colour contrast in the image. Being shot on daylight film stock the sparks of the burning metal are reproduced warmer than they would have been if shot with tungsten stock, therefore creating a higher contrast to the blue toned skies and surroundings. The figure of the worker is beautifully shaped by the warm light coming from his side in contrast to the colder atmospheric light and effectively separates him from the background. Again, it is all due to how the cinematographer exposed the shot. With over or underexposing it the effect would have been the same. In the frame grab seen in picture 2.13 we cannot see the source of light in the shot, but we can feel its presence. The two Chinese workers giving an interview were placed in such a way to have the flickering warm light from the burning furnaces lighting them. What is interesting about this shot is the oscillating intensity of the light source. As seen throughout the sequence, the source of light is always moving and changing intensity. With this the cinematographer reminds us where they are and successfully conveys the nature of the light he works with without showing its source, but simply with association. This image could have been taken anywhere in the world with controlled lighting and still function in the sequence.

In *Workingman's Death* we were able to see how the documentary cinematographer can successfully use visual leitmotifs and use them as a component serving the action and context of the scene. In my view, what is crucial to a good outcome is the careful observation of the

locations and all the aspects they bring. Harnessing the natural elements and using them to adhere the visuals can only come with a distinct explorational method and understanding on what lies in front of one's eyes. This reminds us that creative documentary films are not only there to document, but to transmit a more mesmerising experience of reality. Moving on I will now indulge myself into the world of colours with the film *Whore's Glory* (2011). Again, I will try to bring out aspects of the creative usage of a visual components, in this case colour, and conclude on the creative output one can achieve with manipulating with it without having absolute control over it.

WHORE'S GLORY: A POEM WRITTEN IN COLOURS

“When I decided Whores’ Glory would be a triptych, I decided to follow the order of a Catholic altar triptych, if you read the images from left to right—the order Bosch used in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. On the left is Paradise. In the middle part is the World, and on the right side is Hell. It was easy to follow this order because Buddhism has a much more casual approach to sexuality than Islam or Catholicism, and because sexuality in Catholicism is loaded with guilt and death.”

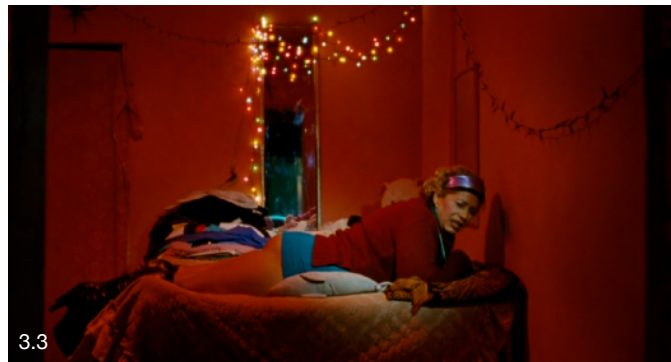
Michael Glawogger

Before seeing this film in the cinema for the first time nine years ago, I never could have imagined that the world of brothels and prostitution could look so beautiful. I might argue with myself a bit and say that before this film I was probably unable to comprehend that documentary film cinematography is something worth more thorough analysis. That definitely changed after seeing the images in *Whore’s Glory*. As the director often mentions that his films are about looking, those words echo when he says: “I think it is obvious that this film was made by a man, a man who looks at working girls and tries to understand how it feels to do this kind of work, day by day.” The film takes us “looking” in three different countries: Thailand, Bangladesh and Mexico. The camera with great lightness documents the lives of the girls working in the brothels and one can say that the viewer is in one way sheltered from the dark side of the work. Rather than that, the visuals bring exactly what the director visioned to depict —the “glory” of the work. What I found most appealing from the cinematography in this film is its tactful use of colours. Colours can speak to us in so many different ways, both consciously and subconsciously, especially when they are well-controlled and implemented into the images. But, how does one do it in documentary film? Yes, there are a few interventions here and there throughout the film in terms of lighting, but for most of the film the camera floats in-between the naked reality of the situations, observing without a pretentious goal to overly stylise the imagery. Being shot on 16mm colour motion picture film, the rendition and reproduction of colours is so natural and at the same time so exquisite, one might argue that it is almost untruthful because of the intensity of the colour details. That brings us to what I mentioned before, which is that the only “truth” we should look for in the films as an audience is the reality presented us by the authors, whether it is narratively or visually.

“*Whores’ Glory* is just as much Wolfgang Thaler’s film as it is Michael Glawogger’s. From the bright lights of Bangkok to the cramped spaces of Bangladesh and muddy areas of Mexico, Thaler brings a sense of beauty to each one.” (Prince)

Because I have no intention of dismembering each of the three chapters of the films independently I chose to analyse the beauty of the colours in this film through methodical examples which are not only found in one segment, but seen throughout the film. This way, in my opinion, we can see how the cinematographer adapted and used similar approaches which he successfully implemented in different parts of the story. Still, the three different locations bring three completely unique sensations and patterns of colours. For example the “Fish Tank” in Bangkok is a blast of kinetic and bright lights which are carefully designed to attract costumers coming from the street. In Faridpur, Bangladesh, on the other hand, we can observe how the cultural differences are translated into colours in the traditional outfits, make up and interiors of the rooms being composed of so many different vivid colours contrasting the naive Western ideas of attraction. At the end in “The Zone” in Mexico we can see a complete destruction of any kind of aesthetics. I sometimes like to associate this last sequence with the colour of skin, dirt and heroin. It is probably the most unattractive place for this kind of work. Being so deeply sunk in drugs and poverty it is quite grotesque. Following this analogy the triptych starts with Paradise, then visits the Earthly World and ends in Hell.

When talking about prostitution we think about sex, and when we think about sex we usually associate with passion, desire and fertility. Thinking in the language of colours the semiotic counterpart of sexuality would be the colour red. Still, not every culture interprets this colour the same. For example in many parts of Asia it represents happiness, celebration or prosperity, but in some parts of Africa it is the colour of death and grieving. Nevertheless, what we have adopted as the meaning of this colour comes mostly from the Western world of advertising. From Marlyn Monroe’s red lipstick to the *Coca-Cola* logo, it is presented to us as a symbol of sexuality and lust. In *Whore’s Glory* the colour red is present continuously through all of the locations and scenes. I believe that many of us when we first think of a brothel immediately imagine a dimmed red light. We instinctively associate it with the colour. Thaler uses this colour to his advantage in more than a few occasions. Not by chance prostitution districts around the world are called “red-light districts”. What caught my interest is how well he managed to implement a uniformed **monochromatic colour scheme** in a few shots using the shades of red.



In the first frame grab seen in picture 3.1 we have an interview shot on candlelight. The girl is wearing white make up and red lipstick, something very common in parts of Asia. She has covered her head and part of her body completely with a red shawl. I can say with certainty that this shot is additionally lit to successfully recreate a candlelight atmosphere in this scene shot in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the image is very believable. We can notice that the colour red is the most dominant colour in the shot. In conformity with the analogous golden-yellow candlelight it brings sense of unity in the image. Being combined with the neutral black tones around it carries the *chiaroscuro* effect and evokes the viewer to relate to the emotional value of the scene. In this case the girl as confessing about the troubles she encounters during her work and all the hardships she carries around with her. The monochrome colour scheme in compliance with the lighting ration in the scene very successfully collides the two components of the nature of her work: the one that is hidden in the darkness and the one that is “forcefully” visible on the surface.

Similar to this in picture 3.2 we see a silhouette of a girl against the door of her room. This is a shot from the sequence shot in Mexico where many of the girls were trying to hide or did not want to be shot. As a metaphor it works perfectly in both ways. The gate to sex is opened and from the inside shines a deceptive red light. On the entrance there is a faceless

character, hence the connection to Nuestra Señora de la Santa Muerte (eng.: Our Lady of the Holy Death) which is the protector and saint of “The Zone”. For me it represents one kind of a portal to Hell that with the absence of other colours conveys a message of danger. Not sure that this would be very appealing for every customer if put in this context, but it seems to work for the girls.

That “hellish” red is similarly shown in the frame grab seen in picture 3.3. Definitely one of my favourite shots from Mexico when put into context with what the woman is talking about. In this deliberately set-up interview shot, she is telling the story of how a father came with his fifteen year-old son and she had the opportunity to make the young boy “feel like a man”, as his father had requested. The screaming red colour covers more than eighty percent from the shot’s surface. It is very aggressive to look at due to the intensively saturated colour, but in some way a bit comical because of her pose and physical appearance. She is almost like some of Miloš Forman’s wacky supporting characters. Nevertheless, what is interesting about this shot is the neutral tungsten spotlight coming onto her, which being in the warm-tone scale does not make such a big difference, but the presence of another primary colour - blue is what catches our attention. In such a monochromatic scene, when one implements even a small fraction of another colour it is highly noticeable. Especially here with the presence of the blue. Blue and red are not complimentary colours, but they are in my opinion a very odd couple which when put together make such beautiful music with the cold-warm contrast. Probably the presence of the blue visually indicates to the “Jarabe” danced by the woman’s hips, as it is the part of her body it covers. Nonetheless, the shot is visually striking because of the the vivid red, especially as part of an editing sequence where it stands out amongst the other shots with great peculiarity. I must note that there is the presence of the colour yellow in the small Christmas lights on the wall. With this one may argue that this shot has a triadic colour scheme. This is not far from true. But, because of the overwhelming presence of red I decided to put it in the section with the other two examples using it in a more monochromatic approach.

Following the example from picture 3.3, I will now present examples from the film where different situations of **colour contrast** effects were captured. Colour contrast is a method of storytelling and visual expression very familiar to the cinematographer. In fiction films the cinematographer has the chance to create, control and contextualise the meaning of a certain scene with the psychology behind the colliding colours. Unlike in fiction, in

documentary film one has to carefully observe and driven by his/her instinct and visual knowledge present the effects to the viewer by astutely capturing them. Thaler uses this method in various situations, employing different types of colour contrasts to depict different emotional and corporeal situations. What we have as an outcome from using colour contrast in the visuals is a more vibrant depiction of the scenes, unlike the more clean and soothing effect the monochromatic colour scheme we saw examples of gives us.



According to the colour scientist Johannes Itten there are seven different types of colour contrasts: contrast of hue, light-dark contrast, cold-warm contrast, complementary contrast, simultaneous contrast, contrast of saturation and contrast of extension. In the examples seen in the frame grabs following this part of the analysis, we can identify at least four different types of colour contrast. Because everything we can perceive by our senses is made through comparison, similarly the colour effects can be intensified or weakened by the colour contrast.

In the frame grab seen in picture 3.4 we have an example of complementary colour contrast. This is the most difficult of all the contrast for the eye to comprehend, hence it has the most forceful effect. Because it is consisted of two colours which are lying opposite of each other on the colour wheel, in this case red and green, our eye has the most difficulty to adapt and create a neutral balance in our brain. Therefore the contrast in between the larger green area which is the wall and the girl's dress is very striking to the eye. We can easily differentiate the girl from her surroundings. The analogous colours found in the "frame within the frame", inside the girls room, enforce the effect of the contrast. If there were to be another colour, the effect of the whole composition would have been different.

In the example presented in the picture 3.5 we can see how the contrast of saturation helps the guide the viewer's eye. In this scene, the girl in the red dress, leads her client to one of the bedrooms after her and a few other working girls had a dinner with other clients. Not accidentally, the cinematographer chose to follow this exact girl. The contrast between the pure, intense red and the dulled peachy walls and gentleman's outfit gives the viewer's attention direct instructions on who the main character of the scene is and which of the characters they need to follow in a very straightforward way. This effect comes with the juxtaposition of highly saturated and diluted colours. Seen in this example, also in the one I analysed before and in 3.7 we can see the use of the "frame within a frame" composition method. When combined with colours this technique even more effectively leads the eye and encourages the viewer to look towards the subject. It also creates a feeling of confinement and inner emotional struggle.

In picture 3.6 we have an example of light-dark colour. contrast. This is a textbook example of how the cinematographer uses the tonalities to separate the subject of interest from its surroundings with using the "painter's strongest expression" as noted by Itten:

"Day and night, light and darkness - this polarity is of fundamental significance in human life and nature generally. The painter's strongest expressions of light and dark are the colours black and white." (Itten 37)



In this frame grab we can see a girl in a light blue outfit against a dark green, almost black wall. In the depth there is another character which is swathed by darkness and in front of this person's feet there is a white goat. What drew my attention is how the contrast in this shot also leads to an associative emotional meaning. The young girl in light blue is seemingly distressed and sad. She looks weak in her moment of contemplation. Knowing the conditions and difficulties these working girls in Faridpur encounter one can say that they are treated

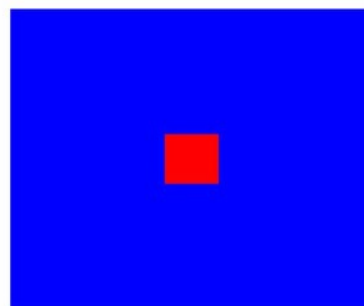
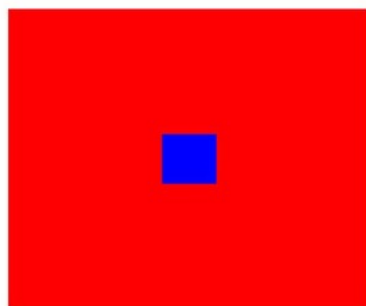
more like animals than as human beings. Being so fragile and powerless this comparison with an animal comes analogously. We can also see that in the shot. The two highest value shots are the girl and the animal, except for the small window on top which I will exclude from this situation. The similar luminosity connects the two subjects and in my view creates this connection of fragility also visually.

In the last picture in this section we come back to the warm-cold colour contrast. This contrast is very common in cinema, most often seen these days in Hollywood's favourite blockbuster the teal/orange look. Here in the example seen in picture 3.7 we have a composition consisted of red-orange and blue. An interesting phenomena when speaking about the juxtaposition of red and blue is the illusion of depth in binocular vision called *chromostereopsis*. The Dutch scientist Willem Einthoven explains it as:

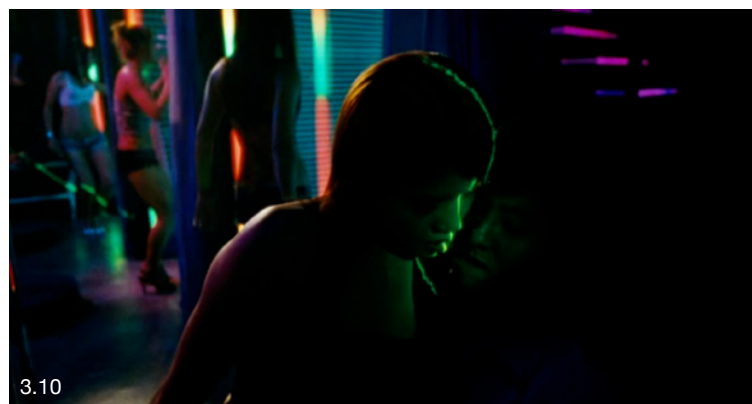
“Depending on the wavelength, the focal point in the eyes varies. He concluded that the reason why people see red in front of blue is because light with different wavelengths project onto different parts of the retina. When the vision is binocular, a disparity is created, which causes depth perception. Since red is focused temporally, it appears to be in front. However, under monocular vision, this phenomenon is not observed.” (Wikipedia)

This happens because of the chromatic aberration in the eyes, which means that not all colours we see are focused in the same time. With this effect of depth also visible is the effect of assumed volume. As seen in the example in picture 3.Y, we can observe that although both squares are the same size, the blue one inside the larger red square appears to be and smaller.

3.Y



This illusion of size is something Thaler uses throughout the film. In compositions similar to the one seen in 3.7. He wraps around colder objects with warmer colours, or visa-versa to create the wanted effect. But in the situations where we see colder colours wrapped with a warmer one, the sensation of confinement is greater. In the shot we can see the two girls preparing to go out into the “Fish Tank” lit by a fluorescent blue light inside the door frame. The outside wall is red-orange and with this the effect is felt. In this way, the warm-cold contrast serves as an excellent narrative tool to present how the girls are trapped in by their work.



Previously we saw how the cinematographer Thaler successfully uses one colour, or the clash of two colours to his advantage to create mesmerising images. This leads me to the another example of usage of colour in this film which is the one of **multiple colour compositions**. In many examples throughout the film we can see this “Pollock” effects to create close to kaleidoscopic images. In the world of colours we can classify their arrangement with different colour palettes as: monochromatic, analogous, complimentary, triadic, split complementary and tetradic. Because this is a documentary film and the cinematographer is

not able to fully control the colour schemes in correspondence to the story, what I find interesting is how he uses the spaces in the location to capture such lucid imagery. Documentary is a world of adaptation and improvisation. This is why I find it so captivating. The freedom that cinematographer has is something that is priceless and when demonstrated in the right way it leads to the creation of radiant images. We have to be aware that the usage of colours is not purely combination of their pigments. It is also a combinations of their hues and different tonalities. With combining all of these elements one can create a “complete“ composition.

Seen in the frame grab in picture 3.8 is an intriguing colour composition. We can observe the warm light inside the girl’s room collided with the cold blue fluorescent lit hallway and her yellow shirt in the middle splicing the composition. The yellow is of highest value and keeps our attention on her. The different colours of the lights only add up to the rich colour composition and its expressive character. We see the presence of green, blue, yellow and red. With this we can say that this shot has a tetradic colour scheme with two complementary pairs of colours. If we analyse the semantics of the colours and their psychological effect we can see that every colour has its own subtext. Yellow for youth or naivety, red for passion, blue for melancholy etc. The viewer’s visual knowledge registers these symbolic meanings and emotionally connects with the subtext of the shot.

In the second example seen in picture 3.9 we can see how the cinematographer used the reflection to construct a very poignant composition. It is like a depiction of an acid trip and the main character, which is the customer choosing a girl is the one composed in the middle of the frame, is surrounded by this colourful world of delights. There are multiple colours in this composition which when combined together with all the tonalities, shapes and elements in the shot create a sensation of confusion. This kind of expressive combination of elements does not necessarily need any kind of clarification. By itself it evokes a cerebral reaction in the viewer which is left for individual interpretation. Still, it is a great example how one can combine the reflective qualities of surfaces, different textures and a melange of various colours in a dramatic composition.

The last picture in this section is a frame grab from a shot in the opening scene of the film. What is characteristic about this scene is the presence of kinetic coloured lights and lasers. What i find interesting in the shot seen in picture 3.10 is how the cinematographer

used one colour and light to accentuate the girl dancing with the costumer. Opposing to the colourful background where the other girls dance, in the foreground of the image in complete darkness there is a girl giving a lap dance to a costumer. A moving green laser lights up the girl's face in intervals. In contrast to the multicoloured bright background, this green laser admirably divides the two spaces in terms of colour. The light-dark contrast of the image in combination with the green accent in the dark foreground creates a very dramatic assortment of the visual components. With having no space to set up the lighting in this shot I perceive it as an example of how with careful observation one can adapt in the situation and create meaningful visuals with usage of colours and tonalities.

In *Whore's Glory* we were able to see how colour can be treated in documentary film as a narrative tool. On a number of occasions throughout this chapter, and the thesis in general, I mention how important is not to forget that the cinematographer had limited or no opportunity to fully control the colour schematics. With this I want to point out that even with limitations one can adapt and use the colourful textures found on the locations and interpret them into constructive visual compositions. Colour is a very powerful tool to work which can be used as an adhesive ingredient to telling a story. This film is a true poem written in colours. From the neon city lights in Bangkok to the narrow dimly lit hallways of Faridpur and the desert-like dullness of *The Zone* in Mexico it takes the audience on an emotional rollercoaster conducted through the stories, sounds and colours. With this film I am finishing my analysis of Glawogger's work. For the end I will leave you with a quote from the filmmaker:

“The world will never be a better place because people do only good things to each other. There is beauty in the most tragic moments and there is aggression and boredom in the ordinary. There is hope in war and war in hope. Films that offer resolutions are nothing but bad art, because they cannot truly explore the diversity of the human soul.” (McDonald)

CONCLUSION

Wherever they take us, the *auteurs* seem to bring the same dazzling effect to the screen. Regardless if they are lost in the streets of a megacity or cramped in a small warehouse room somewhere in Bangladesh the camera is breathing with ease and delivers radiant imagery and resonant narrative content to the viewers. When I set out to write this thesis my goal was to demonstrate that the world we live in is full with visual poetics and that there is no better way to capture this segment of our reality than through the documentary film. Of course capturing this “reality” requires a mechanical tool which in this case is the camera. Still, the camera as a machine is nothing without a skilful eye behind its viewfinder. In this case we were able to enjoy a showcase of the work of the Austrian cinematographer Wolfgang Thaler in his documentary film collaborations with the director Michael Glawogger. I took him and their “Globalisation Trilogy” as a leading protagonist to help me bring to light a widely (but silently) accepted assumption that has been troubling me for a long time, which is the premise that documentary film cinematography is not as expressive and creative as that in fiction film. Why would one consider (as many do) that a documentary cinematographer’s work is not on the same level, or let’s say in the same category as fiction film cinematography? Yes, there are differences in the workflow and (most usually) tools that are accessible to the cameraman to use, but is the final product of “lesser worth”?

We live in an age of blurred boundaries between fiction and reality. In films we see the same. For example more and more fiction films today are trying to achieve a so-called “naturalistic” look and concentrate their cinematography around a minimalist approach towards creation of meaningful images. In my opinion this kind of concept is borrowed from the greats of documentary film cinema. I think that people often forget that documentary films, or to be more specific “creative” documentary films, were also meant to be viewed in a cinema theatre. With acknowledging the fact that this films should be viewed on a big screen by analogy means that they should be in one way visual counterparts to their fiction cousins. Only in the past ten years we were able to see such films as: *Pina* (Wenders, W., 2011), *The Salt of the Earth* (Salgado, J.R. and Wenders, W., 2014), *Aquarela* (Kossakovsky, V., 2019), *Honeyland* (Kotevska, T. and Stefanov, Lj., 2019), *Under the Sun* (Manskiy, V., 2015), *In the Basement* (Seidl, U., 2014) and many more which found their way to the regular film programs in cinemas

around the world and reminded audiences that documentary films can be as exciting and beautiful to watch as fiction films.

What we saw as examples in the analysis of the documentary collaborations between Glawogger and Thaler were different visual precedents which were creatively used to adhere the cinematography and with that the complete storytelling machinery. This visual components are shared in between all of the expressive visual disciplines that exist in the modern world. The cinematographer's mission is to advocate them in such way that they fit the format of cinema, which is moving images. Throughout the thesis we were able to observe how one can creatively use composition and framing, adapt to the location, point out visual leitmotifs and create amazing colour compositions with the same impact and continuity as, for example, a blockbuster fiction film would have. In my view, the goal of presenting truthful images of a reality constructed within the "reality that we want to take for granted" was sublimely executed. The freedom of expression and the diligence with which it is brought to the viewer by Thaler is an outstanding example of how a cinematographer can use all of his/her knowledge of the visual and implement it in a film genre that does not necessarily require or has written in any "how-to" handbook that its cinematography should stand as an unparalleled author's entity. Of course this is also the blame of the genius mind of the prematurely passed away Michael Glawogger. Their chemistry brought to us scenic visuals and an exceptional depiction of the world we live in. In my view, they were able to create *auteur* pieces **non plus ultra**, both visually and narratively.

I hope that this thesis will inspire anyone who reads it to be more curious about the world around us. There are many beautiful things we tend to miss out on while talking those nice long afternoon walks around the neighbourhood. Next time "look" more closely I am sure there will be something that will surprise your senses. There is always something new and bewildering no matter how well we think we know the route. At the very end I will just say that we cannot let ourselves forget that cinema was only born with a documentary film, everything from there on is pure fiction.

Notes

1 —This quotation was taken from a transcribed masterclass from an online video source which unfortunately got taken off the internet and the only proof of its existence is the transcription written down in my personal notebook. It was accessed somewhere between October 2019 and January 2020 on the online video platform YouTube. It was an masterclass including cinematographer Wolfgang Thaler and director Michael Glawogger as part of *Planete + Doc Film Festival* held on Monday, May 14, 2012, 7.30 p.m., at “Kinoteka” in Warsaw, Poland.

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