Erice Kiarostami

Correspondences

CENTRE DE CULTURA CONTEMPORÀNIA DE BARCELONA

Diputació Barcelona
xarxa de municipis

EXHIBITION

Erice-Kiarostami. Correspondences is a co-production by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) and La Casa Encendida (Madrid). It is on at the CCCB from 10 February to 21 May and at La Casa Encendida from 4 July to 24 September 2006.

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We politicians, administrators of the state, are often asked for rapid solutions, immediate responses, to the problems created in society. Fortunately, artists, who with their creations reflect on reality and help to question what we are and what all of us do every day, pointing to the ways and means to live with a deeper awareness of existence, have more time available to work in. Above all if they are of the kind who bet heavily on the individual freedom of the artist, as is the case with Víctor Erice and Abbas Kiarostami, now brought together in an exhibition at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona.

The importance of this exhibition's approach lies in presenting two filmmakers side by side, filmmakers who independently of their origins—one is Spanish; the other, Iranian—share a profound and deliberate vision of reality, and especially of the tension between the individual and society, a basic feature of the CCCB's philosophy. Two quintessential filmmakers in today's cinema, two researchers of incorruptible independence who work to further the expressive potential and capacity of cinema a century after its invention, by frequently regressing—in a way less paradoxical that it may seem—to the starkness and primal force of the cinema of the pioneers.

It is an honour for the CCCB that the two of them have agreed to share their art and their time and to establish this dialogue in the form of an exhibition. A dialogue of images which is an essential component of their cinema and is presented here as an approach to two open-ended oeuvres which are not exhausted in the footage of their films but go beyond them, and which—so I hope—will give us yet new and excellent fruits in the future.

Lastly, I am happy to emphasise, particularly in an era so riven by political confrontations at the international scale, and often based on a reductionist or simplistic view of things, the fact that between Erice and Kiarostami there exists an essential convergence, a deep affinity, albeit arising in very different settings. Bringing their visions closer together, comparing their trajectories, is converted, then, into a stimulating exercise in creative dialogue.

Celestino Corbacho
President of the Diputació de Barcelona and of the CCCB Consortium

The Casa Encendida is privileged to participate in the encounter between two great filmmakers, the Iranian Abbas Kiarostami and the Spaniard Víctor Erice. Guided by Alain Bergala and Jordi Balló, the project curators, the directors have maintained a filmic correspondence which demonstrates the similarities and parallels uniting two artists from such distinctive social, cultural and aesthetic contexts.

Their filmographies share a taste for a slow, temporally sustained narration and for focussing our attention on those elements that pass unnoticed yet which contain entire worlds; in short, the gaze attributed to children, recurring characters in both oeuvres and whose viewpoint also guides the exhibition. The vindication of the viewer is also clearly established via the filmmakers, incursions into other fields such as installation and photography, and in collaborations with other artists like Antonio López. Due to their twin correspondence the public will be able to return to both directors the look the two of them defend in each of their works and to enjoy little-known aspects of these creators, aspects that will provide their regular viewers with new clues to understanding these oeuvres.

We hope that our collaboration with the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona will always be as fruitful as this project has been.

Carlos María Martínez
General Manager of Obra Social Caja Madrid

The Twofold Childhood of Cinema

When we proposed to Abbas Kiarostami and Víctor Erice the mounting of an exhibition on their respective careers they'd only met once before. This had been at a session of the Taormina Festival, where they'd had the opportunity to express their mutual admiration. They weren't friends but knew each other thanks to the universality of cinema language. It was probably due to this that they didn't have to be asked twice when Alain Bergala and Jordi Balló explained their idea to them about a joint exhibition. The cinema—a certain way of understanding cinema—was their common ground. And it was this basis, and not friendship or personal knowledge, which lent meaning to the project. Later, when they'd already agreed to participate, they saw each other for a day in Thessaloniki, and exchanged a couple of e-mails. The rest has been a matter of cinema. Cinema—the main language of these two artists—has served to depict in images the dialogue between two directors who only knew each other through their films.

Exhibitions—like all creative genres—have their own internal codes. A bad exhibition is one that shows things that might have been better presented in some other way. "Erice-Kiarostami. Correspondences" is the location, at once physical and mental, in which a dialogue takes shape between two artists—between a cinema and its referents—that would hardly have come about using other means. Thus, for instance, Antonio López's paintings can coexist directly with Víctor Erice's speculations about them, and Kiarostami's photos and installations pass the test of contact with his cinema. And thus, especially, the correspondence between two people who are from cinema and who therefore agree to write to each other in shots and not words, can take shape in all its intensity as part and parcel of two cinematic trajectories that are two ways of looking at the world, with many points of contact, from behind a camera.

Creativity ceases to be a solitary exercise the moment the work exists and goes off in search of other people, who are the ones who truly endow it with meaning. Here, this exercise has an initial part created between two. When the exhibition reaches the public it will have the added value given it by the encounter between two artists who, without meeting, knew of each other. And who have had the generosity to test what happens when their creative works are shown conjointly. Artists are accustomed to keeping themselves to themselves and they prefer to ride alone. Here, not only are they exhibited alongside one another but at a certain moment they combine to knit the experience of filmic correspondence together. This is a way of symbolising that any artist is part of a long chain that he hasn't begun and which he will not finish.

The common ground is childhood: the childhood of cinema and the cinema of childhood. Cinema has two characteristics that differentiate it from other arts: it's relatively new—it's just over a century old—and consequently it possesses an absolutely precise history. Any filmmaker knows who his ancestors are. The newness and rapid succession of cinema, as if it were a perennial language which furnishes icons and ingredients for the child's imagination and for formative novels, has to do with the thinking of two unusual filmmakers. The twofold childhood of cinema is, finally, about the correspondence Erice and Kiarostami have maintained with the help of their ballpoint pen: the movie camera. It's their way of writing.

Josep Ramoneda
Director of the CCCB

Abbas Kiarostami, 2005

Víctor Erice, 2005

As luck would have it Abbas Kiarostami and Víctor Erice are born a week apart, the first in Iran (in Teheran) on 22 June 1940, the second in Spain (in Karrantza) on 30 June 1940.

Their personal history is to mean that the two of them will become filmmakers, Abbas Kiarostami by taking a circuitous path and Víctor Erice via the more classical route of a cinema school. Both are now internationally renowned filmmakers and have become, in their respective countries, leading lights for the younger generation of directors, who consider them to be exemplary "big brothers" and amicable "masters". The two of them have placed their personal imprint on their national cinema, their work being inscribed therein as a kind of beacon, in both cases the most representative of their generation, a somewhat lost generation in cinema history, the one which is to start making films in the 1970s, following the great efflorescence of the 60s.

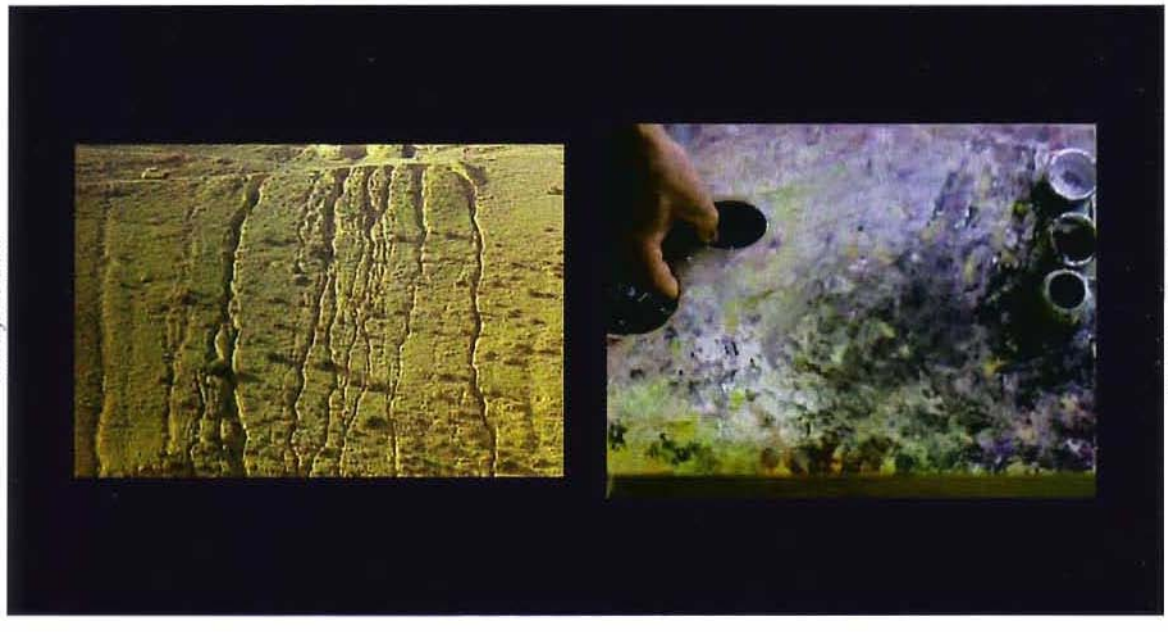
For both parties this personal history is inscribed within the more painful History of their respective countries. As adults the two of them have lived through a radical change of political regime, with all that this means by way of an upheaval within everyday life, an openness towards other cultures, morals, censorship, the possibility of artistic expression. For Víctor Erice this rupture, the end of Francoism and the advent of a democratic regime comes about within two years of the making of his first film, *The Spirit of the Beehive*, in 1973, while censorship will only be abolished in Spain in 1977. For Abbas Kiarostami it is a few years later in the same decade, in 1979, that the Islamic Revolution is to cause his country to make the switch from the old regime of the Shah to the Islamic Republic of today. These two changes of regime have nothing in common, obviously, except that to be born, to grow up and to be formed as a filmmaker, artist or intellectual in an extreme historical and political situation, with all that this entails by way of censorship, cultural frustration, trickery, prudence, but also of courage and a taste for freedom, and to find oneself in one's thirties, fully mature, faced with a radically different situation, other rules

Erice - Kiarostami: The Pathways of Creation

Alain Bergala

of social intercourse, other ideologies, other kinds of limitation, implies a further calling into question of the role of art in society and, for a creative person, of all that his own artistic practice is. For Abbas Kiarostami, who has learnt to make films under the old regime in an educational institution founded by the Shah's wife, the Kanun, the Islamic Revolution has not necessarily meant a gain in creative freedom but has brought him face to face with new forms of ideological and religious pressure and censorship, and has called, in his case, for enormous strength of conviction and attachment to his country in order to go on living and exercising his métier as a filmmaker in Iran, even though international recognition has offered him the possibility of going into exile and freely producing his future films elsewhere.

For both men the political, cultural, ideological and social climate of the two periods they have lived through (before and after the political change) has never to be the declared subject of their films. They share the same conviction that cinema is first and foremost an art of singularity, that of the human beings whose story they tell and that of the actual world around them: their house, their neighbours, their landscape, their way of life. They are obviously aware that these modest, ordinary lives (the only ones in their eyes that are worth taking the trouble to recount) are partly determined by the overall situation of the society in which they are active. But in the cinema it behoves them to make, this quintessentially human factor must never steal a march on an attentive and modest approach to the singularity of their character. In their films one can read the effects of the overall political situation in which their story takes place, but these signs retain the opacity and areas of shadow that they have for their characters. The two of them have always been convinced that neither the filmmaker nor the viewer must have the least superiority nor the least prominence over the character, what happens to him, what he does and doesn't understand of the world in which he lives. We will know nothing more of the man who takes



And Life Goes On

The Quince Tree Sun

refuge in the abandoned house in *The Spirit of the Beehive*, and to whose aid the little girl will come before he is shot down, than what this little girl sees and understands. We will have not the least inkling of what the character of the young girl with whom Hossein is in love thinks in *Through the Olive Trees* (1994) all throughout the film, centred on the character of the boy who forcefully and innocently repudiates the social rules of caste which prevent him from aspiring to marry her. This non-access to what the young girl in this story thinks and feels is for the filmmaker a radical, incisive way to make us feel, as viewers, something of the status and the place of women in this Iranian society, and of the censorship which reigns therein vis-à-vis female characters, without ever directly speaking of it in his film.

Today, in 2006, it seems obvious that in their lives as filmmakers these two men have made the same basic choices of never submitting to the laws of cinema as an industry and a market; of keeping all careerism fiercely at bay in order to bring their work to a successful conclusion with the sovereignty befitting an artist, even if both of them must put up with severe cutbacks in the financing without which no film can get made. These two oeuvres bear witness to the same freedom and the same exactingness on the part of their authors never to give in as far their desire to create is concerned. The two men have never entered into the game of the norm, of cinematic fashion, of would-be "public taste" and of a career. They've made their films when the conditions for a worthwhile personal creation seemed to them to be right—which has frequently been very long, too long, in Víctor Erice's case—and Abbas Kiarostami has permitted himself the freedom, after a Palme d'or at Cannes, to pass from the cinema of standardised production and distribution (feature films on 35 mm) to a much poorer and solitary cinema shot on a small DV camera,

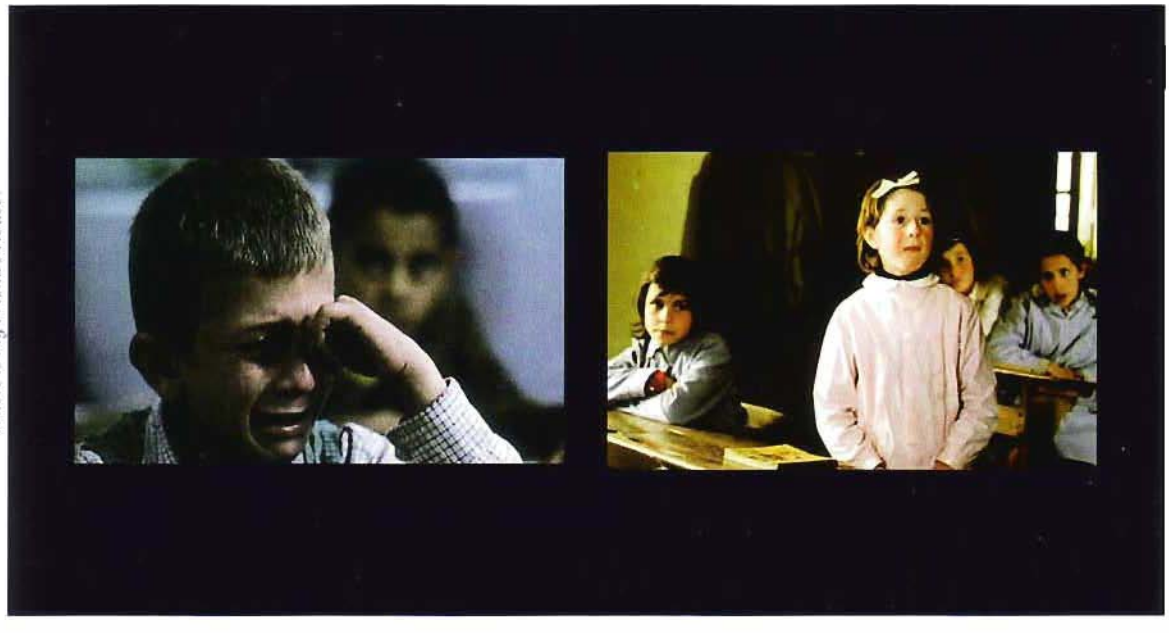
Through the Olive Trees

The Quince Tree Sun

without profiting from the access facilities to the financing of his film projects that success in Cannes opened up for him.

Their first resemblance is, then, of the order of an intransigent morality of artistic creation. This similarity is to be expressed in their films by an ethics of form that means that their films have an unmistakable aesthetic kinship.

Both have begun in cinema with a conviction that this art was, for them, indissociable from the childhood of which they've made at once an origin and a subject. This profound similarity marks their belonging to a generation of children and adolescents born during and just after the war, of which Serge Daney and Jean Louis Schefer speak, who have had the indelible feeling very early on that films had "concerned their childhood." Of these films, miraculously encountered at the right moment as an overwhelming experience for those who will be able to do nothing other than henceforth devote their lives to them in one way or another, Philippe Arnaud wrote: "They are indispensable images that define us and form a sort of destiny which awaits us, a baffling kind of knowledge since it's in advance of us, forever stamped by an irremediable hallmark in which we know that this concerns us without understanding why." The children of *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *The South* (1983), those of *Where Is My Friend's House?* (1987), *And Life Goes On* (1992) and most of Kiarostami's short films also perceive the world as an enigma whose key is at once contained by and hidden in the visible. Above all, these are clairvoyant, silent children through whom Erice and Kiarostami seek to rediscover the infancy of their art and an as-yet primitive, magical vision of the mysteries of the world which was that of the children they have been. The projection of *Frankenstein* in *The Spirit of the Beehive* and that of the coloured lamps on the walls of the forbidden village in *Where Is My Friend's House?* are dependent on this same revelation of the enigma of oneself and of one's relationship with the world in a mysterious visible dimen-



Where Is My Friend's House?

The Spirit of the Beehive

sion which is capable of provoking a foundational shudder. This resemblance renders even more visible the basic difference between the child characters of the Spanish filmmaker—who live this founding experience of the relationship to the world in terms of a protected milieu in which they can return nice and warm to the family home, loved despite everything by parents with whom they can converse—and those of the Iranian filmmaker, who are often much more alone in the world, faced with parents closed to any genuine dialogue, and must seek out other adults, met by chance, as guides and initiators, with the exception of the little boy in *And Life Goes On*.

In an installation, Víctor Erice has made a three-dimensional version of his decisive encounter as a child with the cinema, in a troubling, magical place, a closed Casino, which relies on a film—*The Scarlet Claw*—on which he has then posed, without having the answers, the essential questions about his relationship to the world, to adults, to death, to actors, about the relationship between the screen and life.

Whatever the great differences between their mutual cultures of origin may be, Kiarostami and Erice have always shared a taste for a cinema which takes the time to contemplate the things of the world, to look at human beings confronted by this enigma, a cinema of minute observation, of patience and of attention to small things. Since their debuts in cinema, both have had the conviction that there are no minor and no major themes, but that the vocation of the artist is to give himself up to that *inessentiality* of which Maurice Blanchot said: "The risk of giving oneself up to the inessential is itself essential [...] And whoever has a presentiment of it can no longer steal away. Whoever is approached by it, even if he has recognised in himself the risk of the inessential, sees in this approach the essential, sacrifices to it all the truth and all the seriousness

Where Is My Friend's House?

The South

to which he nevertheless feels tied." To make a work with a painter who paints an ordinary tree in his garden—for Erice—or with a child who must return a schoolbook to his friend—for Kiarostami—means to place oneself at the core of this essential *inessentiality* of art, and to rejoin the universal via the most singular.

Both directors have preferred a cinema of "the being-there of things" to a cinema of the tyranny of sense and of narration, a cinema busy being made to a cinema of staged programme and production values. But their cinema manifests, for all that, the same fierce refusal of flat naturalism, and the world and people they film are also dependent on thought, on philosophical and metaphysical speculation, on a multiple and fantastic perception of appearances. The almost Franciscan respect for what is in front of the camera when they film is, for the two directors, also that for the individuals around whom the film being made is based, and who are its most fragile and most precious raw material. Kiarostami and Erice have doubtless learnt a lot from the real people who "play" in their films, actors or otherwise, and above all from the children before whom no filmmaker can dissimulate or take refuge behind some technique or other of directing actors. Kiarostami has almost always refused professional actors and prefers to work with people who contribute much of what they are to his films. Erice, who has always liked to have actors and non-actors performing together, has, in *The Quince Tree Sun* (1992), made a film in which it becomes impossible to distinguish between the real people (who play themselves) and the fictional aspect that turns them, despite everything, into film characters. When Víctor Erice films the painter's dream, he behaves like a pure fiction filmmaker, this dream being an absolute creation of cinema, as arbitrary as the dreams of the characters of Buñuel or Hitchcock have been.

Kiarostami and Erice also have a "slowness policy" in common, which is the best of the current acts of resistance to the accelerating rotation of cultural objects and to the pseudo-demands of

Where Is My Friend's House?

The Spirit of the Beehive

an allegedly ever more impatient public. Both consider that time is their raw material and that they must neither force nor brutalise it, but on the contrary humbly espouse its meanderings, accept its rhythms, stases, blockages and accelerations, without which the work would have no chance of inscribing itself in the *longue durée* of art and of transcending the fashions of cultural consumption. Both are past masters in the art of the musical repetition of motifs and so rejoin each other in a modern-serial postulating of their art. One has only to compare the scenes which are repeated, with subtle differences, in Antonio López's picture-making in front of his quince tree in *The Quince Tree Sun*, and the multiple takes, edited in a series of almost identical shots, that the fictional filmmaker of *Through the Olive Trees* shoots, to become aware of the capacity for resistance of the two directors to the alleged expectation of film viewers who'd like something new, different and surprising in every scene. On the contrary, they trust in the viewers' ability to appreciate a more musical and subtler art based on repetition and difference, on seriality, on the device; namely, on the pleasure of inner recall produced by the film from scene to scene, and not on the linear, amnesiac principle of effacing one sequence by the next. Both of them prefer the tabular to the linear, and to allow the viewer the freedom to enjoy the musical variations in his own way rather than bearing him off in a headlong narrative flight of which he can only be the passive subject. This bit of freedom left to the viewer, invited to participate in the imaginary elaboration of the film, relies on an aesthetic of the shot in which there is no question of imposing what is important and what isn't on him, as in standardised cinema which creates a hierarchy among the figures through perspective, narrative *découpage* and editing. In their cinema the screen is willingly treated as a flat surface where things are on an equal footing, where the viewer is free to organise the trajectory of his gaze as he sees fit. And the scale of shots is not necessarily that of classical cinema, geared to the characters' function within the narra-

Bread and the Alley

The Quince Tree Sun

tive, but a scale in which each species has a right to equal attention and at its shot scale (the bees of *The Spirit of the Beehive* rhyme with the shots of insects in *And Life Goes On*), in which the setting is as important as the figures who inhabit it and who are inhabited by it.

There's nothing surprising about the fact that, based on this shared ethic and aesthetic, these two filmmakers have ended up rejoining each other as to the favourite themes and motifs they share: the landscape, villages, paths, nature, the tree, but also silence, meditation and, of course, childhood. Both are transfixed by the same fascination for what lies beneath the ground, for what may surge up from it that is unforeseeable, for what is invisible to our rational intelligence and which can only be glimpsed and approached through the mysteries of nature: a fog which covers the hill, a cloud that hides the sun, a storm during the night, in Erice's case; of an inexplicable wind which suddenly gets up in one shot, of the invisible man in the underground passage of *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999), or also of a nocturnal storm, in Kiarostami's.

Both, finally, are primitive filmmakers in the best sense of the word, namely, that in their cinema they rediscover the infancy of their art, yet at the same time are the most radically modern filmmakers in indirectly behaving as contemporary visual artists, even, in their films: Kiarostami's famous Z-shaped path partakes of the purest Land Art, and the *mise en scène* of the quince tree of *The Quince Tree Sun*, under its plastic hoop and with its "geometrical marks" added by the painter, relies on the most up-to-date installation practices. For some time now Kiarostami has skipped between the practice of cinema and the creation of museum installations. His first two installations are projections on the ground of sleeping people (a couple in the first, a child in the second). In a more recent, monumental and playful installation—*Forest Without Leaves* (2005)—the visitor

The Wind Will Carry Us

The Quince Tree Sun

is invited to stroll through an artificial forest of life-sized trees photographically reconstituted from thousands of digital photos.

Both have long been aware that cinema has everything to gain from working at the boundaries of the other arts at this time, which is theirs: photography, video installations, painting. They have used photography as a frontier region of cinema, in a fascinated confrontation with the immobile time of the still photo. Víctor Erice has often filmed photographs in his fiction films but has kept his own practice as a photographer a secret, while for Abbas Kiarostami being a photographer has become an activity as essential in his eyes as cinema, enabling him, like poetry, to create images in the solitude of his contemplative and meditative wanderings in nature.

For his part Víctor Erice has had, along his way as a filmmaker, a decisive encounter with the painter Antonio López, which has given birth to a film which is one of the greatest that's ever been made about creativity, *The Quince Tree Sun*, in which he confronts as no one had done before him since *Le Mystère Picasso*—and in a radically different way—the act of painterly creation and the act of cinematic creation. Víctor Erice has wished to present some of the painter's pictures in an exhibition setting, but has posed himself a filmmaker-type question on this subject—how does one accompany the visitor's gaze in this confrontation with a painting?—and has set up a system of lighting and sound in order to smoothly organise this encounter, which can only be an intimate one.

Both, lastly, belong to the generation of filmmakers which over the last ten years or so has seen the digital camera revolutionise the making of cinema. If for thirty years the two of them have

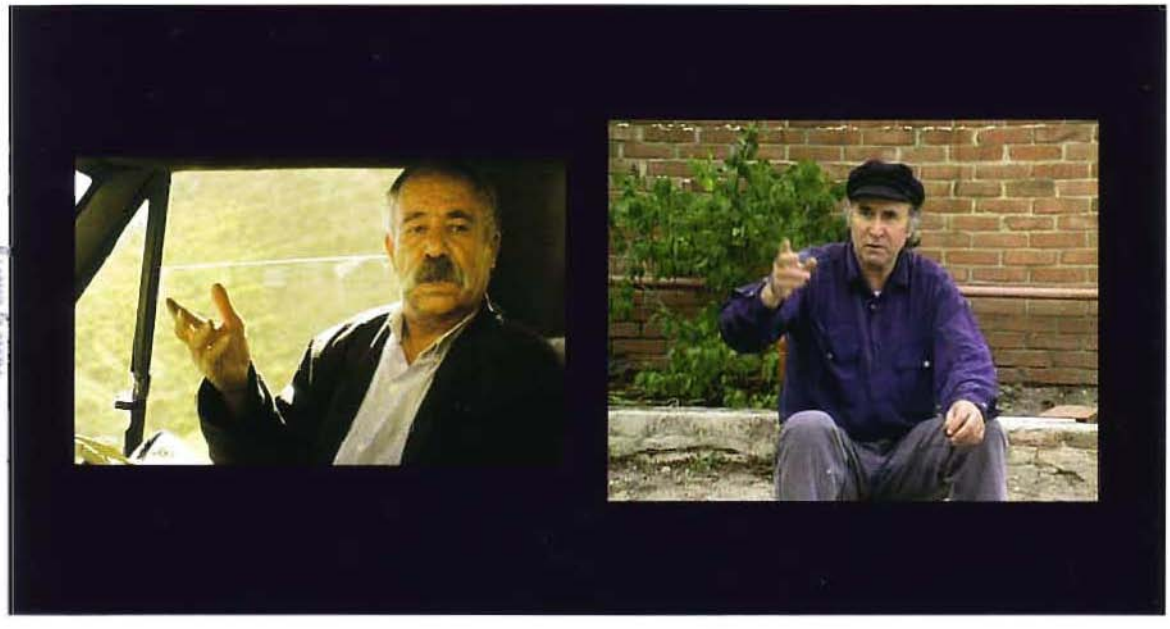
Through the Olive Trees

The Spirit of the Beehive

learnt, practised and loved 35-millimetre "chemical" cinema and traditional editing tables, they've immediately wanted to experiment with the new possibilities small digital cameras opened up for them. In this new tool Víctor Erice has found a fresh way of approaching the subject of a film without prejudging in advance what it was going to be, and to make true works out of these images "towards the film". He has made a three-dimensional version of the *Notes* (1990-2003) that have enabled him to approach Antonio López and the act of painting. With *Five* (2004), at once film and museum installation, consisting of five contemplative shots filmed with the freedom, flexibility, economy and patience bestowed by these little cameras, Kiarostami has made a radical change in his practice of cinema.

It was almost inevitable that these two singular paths, described in countries and cultures that are seemingly different but which partake of this same "cinema land which figures on no geography map", should intersect one day in a place that is itself beyond artistic frontiers, where cinema, photography, video, painting and installations can coexist.

The exhibition "Erice-Kiarostami. Correspondences", it will now be clear, is not simply an exhibition *on* two artists. It is also, first of all, an exhibition *of* two artists. It has been patiently prepared as a work in progress to which the two filmmakers have endlessly contributed via their continually developing ideas, via the creation of new pieces, via a permanent exchange based on a symmetry that plays with the tension between the resemblance and difference between the two oeuvres. The exhibition, in effect, has been posited as symmetrical and reversible, viewable in either direction, articulated in its setting by an oeuvre *à deux*: an exchange of letters in mini-DV which form the pivot and creative culmination of it.



Taste of Cherry *The Quince Tree Sun*

Its *raison d'être* is firstly to establish the essential correspondences in their way of envisaging their work as filmmakers at the highest level of exactingness in the artistic expression of their time. Obviously, in the two oeuvres there was from the very first a notion of the museum installation, of the viewer's right of inspection. The exactingness of the two filmmakers and of their oeuvres has posed several crucial questions, which they have contributed to resolving, about how to exhibit cinema, how to exhibit cinema images and images of other sorts, and how to make an exhibition tour into *an experience of the gaze* that is sustained and personal for each visitor.

Where Is My Friend's House?

The Spirit of the Beehive

The Spirit of the Beehive The Spirit of the Beehive The Spirit of the Beehive

By night the little girl wanders through the depths of the nocturnal forest and squats at the edge of the river. On the surface of the water the shadows of the trees are already dancing, white outlines trembling beneath the pallor of the moon. The little girl contemplates the reflection of her face, twisted and deformed by the watery undulations, an unsteady image that does not settle, a blurry projection. The pale reflection in the black water makes sport of its new elasticity like a Chinese shadow or a distorting mirror. Suddenly it dilates so much that it becomes a blotch, allowing itself to be transfixed by a metamorphosis: it is no longer the face of the little girl, Ana, which is formed on the back of the river, but Frankenstein's, the hard features of the Spirit. Comparable, in beauty, to the marvellous visions of *Sunrise* or *Night of the Hunter*, the scene continues. Already to the back of Ana twigs are cracking beneath heavy, clumsy footsteps. Frankenstein is there. He comes and kneels beside Ana, who opens wide her eyes before this apparition and almost opens her arms as well; she makes a vague gesture of the hand when those of the creature, the huge hands of the Spirit, slowly approach her shoulders. Then she closes her eyes, enraptured, submissive. The Spirit, that night, has possessed Ana. By what sorcery is Frankenstein's face substituted for Ana's? What is this crumpling of the image that opens onto a radical inversion, from a living girl's face to the terrifying features of an imaginary monster? It's a dissolve, one image and one alone, but which spreads out and binds together two worlds, that of living people and that of chimeras, pure identity and absolute change—one image and one alone, inhabited twice over, in which difference is registered but once, in the same instant. A reversal of the world that would drive a little girl still dazzled by shadows crazy. The inner difference of this image, drawn from the central scene in *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), is the object of quest *par excellence* of the cinema of Víctor Erice.

It has to be said that Ana has already seen Frankenstein, but only at the cinema, in the James Whale film. And that it's the privilege of children to be borne off this way by the kingdom of the

On the Difference Between an Image

Jean-Philippe Tessé

Spirits who inhabit the screen to the point of seeing them made flesh and touching your hand at night at the edge of the river.

There are lots of banalities to utter on the relationship between childhood and cinema, all of them subsumed under the nice, mute label of "magic". Well, more than enchanting them, the cinema possesses children, inflames them. Growing up means learning to content yourself with ashes, since the initial amazement is produced but once, and once alone, and only persists in the form of traces. This first time is wonderment and madness, and the word that would bring these forces together has yet to be invented, apoplexy perhaps, in any case something ephemeral and immense that Víctor Erice has managed to capture, miraculously, in Ana's eyes.

Films that explicitly take the cinema as their subject also open the door to all kinds of vain, theoretical considerations, depending more on written reflection than on the cinema in action. It is on that perilous terrain—of films entirely traversed by a questioning of the nature and functioning of cinema—that the oeuvre of Víctor Erice is constructed, a director whose films are packed with direct evocations of the cinema-machine, evocations that extend from metaphorical translation to an unswerving concrete materialisation of the cinema-moment: a line of light striking the eye of a little girl (another one) through a keyhole from where she observes her father busy with other kinds of sorcery (*The South*, 1983): the shadow of a camera stretching along a wall, at the bottom of which fruit lies rotting (*The Quince Tree Sun*, 1992); or simply the faces of children straining upwards towards the screen, faces entirely given over to the entertainment of a film show (*The Spirit of the Beehive*).

Rather than being contented with a theoretical gloss on the art of the films, the challenge would be to give an image of this which would be primarily and at once a cinema image and an image of the cinema—one image and one alone, once more, the liveliest and most singular of images.

The Spirit of the Beehive

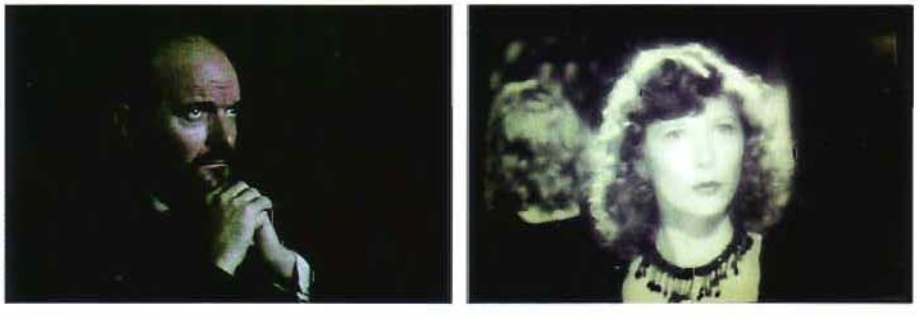
This is the privilege of two or three filmmakers, scarcely more. Perhaps Jean-Luc Godard, Abbas Kiarostami and Víctor Erice are precisely these. And the risk they run, in coming up against matter itself that way, is enormous, a risk of fatal redundancy. For Erice, it's a temptation the prodigious actors and actresses at work in his films respond to. Each in its own way, *The Spirit of the Beehive*, *The South* and *The Quince Tree Sun* strive towards the "white of origins",[1] which is also the white of the screen at the moment the images, the phantoms, are ready to beleaguer it. In order to reencounter the intensity of first contact, before the loss that inexorably follows it. In the same way that a painter hastens to capture the light which threatens to fade away, a fruit which prepares to turn rotten. Cinema, for Erice, ages at the very moment of its birth, it never stops putting those first sensations at a distance. And there is no remedy for this loss, certainly not the one that would consist in reproducing something, as one places a sheet of tracing paper to reproduce a drawing. From his cinema Erice has banished forever the re-creation, pastiche, the incestuous and vain reference. Instead he explores dream images, the imaginary, the empire of spectres and sometimes the captivating incarnation of Spirits. In short, projection. In a sense, all the developers, in the chemical acceptance of the word. Cinema's powerful powerlessness, of which the dissolve is the very expression, inasmuch as it expresses any difference hollowed out within a single shot, a single image, between the truth of Being and what it appears to be: at once an entire world and a kind of dust. Erice the filmmaker relentlessly tracks down what Erice the spectator saw one day when he bunked into a cinema where *The Shanghai Gesture* was being projected in a print cut to ribbons by the censors. Therein lies the risk of a congealing of the cinema in the contemplation of the faraway, in the waiting for an absolute transparency Hollywood classicism perhaps momentarily got near to. But *The Spirit of the Beehive*, *The South* and *The Quince Tree Sun* succeeded in averting such a threat.

The Spirit of the Beehive

1. The phrase is Víctor Erice's, the post-scriptum to the beautiful posthumous collection of texts by Alain Philippon, *Le Blanc des origines, écrits de cinéma*, Yellow Now, Paris, 2002.

Perhaps the first two films are still in a state of dizziness, so much closer do they remain to the abyss that attracts little Ana: a definitive fall into cinema sorcery. And doubtless they draw from this danger the essential nature of their intense beauty. *The Spirit of the Beehive*, a night film, is a treatise on invoking phantoms. After seeing *Frankenstein* at the cinema Ana asks her sister Isabel, scarcely older than she is, why Frankenstein killed the little girl and what has become of him. The cinema is the empire of the false, replies Isabel, Frankenstein is a Spirit and if you want to see him pronounce the magic formula: "All you have to do is close your eyes and say 'It's me, Ana, it's me, Ana.'" *The South*, a winter film, tells of the confrontation between a grown-up little girl, Estrella, and a mythic land, that South of which she possesses naught but stories, scattered signs. The South, from where her slightly sorcerer father comes, her adored father who slowly sinks into a depression when caught up by the image of a woman he loved in the past, present today in the darkness of the movie house, an actress, a vanished mirage. Like Ana, Estrella's father is engulfed on entering the round of chimeras, to the point of madness.

This is where Erice's cinema is at, in fact, when he meets the painter Antonio López in 1990 and begins filming him at work a few months later. Nevertheless, *The Quince Tree Sun*, a daylight, autumnal film, is born less of a documentary ambition than of an image from a dream told by the painter to the filmmaker, and which the latter has re-staged at the end of the film. Erice might have adopted as his own Abbas Kiarostami's beautiful phrase apropos of his film *Five* (2004), which he claims to having made in order to "wash the gaze clean." After the childish reveries of *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *The South*, *The Quince Tree Sun* marks the moment of the amicable confrontation of the cinema with its eternal rival, painting, which Erice takes to be the outright winner. In the little garden of a suburban house, while some workers busy themselves on a building site, Antonio López attempts to paint a quince tree. The film chronicles this labour



The South

from day to day, yet without claiming a neutrality it cannot in any case lay claim to. It is perhaps the artificial lights used for filming that have caused the fruit to go rotten before the painter was able to finish his picture. The more the camera approaches, the more the image is adversely effected, because the camera "rots the natural", says Erice. The quinces are akin to memories, with the lustre of the first day of the cinema, and if *The Quince Tree Sun* is a treatise on joyfulness it also recounts the weight of things (the white paint marks on the yellow skin of the quinces, which serve to mark the progressive sagging of the tree bending beneath the weight of its fruit) and the death to come.

It needs saying where these films are born, the hollow of the day or the back of the night. *The South* opens, then, on the birth of the daylight, which spreads little by little through Estrella's bedroom, in which her father has left the indication that he has left forever. Films that are born in the smoke of a train present in each of them, come from elsewhere and are bound for an hereafter. The train which ejects a wounded soldier in *The Spirit of the Beehive* whom Ana goes to visit, taking him for a Spirit. The train that awaits the father in *The South* and which he will not take, a train whose imminent departure for the country of his dreams is punctuated by the pulsation of the light during the dissolves, through the window of a hotel room in which the man who sleeps resembles Antonio López striking the pose for his wife, a painter herself, a drowsy López given over to a slumber that is strangely death-like. Lastly, the train of *The Quince Tree Sun*, which departs from or arrives at Chamartín, and marks the coming then the passing of the day, announces the time of repose for the painter, back home after a day's work.

We have to go back to the original image, to rediscover the lost link, even though this first image is anything but pure, being already wounded to the quick by a difference, an incompressible discrepancy. The whole problem of Víctor Erice's cinema lies here: filming involves following on from this

The Quince Tree Sun

image, and that is impossible. The second image is an absence. Víctor Erice's trajectory reveals the capacity of this difficulty—not to say impossibility—to carry on via two moments of disillusion. One concerns *The South*, the adaptation of a short novel by Adelaida García Morales,[2] a tale in three parts of which Erice will only shoot the first two due to a disagreement with his producer, Elías Querejeta. The other is an adaptation of the novel by Juan Marsé, *El embrujo de Shanghai*, on which he worked for a long time before arriving at a complete scenario, *La promesa de Shanghai*,[3] a project finally allotted to Fernando Trueba. These two accidents with a painful outcome add, notwithstanding him, to the filmmaker's legend. Erice has shot three major feature films in thirty years. This is little, but the films are immense. And this quantitatively minuscule output gives rise to misunderstanding. From this lack of prolixity it would in fact be all too easy to extrapolate the figure of a cineast filming solely in an exceptional mood of inspiration—very rare moments that only arrive a few times in the life of an artist, who must wait and wait. Now, Víctor Erice insists on the contrary on hard work, daily activity: "I need to work", he says, "you've got to work."[4] Working does not exclude patience, on the contrary, or interruption. But for thirty years Erice has never ceased dreaming up ideas for films, being involved, via writing (notably on Nicholas Ray[5]), in thinking about cinema, of lighting wicks which have not burned as long as was hoped. This presence, be it stippled, signifies more than the mythic aura, inevitably cumbersome, museum-like, freely granted him. Apropos of aborted projects and of the third part of *The South*, there are no grounds, either, for imposing an aesthetic of the incomplete, of "hindrance", where there is none. To be sure, we may think that *The South* gains from the fact that it remains open, through the force of circumstances. Doubtless Erice observes Antonio López with envy as he finally puts away, without sadness, his quince tree painting, unfinished because autumn has descended all of a sudden and its fragile and fleeting, beautiful light has got the better of the canvas. But, without

2. *El sur*. Anagrama. Barcelona, 1985.

3. *La promesa de Shanghai*, Plaza & Janés. Barcelona, 2001.

4. *Cahiers du cinéma*. no. 457, Paris, june 1992.

5. *Nicholas Ray y su tiempo*, Filmoteca Española. Madrid, 1986.

The Quince Tree Sun

The Spirit of the Beehive

prejudging the quality of a film which does not exist, it would be unjust to think that *La promesa de Shanghai* did not get made because it ought not to be made, that this was in short its fate. Films, like phantoms, should all exist; something's missing if they don't come about.

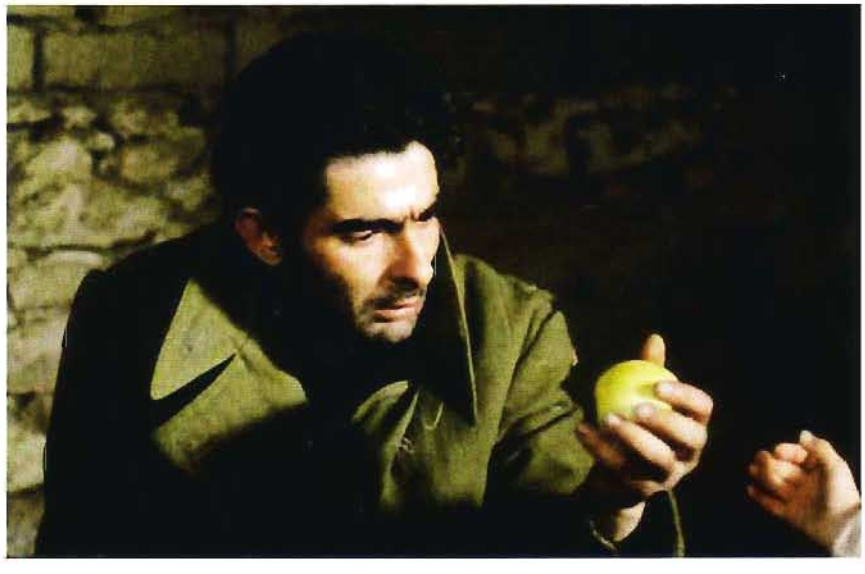
In three films Víctor Erice has constructed a fragile body of work, with a painful coherence. It begins and ends straightaway, from the very first images, once the bridge is crossed and we let the phantoms come to meet us. It is entirely, and in a single movement, total openness. To Being, to the Spirits. A haunted cinema in which spectres take little girls by the hand. The references to Don Quixote dotted throughout the oeuvre point to a political preoccupation (the portrait, ever on the stocks, of post-civil war Spain, that of the filmmaker's childhood), and bespeak what modality of the fantastic Erice believes in, the fantastic as a ballet of chimeras or a dance of Chinese shadows or a dissolve. A dissolve without a cut between two worlds. Only the trees know the secret passage linking them. Those leaning over Ana at the moment Frankenstein appears to her. Or that avenue of plane trees in *The South*, a perspective view which accompanies the passage of Estrella from childhood to adolescence, from the North as experienced to the South as imagined, since the film ends on these words "I was finally going to get to know the south." A fruit tree that claims all of Antonio López's attention, and on which it is henceforth cameras and projectors that are trained.

It is said that on the shooting stage of *The Spirit of the Beehive* Erice had asked everybody to talk in hushed tones, to murmur, whisper, so as to protect the reverie of Ana Torrent, a little actress with incredible presence. A cruel gentleness, since at the same moment the child confronts the greatest peril and is infinitely alone at the edge of the abyss, alone in the cinema screen, lost in the magic forest where the Spirit lives, alone in the middle of this dance which saves you or kills you or drives you mad, the representation of wonders.

The Quince Tree Sun

The filming

The Spirit of the Beehive
1973

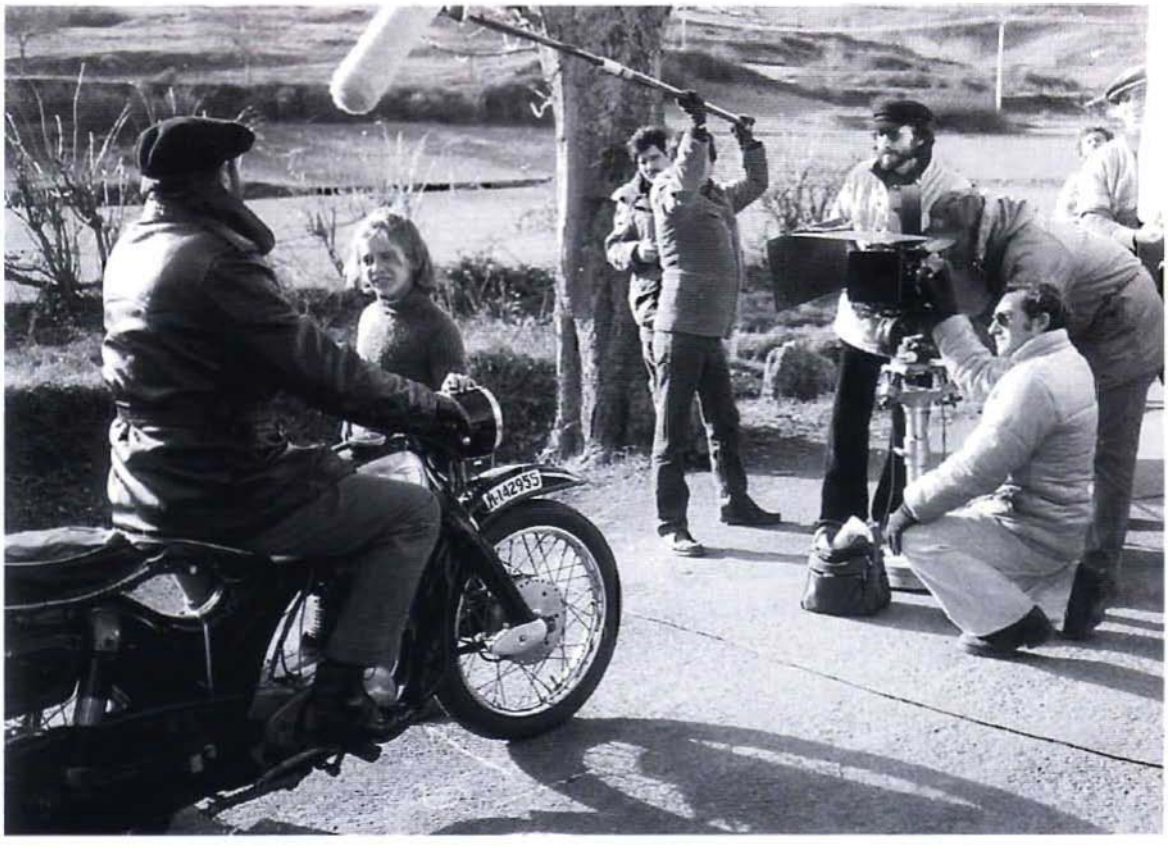


The South
1983

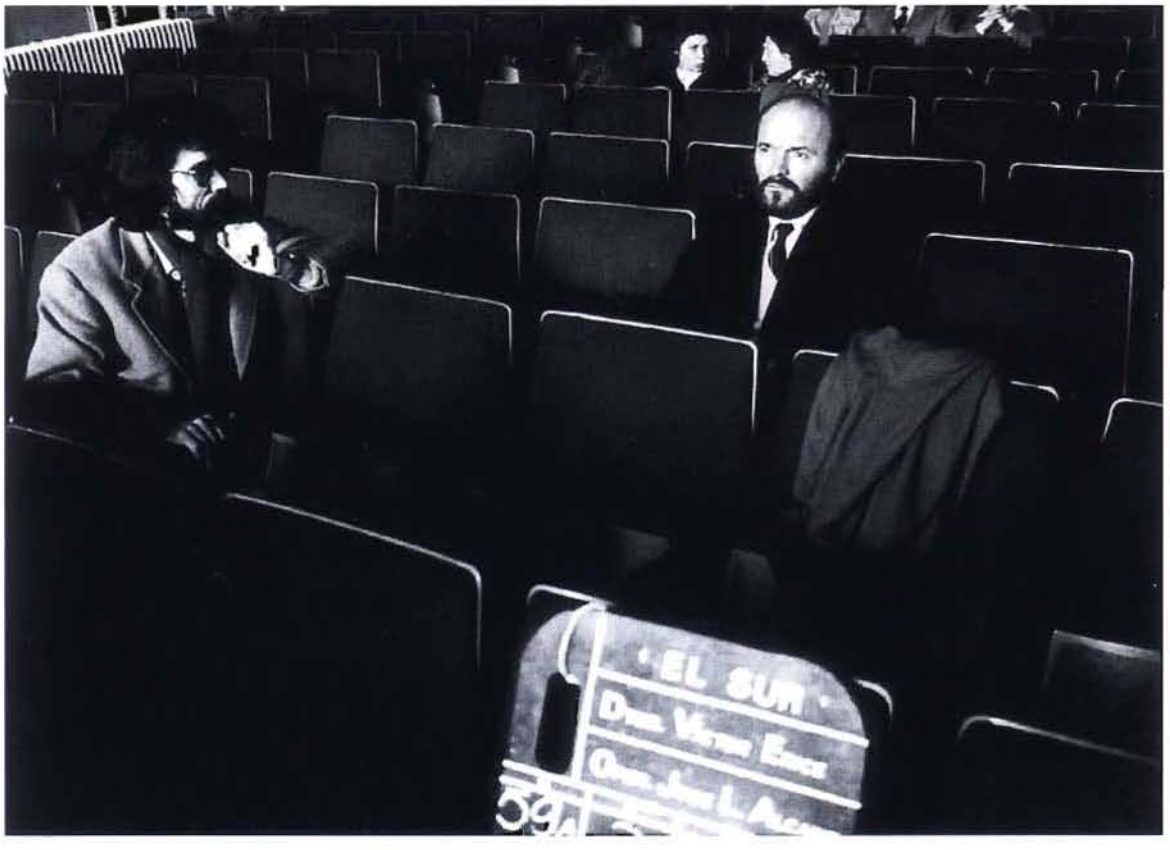
Preparatory photographs taken by Victor Erice

Emilio Serrano (Octavio), 14
Iciar Bollain (Estrella), 15
Los dos hermanos

Soledad - Iciar
(ESTRELLA)



The filming


EL SUR

Una Producción
Elías Querejeta

EL SUR

Omero Antonutti · Sónsoles Aranguren
Iciar Bollain · Dirección **Víctor Erice**

Una Producción
Elías Querejeta

EL SUR

Omero Antonutti · Sónsoles Aranguren
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Una Producción
Elias Querejeta
EL SUR
OmeroAntonutti · Sónsoles Aranguren
Iciar Bollain · Dirección Victor Erice
CB films


Una Producción
Elias Querejeta
EL SUR
OmeroAntonutti · Sónsoles Aranguren
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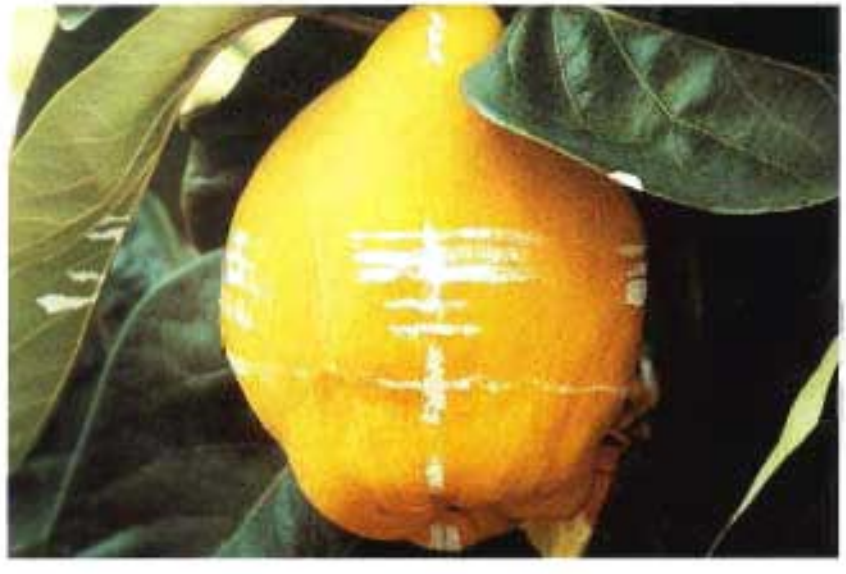
CB films

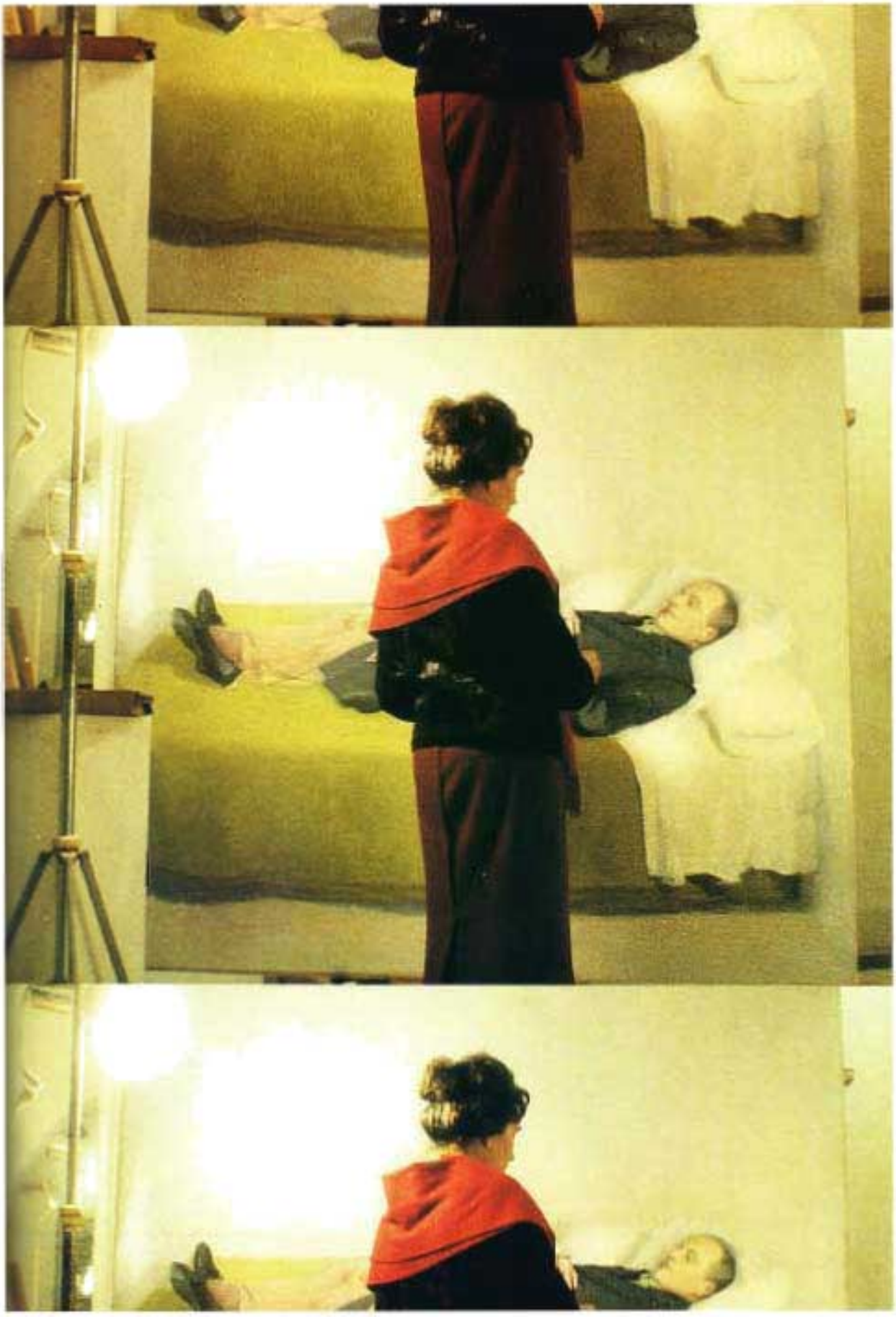
Photographs by Víctor Erice for the locations of the second part of The South, which would have been filmed in Carmona (Seville)

The Quince Tree Sun
1992



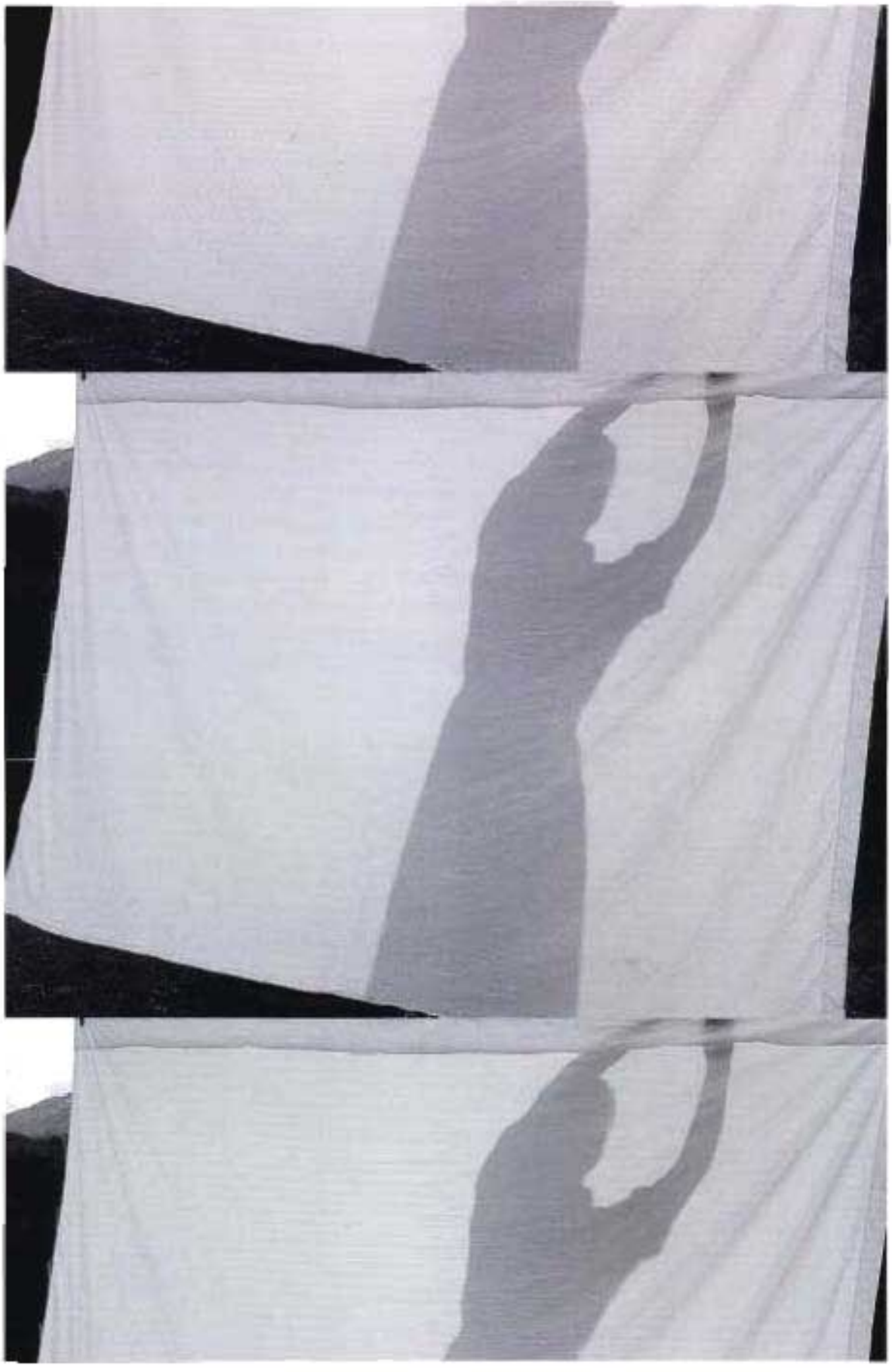
"I'm in Tomelloso, in front of the house where I was born. On the other side of the square there are some trees that never grew there. In the distance I recognise the dark leaves and golden fruit of the quince trees. I see myself among those trees, together with my parents, accompanied by other people whose features I don't manage to recognise. The murmur of our voices reaches me, we chat peaceably. Our feet are sunken into the muddy ground. Around us, suspended from their branches, the wrinkled fruits hang ever softer. Big blotches make inroads upon their skin and in the still air I notice the fermentation of their flesh. From the placewhere I observe the scene I cannot know if the others see what I see. Nobody seemsto notice that allthe quinces are rotting beneath a light Idon't know how to describe, bright and at the same timesombre, which turns everything into metal and ash. It isn't the light of night. Nor is that oftwilight. Nor thatof dawn..."

An account by Antonio López in the "Painter's Dream" sequence of *The Quince Tree Sun*



Lifeline
2002

The filming



When he directed his first film, *Bread and the Alley* (1970), Abbas Kiarostami was thirty years old, he'd worked as a graphic designer and publicist and didn't plan to become a filmmaker. It was the first film produced by the Centre for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents (Kanun), for which he would make many didactic shorts and most of his features before leaving it after *And Life Goes On* (1992). Almost all of these deal with childhood. Today you can see in that work of ten minutes or so all the splendour of a cinema that was awakening to the world.

All at once, in a far-off land uncharted on the cinema map and subject to enormous repression—by, at the time, the Shah's regime as well as later, from 1979 onwards, by the Islamic Revolution—a pulsation was coming to the fore, a vibration that gave tension to the images and had them correspond to things. This natural respiration of cinema would never abandon the remainder of his oeuvre, marking the rhythm of gradual discoveries, the palimpsests, the forms of solitude, violence or anxiety that are transformed into sudden harmony, into instants of happiness, into a seemingly insignificant kind of reconciliation: a flower in a notebook, a kick given to an aerosol can, a man who transports a flowerpot on his motorbike, a boy who passes the entrance gate of a football stadium.

Alain Bergala has seen the essential image of this poetics in *agencement*.[1] It's a word I wouldn't know how to translate, maybe because it names something that seems inherently unsayable, a pure, rhythmic, cinematic chord: the meeting of two images or dynamic forces which upon entering into contact with each other—for example, a child who encounters an object, an animal or another person—has each one leaving its initial blockage and acquiring the necessary force to move. In Kiarostami's narratives the characters pursue an obsessive *idée fixe*—to return a notebook to a classmate; to go and see a football match; to get a girl to return their look—and their searching ends in failure in accordance with the material reckoning of the facts, yet affords them

The Different Scales of the World

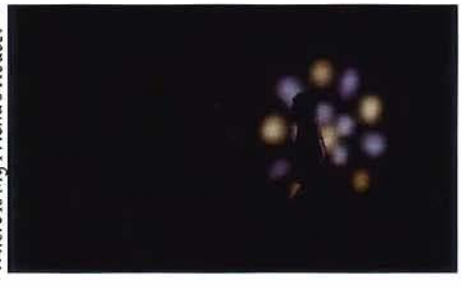
Gonzalo de Lucas

1. *Cf.* Bergala, Alain, *Abbas Kiarostami* Cahiers du cinéma, Paris, 2004, pp. 5-17; Bergala, Alain, "Il bambino, la Legge e la concatenzaione", in Barbera, Alberto & Resegotti, Elisa (eds), *Kiarostami*, Electa, Milan, 2003, pp.82-85.

and exalts it. Kiarostami has always wanted to make a "story-less" cinema in which the viewer does not remain subject to the narration, to verbal meanings, nor to passive perception. And so he selects those small fragments in any space that permit us to live them, imagine them, evoke them: the neighbourhood of the middle-class girl with whom the boy in *The Experience* (1973) falls in love is a brick wall which forever reflects the sun; the old woman's room in *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) is a little blue window; the identifying mark of the school in *Where Is My Friend's House?* (1987) is a green banging door; and the life of the carpenter is summed up in the stained-glass windows that colour the Poshteh night.

These evocative and essential images derive from a minute exploration of cinema's possibilities. In *Homework* (1989)—the most Godardian of his films—he states that he proposes to undertake a work of investigation rather than a movie. When you contemplate his filmography in chronological terms you notice the existence of a Kiarostami "laboratory" in which he's made successive experiments as to how to incorporate a visual motif or how to resolve a formal problem, at times after a period of meditation that has occupied him for some time. Even though in *The Report* (1977) he'd already discovered that cars could be a substitute for home, the use of them as a single setting for a film did not become explicit, after trying out ever more extensive sequences, until twenty-five years later, in the minimalist contrivance of *Ten* (2002), a film recorded in the inside of a vehicle with two video cameras. When it come to cars from the outside, he's discovered great tonal richness: the vehicles that move across the frame and function as stains of colour which

The Wind Will Carry Us



Where Is My Friend's House?

punctuate the montage; the distant cars that travel a track and by raising clouds of dust construct the shot itself, while in the foreground we hear the dialogue. The landscape emerged this way belatedly, and save in the snow-covered mountains in *Solution* (1978), it wasn't until *Where Is My Friend's House?* that it became a primordial motif that would culminate in a *landscape film*, *Five* (2004). Prior to this he'd planned minor variations: after the slightly angled frames of the Gilan trilogy, he opened these up to the sky in *Taste of Cherry* (1997). Such impulses have involved him in challenges like that of shooting a long sequence with the screen in black, which he would sketch out in *Taste of Cherry* and *The Wind Will Carry Us*, and which would find complete expression in the five minutes in black of *ABC Africa* (2001) and the night in *Five*. Kiarostami has also pursued, then, his *idées fixes*, and along the way has had to get around obstacles which made him dispense with the movie camera and trade it for more manageable and discreet digital cameras.

It's an oeuvre that abounds in rejects, detours and concealment, in characters who don't appear on screen and who we only hear, and in others who remain hidden by something they carry: a woman behind a bunch of herbs, a little boy behind a window. At the same time there is an obsessive insistence on showing a single landscape, a single face, and on preserving them or making them unique, on giving them a particular memorable form. Kiarostami always works with non-professional actors, and one of his ambitions is to reveal an anonymous face chosen from everyday life; afterwards, when re-encountering it, he likes to film the effects this process has produced. In contrast to the few things he's done outside of Iran, in his own country he maintains—mainly due to the restrictions imposed on portraying women—a constant dialogue, one that is essential for his cinema, between visible figures and the ones that cannot be shown.

In a repressive society where the religious law determined by power is transmitted through a blind machinery of mechanical and dogmatic repetitions, and which calls for the censoring or

Taste of Cherry

Taste of Cherry

The Wind Will Carry Us

Where Is My Friend's House?

And Life Goes On

concealing of images, Kiarostami has revealed his great qualities as a filmmaker by ensuring that neither the opacity of the law nor the dynamics of its transmission turn out to be abstract, and that they are always embodied in sentient forms: in exposed faces and in veiled ones; in the contrasting intonations and modulations of voice between children and adults who almost never listen to each other or keep to a language in common, or else who repeat precepts and mottoes or express an intense verbal violence, since in his cinema words recount or say much more than what they literally mean. At times these cadences of repetitions, of reiterated questions, sound like verses and contrast with the silences—or deafness—that keeps characters at a distance. In their searching not only are they confronted with a deaf world, but a blind or blinded one too, and the radical solitude of their gaze, which pursues the reduced focal point of an obsessive idea, obliges them to discover things for themselves, or to contemplate them from behind some "frame" (the window of a car, a threshold). In Kiarostami's cinema the characters don't usually divide up a landscape with the gaze and remain attracted by a position which separates them from the others and confronts in solitude an image that seems to take on depth and to get wider, which inhabits them. His pedagogical venture consists, therefore, in teaching us that all perception is singular, and that each person must learn to discover their own images. Whence the tremendous beauty of his didactic portraits, in which each child is captured within the forms of a world that pertains to them alone, but that will maybe learn one day to open up and to share —to sing and film. This is why for Kiarostami the dissociation and disorder of the materials of cinema is so revealing, since it opens our eyes: in *ABC Africa* the total darkness of the black screen is the privileged form for imagining—and loving—the light; in *Homework* the elimination of the soundtrack during the children's saying of their prayers is a "way of seeing" from another angle. The raw materials of cinema alone constitute the political form of a film and make cracks

And Life Goes On

Ten

in the prevailing order. In working with them Kiarostami arrives at enormous subtlety in *Close-up* (1990) and the Gilan trilogy.

In this way the filmmaker continues the Aristotelian tradition of defending the powers of the image—of painting as a way of approaching a truth—in an act of resistance to attempts at controlling, censoring or devaluing it: "The most important thing is how we make use of a series of lies in order to reach a greater truth."[2] The camera turns out, therefore, to be a pedagogical tool with which it is possible to find the right rhythmic chord, the *right composition*: the shot of the little boy in the final sequence of *Homework*, who conquers his fear of the camera and stops crying when Kiarostami comes to an agreement that his friend can station himself in the background in such a way that the frame, hitherto restricted to a single boy, reunites the two of them; in *Ten*, when the hand of the guide breaks up the separation of the characters in isolated spaces, and enters the "other" shot in order to dry the tears of her companion in a gesture of solidarity.

The director's films stem from two sorts of impulse: from a slowly gestating idea that reveals its form one day,[3] or from the sudden need to respond to an event (the news about Sabzian in *Close-up*, the effects of the earthquake in *And Life Goes On*). In both cases, though, Kiarostami reacts to the images with a similar sort of speed, since he possesses a strong sense of intuition when choosing the device of his films and an unusual, maybe magical, ability to recognise the precise distance, the right form. The risks he runs are notorious—above all in relation to reflexive games about cinema itself—and if he's sidestepped them it's because of his mastery of the reconciliation between device and transparency. Kiarostami renders indistinguishable the capturing of the natural aspect of artificial compositions: thus, the rigid framing of a car window remains open to the sudden appearances of reality. In his films he knocks down and builds the walls of houses or pathways, co-ordinates colours, textures, highlights, but everything acquires a natural order:

2. A statement by Abbas Kiarostami in Jean-Pierre Limosin's film *Abbas Kiarostami: vérités et songes* (1994).

3. Perhaps the most famous example of this search for an "interior" image is the zigzagging path: "It was an image I'd had in my head for years, long before making films. You can see it in my paintings and photographs of the period. It's as if I'd felt unconsciously attracted by that hill and that solitary tree." (KIAROSTAMI, Abbas, "La Photographie" in ROTH, Laurent (ed.), *Abbas Kiarostami: textes, entretiens, filmographie complète*, Éditions de l'Étoile/Cahiers du cinéma, Paris, 1997, p. 38.

the arrangement of blues in *Where Is My Friend's House?* (a digging machine, an oil drum, a boy's shirt on the line, a clothes peg, a window, a door) ultimately responds to an internal harmony. He's almost never made use of the efficacy of a conventional poetic motif, or else has glimpsed in this some unnoticed trait or feature: instead of a dead tree, he shows the shadow of its branches sectioned by the light from a window; flowers are reflected in rear-view mirrors or appear on an edge of the composition (on a terrace, in a wood). Rarely has he filmed moments which reveal the course of time—the twilight only appears in the polluted sky of Teheran in *The Report* and *Taste of Cherry*—nor has he made shots of passing clouds, of the falling of snow or rain. Nevertheless, his films capture an intense feeling of life in nature, of the effects of its friction and coursing.

The pact with the viewer has enabled him to eliminate these "strong moments" and to entrust them to him or to let them be suggested, with a steady reduction of elements that may go unnoticed by the sound depth of his films; if in his first short he narrated the adventures of a little boy scared by a dog which blocked his way in an alley, when reusing this alleyway in *Where Is My Friend's House?* he will again depict a boy's fear, but this time only with the barking of the dog in the darkness. This dynamic of the visible and the invisible has led him to organise an odd architecture of editing, by means of which he's invented, among other things, the horizontal division of the shots according to the floors of the houses: one shot at street level next to another at first-floor height, with which the separation between both is marked by the ceiling and not, as is usual, by a wall or side strip. This composition gives rise to marvellous apparitions: a hand that intrudes from the top of the frame and gathers up a sheet; a figure who remained off-screen. Kiarostami's cinema generates a deep desire to see, to share the precise angle that may reveal an elusive presence, may recapture an image: his characters advance this way, like the boy in *The Experience* following the smile of a girl from a wealthier family, or like Hossein in *Through the Olive*

And Life Goes On

Trees (1994), a homeless man who suffers from love for a girl who refuses to speak to him but who one day casts a glance in his direction: "Explain that look you gave me, that look that says to seek you out and to follow you all the time so you'll give me a reply." Hossein pronounces these words while he follows Tahereh under the olive trees, keeping out of sight among the leaves and the shadows. Women's status arouses in Kiarostami a feeling that is prolonged in the sadness of the men who are enamoured of them, when on contemplating them they make an effort to divine in their faces the sign of some response, of a signal, of a shared but silenced love. This look of love, *look of the heart*, is the one Kiarostami has professed to nature: "The only love that increases in intensity day by day, while the others lose their strength, is the love for nature." [4]

In his work the filming of nature adds up to the creation of a melody, the musical version or interpretation of a landscape, almost: of the trees on a hilltop in the upper part of a frame which barely lets a strip of sky be seen; of woods in panning shots that reveal the fleeting highlights and shadows on the slender trunks and leaves; of the snaking or zigzagging pathways along which characters go in pursuit of their *idée fixe*, in movements Kiarostami compares to the coursing "of a stream in the field, in which the water never keeps to a straight line and the essence of its movement is the obstacle, the curves and meanders it has to negotiate." [5] The rapid connection in cinematic memory of "Kiarostami landscapes" points to the depth with which these memorable images become fixed, images that combine the ephemeral (the panoramic displacement, the stirring of the wind, changes of light) with the permanent value that nature possesses for Kiarostami, and in which he wishes to photograph the fixity of trees rooted in the earth. With these landscapes he has constructed the unforgettable topography of his films, and with slight variations they reappear all through a movie or pass from one movie to another, sometimes contemplated from a prolonged distance and at other times barely glimpsed, as in the reencounter in

And Life Goes On

4. Ishaghpour, Youssef & Kiarostami, Abbas, "La Photographie, le cinéma et le paysage. Dialogue", *Positif*, no. 491, January 2002, p. 69. Also see Kiarostami, Abbas, *Photographies, Photographs, Fotografie*, Hazan, Paris, 1999, p. 7.

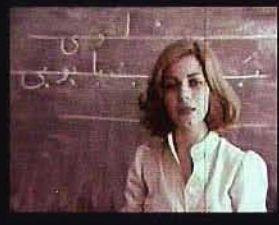
5. Statement by Abbas Kiarostami in the film *La Leçon de cinéma* (Mojdeh Famili, 2002).

And Life Goes On of the zigzagging path of *Where Is My Friend's House?*: a shot, taken from the car window, which moves forward, showing the dense tops of the trees, until it opens out and we rediscover the pathway in a sudden celebration, a canticle.

All these instants do not stem from a world arranged by the cinema or calibrated in terms of shot size. Everything has equal value: a man, a tree, a hill, a house, a canister, a wheel, a flowerpot, a grasshopper. A mysterious harmony links all and a sense of fraternity—overcoming solitude and opening it up to the world—transfixes the prolonged shots of men and nature. Kiarostami has endlessly sought after precise ways of avoiding the hierarchies of framing: whence the fixed composition of *Ten* and *Five*. When the different scales of the world are denied, each close-up becomes a long shot, and vice versa. At the end of *Through the Olive Trees* Hossein and Tahereh turn into two tiny dots in the middle of the countryside, but to our eyes they appear in close-up. In *Where Is My Friend's House?* the close-up of a notebook with a flower is a huge shot of the world.

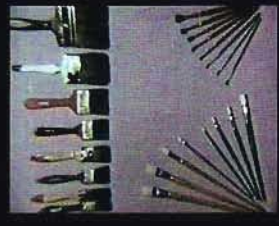
The Wedding Suit

Tribute to the Teachers



Jahan-Nama Palace

Painting



Solution

Case No 1, Case No 2

Toothache

Orderly or Disorderly

The Chorus

Fellow Citizen

First Graders

Homework

Films made at the Kanun (Centre for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents)



Bread and the Alley




Breaktime




The Experience




The Traveller




Two Solutions for One Problem

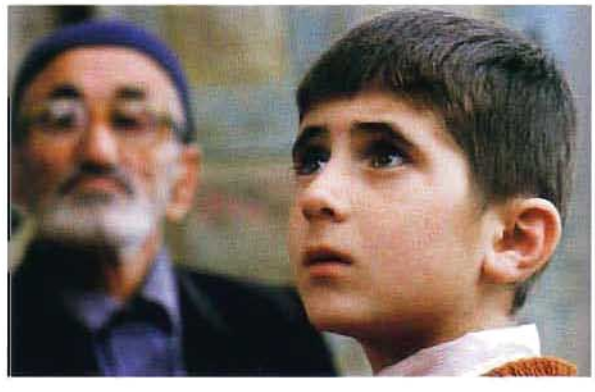


So Can I

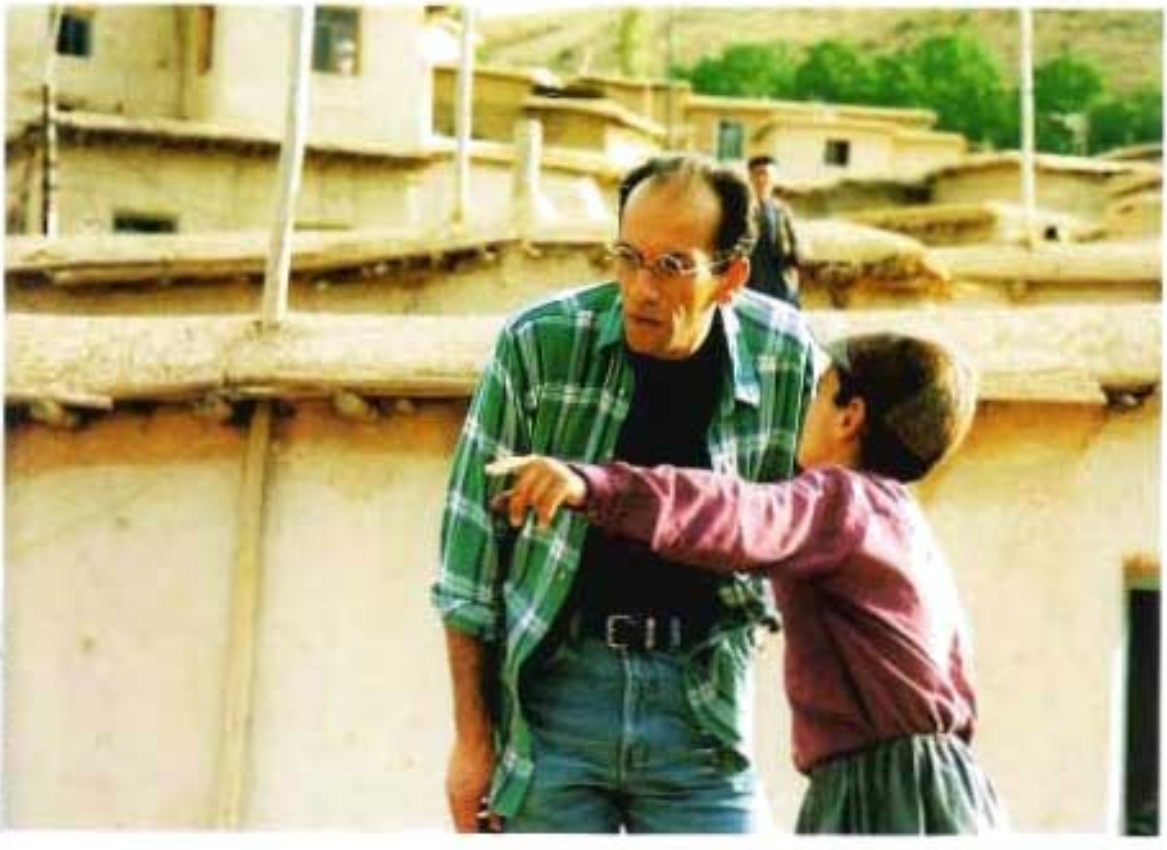



The Colours

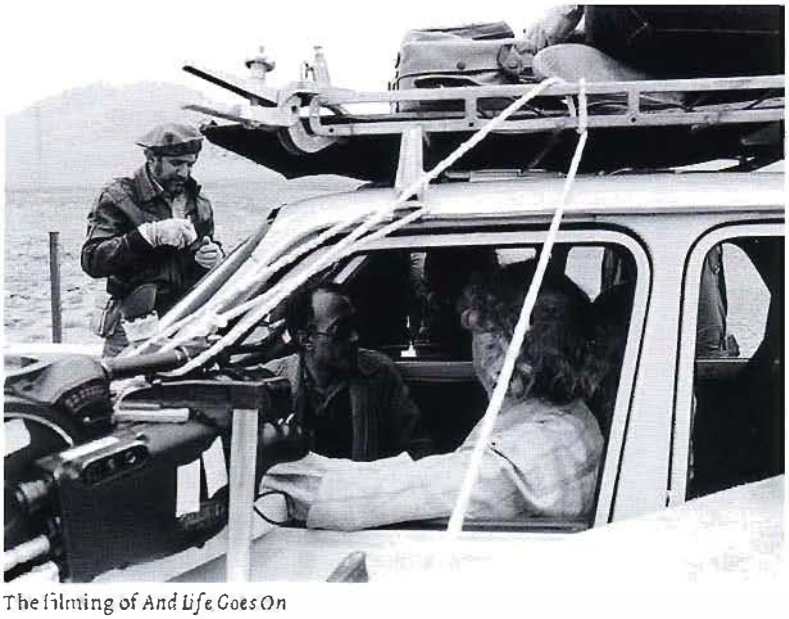
The Traveller



Bread and the Alley



Through the Olive Trees



The filming of *And Life Goes On*

Through the Olive Trees

The Wind Will Carry Us

Ten

Where is My Friend's House?

Through the Olive Trees

The Wind Will Carry Us

ABC Africa

Close-up

Through the Olive Trees

The Wedding Suit

Through the Olive Trees

Of all the possible ways of demonstrating the creative rapport between two contemporary authors, correspondence is the most simple, subtle and direct, because it is not transacted via mediation or interpretation but by constructing an expressive reality which solely depends upon the two interlocutors. When Víctor Erice and Abbas Kiarostami decided to begin this filmed correspondence they did so knowing that its result would be exhibited and seen, and so their joint creation combines in an extraordinary way the intimacy of both filmmakers with the knowledge of its public exhibition. We are in the presence, then, of an unprecedented three-way cinematic experience which simultaneously contains the direct addressee and the viewer, a way of constructing images provided by a different system of production, the creation of a museographic-type exhibition space which provides the conditions for making the experience possible without once overriding its future possibilities for being shown in a conventional cinema. As for the language used, everything is new, everything remains to be invented.[1]

Aside from the degree of newness of this correspondence, however, there is another factor that makes it an event: the fact of being in the hands of two front-line auteurs who have managed to create a world-wide following, who are admired for their ability to rid themselves of the superfluous and who simultaneously recognise each other in their cinema and their evolution, sensing themselves to be common participants. This mutual admiration—which isn't personal but based on knowledge of their respective oeuvres—is observed in the personal declarations of both, as well as in the similarities we can detect in their way of addressing the issue of *mise en scène* or the ethics of filming. But it will be in the final result of this filmed correspondence where more subtle and refined forms of homage and recognition are instituted, in a demonstration of how, each one of them being faithful to his own narrative spirit, the pulsation is perceived of communication with the other.

Correspondence. News of a Process

Jordi Balló

1. The only precedent we know of this "filmed correspondence" are the "videoletters" Stephen Dwoskin and Robert Kramer exchanged in 1991, although they were never meant to be exhibited. The Turin Film Festival showed them in 1997 in a 121-minute version on the occasion of an homage to Kramer.

From the first, *Correspondence* establishes certain rules of the game. To begin with, the wish for symmetry, the fact of replying in an alternate way and of including in the missive the reception of the previous letter. More than likely, in the later fluidity of the correspondence this symmetry wouldn't be essential, since the possibility is perfectly conceivable that each of the filmmakers would send his letter without yet having received a reply to the one before. Even so, it seems obvious that in order to begin establishing the bases of this contrivance, which requires a new visual language, it was necessary to affirm the symmetrical mechanism. It was also essential to establish a way of denoting the geographical and temporal provenance of each of the letters sent, and which in turn would give the viewer to understand that the physical distance between Spain and Iran has not only been no impediment to the fluidity of communication but that it reflects the will to seek in the geography closest at hand the signs of the distant other. Likewise, we have to emphasise the type of technology used, which is only workable thanks to the small digital cameras which offer a wide margin of movement and an economically sustainable autonomy of production. The role of the messengers, the mediators in charge of seeing that the letters reach their destination in a fit state to be received and read, may also be considered an interesting external element. The creating of the subtitles is proof of this temporal passage: the letter won't be wholly finished until it includes the translation into Farsi or Spanish. For once, this constituent element is not an issue separate from the process of creation: the subtitling doesn't have the viewer as its main addressee, since its objective is the comprehension of the person who receives the letter, the interlocutor who, in the extra effort to incorporate this calligraphic detail, recognises the will to communicate beyond idiom. Or precisely because of the richness of linguistic diversity and of its graphic expression.

Madrid, 22 Abril, 2005

Querido Abbas:

Hoy he vuelto al jardín de la casa de Antonio López. En este lugar, hace quince años, rodé "El sol del membrillo".

El escenario ha cambiado mucho. Los muros de la casa han crecido; el jardín, en cambio, se ha hecho más pequeño. El membrillero ha buscado cobijo en un rincón. Ahora recibe menos sol, pero, tan generoso como siempre, sigue dando sus flores por primavera.

Los sonidos tampoco son los mismos. Hay en el aire del día cada vez más ruidos nuevos: son los nietos del pintor y la vida urbana...

Un saludo afectuoso:

Víctor Erice

Correspondance. From Victor Erice to Abbas Kiarostami, "The Painter's Garden", 22 April 2005 [Letter 1]

The letters

Víctor Erice is the person who kicks off the correspondence, given that his geographical proximity to the place of production gives him greater familiarity with the working of the contrivance. His first letter takes place in Madrid, in the urban garden where he filmed *The Quince Tree Sun* (1992). The first image is almost canonic: a subjective shot of the director writing with his own hand on the envelope that will contain the final missive, "Abbas Kiarostami. First Letter", before going on to write on a sheet of notepaper, "Madrid, 22 April 2005", with Erice's own voice rereading what he writes, thereby converting, from this moment on, the interior voice into a voice that has also been written. For this first instalment of the correspondence Erice has elected to go back to a space typical of his cinema, as he relates in his own voice: " Today I've been back to the garden of Antonio López's house", the place where more than fifteen years before he'd filmed *The Quince Tree Sun*. This return is also correspondence, given that it was this movie which revealed Erice's cinema to Kiarostami when he first saw it at the Taormina Festival, to the extent of declaring later that *The Quince Tree Sun* was an essential film for him, one seen and reseen on numerous occasions. Erice's investigation in this rediscovered garden is based not so much on memory of the past as on its sound, landscape and human evolution: "On the afternoon air there are new voices and laughter: it's the painter's grandchildren. And life goes on..." Alone, with his digital camera, Erice registers the relationship between the three kids, Andrés, Carmen and Aurora, beside the tree which is now legendary thanks to his earlier film, and which on this occasion has been modestly shifted to one side of the garden and is bedecked in its first spring flowers. The appearance of rain, a bit of chance for the filming, makes the narration more dense and doesn't prevent the children from finishing their task under an umbrella. Once the drawings are finished (something Antonio López didn't manage in *The Quince Tree Sun*), the three kids show

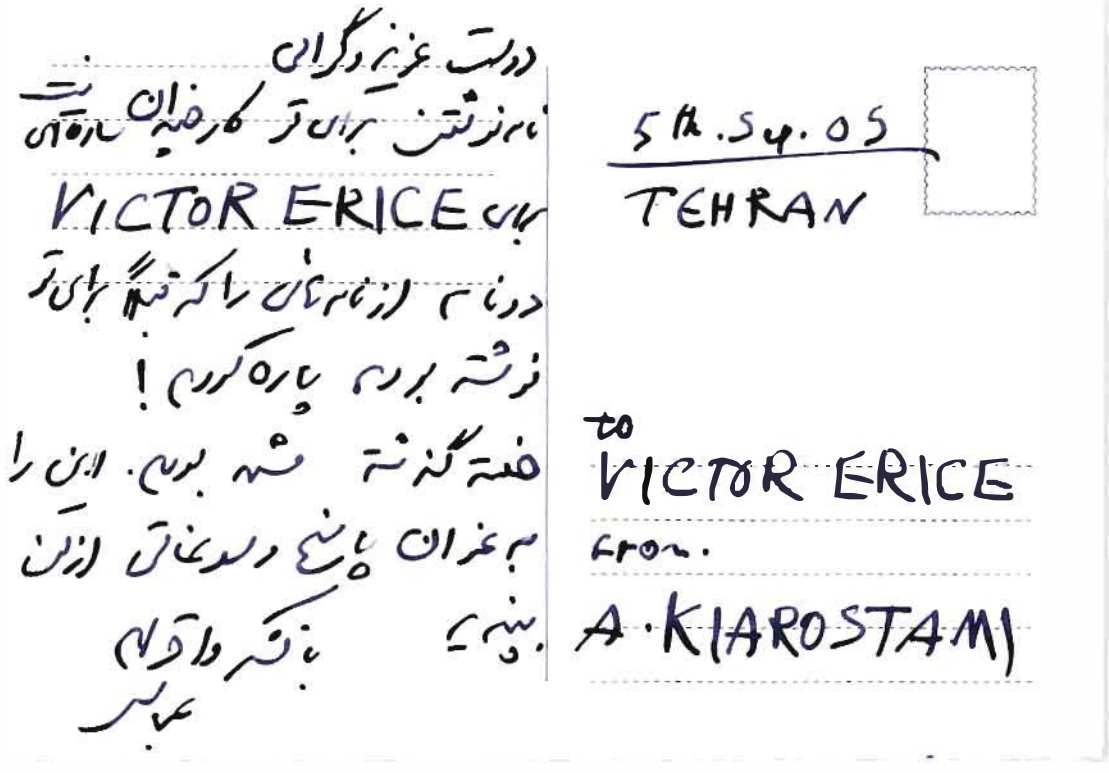
them to the camera, to Erice. He questions the youngest girl, Aurora, who's the one who's shown herself to be the most timid and introverted. Invited to describe her drawing, Aurora looks at it and says, "Three clouds, the sun, the sky and the tree." But a detail the girl doesn't see leaps out at the viewer: two raindrops roll across the drawing, incorporating nature into the finished work in an unexpected, aleatory way, and forming a very beautiful image of fragility, joy and sadness. The letter ends with a high-angle shot of Aurora's drawing, a drawing the little girl dedicates to Kiarostami, writing something on the paper in the same framing as at the beginning, this time with the voice of the mother, who spells out what she has to write. An ending, this, which relaunches the correspondence and convokes many of aspects common to both filmmakers: childhood, the tree, its depiction, nature as an active force, chance, the off-screen presence of the family...

Due to a coincidence of calendar and geography this first letter was delivered personally to Abbas Kiarostami by the team of mediators of the project, Alain Bergala, Carlota Broggi and me. It was in London at the beginning of May 2005, when Kiarostami's installation *Forest Without Leaves* was unveiled at the Victoria and Albert Museum. That same night, at a dinner in the house of Farhad Hakimzadeh, director of the Iran Heritage Foundation, and in the presence of Geoff Andrew, programmer of the National Film Theatre, Kiarostami saw the letter for the first time, which made a tremendous emotional impact on him. He immediately understood the simplicity, and complexity, of the device and commented enthusiastically on the poetic dimension of the two tears which glide across the picture as being chance's gift to an artist. From this moment on he addressed the challenge of replying in turn, knowing that the experience had no precedents and that for him, as for all the rest, it would be a totally new adventure he embarked on with an experimental intention. A shoot in Italy during the summer awaited him, but right there and then he began thinking of the reply. As is indicated in his first letter, the second of the correspondence,

dated 5 September 2005 in Teheran, finding the right tone was a complex and difficult task: "It isn't easy to write a letter for Víctor Erice. I've ripped up two I'd previously written to you!" In the third attempt, the one he did send, Kiarostami places himself at the other end of the arc formed by the device of the correspondence, since he doesn't concentrate so much on a revelatory fact and a few characters as on the creation of a single hyperrealist but almost abstract image, thus expounding an idea about nature and physical surfaces. Appearing at the beginning of the letter is the texture of a skin in black-and-white, a number of stains that we identify as the skin of a cow, but which due to its moving around and because of the sound of the wind which accompanies it as a soundtrack, we can imagine as being separated from the body of the animal. As the sequence unfolds the skin is seen as being ever more alive, forming part of a body that throbs, that ruminates, that eats, a disturbing body which admits of other animals—a fly which enters and exits the visual field—and which gradually develops in chromatic terms towards a beefy colouring. The pink skin emerges in an almost obscene way, betraying the presence of other material on the surface that the camera has visually related in every detail and which it has converted into a natural symphony. When we get to the all-embracing shot of the cow, the latter disappears from our sight, and the meadow, by means of a simple but very emotive trick, turns into the fixed image of a postcard, a postcard that Kiarostami's hands turn over in order to write his dedication to Víctor Erice, in a shot symmetrical to that of the first letter received from Madrid. As we were saying, Kiarostami's text, narrated in his own voice, recounts the difficulty of encountering the precise tone for responding to Erice's first instalment, and also documents the place where the image of the animal has been filmed: "Last week I was in Mashhad." This final sequence, approachable and intimate, deliberately distances itself from the previous visual essay but it enables the letter to be interwoven with the overall device: the correspondence must continue.

Correspondance. From Abbas Kiarostami to Víctor Erice, "Mashhad", 5 September 2005 [Letter 2]

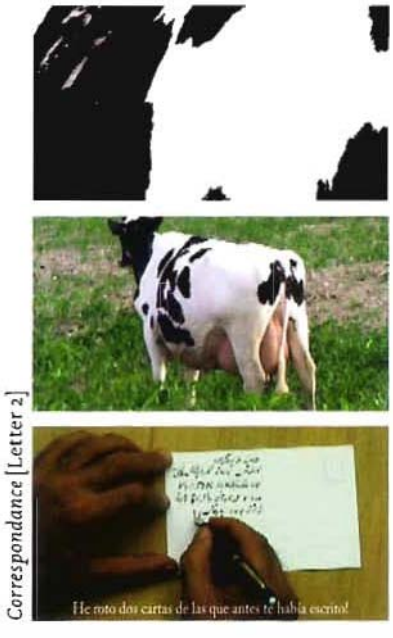
In Víctor Erice's second letter, *Correspondence*'s third, the director engages directly with Kiarostami's invitation while displaying a proverbial sense of humour. The opening images describe a still life formed by Kiarostami's postcard, a photograph of Erice at the age of four accompanied by a cow, and a little figurine of the animal. Over this still life there appears the text of the new letter, which now posits the difference between the temporality of the filming and that of the sending: "This is a letter I started writing a while back. As I was awaiting your news at the time." The letter describes a didactic experiment undertaken in a village in Extremadura whose name could be the title of a film in itself: Arroyo de la Luz [literally, Stream of Light]. Erice knew of the experiment after receiving some drawings done in the primary class of the village school, in which the kids drew scenes from a film seen in class and which was, in point of fact, Kiarostami's *Where Is My Friend's House?* (1987). In the prologue Erice describes the attributes of the village, drawing attention to one essential detail: almost all the fathers work in Madrid in the construction business and the children are cared for by their mothers and grandparents. Erice visits the class and films the kids while they watch Kiarostami's movie, thus creating an iconography of the viewer which is not so much close to the discovery of cinema by Ana in *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) as to a set of faces more familiar with images but which intensely follow the peculiar suspense of Kiarostami's film, in which a boy from an Iranian village has to decide if he can disobey the orders of his family and help a friend with problems at school. When the projection is over and the windows of the classroom are opened the teacher articulates a dialogue with the pupils that reflects the themes which unite and separate the experiences of the children, those who appeared on the screen (Ahmad and Mohammad) and those who have seen the film. These involve big issues: the need to obey, family violence, loneliness, the fear of de-urbanised spaces, but also friendship, solidarity, compassion. The kids discuss if the sense of obedi-



Correspondance. From Abbas Kiarostami to Víctor Erice, "Mashhad", 5 September 2005 [Letter 2]

ence—the promise not to leave the family home—should have prevailed over the wish to help the friend by taking him the notebook he needed and had forgotten. Finally, the conclusion is generally accepted: the boy has acted well in helping the friend notwithstanding the punishment his father could impose on him. Through the teacher, Erice attempts to inquire into the distances and parallels between the child viewers and the child actors of the film, who are the same age, by highlighting, in particular, the absence of the father in both instances. In order to conclude this bit of *ciné-vérité*, Erice, on the train back to Madrid, expounds one last idea which perfectly rounds off the tale: "thanks to cinema Ahmad Ahmadpur and Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh had made a lot of friends in Arroyo de la Luz. There's one fact we adults often forget: children know nothing of frontiers, the whole world's their home."

At the very moment in which, for reasons of editorial production, I must consider the news of this correspondence to be over and done, a letter is on the way. I know something about it. I know that Abbas Kiarostami is filming the life of a quince tree in Iran. On this tree there still lives one of the quinces from Víctor Erice's tree. When it finally falls the quince will not rot away like the others. Abbas Kiarostami's camera follows the adventure of Víctor Erice's fruit through nature "from an oriental point of view." A journey, an escapade or even a meditation, a direct reference to the life which continues through one film that connects up with another, with the tree that links them and which forms an inescapable part of the stylistic world of both authors. It only remains for us to add with conviction that the process will continue.



Correspondance [Letter 2]

From
Víctor Erice
for
Abbas Kiarostami

Madrid, 22 October 2005

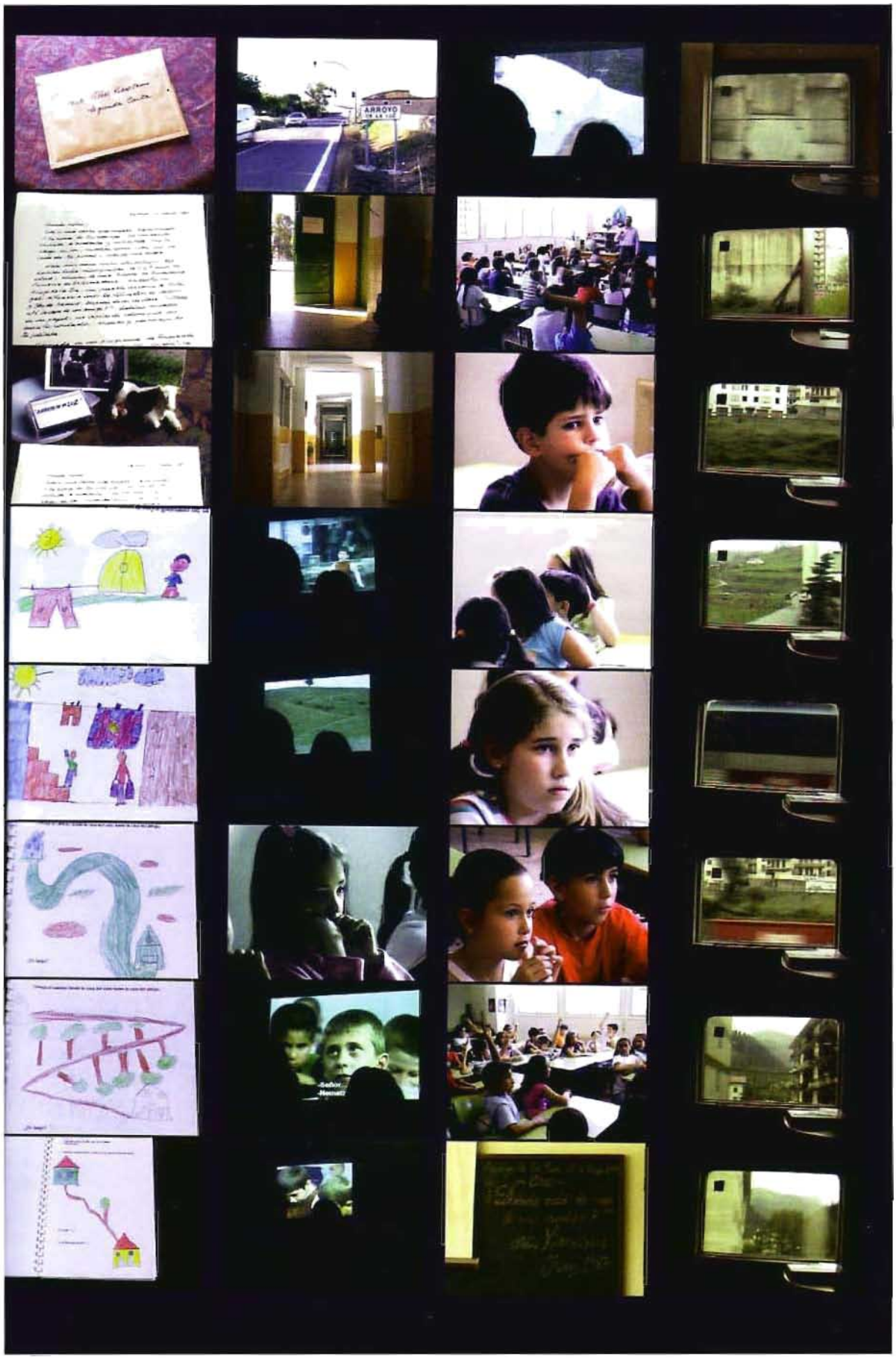
Dear Abbas,

This is a letter I started writing a while back. As I was awaiting your news at the time, I couldn't make up my mind to finish it and send it to you. Today I'm finally doing so, while I chew over—almost like the cow on your postcard—the odd doubt.
A few months ago I received these drawings. Eight-and nine-year-old boys and girls had done them, pupils at a primary school in Extremadura, living in Arroyo de la Luz, a village some 20 kilometres from Cáceres and 300 from Madrid. After seeing Where Is My Friend's House? *in class they'd recreated scenes and characters from your film on a piece of paper with coloured pencils or a simple marker.*
The experience the drawings reflected was part of a Teacher Training programme called "Open Your Eyes". It seemed so interesting that I decided to get to know its participants a bit better.
Arroyo de la Luz has 6,600 inhabitants. Today its people have traded their former dedication to farming and livestock for the service industries. An odd thing occurs, though: most of the men have migrated to Madrid to work as building workers, leaving the kids in the care of their mothers and grandparents.
When I announced my visit to the school, the teacher agreed to have a new showing of the film, mainly for the kids who didn't get to see it the first time round.

On the journey back I was thinking about lived experience. One thing was clear in my mind: thanks to cinema Ahmad Ahmadpur and Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh had made a lot of friends in Arroyo de la Luz.
There's one fact we adults often forget: children know nothing of frontiers, the whole world's their home.
All the best,

Víctor Erice

"Arroyo de la Luz", 22 October 2005 [Letter 3]


ARROYO

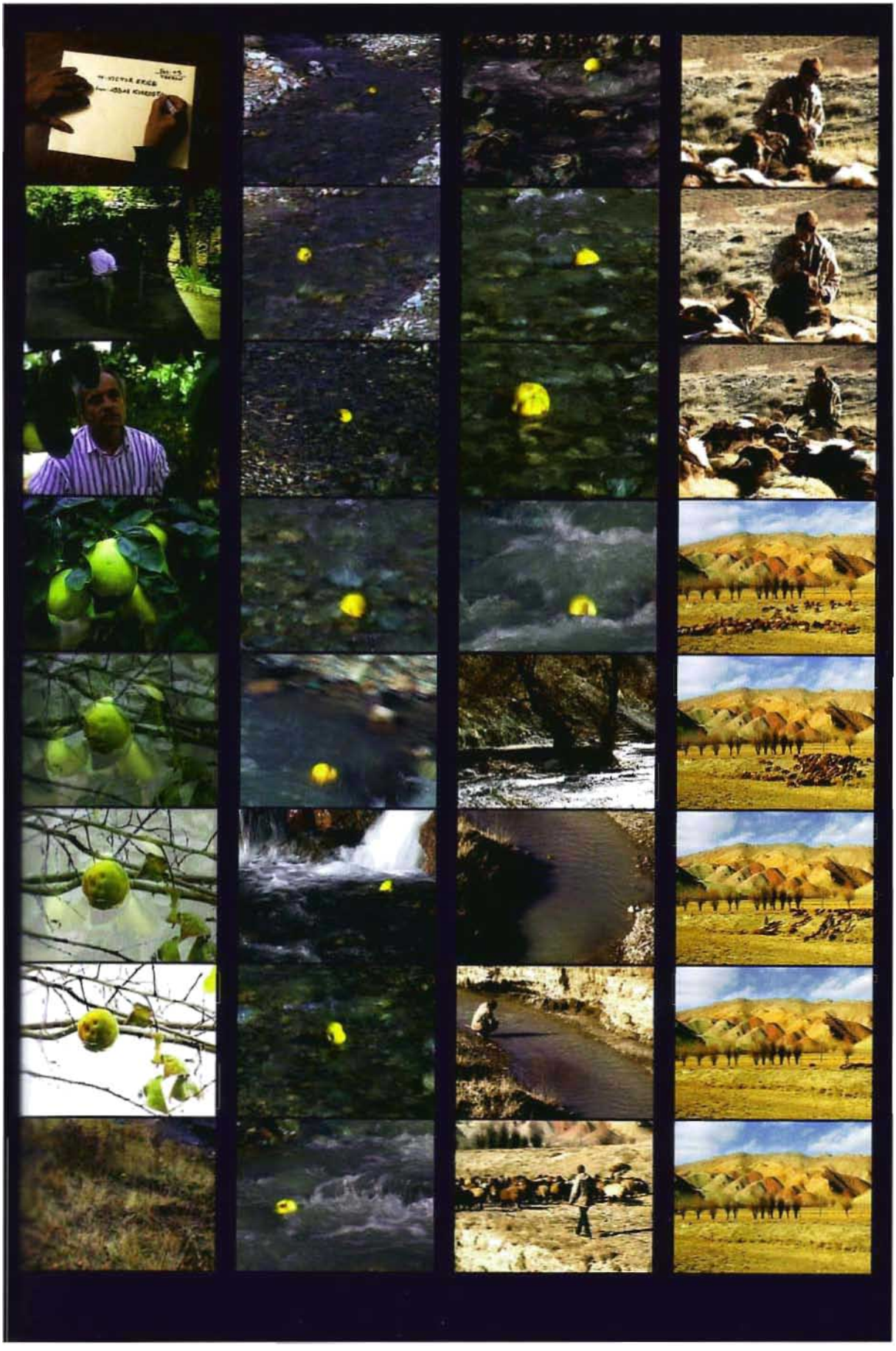
From
Abbas Kiarostami
for
Víctor Erice

Teheran, December de 2005

Dear Víctor,

You must know I'm one of the admirers of your film The Quince Tree Sun.
I know that when you and Antonio López were making the movie, the attention of the two of you was focussed on the quinces that remained under the tree, rotting, at the end of the film.
For this reason maybe you didn't realise that there was a branch with a quince on it in the street that was seemingly to have another fate. In our culture, if the fruit hangs outside the four walls of a garden it belongs to the people passing by. Here we see two boys who are a bit older than Antonio López's grandchildren and who are more interested in eating the quince than in painting it. And they turn it into a target.

Abbas Kiarostami



Going to Meetthe Ghosts. Portico to *La Morte Rouge*

La Morte Rouge is an attempt to relate certain particulars of the first cinema experience of a child. Given the conditioning factors typical of the medium in which it is going to be publicly presented, and inasmuch as it is situated outside the conventional limits of fiction, said attempt possesses, in its brevity, an inevitable sketchiness; it is more or less doomed, due to its very nature, to fail in the documentary recouping of the facts.

It's good things are this way. Because here it would mean something different from the registering of the events, that ultra-modern drive which converts, through the use and abuse of the new technologies, human experience into an archive. It would mean, rather, turning this essential failure into something evocative, capable of revealing what may lie behind those holes which the action of time gradually makes in personal memory and the annals of History both. In short, to draw attention to the other face of what is sold to us as reality; or what amounts to the same thing, to show the other scene.

As the Inspector of Souls, Sigmund Freud, said, nothing is ever completely forgotten. And only out of this form of remembering can the past be illuminated anew. Whence the discussion, and the contradiction, contained in the text, that which the narrator's voice personifies in *La Morte Rouge*, which restricts itself to the images or flies over them, depending on the moment, fluctuating between the first and third person. An inevitable coming-and-going which in this hypnotic state testifies to the subject's inconsistency. Because, who is it who remembers?

La Morte Rouge

La Morte Rouge

The sea... It could be said that only the sea remains. The rest is different or has been effaced with time, like footprints in the sand. But here it was, in the very same space occupied by these cubes, emblem of Modernity—the Casino Gran Kursaal, the setting where this story began. Someone very close told me it, one day when we were talking about our first experiences as moviegoers.

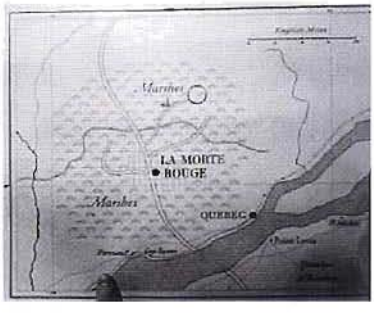
The Gran Kursaal...

I ask myself what will have become of those ghosts that more than one of us thought we sometimes saw at night wandering about the environs of the casino. The ghosts of gamblers and croupiers, of waiters and cooks, of musicians and variety artistes: anonymous dead folk in the main, disappearing into the nothingness, like the monumental building they once inhabited.

All the same, there were beings related to this episode of initiation who, quitting the cinema screen, went beyond the ephemeral nature of their existence: Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson; to wit, Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. Others, meanwhile, have also vanished with the years: Roy William Neill, the enigmatic director, and Gerald Hamer, alias Alistair Ramson, the actor who, off-stage, embodied his last and most brilliant role: Potts, the postman of La Morte Rouge.

La Morte Rouge...That was the name of the place: a village surrounded by marshes, situated in French-speaking Canada on the outskirts of Quebec. I've never managed to find it on the map, probably because it only existed in the imagination of the scriptwriters of *The Scarlet Claw*, the first film he remembered having ever seen.

The kid was five at the time and it was a winter's afternoon. For a long time he avoided putting a date to that crucial experience, which thus remained in an undefined spot in the lawless territory of earliest childhood. Until one day during a visit to the city, in the archives of the Municipal Library he meticulously went through the two local newspapers of the period. In their issues



corresponding to 24 January 1946, in the Entertainment Section, he found what up until then he hadn't wanted to know in its entirety: " Kursaal. Today. Sensational première. *The Scarlet Claw*. Suitable for minors. Sessions: 5, 7:30 and 10:30."

In contrast to what its title announced, in *The Scarlet Claw* red was abolished: its images only let the colours of mourning be seen, the black-and-white of primordial cinema. Although it formed part of a series inspired by the adventures of the character of Sherlock Holmes, for the public *The Scarlet Claw* was mainly just one more "scary" film, almost banal in appearance. Except that in this instance the scariness spread forth beyond the screen, prolonging its echo in the ambience of a devastated society—on the one hand due to the bloodletting typical of a civil war and its sequels; on the other, to the effects of a recently ended world struggle. While an emotionally benumbed population sought refuge in the imaginary world of cinema, there wasn't a continent on the planet that wasn't totting up, right there and then, its dead and missing on the battle fronts or in the bombed cities and extermination camps.

Did this universal pain somehow weigh upon the heart of the five-year-old boy who, in the company of his sister—she was seven years older—walked towards the penumbra of a cinema to see the first film of his life? It's difficult to know. Anyway, one might imagine so, that it weighed upon him a lot; that this generalised pain, deposited like a sediment in the dark depths of society, impregnated everything.

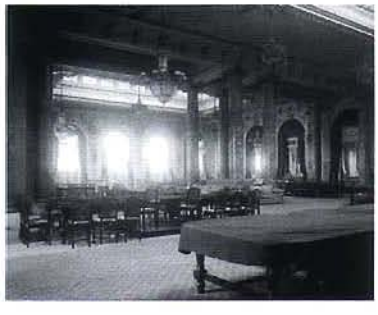
Whoever chose this "scary" movie demonstrated that they had a grownup's sense of curiosity. That day the Entertainment Section announced some very attractive titles (*Experiment Perilous*, *Honolulu*), but they didn't count: they were for Adults. Among the ones suitable for Minors there were other options, probably more interesting (*Sundown*) or appropriate ones: for example, the animated drawings of a soft-centred tale for children, *Garbancito de la Mancha*, or the cuteness of

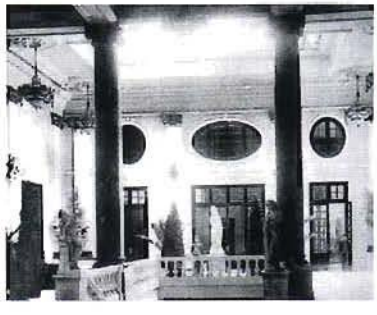
Shirley Temple in *Kiss and Tell*. And yet someone—my sister, surely—chose *The Scarlet Claw*.

The show took place inside the Casino Gran Kursaal. An emblem of the city, the pride of its bourgeoisie, opened in 1922 by the Queen of Spain, the Casino had very quickly learned how its main object, gambling, was outlawed. This more or less unforeseen event contributed to its gradual decline; but it was above all the march of history which meant that the ambitions of the people who built it would never be fulfilled. All of them slowly disappeared from the public scene without being able to recover the splendour of a definitively lost *Belle Époque*, that "glamour" reflected in the Rafael Penagos poster which in its day announced the opening of the Gran Kursaal to the four winds. The march of history was the cause, indeed...

In the 1940s the Kursaal survived thanks to the cinema. If you went in through its main entrance, to get to the theatre where the screenings were taking place you had to follow the route traced on the floor by a red carpet; to leave behind, to the left, as you moved forward, the huge, closed-off rooms. Immersed in a semi-darkness in which the silver of its mirrors and the glass teardrops of its extinguished lamps shone, they seemed to form part of the *mise en scène* of a bad dream. On that January afternoon the boy timidly traversed them, clinging to his sister's hand, like someone entering another world.

The theatre was full of people, more than eight hundred spectators dotted throughout the stalls, boxes and balconies. From his seat he had time to let his eyes wander over the paintings on the dome or to amuse himself with the publicity inscribed on flats that went up and came down at intervals, occupying the entire proscenium. Until all of a sudden the insistent sound of a buzzer announced the start of the session. The latecomers among the spectators rapidly occupied their seats. In the midst of the darkness, from on high, the beam of light of a projector issued forth. As if by the art of magic, the images of a newsreel began to file past on the screen.





Of that first No-Do of his life, the scene would remain engraved of a high official—a Civil Governor of Catalonia, no less—doling out in the street, for Christmas, a few pesetas into the hands of poor men and women, formed up in a line. In a way this documentary evidence was the substratum of reality on which a few minutes later the fiction would establish itself. But this, the boy didn't know; for him fiction and reality were as yet the same thing.

From its very first images *The Scarlet Claw* displayed a nightmarish atmosphere. It was as if everyday life were suddenly interrupted, whilst the bell of the church in La Morte Rouge tolled unexpectedly. Inside a café a strangely motionless and silent mankind was listening attentively to the mournful pealing; on their faces, a confused fear, as if they were witnessing the agreed signal for phantoms and souls in torment to come onto the scene. But the person who did so for real, beating the ghosts to it, was Potts, the local postman, examining the question in a loud voice of a phenomenon nobody knew how to interpret: "Who can be ringing the church bell? Perhaps it's nobody... Maybe it's a 'something', and this 'something' is what's doing the ringing."

The disturbing question didn't take long making itself known: a dead woman appeared stretched out on the floor of the church, clutching in her right hand, in a dying gesture, the rope of the bell. The first of a series of crimes which would sow panic among the inhabitants of La Morte Rouge: in all of them the murderer eliminated his victims by slashing their throats in the manner a wild animal, utilising a kind of metal claw.

And thus it was, in the midst of what the vast majority thought of as a mere pastime that the boy discovered that people died; and, furthermore, that men were able to kill other men.

During the screening, with a sense of curiosity that was momentarily greater than his fear, seeking an explanation, he kept a watch on the faces of the adult spectators. Attentive but unmoved, for the most part silent, the deaths that were taking place in front of their eyes didn't

seem to affect them. There wasn't indifference in their eyes, it was something else altogether, perhaps what Potts the joker had hinted at: "something".

This fact awoke a suspicion in him: the unanimous attitude of the adults had to be the consequence of a pact they'd all agreed to, consisting of saying nothing and carrying on watching. Because all of them possessed one feature in common: they knew something he didn't know, a secret that explained everything. To uncover it was, from that moment on, the disturbing adventure to which he felt drawn by a force superior to his will, the one which caused him to glimpse the other face of fiction: a black hole in the fabric of reality, a drain down which the entire innocence of the world had gone.

At the end, Sherlock Holmes would discover that the cruel murderer in La Morte Rouge was the most innocent-looking person of all: Potts, the sardonic postman, lover of the occult. Potts wasn't Potts, however, but Alistair Ramson, a resentful actor obsessed by revenge, who passed himself off as a postman in order to get close to his victims without being recognised. But what was an actor? The boy didn't know exactly. What he deduced was that an actor was someone who didn't have a soul of his own; that, furthermore, by means of false beards, hairpieces and moustaches, changes of clothing and of voice, he was capable of choosing an identity at will. And if Potts was able to be everybody, then everybody was able to be Potts, evil Potts. He came out of the cinema perturbed, dispossessed of any kind of certainty, sporting a feeling of abandonment that would accompany him forever.

It was already night as the two siblings returned home along the bank of the river. Here and there in its dark waters the streetlights were glittering. There was a moment in which she, pausing, made the boy look at the reflections while she called on his aid, repeating an old game, "I Spy". The familiar reply in question form, "What do you spy?" didn't arrive this time, despite her

stubborn insistence: "I spy, I spy..." He looked into her eyes as if she were a stranger, lips pressed together, saying nothing.

In her role as initiator the sister immediately perceived the inner turmoil that was gripping him. Furthermore, conscious of his panic, she dedicated herself to stimulating his memory of the murderer of the film, that uniformed figure of evil: " The postman's coming, the postman's coming", she repeated to him before going to bed. In this way she would discover the practice of terror as a form of power. Although perhaps, deep down, she was doing nothing other than exorcising her own fear; a fear that came from afar, accumulated in the besieged Madrid of the Civil War, during her days as a little girl subjected to the horror of the bombings, and which still remained stuck to her skin.

For a time letters were an emblem of death for the boy; and postmen its agents. Dressed in their blue uniform, head covered with a round peaked cap, they covered the city streets at the double bearing on their shoulders leather mailbags in which all the menace of the world might have been contained. Each morning at the same time one of them entered the hallway of the house. As it was a period of electricity cuts and the bells weren't working, in order to announce his presence from the stairwell he blew on a whistle. On hearing it the boy ran to take refuge in the most out-of-the-way corner of the house.

On the envelopes of the letters there were always one or more stamps. On almost all of these the same portrait appeared: that of a man with a serious expression and a cold stare. On the radio they called him *Generalísimo*, which—as some of the barrio kids explained—meant that he was the one who was mainly in charge, a military man. His face, which appeared painted on the walls, and above all the icy look in his eyes, henceforth presented themselves to the boy as one more sign of death.

Night after night the door of his room remained open onto the darkness of the passageway that connected every bit of the apartment. From the bed, being unable to sleep, he observed the artificial light that came in through the balcony. It was a pallid light, filtered by the net curtains, that was concentrated on the whitewashed, rectangular surface of the ceiling—a kind of imaginary cinema screen—only to be dispersed from there throughout the rest of the bedroom. From time to time, at the passing along the street of a vehicle—a car, a tram—the window panes shook; a few fleeting, elongated shadows, unfurling in a fan shape, crossed the screen of the ceiling, while in the wardrobe mirror unwonted glimmers appeared. Next, everything returned to the ambiguous stillness of always, inhabited by intermittent tiny sounds the nature of which it was impossible to pinpoint, and which presided over the slow flowing of time.

As in *The Scarlet Claw*, the chiming of the nearby church clock, along with the confused noise of footsteps in the street, and the sound, like the crack of a whip, of clapping hands appeared to serve as a prelude to that mysterious music which promptly issued forth at these belated hours from a piano or a violin in the apartment above. It could be said that insomniac hands finished preparing the requisite atmosphere so that, at the very threshold of sleep, the memory would once more reach the boy of the film in which he'd just discovered not only the fact of death in itself, but also the power men had to visit death upon other men.

To the rhythm of these signs he went back anew to his recollections of the images of the film, and especially those of its main protagonist: the killer postman with his metal claw ready to wreak havoc. He thought he could feel him getting closer step by step from the end of the passageway, in the dark; then, very still, in silence—he never called out to his parents—he closed his eyes. Playing dead was the only way death wouldn't notice him, as if he were an already claimed victim, and so would pass by without stopping in search of other sleeping bodies.

For weeks the boy lived this nightmare to the full. Until cinema itself came to his aid: if a film had partly perturbed him, there were soon others which little by little placed balm upon the wound, thus affording relief to his feeling of abandonment. This double game of wound and consolation that reached him from the screen instituted his contradictory rapport with moving images.

Many years went by before he was able to view *The Scarlet Claw* again. According to what he told me, on that occasion he went along to the cinema with the fear of not recognising himself, driven not so much by curiosity as by necessity. In his memory only three or four details of the film remained. After seeing it once more, however, he realised that all of them were substantive. In some way, across time, that remote experience had been kept alive within him.

The last time I spoke to him he wanted to know something of Roy William Neill, the director. He asked me to dig up some information, but I was hard put to find a few lines in a couple of encyclopaedias. They all gave a plain and simple summary of his life, just enough to discover that like postman Potts, Roy William Neill was also a pure invention. Apparently, he was originally called Roland de Gostrie, a French-sounding name which encourages one to think that it was as false as the one he finally adopted.

He came into the world in 1887, on the high seas, on board a ship captained by his father, off the coast of Ireland. He managed to make more than a hundred films, in part lost today. The last one dates, precisely, from 1946. He died that same year from a heart attack in London, not far from 221 Baker Street. He invented a place, La Morte Rouge, belonging to a country that doesn't appear on any map, called cinema.



The Teatro del Príncipe, often converted into a cinema, San Sebastián, end of the 1950s

Introduction to the Dark Cave

Miguel Marías

It is rare, at least among genuine aficionados, that one forgets the first time one went to the cinema; not only does one recall, however many years one has gone without seeing it again, the first film one saw, but the exact place and the precise circumstances which surrounded that inaugural, always determinant, in some cases decisive, experience.

It may be said without exaggeration that the most important thing is not so much what was seen—that the film in question was good, that we liked it at the time, that it scared us or made us cry, both of them amazingly frequent circumstances, and without them thereby serving as a warning, but as a stimulus for a growing eagerness—as the fact of seeing, of discovering something new, consisting of darkness, known people—the relatives who took us to the cinema—mixed with many other totally unknown ones, of obligatory silence and immobility. Something that instilled respect, radiated expectation and mystery, invited (or forced) quietude without being a religious ceremony, albeit, of course, an enigmatic and surprising secular rite.

In the era in which Víctor Erice began going to the cinema—as in my own, some seven years later—the normal thing would be to arrive in good time, perhaps by crossing a lobby, to a huge auditorium—now it would seem disproportionate, unfillable, but at that time it might be full—with over-elaborate decoration, often modernist in style, exaggeratedly sumptuous, although probably of a "come down in the world" luxury—and now, while I come to think of it, with a somewhat funereal side, notwithstanding the prevalence of reds and golds—with stalls that were possibly staved in and uncomfortable, yet upholstered in velvet, too big for some of us kids, who were maybe obliged not to lower the seat in order, thereby, to be able to perch on its much less comfortable upper edge, without the viewer in the row in front blocking a screen that was almost always enormous—and which due to our size seemed immense to us—which before there might be anything to see we'd want to see entire, as soon as the mysterious and heavy curtains covering it were drawn back.

First, a few announcements or notices would appear—along the lines of "Visit our elegant bar on the mezzanine floor"—which prevented us from continuing to inspect the ultra-high palace ceiling, which lacked comparison with the ones we were accustomed to having over our heads. Next, the darkness would become almost total, and with this the murmurs and noise would cease. Other kids or we ourselves would be called to order, and to immobility and silence. The screen would be lit by a stream of light, and we'd turn round to detect its source. In following back the luminous beam we'd see suspended motes of dust, as in the rays of sunshine that filter through the blinds, and we'd become aware of a curious mechanical sound, slithering and vibrant, unforgettable. A bit of music would sound that was later to become familiar to us, remaining forever in our ears, and a haughty, satisfied, obsequious voice with a wheedling, persuasive tone, at times spirited or perhaps selectively disdainful or ironical towards what was foreign, of which we'd quickly learn to be instinctively mistrustful, although we still didn't imagine that it was "his master's voice", the intonation of propaganda, yet which sounded false to us, hypocritical, at bottom unbelieving until the moment when—we noticed—it simulated adherence or enthusiasm, which at least it exaggerated. The images that filed past in black-and-white mixed recognisable things with other highly exotic ones, which the first certified as equally real, although distant and never hitherto viewed, at least not in movement. It is as well to remember that for little Spaniards coming into the world before 1970 or so, the No-Do newsreel was in fact the first film we saw.

We'd been introduced to a strange marvel: it was reality in movement (a movement that was only able to surprise us by comparison with photographs, since in itself it wasn't lacking in it), albeit devoid of colour. But we'd already, even in something as untrustworthy as the No-Do, begun to travel, to quit our city, our country, which we could sometimes get a bird's eye view of,

when we still hadn't even been up in an aeroplane. Nevertheless, it was an ephemeral, transitory miracle that didn't really satisfy our curiosity but redoubled our expectant impatience. Because we'd come to see a movie, not a newsreel, or a kind of diverse contemporary magazine called Imágenes, with another, less solemn, more catchy jingle, and with a more miscellaneous, at times sports-orientated, content, given over less to the news, with less foreign catastrophes to contrast with the daily opening of reservoirs intended to fight the "persistent drought". But the spectacle made itself be desired: an unwarranted, premature interval, and once again the penumbra, and a foretaste of future films, the trailers, which delayed the awaited, longed-for, promised moment for yet a few minutes more, while they created new desires for the weeks ahead, since we were convinced by now that all this was interesting. Ah, neither were we free by then of commercial advertising, nor of the very promoting of cinema.

There's no doubt that all of us who, as kids, turned into assiduous, omnivorous and insatiable cinemagoers, long before we'd be able to transform ourselves into cinephiles, critics or cineasts, were seduced in a very special and particularly intense way by something. At least we of that generation, I reckon, were avid readers, and we never ceased being so, nor being interested with similar intensity and enthusiasm in many other things, some artistic and some not, and which probably went on changing with time. As a general rule the cinema was not, in that far-off era in which there was a lesser supply of entertainment that was cheap and relatively within our reach, an exclusive or excluding passion, it never got to be a monomania or an obsession, the cinema didn't suffice for us. But it had something special, it fulfilled us or satisfied us more, or it appeared more potent to us. It's possible that the era may have helped—these were the culminating years of sound cinema, of its mature but still innovatory age, full of juvenile vigour—with a genuine flood of great films of all genres, shades and styles, all linked by a perfect under-

The Cine Novedades, San Sebastián, 1950

standing of narrative codes, via a sort of tacit understanding between filmmakers and viewers, accepted as natural and logical by newcomers, which was based on mutual confidence and on a series of understandings and conventions that nobody called into question.

Naturally, the first film in our lives may be more or less memorable in itself, depending on luck or the taste of the adults who took us to the cinema for the first time. On occasions it may be an especially impressive work, above all for an extremely young and impressionable viewer, and may leave an indelible mark. It may even be a traumatic experience that indissociably combines agreeable and pleasant sensations with a certain apprehension. But I don't know of a single instance in which, not liking the first film in itself that we saw, or provoking terror in us, we didn't want to repeat the experience, to try our luck again as soon as possible.

And so generally speaking it doesn't matter so much what film we saw for the first time, or that it was good or bad. We were already distinguishing between cinema and its individual expressions, films. And just as some movies did not appeal and others did, for reasons difficult to explain but seldom wrong, although we might not like the first film we saw, it might frighten us, disturb us, make us suffer or even (the height of shame) cry—it's unlikely that we'd be bored, although it may be that the enforced immobility and obligatory silence might tire us or make us impatient—the cinema had already won us over.

I don't know why for sure. I suspect, without any certainty, that one of the crucial and basic attractions, along with the novelty and the ceremony, the rite, was the size of the things we saw projected in two dimensions on the screen, an aspect which, after a phase of expansion—the wide screen or CinemaScope, Cinerama—has progressively been reduced to the point of being lost, with the fragmentation of the big cinemas into various auditoria, with the proliferation of mini-cinemas (with their corresponding mini-screens). Because what cinema—both docu-

mentary and fictional, both the one we recognised and the one we discovered for the first time or our imagination as the readers of and listeners to stories gave material form to, the same if it photographically reproduced real persons as if it involved animated cartoons—did, above all, was to enlarge things, increasing their proportions to a scale superior to the natural one—which served as the title of a famous movie by Nicholas Ray, *Bigger Than Life*—that aggrandised (and at times magnified or sublimated) everything and enabled us to contemplate objects and faces with a detail inaccessible in reality: we'd have to get so close that nobody would permit it, and furthermore we'd lose perspective, context and even the ability to focus. This magnifying-glass effect—at that time we wouldn't have put our eye to either a microscope or a telescope, although we'd have known of their existence—revealed the unknown to us, even in what we were fed up of seeing: the street or the main park of our city, the cars that went down the roads, certain everyday objects, plus, on an equal plane, with the same sharpness and on the same enlarged scale, the never-seen, the unknown. Also at work was a second marvel, which we'd maybe not notice at first, it depended on what films we might see: it made even the most fantastic and impossible things present, visible, evident, things which were unexpectedly there, on the screen. It didn't matter that the images—to which we undoubtedly gave absolute credibility from the first—might rectify or correct the ones we'd intuited, imagined or dreamed of from readings, photos, prints or drawings, they were never less fantastic, terrifying or attractive, and they were much bigger and more imposing.

What's more, and unlike the No-Do, the films we were seeing told stories. Like tales and novels, but visible. We no longer had to imagine a three-masted sailing ship, we were seeing it, nor the rows of oarsmen, which we able to count, nor look up in an encyclopaedia the appearance of a poplar or a palm tree, which at times we recognised or which we identified by name, adjusting it

Programmes for two of the films shown in San Sebastián on the same day as *The Scarlet Claw*, 24 January 1946

to its revealed image. The cinema, then, supplied, confirmed, rectified or completed information that the assimilative capacity typical of our age instantly stored away, probably forever. It was a way of travelling, not only in imagination and fantasy, but also with sight, hearing, the entire body almost, since at times it communicated to us the rolling of a boat, the thrust of the current of a river, the velocity of a racing car or a plane.

How can it come as a surprise that a filmmaker formed in that cinema of huge dimensions, at that early age, would think, for the rest of his life, that cinema is a means of knowledge, that it serves for giving material form to the non-existent and for exploring, in greater detail and sharpness, that which surrounds us? How can it come as a surprise that what was a vehicle for countless discoveries about the world and about life, about people and their gestures, their relationships and their lying or dissimulation, would not be conceived as a quasi-scientific, or perhaps poetic, tool which permits one to make discoveries, to see better and more deeply, and to reveal this to others? Which enables one to contemplate things by delaying and prolonging time, and to tell, by prolonging or compressing it, by speeding it up or slowing it down, a whole host of stories, isolated or interwoven, linear or with retrogressions into the past to retrieve and haul memories into the present.

It was a marvellous invention, to be sure, with capacities still in the course of being explored and inventoried, which went on changing and adding new attributes or discarding them at will. There were stories that seemed to call for wider screens, which required us to move our heads in order to take them all in and to miss nothing, and others which were better—darker or more "realistic"—in black-and-white than in colour. Still circulating were some films in which the movements seemed speeded up, as if caricaturised or exaggerated, and in which the characters didn't speak. They were the relics of silent cinema, almost always of short duration and of the

The Spirit of the Beehive

comedy genre, which recounted the adventures and misadventures of permanent and sufficiently individualised characters with picturesque nicknames—Pamplinas, Charlot, Jaimito [namely, Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Larry Semon]—or descriptive ones—el Gordo y el Flaco [literally, The Fat Man and The Thin Man, aka Laurel and Hardy]—and which had a more reduced coefficient of reality, almost as scarce as that of animated cartoons or films enacted by marionettes or figures of different materials (paper, plasticine).

Much of what the cinema conditioned and represented then has disappeared almost completely, and I'm afraid it's irretrievable. Even part of what was essential about it has been weakened, vulgarised in reduced forms, in minor formats; I want to believe that this is a transitory eclipse, and that in part it's retrievable. But it's as well to ask if there's anybody who desires this—and it's difficult for someone who hasn't known it to miss it, not to mention to yearn for it—and if witnesses go on remaining capable of reconquering for the cinema its powers and its possibilities, in large part in disuse, or not completely explored, developed, perfected and exploited. This, I think, is tantamount to what Jean-Luc Godard in his *Histoire(s) du cinéma*—and in its appendixes, footnotes and sketches—implies. That the cinema is something unique and extraordinary, that it hasn't managed to give of itself as much as it could have, that it hasn't contrived to fulfil its promises, that it has been led astray from its path, but that it could return to it and set out once again. If anybody remains who glimpses that potential and dares to put into practice what has remained as a project, a sketch, a dream, and might thus manage to see more and better and bigger, and to help us, we too, to look in another way.

La Morte Rouge

"I came when the blood
was still on the doors
and I asked why"

José Ángel Valente[1]

I

Víctor Erice's entire cinematic oeuvre is born of the will to explore a certain *moral landscape*.[2] There are exceptions, to be sure, but the shadow of an ill-fated time—the interminable post-Civil War period, the *posguerra*—repeatedly casts itself over his films, be they original projects (*The Spirit of the Beehive*, *The South*), personal literary adaptations (*The Shanghai Promise*) or simple momentary assignments (*Lifeline*). Jaime Pena has magnificently analysed, apropos of *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973), the recurrent tension between the frequent and precise spatio-temporal, finally historical, indication his movies offer and a clear propensity for vagueness, abstraction or even metaphor in which "emptiness and absence are configured as the only valid strategies of hyperbolic representation of what the dictatorship lacks: freedom, democracy [...] [And so] for Erice the *posguerra* will be first and foremost a feeling, what redounds, in short, to the elliptical nature of the story, the clearest manifestation of which will be the *erasing* of time and space." In that sense, and in opposition to other fashionable interpretations, Pena concludes that the real task undertaken by Erice in *The Spirit of the Beehive* is not so much to call on the past to speak metaphorically of the present (of the *present* of the final years of the dictatorship) as to "forcefully proclaim that time somehow stopped in 1939."[3]

"May the thread still not snap"

Three notes on *Lifeline*

Alberto Elena

1. José Ángel Valente, "Patria, cuyo nombre no sé". in *Obra poética 1. Punto cero (1953-1976)*, Alianza, Madrid, 1999, p. 36.

2. In the precise sense invoked by Juan Marsé: "Hence, in time and almost without realising it, the essential setting of my childhood was gradually being converted into a moral landscape, and so it has remained engraved upon my memory for all time." Cited by Juan Miguel Company, "El sueño entre los párpados", in Jean-Claude Seguin (ed.), *Shanghai: entre promesse et sortilège*, Grimh, Lyons, 2004, p. 333.

3. Jaime Pena, "Nocturno 34", lecture delivered at the conference *El espíritu del colmena: 31 años después* (IVAC, Valencia, May 2004), forthcoming publication. Also see Pena's monograph *El espíritu de la colmena*, Paidós, Barcelona, 2004.

Lifeline (2002), a veritable *summum* and compendium of Erice's cinema, created in the hangover from the bitter frustration produced by the confirmation that *The Shanghai Promise*—his most direct immersion, from the hand of Juan Marsé, in the world of the *posguerra* and its losers—would never see the light due to reasons of a seemingly managerial kind, masterfully reworks the strategies of earlier films. In its impacted ten minutes the film once again rehearses a sort of *ars describendi* remote from conventional narrative formulas in order to embark on the capturing of prized and precious instants: "Directing a film", notes Erice, "isn't about expressing a previously known truth [...], but about making that potential truth spring forth from among the images."[4] Forty years earlier, in reformulating the boundaries of the critical realism championed by an influential section of the European (and Spanish) Left, the young contributor to *Nuestro Cine* had already dared to defend Kafka in the face of the criticisms of Lukács by understanding that his work performs the essential role "of having us discover our own selves."[5] The trajectory that unfolds between *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *Lifeline* is, in fact, but a process of self-discovery via an exploration of the possibilities and potentialities of cinematic language itself.

II

"Dismantling genres, shattering narrative structures and the 'naturalness' of filmic expression; distancing the cinema from the narrative tradition of literature, uniting it with the common ground it shares with pictorial representation; investigating, tautening, capturing time; involving the viewer by means of ingredients other than surprise, suspense, artifice—this is a programme, modernity's own, that Erice lays claim to",[6] Mirito Torreiro vehemently wrote shortly after the presentation of *The Quince Tree Sun* (1992), but as it happens his accurate diag-

Lifeline

4. Xavier Bermúdez, "Esa oscura degeneración del entretenimiento: conversaciones con Víctor Erice y Montxo Armendáriz", *Archipiélago*, no. 7, 1991, p. 116.

5. Víctor Erice, "Realismo y coexistencia", *Nuestro Cine*, no. 27, February 1964, p. 24.

6. Mirito Torreiro, "Los trabajos, los días, el tiempo", *El País. Espectáculos*, 20 January 1993, p. 33.

nosis applies in equal measure to *Lifeline*. Like Kiarostami, Erice gives his backing to a *re-educating of the viewer's gaze* that would end up wedding his cinema to the impenetrable mysteries of poetry more than to the certainties of conventional narration.[7] As such, Erice might claim that "Lack of understanding forms part of the very essence of poetry and is accepted without any problem. The same occurs with music. But not with cinema [...] In my opinion the cinema will never be considered a major art unless the possibility of not understanding it is admitted."[8]

Thus, over and above its central anecdote, barely held together by a trivial narrative framework, *Lifeline* addresses itself to contemplation and evocation. There are, of course, many thematic ideas in the film (death's shadow, mother/child relationships, the traditional rhythms of life in the countryside), but none imposes itself in a decisive way, unless it be the so-Ericean statement that "the only mask is time's."[9] At the end of the day, *Ten Minutes Older* (2002)—the collective project in which the film is inscribed—was meant to be about the passing of time, its diverse effects and our different perceptions. No surprise, then, on that score. Erice skilfully constructs his piece in accordance with the notions of that *poetics of the void* that some writers have considered as the defining element of his oeuvre, by exploring, here, in a particularly systematic manner the resources of reiteration and contiguity.[10] But also of the privileging of that interrogative off-screen space that has turned, throughout his filmography, into one his most personal and recognisable auteurist trademarks. And, in this instance more than ever, what grabs us as a magnetic and determinant off-screen presence is nothing less than History.

7. The fecund notion of a *re-educating of the gaze* was first applied to Kiarostami by Alain Bergala, "L'os et le pare-brise: à propos de *Le vent nous emportera* d'Abbas Kiarostami", *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 541, December 1999, p. 34, and is developed in Alberto Elena, *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami*, Saqi Books, London, 2005. Its relevance to any analysis of Erice's work is argued in Elena, "Dream of Light: Erice, Kiarostami and the History of Cinema", lecture delivered at the symposium *Abbas Kiarostami: Image, Voice and Vision* (Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 29 April-1 May 2005), forthcoming publication.

8. Statements to Jean-Luc Nancy, "Conversation entre Abbas Kiarostami et Jean-Luc Nancy", in *L'Évidence du film: Abbas Kiarostami*, Yves Gevaert, Brussels, 2001, pp. 88-89.

9. "Umbral del sueño", preface to *La promesa de Shanghai. Guión cinematográfico de Víctor Erice*, Plaza & Janés, Barcelona, 2001, p. 11.

10. See Rafael Cerrato, *La relación del cine de Víctor Erice con la pintura* (Doctoral Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2004); especially the section on *Lifeline*, pp. 488-503.

III

"War hovers in the background of an idyllic landscape and blood tinges the white purity of the sheets while we sleep on without noticing it", writes Linda Ehrlich, summing up her particular impression—rather than interpretation—after attentive, repeated viewings of *Lifeline*.[11] Few texts have fittingly underlined this dimension of the film, confining themselves instead to eliciting an undeniable autobiographical clue from the eye-catching—and decisive—presence of an abandoned Falangist newspaper which, dated 28 June 1940 (that is, two days before the filmmaker's birth), announces the advance of German troops towards the Pyrenees. "Swastika in Hendaya", as the headline of the paper intones, is very far from being an innocent reference or a clumsy strategy for dating the lifeline the film describes. Erice refers his viewers to an essential moment in Spain's contemporary history, the end of the Civil War and the *posguerra*, aside from which it also marks the date of his birth: his arrival into the world coincides with the advent of a *new Spain* (*La nueva España* [The New Spain] is, not accidentally, the title of the above newspaper) in which he, like so many others, will not recognise himself.

The poetic exercise of memory deployed in *The Spirit of the Beehive* spoke of disaster and loneliness in a very specific context, as also would have done—perhaps inopportunely, given the temper of the times—*The Shanghai Promise*. In between the two, *The South* (1983) sought in its poetic and elusive way to illustrate the expoliation of Republican memory, bringing the viewer of those years of inconclusive democratic transition closer to the drifting of defeat, isolation and loneliness. But the South that embodied the happy past, the lost paradise, the yearned-for utopia, was never filmed and the movie necessarily changed its story-line and its direction and contented itself with evoking from the uninhabited North, in an obligatory off-screen space, a promise as distant as the mythical Shanghai of Marsé's novel. *Lifeline* would serve in a certain sense—allow

11. Juan F. Egea & Linda C. Ehrlich, "The Promise of Words, The Promise of Time: Víctor Erice's *La promesa de Shanghai* and *Alumbramiento / Lifeline* (2002)", *Cinema Scope*, no. 23, 2005.

Lifeline

us *to interpret it* thus—to give Erice one last chance to evoke the wounds of the war and the emptiness of the *posguerra* (there, without needing to have recourse to the stain that spreads across the newspaper, are the amputated leg of the young peasant boy, the Republican helmet adorning the head of a scarecrow, the rigid social stratification of life in the hamlet) from, in this instance, the optimistic perspective of a promise, the "promise of the world"[12] with which the filmmaker combines historical temporality and mythic time.

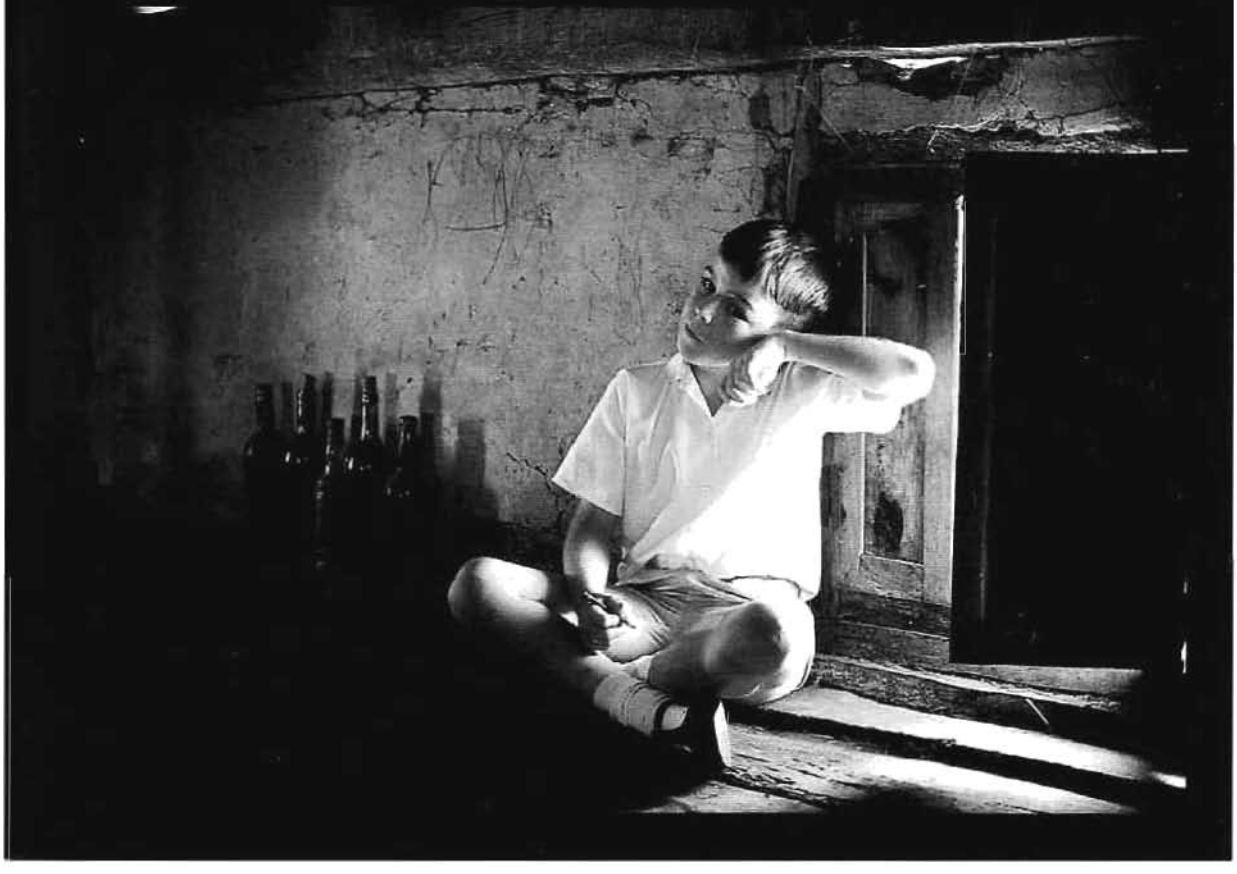
Lifeline does not in the least renounce the function of self-discovery that its creator assigns to art, nor the aspiration to make the truth spring forth from among the possibilities of his images. But neither does he forget the co-ordinates of History and the exigencies of Memory, much as Erice, with the poet, might now wish to implore:

> "May the thread still not snap
> endless thread of hope and may memory endure
> in the elongated light of afternoon
> [...]
> May time still not halt
> its incorruptible course
> and may the waters pass by
> the same waters that bear us along
> luminous and embittered
> while my canto lasts."[13]

12. "Dedicatoria", *La promesa de Shanghai*, p. 14.

13. José Ángel Valente, "Que no se quiebre todavía el hilo", in *Obra poética* 1, p. 200.

Lifeline



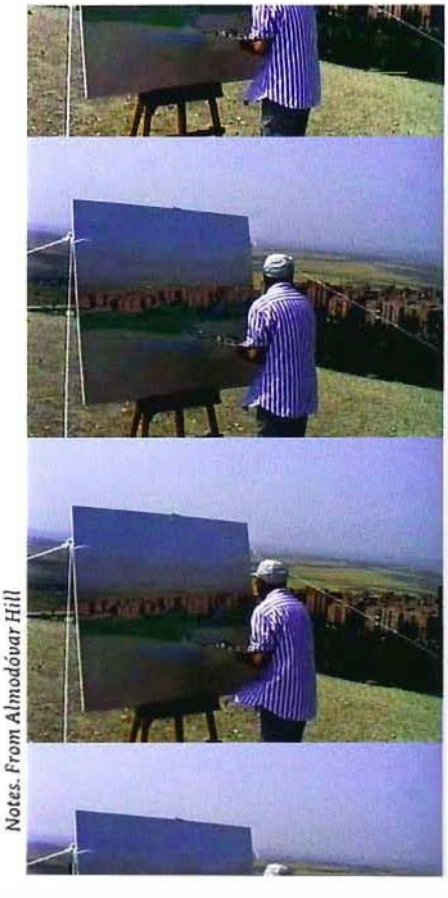
From painting, cinema learnt about angles, framing, composition, distances, light and colour: the pictorial has inhabited the filmic ever since Lumière adopted the ways of an "Impressionist painter". The search for artistic legitimacy brought the cinema nearer to the legacy of a more established and prestigious tradition, and explicit allusions to or quotes from painting were frequent, from *tableaux vivants* to subtler interventions like the homages to Auguste Renoir of his son Jean. Of course, the cinema has also taken painting, painters and, as we know, the *very cinematic* lives of painters as a theme: from Rembrandt or Van Gogh to Antonio López or Pollock, by way of Andrei Rublev.

Yet besides these relationships, cinema and painting have long since shared something more: a way of looking at the world, at reality. As Víctor Erice points out, "during this century painters and filmmakers have never ceased observing one another, maybe because they've had, and go on having, more than one dream in common—capturing light, among others—but above all because their work obeys, as André Bazin remarked, a single mythic impulse: the original need to overcome time by means of the perennial nature of form; the totally psychological desire to replace the external world with its double."

In fact, wherever a movie camera was first set up on a tripod, looking at the world, long, long before it there had been a canvas on an easel and behind it a painter. With its inception the cinema served to relieve painting by taking over the aspirations and tasks that were proper to the latter: capturing the appearance of things, fixing beauty, being the memory of that which passes, testifying to reality. The relieving—or if you like, the supplanting—of the representational function, the conflict of responsibilities, led to tensions and confrontations between two art forms condemned to collide in the past. However, the passage of time and the imposition of the audiovisual industry, with television in the van, the incessant production of banalised reality, has shown that cinema

Looking in Time: Antonio López and Víctor Erice

José Saborit



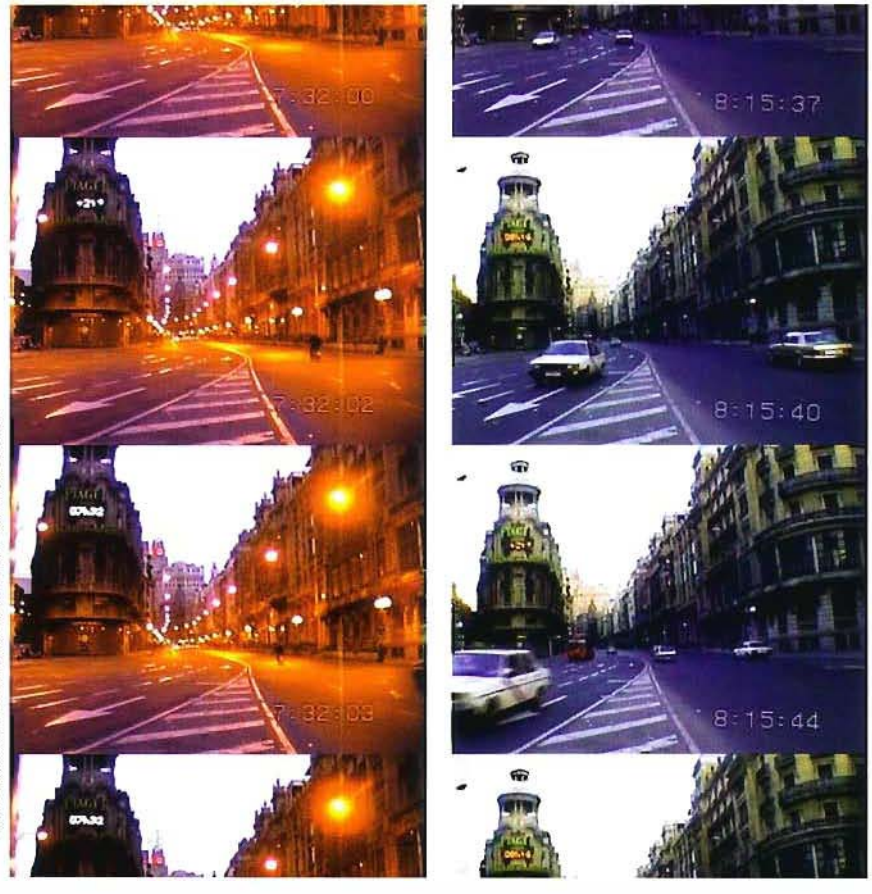
Notes. From Almodóvar Hill

Antonio López
Madrid From Almudena Hill, 1991–1994
Oil on canvas mounted on board, 180 × 180 cm
Private collection, Madrid

and painting can share in the present the possibility of looking *in another way* at the world, create *other* images and exhibit reality outside of the hegemonic channels of representation.

Now, in *The Clamour of the World. The Silence of Painting*, we find ourselves in the presence of an unusual form of co-operation between cinema and painting. Víctor Erice has come up with a device for presenting Antonio López's original pictures, an installation, an atmosphere and a set of conditions that are not those specific to a museum or an art gallery. This is a cinematic experience that adds duration and temporality, lighting and sound, to the silent stillness of the paintings; a reflection on reality, time and the gaze, an approach somewhere between cinema and painting born of the complicity and intimacy between filmmaker and painter that the filming of *The Quince Tree Sun* (1992) hinted at in its day.

Both the feature film devoted to Antonio López and the present installation have a clear precedent, though. In the summer of 1990, before filming *The Quince Tree Sun*, Erice accompanied and recorded the painter on video during various work sessions in different places in Madrid. Later, he went back and set up the camera alone in the same places at the same times of day, seeking after the same viewpoint and the same sensations. It was then, when it came to approximating to painting, that the limitations of video became evident, along with the distinctive characteristics of each medium (framing formats, depth of field and colour). This was how Erice became aware that the camera picked up on and showed movement, the fleeting passage of people and things, that which painting could not register. Because Antonio López's oeuvre, a far cry from Futurist attempts to represent movement by means of vague kinetic effects, suppresses from the urban landscape all that moves and cannot be observed and described with meticulousness.



Notes. Gran Vía and Madrid From Torres Blancas

Antonio López
Gran Vía. 1974–1981
Oil on board, 90.5 × 93.5 cm
Private collection, Madrid

Some of these images were put out on DVD as *Notes* (1990-2003) with Antonio López's voice, editing by Julia Juaniz, music by Pascal Gaigne, and texts by Erice himself. Let's bring to mind "Note 4: Gran Vía and Madrid From Torres Blancas". In both instances the two shots (Gran Vía at ground level and Madrid from the top of the Torres Blancas) seek after a framing similar to that of the pictorial compositions, and enmesh via a dissolve with the shots of the actual paintings, thus privileging a comparison in which similarities and differences are noticed. But while the camera shows the urban landscapes ambient noise is heard, a sound that is gradually extinguished during the dissolve, leaving the shot of the painting in total silence. In Erice's words: "With regard to the landscape, the video showed what the painting couldn't capture: the movement of vehicles and people, their fugitive passing. In the recording the image of things was also that of their duration, it enabled one to see and hear what the painting caused to disappear."

The present installation involves a development of the procedure alluded to in "Note 4", but in incorporating the paintings "live" before our very eyes, a matter of singular importance since if there is a feature which now characterises painting and gives it a specific meaning in the face of the whirl of images that proliferate so much, it is precisely its resistance to reproduction, its insistence on being contemplated live. No copy, however perfect, can provoke in the initiated viewer the experience elicited by live contemplation.

In isolated enclosures, little chapels with a small space between them, actual paintings and one drawing by Antonio López await us: *Gran Vía* (1974-1981), *Madrid From Torres Blancas* (1974-1982), *Quince Tree* (drawing and oil paint, 1990 and 1992), *Madrid From Almodóvar Hill* (1991-1994).

Notes. Gran Vía and Madrid From Torres Blancas

Antonio López
Madrid From Torres Blancas, 1974–1982
Oil on board, 145 × 244 cm
Private collection, Madrid

Each picture has its soundtrack, which recreates the ambient sounds of the place depicted and causes them to swirl around the viewer, enveloping him as if he were where the artist worked. Sound begins to be heard and its volume gradually increases as the painting and the enclosure darken (there's a cyclorama slightly illuminated behind each work). On reaching the maximum sound level the light comes on bit by bit, in such a way that while the picture is illuminated, in parallel and inversely the sound diminishes, as if the light were cancelling it out. The silence coincides with total visual plenitude for a minute or so, then the light gradually decreases and as the picture ceases to be seen the sound comes back little by little.

Each cycle takes some three minutes, is repeated as a loop, and the tour of the paintings and their respective time loops is reversible. The viewer can move around, enter and exit each enclosure and randomly encounter each cycle and picture.

Infrequent in the usual way of exhibiting pictures, the initial darkness evokes the cinematic experience, the aura and atmosphere convoked at the beginning of movie screenings. Anticipation of the soundtrack (overlapping sound prior to vision, on a black plane) leads to visual expectations and invites one to imagine a place that one cannot yet see. Meanwhile one hears what the painting is to eject from its static silence: the experience of duration, the temporality that is manifested and expressed on the soundtrack.

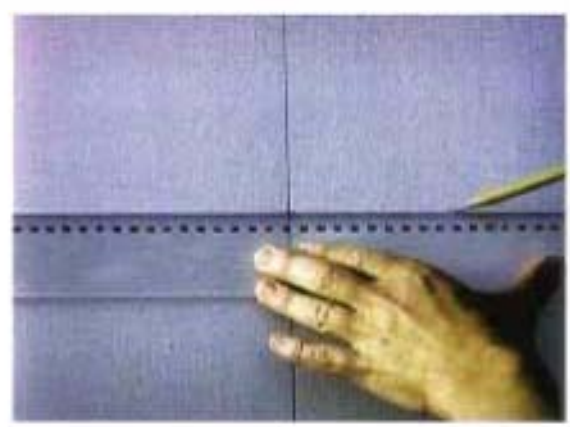
The parallel transition from ambient noise to silence and from semidarkness to light facilitates the revelation of the painting in its most essential being, its epiphany amidst an ontological silence. The slow passage from auratic darkness to vision and the subsequent sustained silent stillness encourage the cult experience of contemplation.

This is no normal stillness, but one preceded by the sonorous suggestion of movement. Neither is it a normal silence, but one preceded by ambient sound. "The sound cinema has invented

Antonio López
Quince Tree, 1990
Pencil on paper, 104 × 120 cm
Private collection, Madrid

silence", said Bresson, and Erice has recalled this on occasions. Silence is the counterpoint of sound and its chronological unfolding is an emphasis of the contemplative gaze which overcomes the successiveness of experience. The brief sound duration and its displacements give way to the arrested time of the painting, condensed and silent, compact, filled with superposed, unified instants (glances, brushstrokes, lines, superimpositions, dissolves): it is contained time that unfolds once more in contemplation, when the eye moves over the skin of the painting, that outer layer which secretes and grows upon the amalgam of underlying strata, a condensed accumulation of instants.

The installation enfolds the original paintings in high style and favours the discovery of what they silently show, the mystery and strangeness of everyday reality, the passing of the days and the ruffled palpitation of its indecipherable secret, the emotion of looking and the revelation of seeing. In its cyclical reiteration the installation establishes an incessant conversation between cinema and painting, providing an experience in which temporal becoming, the ongoing flight of the contingent and its visions, dialogue with the possibility of felling in the stillness of a canvas. And at that point transcends the concretion of paintings or the relationship between two arts in order to refer to vision itself, to its duration and its memory, to the human desire, immemorial and cyclical, of stopping time and seizing life.



The Quince Tree Sun

Antonio López
Quince Tres, 1992
Óleo sobre lienzo, 165 x 149,5 cm
Fundación Focus Abengoa, Sevilla

One never imagined when he was making his earliest films that Kiarostami could have taken the risk of forgoing the experience of traditional cinematic projection. On the contrary, his stories, his fables and the geographical itineraries of his characters didn't call for quitting the confines of the "cinematographic theatre" auditorium. Nevertheless, films like *Homework* (1989), and many years later, *Ten* (2002), were to establish a bias towards repetition, towards the affirmation of a device which took the place of *mise en scène*. A serial sensibility was at work in Kiarostami's fiction, without attention having been paid to it early on: the repeated attempts to get around the obstacle of the dog in *Bread and the Alley* (1970), the comings and goings of the little boy of *Where Is My Friend's House?* (1987), the unfortunate car driver's almost infantile giving in to his punctured tyre of *Solution* (1978), the overall construction of the narrative in stages of *And Life Goes On* (1992), the obsessive insistence of the bashful lover of *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), the dissolving appearances of the pupils of *Homework*, the renewed attempts at imposture of a pseudo-filmmaker in *Close up* (1990), Bezhad's racing about with his telephone on the hilltop in *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999)... The breakers tossing a piece of floating wood about in *Five* (2004) complete this potential serial interpretation of Kiarostami's entire oeuvre.

This undoubtedly reveals an experimental penchant on the part of the filmmaker, and the utilisation of video followed by the flight from the traditional cinema auditorium were the scenographic solutions for developing this experimentation. In point of fact the video image appears in his cinema with *Taste of Cherry* (1997): the film was reborn to both light and life in the final images shot by a video camera. Later on, *ABC Africa* (2001), *Ten* and *Five* were to be entirely shot on video. Retrospectively, one cannot escape the fact that appearing side by side in Kiarostami are, on the one hand, a humanist engagement, at times a compassion or tender observation of

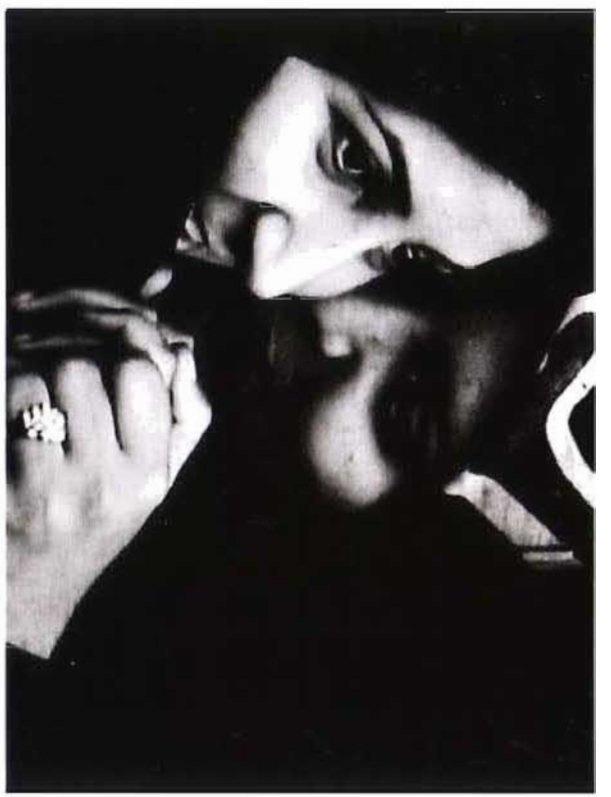
his characters—this is his warm side—and on the other, a dramaturgical "machinery", a sort of repetitive formalism, a narrative minimalism: this is his cold side.

I've often made the supposition that in the filmmaker's case experimental egoism clashed with documentary generosity. What one often senses as being exceptional in his films is as much that secret tension between form and subject as the artful ideological audacity that has led to their success. In a way one could claim that Kiarostami's bias towards installation has to do with his wish to escape this contradiction, to momentarily deliver himself from it, whereas, however, it was this that first led to the singularity of his films.

Kiarostami's gaze is much enlivened by a decorative geometry when it comes to framing a landscape, following a vehicle, accompanying the trajectories of his characters, integrating the latter in the landscape or both uniting and opposing them to their means of transport. In his films Kiarostami plans lines and angles, provokes intersections, adopts rotations, organises shattered segments. Doubtless it's easy to observe in this abstraction the essential influence of the art of the carpet, in other words the anthropological and plastic, coded and hyperbolic, practice of the organisation of motifs belonging to Persian textile culture. In many ways the "carpet-effect" is generalised at the scale of the oeuvre as a whole. But in the first instance installations perform for Kiarostami the function of accentuating his formal inclinations, inclinations which he was unable, beyond a certain aesthetic and ethical limit, to get to cohabit and develop with a humanist cinematic fiction. It was necessary for him, then, "to quit the cinema auditorium" in order to be free of narrative constraints. He isn't the first filmmaker to give in to this necessity: think of Raoul Ruiz in the 1990s, Chantal Akerman, Atom Egoyan.

Looking at Ta'ziye (2004) is the most recent "installation". It's frequently presented in a theatre and not in a museum. It also has little relationship to Kiarostami's other installations. It links and compares multiple screens that break up the gaze, and the traditional captivity of the cinema spectator in his seat.

The spectator follows the entire spectacle on three screens: two projections respectively describing the faces of men and of women (in black-and-white) placed low down, which recreates the Ta'ziye properly so called. At the same time we see the stage covered by carpets and simultaneously the public. We are present, then, at the spectacle on many scales: extremely sweeping shots for the performance itself and close ups of the public. The upper projections enable us to see the evolution of the spectators' emotion: their responses are presented "live". The spectacle has a cathartic virtue; it brings a legend the public identifies with up to date once more. Kiarostami films not so much the effects of the spectacle as the effects of the belief in a fiction, of belief *tout court*. The physical position of the spectators of the Ta'ziye is the same as that of western visitors in front of *Sleepers* (2001): the Ta'ziye is looked at in a downward direction and the triangle formed by the three video images recreates the spatial layout of the spectacle for us by giving the impression that the characters are looking from a point on high. Contrary to western theatre, there is no hierarchy in the spaces devolving upon the public—no pit or dress circle—but many divisions coexist: the huge distance between actors and spectators, and above all, in the midst of this audience, the absolute division of the sexes. The installation conveys this: the link between the men's screen and the women's screen is non-existent.



The two proposals *Sleepers* and *Ten Minutes Older* (2001) are based on the principle of a "loop", a long, infinitely resumed sequence. These installations provide open-ended experiences of duration. With no fictional rendezvous in sight, the strolling spectator who chances upon two people filmed in their sleep, the image of whom is projected on the ground, is invited into an intimacy which does not proceed from an identification bound to the forcefulness of a narrative. No event appears to mark the recording of the exemplary non-action that is sleep, save the imperceptible breathing of the sleepers and a few infinitesimal movements specific to slumber.

Instead of an invitation to project oneself into the temporality of a fiction that deprives the cinema spectator of a part of his awareness of actually living, *Sleepers*, and to a lesser degree *Ten Minutes Older*, imposes a live perception of the time that is elapsing and the illusion of being in a present common to the sleepers. Something occurs here that Kiarostami pursued elsewhere by other means (*And Life Goes On*, for example): the adhering of the fiction to the present time of the event (the great earth tremor, the disaster of which the character in the same film traverses). Also, *Sleepers* gives one the feeling that Kiarostami manufactures the time of contemplation, finally comes to the decision to draw a halt (his characters travel so much!), and films the internal movement of the body in order to produce the present. As if slowness, the observation of immobility, facilitated the representation of the present, its restitution *exposed* rather than *projected*.

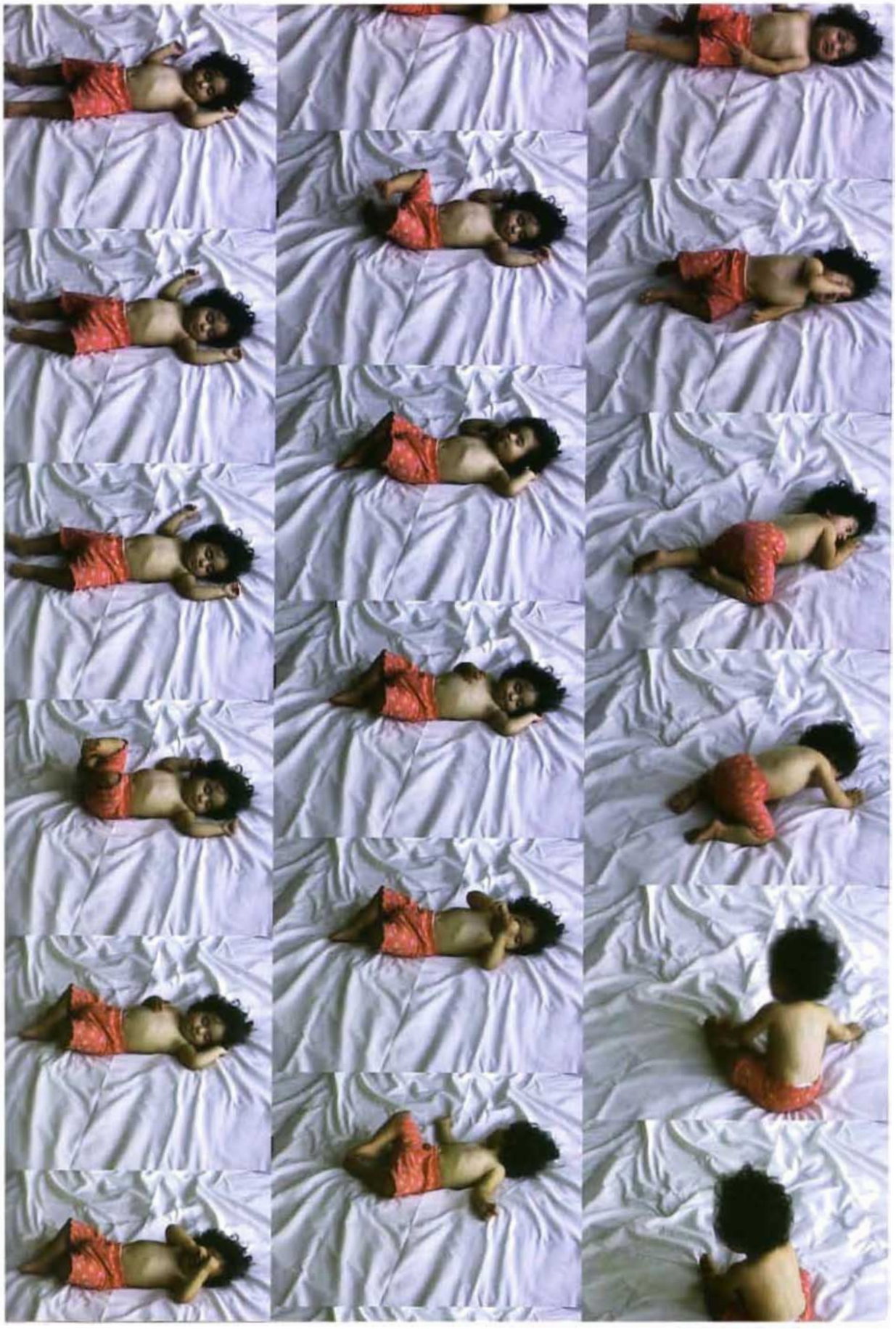
The apprehension of time is not presented in the same way in the two installations: *Ten Minutes Older*, with its "loop" replayed every ten minutes, gives way to a more repetitive temporal experience. In return, the ninety-eight minutes of *Sleepers* tone down the rerunning and give more the idea of something live, of a represented present. There is not, so to speak, any marker in the temporal flow. Obviously, only the installation permits all these effects: Andy Warhol could and should have thought of this grounding for his film *Sleep*, since the cinema auditorium and its

theatrical constraints do not facilitate the patience necessary when faced with the dearth of action and the very dearth of movement itself. And even if the visitor is only present at a few seconds of the ninety-eight minutes of *Sleepers*, he instantly grasps the principle and legitimacy of it.

In other words, and more generally, it isn't necessary for the visitor to the installations to depend on a submitting to the image, comparable to that of the cinema spectator, for him to understand the justification of the installations, those of Kiarostami in particular. The fugitive vision of an installation causes the complete unfolding of its process of images to be imagined. It is mainly this that distinguishes a *projected* film from *exposed* moving images, independently of the organisation of the fictional complexity of the first and the abstraction or narrative slightness of the second.

Along with the narrativity of film, the plasticity of installation interests Kiarostami because this is the way that the tension established between horizontality and verticality assumes all its meaning. The visitor-spectator is vigorously called upon to experience the horizontality of the representation of the stretched-out bodies, projected on the ground, and which he is obliged to mentally oppose to the verticality of normal cinematic representation. The latter has this criterion in common with painting. Yet it is once more to the carpet that these images are comparable: the visitor-spectators can tread upon the moving image (even though they thereby hide a part of it), move across it, avoid and skirt it as a precious decorative element. They can walk on this luminous carpet, on this light-weave standing in for the weave of a textile.

In fact this carpet-screen factor runs right through the oeuvre as a whole: the hill of *Where Is My Friend's House?* on which is deliberately "engraved", for the requirements of the filming, the layout of the path the boy repeatedly takes; the trees which vertically striate the space of the shot, while including the characters therein like stitches of embroidery in *And Life Goes On* or in *Through*



the Olive Trees... Kiarostami films his characters as *shuttles* executing their trajectories as in the process of weaving where *woof* crosses *warp*, human shuttles which weave the carpet-shots. The carpet-effect at work in so many Kiarostamian shots finds in these two installations of sleepers its perfect fulfilment, exempt from the unities of place and action necessary to a fiction film. As to the unity of time, in these installations it has another function, more plastic than dramaturgical, a dilated time not consubstantial with any kind of action.

This led Kiarostami to envisage conjugating in a third installation the effects I've alluded to above, the live-effect and the carpet-effect: the huge installation *Forest Without Leaves* (2005) fuses the two. Visitors are invited to walk among artificial trees—of metal tubes covered with the photographic representation of their bark, or put differently, in the full sense of the term, reproductions of trees, photographic trees—*to weave themselves into the chain* these trees form, being led by their perambulations to produce the carpet, an outcome induced by the immense mirrored wall which reflects, reproduces, flattens and "screens" the live experience.

In terms of deeds visitors are urged to become, in *Forest Without Leaves*, the characters of Kiarostami's films, albeit here more plastically than fictionally. What is asserted in *Forest Without Leaves* exceeds the very alternative between verticality and horizontality. It is cinematic representation in its entirety, its flat illusion, which is examined, "reflected". From this "carpet-making flatness" Kiarostami has applied himself *to thinking through* the irreducible flatness of representation (here, from the photographic bark of the false trees to the immense mirror which serves as a horizon to the installation). And it is probable that this grandiose decor, which might appear to have a realist illusion in view, is in fact an extraordinary theoretical device with the look of a footloose (or forest!) installation. For more than one good reason, the films already enable us to evoke the *device*, on account of their particular seriality. Yet what, oddly enough, the flat-

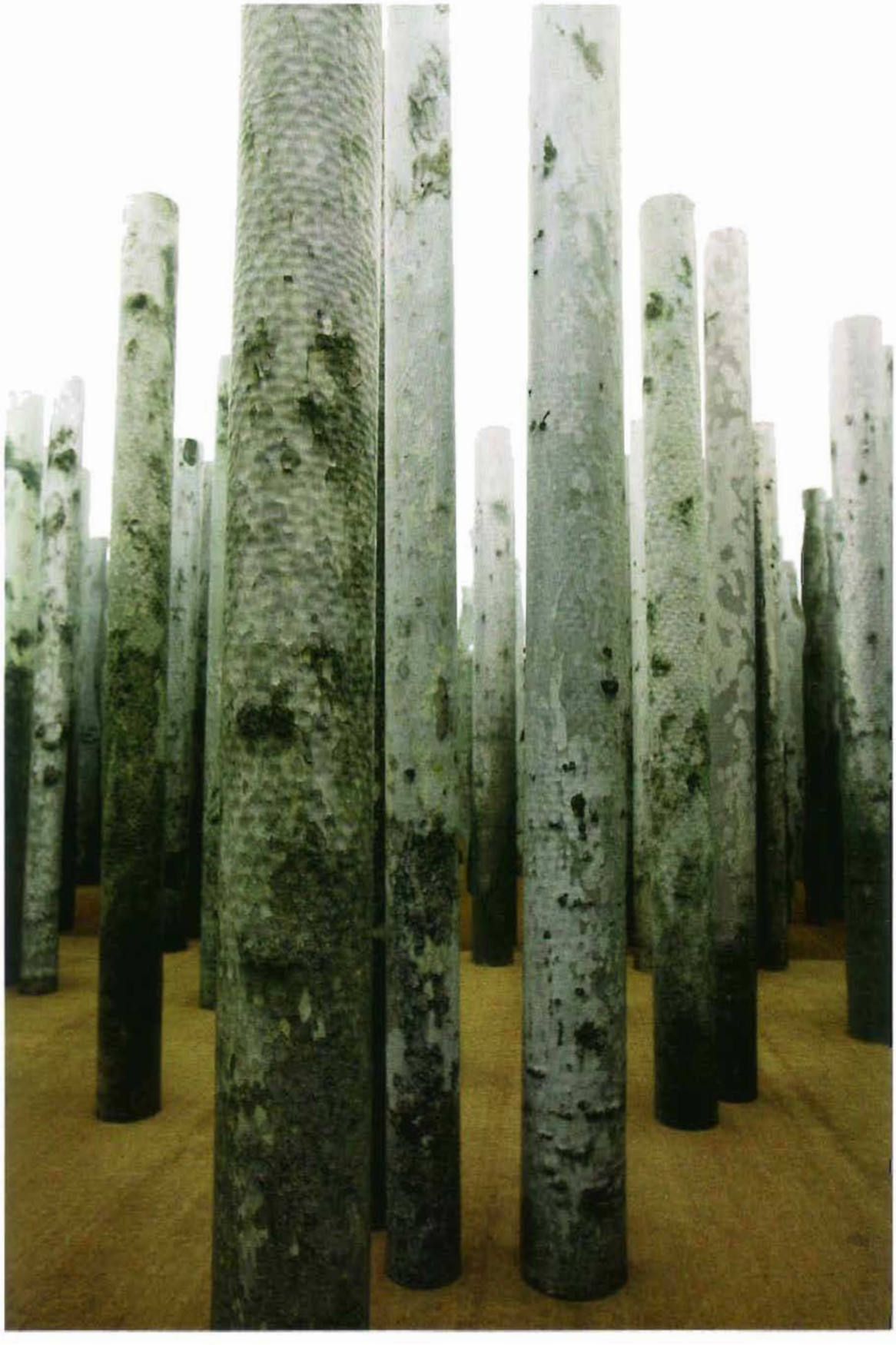
Forest Without Leaves
Installation, 2005
Iran Heritage Foundation, London

tening effects of *Forest Without Leaves* refer to is... the motor car! Nothing is more reducible to the flatness of a shot projected on the screen than the windscreen of a motor car which performs the movement of an infinite forward tracking shot in the midst of the real world (in one way or another Michael Snow has often demonstrated and illustrated this in his work, a work that is basically more conceptual than Kiarostami's). Yet from the car driver who crosses the land devastated by the earth tremor in *And Life Goes On* to the urban wandering of *Ten*, the world seen by Kiarostami is squashed like a plethora of insects against the windscreen of a car, a non-registering mobile box which gulps down the real. A painting fixed beneath glass, as it were, which changes completely, in accordance with what comes up. The real sticks to the "window pane" of the cinema screen, and the car windscreen is endowed in Kiarostami with the twin metaphorical virtue of seeming to be both screen and camera. This is what Bezhad, the character in *The Wind Will Carry Us*, "theorises" in that destabilising shaving sequence: his camera-gaze very close to the screen (in fact the lens of the camera) seems to traverse it as far as the cinema where we are seated, thus establishing within the image an infinitely and imaginatively multi-layered flatness. Behind Bezhad, a woman comes and goes while extending the threads of a future textile creation (a carpet? a tapestry?), thus reinscribing a flat, woven effect in the image background.

It would be necessary once again to evoke the numerous unravellings of landscapes to the rear of so many Kiarostamian travellers, thereby reducing the depth of the world to the flatness of the painted panorama or the tapestry.

With his installations *Sleepers* and *Ten Minutes Older*, and in a different way *Looking at Ta'ziye*, Kiarostami stages, hence exposes, a slippage between the private and of the public realms. Visitors occupy a voyeuristic position in drawing near, by means of the close-up, to emotions that elicit an Oriental "mystery" or in leaning out over the intimacy of a sleeping couple. They take part in the intimacy of the faces.

A painter's preoccupation: the faces are gazed upon like landscapes, sites, those of the soul, of course.



When Abbas Kiarostami presented *Ten* in 2002 he triggered our imagination by promoting his new project: a series of short films about the sea shot with a small digital camera. We'd just seen the sea in video, painted in colours and set in motion by Godard in *Éloge de l'amour*, but we'd never seen the sea filmed by Kiarostami.

Around that time Kiarostami replied to a question about digital video and 35 mm in painterly terms: "It's like painting in watercolour or in oils. Each has its own laws. When you work with water you have to respect its norms, but you can't say it's like oils, because it isn't oils. Oil is oil and water is water."[1] He'd begun to work on the final sequence of *Taste of Cherry* (1997) with watercolour, or water, confronting the ochres and the light of the oil paint with some precarious, lightweight shots of video greens so as to restore, after the storm, something of the spring and the wind among the leaves. Since then, in movies, short films and installations we've been able to see how Kiarostami discovered and experimented with the possibilities of video: we've been able to witness the encounter and the learning of that "soft technique" which up until very recently filmmakers have explored after training with the other, perhaps harder technique—but because of its limits, at times a better trainer—that the photochemical support requires.

It is something of limits that *Five* (2004) shows, the film whose project charmed us and which we'd never have been able to foretell. Firstly, under the title of *The Lagoon and the Moon*, "a collection of digital short films" about the sea was shown in Turin; next, those shots took *Five* for a title. The film, projected in video at festivals, in galleries and rarely in cinemas, is made up of five shots of very varied duration, separated by long fade-out and fade-in and musical phrases with very different tonalities. The shots have been laboriously sonorised, and the composition is precise and rigorous: three moments of intense emotion—an opening (a small piece of wood tossed around by the undertow), a middle shot (dogs facing the sea), and a close (after the storm, the day breaks)—and,

1. "Abbas Kiarostami: el valor del silencio", an interview realised by José Antonio Garcia Fuentes, Daniel Vázquez Villamediana and Álvaro Arroba, *Letras de cine*, no.1, 2003, p.101. The interview took place during the Festival de Gijón, where Kiarostami filmed one of his shots next to the sea.

Five

intercalated with these, two shots of transit (of men and of ducks). While the second, third and fourth shots are filmed of different seas at different distances, and the figures (men, dogs, ducks) move around parallel to the horizon line, in the initial and final shot it is the bit of wood and the moon which bobble to and fro on the surface of the water with the movement of the waves and the clouds. All the same, the intensity of *Five* (to which the privileged viewers in a cinema undoubtedly have easiest access) resides less in its meticulous structure than in each of its shots: in what occurs in them, or better yet, in what occurs within their borders.

The shots in *Five* speak to us of the transitions from oil to water and of what cinema (made with water) can do. From oil to water an essential gesture of the filmmaker's has passed: that of fixing a frame in which things may arrive. I'm thinking of windows of the cars when they stop and frame, as if by chance, the world that follows their course. Or of the shots in *And Life Goes On* (1992) in which someone suddenly deposits a carpet or a lamp in the lower part of the picture, without us ever seeing who it was, without a change of shot ever arriving to define such an apparition. This is what occurs at the end of the same film when, as an extended zoom opens onto the landscape, the car of the main protagonists reappears. What is involved, in both instances, is fixing a frame at odds with the little histories of men so that the latter enter unexpectedly into it and at times overflow it. It is this decision which shapes the whole structure of *Homework* (1989), shot on 16 mm, and of *Ten*, on video: the rigidity of the device which makes that all of a sudden a face, a gesture, fear or the company of a little boy appears. Video permits to increase the number of attempts (to try out different times and places, to work with lightweight equipment, to walk alone) and above all to increase the edges: to those of the rigidity of the frame is added that of duration. With video, in *Ten Minutes Older* (2001) Kiarostami films the sleep of a little child and is there the moment he awakes. With video, in *Five*, he films the people on the promenade in Gijón in the morning sun and is there at the moment when

some men stop on the edge of the frame, talk, change positions and separate; he contemplates a group of dogs shifting from the middle of the shot to the left edge; he lingers for some time on the moon on the water, veiled and unveiled by the clouds, he awaits rain, thunder and lightning, and finally sees the pinkness of daybreak.

But if it was a question in all those shots of fixing the precedence of the frame over that which arrives within it, what we witness in the first shot of *Five* is in fact the actual decision about setting up the frame, the moment of fixing its borders or, borrowing Kiarostami's words apropos of *Ten*, of spreading the nets.[2] For if the shots in *Five* can be "awaited moments",[3] the nets—of the frame, duration and sound—are fine and precise. In the opening shot, which as Kiarostami says is the one which gave rise to the film, the camera follows a piece of wood which with the coming and going of the waves ends up dividing in two. The bits separate and then the filmmaker decides to remain on the shore near the small bit while the other one moves off. It's the only shot filmed with the camera held in the hand and that decision about the hand gives a new twist, before our eyes, to an old emotion. When, pushed along by the waves, the big bit re-enters the little one's frame, the emotion will be that of the apparition plus, indeed, that of having seen the borders being fixed of the shot in which the rencounter was going to arrive. If this is a stroke of luck, as in the Lumière films, it's undoubtedly deserved.

What is to occur in the third shot, on the other hand, is something completely new. Apropos of the movement of the group of dogs on the shore, Kiarostami said he'd witnessed a love story. But the gentle passing of the dogs (in the adjoining shots the men walk hurriedly, the ducks advance noisily) is expressed in another, more intimate rhythm: that of the movement of the waves and of the very material of the image. Shortly after getting going, the shot starts being flooded by whiteness: the sea and sky lose their outlines and gradually disappear, the dogs turn into unsteady blotches and the

2. "Ten. Élimination de l'auteur", interview with Abbas Kiarostami by Patrice Blouin and Charles Tesson, *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 571, September 2002, p. 46.

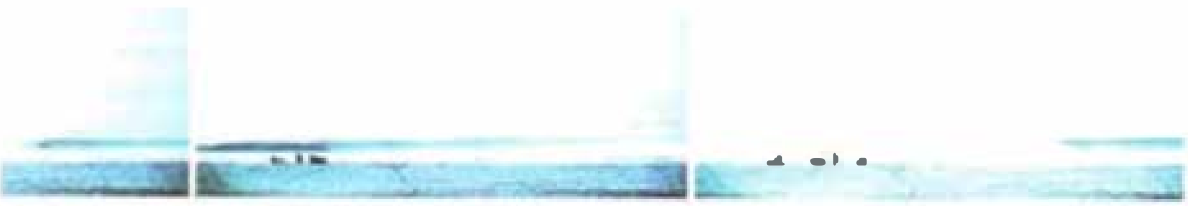
3. Kiarostami, Abbas, "The Legend and the Moon", in Barbera, Alberto & Resegotti, Elisa (eds.), *Kiarostami*, Electa, Milan, 2003, p. 174.

little waves emerge, more visible, more intense, more incomprehensibly fascinating, chasing and being chased by each other from left to right before disappearing. Sea and spray are effaced with the whiteness, but what appears with unusual intensity is the sound and the fringe the shadow of the actual wave traces, which paints the whiteness with a captivating, fleeting blue rhythm.

If in the motorbike tour at the end of *Close-up* (1990) Kiarostami had fragmented the soundtrack in order to restore to us something of the emotion of that journey, what he attacks in the middle shot in *Feo in*, for the first time, the image itself: Kiarostami tries out his palette of water. And he does it by breaking the fragile link which unites video to the world: unlike images in celluloid, in these no photon has touched the sea, then to cause chemical changes on the film: there's no tactile contact of the light. Saturating the exposure, attacking the limits of the precarious material he works with, demonstrating that an image is an image, Kiarostami restores to us something of the breaking of the waves, of the closing in of the evening, of being beside the sea. What to us seems an absolute certainty for painting, namely that painting the air or the sea means inventing it, we forget with cinema. Its recording ability can make us think that the world is something given, which the camera encounters and fixes. However, it is also necessary to reinvent the rain, the sea and the moon in cinema, to frame them, to choose a palette to paint them with.

Before embarking on the editing of *Éloge de l'amour*, Godard, who'd begun to experiment with video a few years after Kiarostami made his first film and has kept on doing so ever since, said in answer to a question about if he felt he was moving away from cinema by filming in video: "Whether you work with coloured pencils, with watercolour, with oil paint, it's all the same."[4] It's all the same when, like him, you know it isn't all the same, when its limits are confronted, its capabilities explored. Then, with coloured pencils, watercolour or water, you can restore something of that which is never given: the experience of cinema and of the sea, which for a moment can be, almost, the same thing.

4. "[illegible]", interview with Jean-Luc Godard by Emmanuel [illegible] and Charles [illegible], *Cahiers du cinéma*, [illegible], April [illegible], p. [illegible].



Snow is little present in the cinema of Abbas Kiarostami, probably because the season of winter calls to a form of inertia, a quietude that nothing can disturb, which is scarcely compatible with moving forward, more often than not by car (noise and dust), as an essential factor in the discovery of landscape in his films. This is why the series of photos of trees in the snow distances us from the filmed oeuvre, whereas the other series, along paths and roads in the midst of temporarily deserted landscapes, brings us nearer to it. Explicitly, because many photos repeat certain situations (the two characters on the motorcycle) and diverse landscapes pinpointed in *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999), as if this film had been the location of a gearing down of sight, which would no longer solely be the complex wager of the film, its internal tracery, but that which overwhelms it from outside, thanks to another practice, another support, namely photography. Implicitly, because the earth track visible in the landscape, the sinuous asphalt road, are, more than a way across, the trace of man's presence, reminding us that, however beautiful, the site also has a use value for whosoever takes these byways to get somewhere. It is to be supposed that these paths come from one place (a village) and lead to another, linking different settlements, even if each photo—this is their photographic *raison d'être*— persists in hiding the ins and outs of the road visible in the landscape from us, to the point that its presence becomes almost incongruous, not to say absurd. A path, yes, but to where, from where?

More broadly, these two series of photos, of the trees in the snow and of the mountain roads, redeploy the inexhaustible question: where does nature end?, where does landscape begin? The first series, beneath the snow, takes the landscape in the direction of abstraction, with its play of lines and shadows, the symmetry of the tree-trunks, their arrangement in lines, in a rigorous alternation of black and white which would be the natural stand-in for Buren's columns. The landscape is a work of art, a silent picture. It suffices to learn to look at it, so much is beauty a matter of choosing

The Roads of Kiarostami, 1978–2003
Black-and-white photo series, 38 × 43 cm
Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino
[p. 141–149]

the view, an art of the shot in all its photogenic splendour, thanks to the sense of framing and the taste for composition. At another level these trees in the snow evoke Chinese calligraphy, the black tracing of the brush on an empty background (the white piece of paper, the mantle of snow), unless this play of broken lines (abstract geometric motifs of a giant carpet *grandeur nature*, life-size?) inspire in the subject who beholds it that which motivates the hero of August Strindberg's *Inferno*: eloquent forms in nature which signal to us and are there to be deciphered.

The photos of roads in different landscapes are of another kind, because one has come across them in the films and one rediscovers them, here, outwardly divested of all that justified their presence. The zigzagging hill made use of by the child of *Where Is My Friend's House?* (1987) has its photographic equivalent, albeit bereft of the presence of the character and of the dictates of the story line (to return the school exercise book to his classmate at all costs). And yet the photo is not the mnemic reminder, in the shape of a synecdoche (the part for the whole), of the scene from the film, but rather its surpassing, its final meaning. Were it necessary to find a coherence between these road photos and certain of Kiarostami's films, it would suffice to rummage through the final images of *And Life Goes On* (1992), when the vehicle leaves in search of the child, whom one supposes to be on the other side of the hill, in another village, beyond the visible line of the road in the landscape. There is the goal to be attained, an inaccessible, fleeting objective whose outcome one won't know, and which one learns when moving forward. There, where *And Life Goes On* ends (the perspective opened up by the final shots, left as it is), the photography begins. In front of them, one thinks of what François Cheng says about Chinese painting: before being governed by a preoccupation with the beautiful, with aesthetic principles, it is first and foremost "a philosophy in action." That of life, of its meaning and its goal, a point via which advancing in life encounters the path in nature. There is something Taoist in these photos of mountain road-

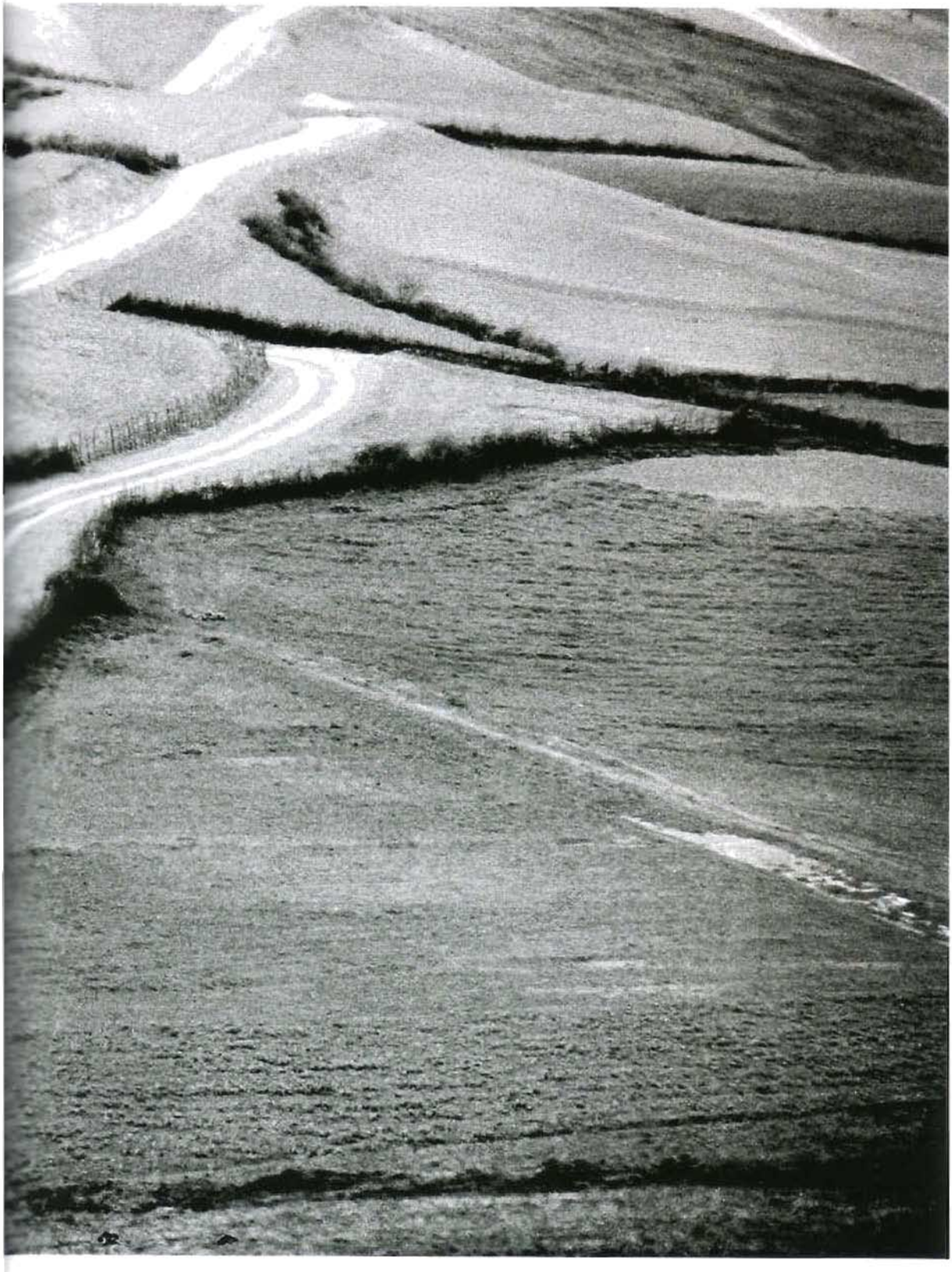
ways. While their photographic content bears no resemblance to Chinese landscape painting, they nevertheless express the existential dynamism at work within it. In Taoist thought, the Tao signifies the Way, but the word actually designates the road, the path. In Taoism the important thing is not to attain the goal so much as to know how to walk. "Do not set your mind on an exclusive goal, you would be crippled when it comes to walking in the Tao", said Zhuangzi. The Way is never wholly traced out in advance; it traces itself as one walks it. It is impossible, therefore, to speak of the Way without being oneself in motion.

A limpid cosmology emanates from these photos, every bit as Chinese in its source, in this three-way game between earth, sky and man, inscribed in intaglio in the landscape via the convoluted road. The landscape consists of layers of space, striped bands of earth. Due to the action of the light on it, the ground becomes a moving mirror of the sky traversed by clouds. Areas of light and shadow organise the land masses, completing that dynamic circulation of matter which proceeds from the sky, an active principle, and imprints the earth, a surface receptive to the movements of light, in a state of perpetual becoming.

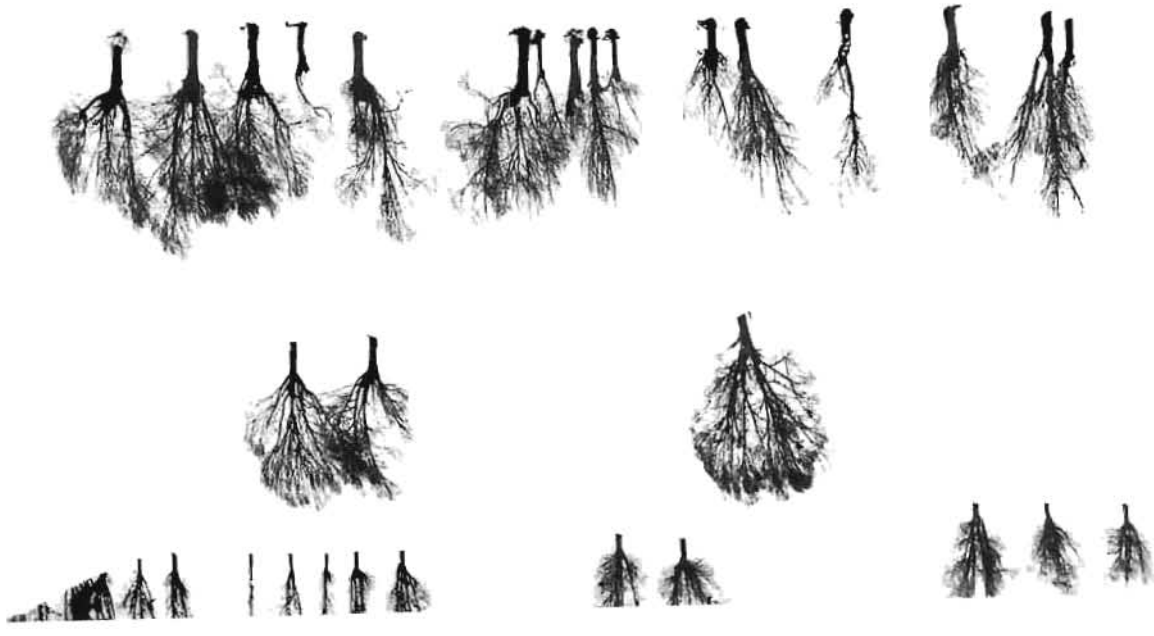
All the roads photographed, however different they may be, share one thing: one doesn't see where they in fact lead, still less where they end up. Never does the road traverse or cover the totality of the landscape shown. To the off-screen temporality of photography (the human usage that has fabricated this road), the photo offering a moment of emptiness between two instances of man's passage, there is added an off-screen effect within the screen. If it so happens that the road begins at the lower edge of the frame (the asphalt roadway and its white lines) one has the impression that the mountain consumes it, as if it was gobbled up by the landscape. Due to the interplay of the hills in the depth of field, the road becomes fragmentary, discontinuous, non-spliced to itself, to the image of that photo in which one sees a road disappear at the top of a hill before

picking up on it again further on, but just to one side, as if out of kilter. At each turn there is the visible part of the roadway on the side of the hill facing us, and the hidden part, at the back of the hill. The road doesn't link all the layers of space present in the photo; it only proposes the partial crossing of them, as if each visible furrow had its invisible double, nestling in the landscape. One loses sight of the road because it is never given in its entire continuity, as far as the eye can see.

The magisterial opening scene of *The Wind Will Carry Us* has ratified the dysfunctioning of the man/landscape relationship. At the top of a hill one sees a sinuous mountain road, such as certain photographs propose. With this difference, that traversing it is a vehicle, recognisable by the cloud of dust it raises. While the viewer sees the scene from afar, looking down, he gets the impression through the sound, which recreates a conversation, of also being in the car, even if the camera goes on tracking the car in the landscape. A dual position, at once inside and outside, then. Anxious to be on the right road and fearful of getting lost, the men try and locate, as an indication of their route, a huge isolated tree. When they say they've seen it, the viewer doesn't see it within the frame. On the other hand, when the characters lose sight of it, the viewer makes it out within the shot. A visual and temporal, radical desynchronisation between what the characters see from their car and what the viewer sees of what they talk about. The photo of landscapes with road welds together vision, its space and its time into a single gesture. From now on the maniacal concern of Kiarostami's characters (to be on the right road, to spend their time asking directions) has no other *raison d'être*. The road is there. It teaches us inasmuch as it is to be taken, a tactful reminder of man's earthly existence, a simple, disjointed strip of life in the active circulation of a cosmos which surpasses and attracts it at the same time. There is no more room for man in these photos because each photo restores to man the final meaning of his place in this world. It is down to each of us to see, and to take the measure of it.



Untitled, 1978-2003
Black-and-white photo series, 188 × 122 cm
Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino
[p. 150-155]



Filmographies

Abbas Kiarostami

Bread and the Alley (*Nan va kuche*), 1970, 35 mm, b/w, 11'

Breaktime (*Zang-e tafrih*), 1972, 35 mm, b/w, 14'

The Experience (*Tajrobe*), 1973, 35 mm, b/w, 56'

The Traveller (*Mosafer*), 1974, 35 mm, b/w, 71'

Two Solutions for One Problem (*Do rah-e hall baray-e yek mas'ale*) 1975, 35 mm, colour, 5'

So Can I (*Manam mitunam*), 1975, 35 mm, colour, 4'

The Colours (*Rang-ha*), 1976, 16 mm, colour, 15'

The Wedding Suit (*Lebasi baray-e 'arusi*), 1976, 35 mm, colour, 54'

Tribute to the Teachers (*Bozorgdasht-e mo'allem*), 1977, 16 mm, colour, 24'

The Report (*Gozaresh*), 1977, 35 mm, colour, 105'

Jahan-Nama Palace (*Kakh-e Jahan-Nama*), 1977, 35 mm, b/w, 30'

Painting (*Rang-zani*), from the series *How to Make Use of Our Leisure Time?* (*Az avghat-e faraghat-e khod chegune estefade konim?*, 1977, 16 mm, colour, 7'

Solution (*Rah-e hall-e yek*), 1978, 16 mm, colour, 11'

Case No 1, Case No 2 (*Ghaziye shekl-e avval, ghaziye shekl-e dovvom*), 1979, 16 mm, colour, 53'

Toothache (*Dandan-e dard*), 1980, 16 mm, colour, 25'

Orderly or Disorderly (*Be tartib ya bedun-e tartib*), 1981, 35 mm, colour, 16'

The Chorus (*Hamsarayan*), 1982, 35 mm, colour, 16'

Fellow Citizen (*Hamshahri*), 1983, 16 mm, colour, 53'

Fear and Suspicion, (*Tars va suezan*), 1984, thirteen 45' episodes

First Graders (*Avvali-ha*), 1985, 16 mm, color, 84'

Where is My Friend's House? (*Khaneh-ye dust kojast ?*), 1987, 35 mm, colour, 83'

Homework (*Mashgh-e shab*), 1989, 16 mm, colour, 86'

Close-up (*Namay-e nazdik*), 1990, 35 mm, colour, 90'

And Life Goes On (*Va zendegi edameh darad*), 1992, 35 mm, colour, 91'

Through the Olive Trees (*Zir-e derakhtan-e zeytun*), 1994, 35 mm, colour, 103'

Dinner for One in the collective film *Lumière et Compagnie*, 1995, 35 mm, b/w, 1'

Birth of Light (*Tavallod-e nur*), 1997, Betacam SP, colour, 5'

Taste of Cherry (*Ta'm-e gilas*), 1997, 35 mm, colour, 99'

The Wind Will Carry Us (*Bad mara khahad bord*), 1999, 35 mm, color, 118'

ABC Africa, 2001, DV, colour, 84'

Ten, 2002, DV, colour, 91'

Five, 2004, DV, colour, 74'

10 on Ten, 2004, digital Betacam, colour, 87'

Tickets, film in three episodes directed by Ermanno Olmi, Abbas Kiarostami and Ken Loach, 2004, 35 mm, colour, 115'

Correspondence (*Correspondència*), with Víctor Erice, 2005-2006, DV, color

Installations

Sleepers, 2001, DV, colour, video installation, 98'

Ten Minutes Older, 2001, DV, colour, video installation, 10'

Looking at Ta'ziye, 2004, video, colour & b/w, triple-screen projection, 120'

Forest without leaves, 2005

Víctor Erice

On the Veranda (*En la terraza*), 1961, 16 mm, b/w, 4', short film made as a student at the Official Film School in Madrid

Gauges (*Entrevías*), 1962, 35 mm, b/w, 9', short film made as a student at the Official Film School in Madrid

Pages of a Lost Diary (*Páginas de un diario perdido*), 1962, 35 mm, b/w, 12', short film made as a student at the Official Film School in Madrid

Wasted Days (*Los días perdidos*), 1963, 35 mm, b/w, 41', short film made as a student at the Official Film School in Madrid

Challenges (*Los desafíos*), film in three episodes directed by Claudio Guerín, José Luis Egea and Víctor Erice, 1969, 35 mm, colour, 102'

The Spirit of the Beehive (*El espíritu de la colmena*), 1973, 35 mm, colour, 97'

The South (*El Sur*), 1983, 35 mm, colour, 94'

The Quince Tree Sun (*El sol del membrillo*), 1992, 35 mm, colour, 135'

Questions at Twilight (*Preguntas al atardecer*), episode of *Celebrate Cinema 101*, 1996, video, 12'

Lifeline (*Alumbramiento*), episode of the collective film *Ten Minutes Older: The Trumpet*, 2002, 35 mm, b/w, 10'

Notes. On the Work of the Painter Antonio López in Madrid in the Summer of 1990 (*Apuntes. Sobre el trabajo del pintor Antonio López en Madrid en el verano de 1990*), 1990-2003, video, colour, 29'.

La Morte Rouge, 2006, DV, colour

Correspondence (*Correspondència*), with Abbas Kiarostami, 2005-2006, DV, colour

Credits of new works created for the exhibition

Correspondence, 2005-2006

LETTER 1
From Víctor Erice to Abbas Kiarostami
"The Painter's Garden"
22 April 2005, 9'30"

With the presence of the children: Aurora López López, Carmen Manuel López and Andrés Manuel López

Images and sound: Víctor Erice

Editing: Luis Cerveró and Víctor Erice

Production: Nautilus Films S.L. commissioned by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and La Casa Encendida

LETTER 2
From Abbas Kiarostami to Víctor Erice
"Mashhad"
5 September 2005, 10'

Direction: Abbas Kiarostami

Production: Abbas Kiarostami, commissioned by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and La Casa Encendida

LETTER 3
From Víctor Erice to Abbas Kiarostami
"Arroyo de la Luz"
22 October 2005, 20'

With the participation of schoolteacher José Javier Vivas and third-year primary school pupils of the CEIP Nuestra Señora de la Luz, Arroyo de la Luz (Cáceres). About an activity on the "Cinema and Education: Open Your Eyes" course run by Professor Isabel Escudero (UNED)

Direction: Víctor Erice

Head of production: César Romero

Images: Víctor Erice, César Hernando and Ramón Lopes

Editing: Luis Cerveró

Direct sound: Iván Marín

Sound assistant: Tomás Erice

Sound mixing: Polo Aledo

Image post-production: Juan Pedro Díez

Production: Nautilus Films S.L. commissioned by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and La Casa Encendida

LETTER 4
From Abbas Kiarostami to Víctor Erice
"The Quince"
December 2005, 12'20"

Direction: Abbas Kiarostami

Production: Abbas Kiarostami, commissioned by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and La Casa Encendida

La Morte Rouge, 2006

Script and direction: Víctor Erice

Head of production: César Romero.

CCCB delegate producers: Jordi Balló, Carlota Broggi and Àngela Martínez

Director of photography: Valentín Álvarez

Documentary images: Víctor Erice

Editing: Juan Pedro Díez

Sound mixing: Polo Aledo

Makeup: Concha Martí

Production assistant: Enok Vázquez

Image post-production: Doce Gatos

Electrics: Luis Rodríguez

Electrical material: Kilowatios Luz

Casting: La coartada

Transport: Fly&Drive

Pianist: Tatiana Aráez

Violinist: José Antonio Torrado

Costumes: L-7 set and Peris

Camera equipment: Asiria

Production: Nautilus Films S.L. commissioned by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and La Casa Encendida

With thanks to: Filmoteca Nacional-Cine Doré; Fototeka Kutxa, Donostia; Ateneo de Madrid; Museo Postal y Telegráfico-Correos y Telégrafos

The Clamour of the World: The Silence of Painting, 2006

Original idea and direction: Víctor Erice

Direct sound: Iván Marín

Sound mixing: Polo Aledo

Production: César Romero, commissioned by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and La Casa Encendida

Photographic credits and provenance of the images

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Correspondence
Front cover, back cover, p. 76-85: Nautilus Films S.L. and Abbas Kiarostami, commissioned by the CCCB and La Casa Encendida

Víctor Erice

The Spirit of the Beehive
p. 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 27, 102: Images ceded by Video Mercury Films s.a.
p. 30: Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid / Photo: Laureano López Martínez
p. 31: Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid
p. 32-35: Images ceded by Video Mercury Films S.A. / Frame stills: Filmoteca Española, Madrid

The South
p. 14, 25: Images ceded by Video Mercury Films S.A.
p. 36, 37, 40-43: Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid
p. 38: Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid / Photo: John Healey
p. 39 (top): Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid / Photo: Roberto Villagraz
p. 39 (bottom): Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid / Photo: José Luis López Linares

The Quince Tree Sun and Notes
p. 11, 12, 16, 17, 19, 26, 27, 112, 114, 116, 118: María Moreno P.C.-CAMM Cinco S.L.
p. 29, 44-51: María Moreno P.C.-CAMM Cinco S.L. / Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid

Lifeline
p. 52, 53, 108-111: Road Movies / Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid / Photos: Jesús Umbría
p. 105, 107: Road Movies

La Morte Rouge
p. 86, 88, 92, 93, 95, 103: Nautilus Films S.L., commissioned by the CCCB and La Casa Encendida
p. 87 (left), 89, 90 (left), 96, 99: Archive photos: Kutxa Fototeka, Donostia
p. 87 (right), 91: *The Scarlet Claw* (Roy William Neill, 1944): © Universal Pictures / Images ceded by courtesy of King World Productions, Inc.
p. 88 (right), 101: Víctor Erice Archive, Madrid
p. 92 (right): © Universal Pictures / Photo: Courtesy of Photofest, New York
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p. 94: Courtesy of USC Cinema-Television Library, Los Angeles

Antonio López

p. 113, 115, 117, 119: Private collection, Madrid / Photo reproduction: Unidad Móvil - Joaquín Cortés
p. 121: Fundación Focus Abengoa, Seville / Photo reproduction: Unidad Móvil - Joaquín Cortés

Abbas Kiarostami

Bread and the Alley
p. 16, 62: Kanun
p. 64, 66: Kanun / Frame still: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

Breaktime
p. 62 (1st, 2nd, 3rd image): Kanun / Video captures: Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino
p. 62 (4th image): Kanun / Frame still: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

The Experience
p. 62 (1st, 2nd, 3rd image): Kanun / Video captures: Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino
p. 62 (4th image): Kanun / Frame still: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

The Traveller
p. 62: Kanun
p. 64 : Kanun / Frame still: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

Two Solutions for One Problem
p. 62 (1st image): Kanun / Frame still: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris
p. 62 (2nd image): Kanun

So Can I, The Colours, Tribute to the Teachers, The Report, Jahan-Nama Palace, Painting, Solution, Case No 1, Case No 2, Toothache, Orderly or Disorderly, The Chorus, Fellow Citizen
p. 62, 63: Kanun / Video captures: Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino

The Wedding Suit
p. 63 (1st, 2nd image), 72: Kanun / Frame still: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris
p. 63 (3rd, 4th image): Kanun / Video captures: Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino

First Graders
p. 63: Kanun / Frame stills: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

Where Is My Friend's House?
p. 13, 14, 15, 20, 55, 56, 59: Kanun / Civite Films
p. 61, 64, 70: Kanun / Frame still: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

Homework, Close-up
p. 63: Kanun
p. 65, 72: Kanun / Frame stills: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

And Life Goes On
p. 11, 21, 56, 57, 59, 60: Kanun / Civite Films
p. 67, 68: Kanun / Frame still and photo: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

Through the Olive Trees
p. 12, 18: Civite Films
p. 68, 69, 71-73: Frame stills: Collection Cahiers du cinéma, Paris

Taste of Cherry, The Wind Will Carry Us, ABC Africa, Ten, Five
p. 17, 19, 21, 43, 55, 56, 57, 136-141: MK2
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Looking at Ta'ziye
p. 125: KunstenFESTIVALdesArts 2004, Academie Anderlecht, Brussels

Sleepers
p. 127: Courtesy of the Galerie de France, Paris

Ten Minutes Older, The Roads of Kiarostami and *Untitled*
p. 129, 143-155: Elisa Resegotti, Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino

Forest Without Leaves
p. 131-135: Courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum and Colin Morris Associated, London

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