

WE: VARIANT OF A MANIFESTO

We call ourselves *kinoks*—as opposed to “cinematographers,” a herd of junkmen doing rather well peddling their rags.

We see no connection between true *kinochestvo* and the cunning and calculation of the profiteers.

We consider the psychological Russo-German film-drama—weighed down with apparitions and childhood memories—an absurdity.

Glosses followed by “ed.” or “trans.” are additions by the present editor or the translator. Glosses which are not so marked are taken from the Moscow edition without substantial alteration.

kinoks. (“cinema-eye men”). A neologism coined by Vertov, involving a play on the words *kino* (“cinema” or “film”) and *oko*, the latter an obsolescent and poetic word meaning “eye.” The *-ok* ending is the transliteration of a traditional suffix used in Russian to indicate a male, human agent.

Kinoglaz (“Kino-Eye”) is the name Vertov gave to the movement and group of which he is the founder and leader. The term was also used to designate their method of work. It is, as well, the title of the feature-length film that, in 1925, initiates the period of his maturity. We have chosen to use the Russian title in all cases involving specific reference to that film, since it is by its Russian title that the film is generally known to scholars and archivists. This work was the culmination of a development begun in 1922 with the production of a series of shorter newsreel films bearing the same title and devoted to aspects and problems of the new Soviet society. When reference is made to the group or movement as such, we have used the name *Kino-Eye*, both in order to distinguish it from the specific productions and to stress the continuity involved in the production, by Vertov and his group, of the *Kinonedelia* (“Kino-week”) and *Kinopravda* (“Kino-truth”) chronicles, which preceded the appearance of the film *Kinoglaz*—trans. and ed.

kinochestvo. Another of Vertov’s neologisms: the suffix *chestvo* indicates an abstract quality, therefore, the quality of the cinema-eye. While its



Vertov and Mark Magridson on location for *Three Songs of Lenin*

To the American adventure film with its showy dynamism and to the dramatizations of the American Pinkertons the kinoks say thanks for the rapid shot changes and the close-ups. Good . . . but disorderly, not based on a precise study of movement. A cut above the psychological drama, but still lacking in foundation. A cliché. A copy of a copy.

precise signification is rather vague, it would appear from the context that Vertov is using it, by analogy with *kinok*, in contrast to *cinematography*. In his journal of 1924, he writes, "We almost never used the term *kinochestvo*, as it says nothing and is gratuitous word building." Film theory of the period is characterized, internationally, by a proliferation of terminology, and this particular instance recalls the elaborate speculation surrounding the notion of "photogénie" proposed in France by Vertov's contemporary, Jean Epstein—trans. and ed.

WE proclaim the old films, based on the romance, theatrical films and the like, to be leprous.

—Keep away from them!

—Keep your eyes off them!

—They're mortally dangerous!

—Contagious!

WE affirm the future of cinema art by denying its present.

"Cinematography" must die so that the art of cinema may live.

WE call for its death to be hastened.

We protest against that mixing of the arts which many call synthesis. The mixture of bad colors, even those ideally selected from the spectrum, produces not white, but mud.

Synthesis should come at the summit of each art's achievement and not before.

WE are cleansing *kinochestvo* of foreign matter—of music, literature, and theater; we seek our own rhythm, one lifted from nowhere else, and we find it in the movements of things.

WE invite you:

—to flee—

the sweet embraces of the romance,
the poison of the psychological novel,
the clutches of the theater of adultery;
to turn your back on music,

—to flee—

out into the open, into four-dimensions (three + time), in search of our own material, our meter and rhythm.

The "psychological" prevents man from being as precise as a stopwatch; it interferes with his desire for kinship with the machine.

In an art of movement we have no reason to devote our particular attention to contemporary man.

The machine makes us ashamed of man's inability to control himself, but what are we to do if electricity's unerring ways are more exciting to us than the disorderly haste of active men and the corrupting inertia of passive ones?

Saws dancing at a sawmill convey to us a joy more intimate and intelligible than that on human dance floors.

For his inability to control his movements, WE temporarily exclude man as a subject for film.

romance. Vertov is referring to a type of sentimental film based on songs ("romances"), popular at that time—trans.

Our path leads through the poetry of machines, from the bungling citizen to the perfect electric man.

In revealing the machine's soul, in causing the worker to love his workbench, the peasant his tractor, the engineer his engine—we introduce creative joy into all mechanical labor, we bring people into closer kinship with machines, we foster new people.

The new man, free of unwieldiness and clumsiness, will have the light, precise movements of machines, and he will be the gratifying subject of our films.

Openly recognizing the rhythm of machines, the delight of mechanical labor, the perception of the beauty of chemical processes, WE sing of earthquakes, we compose film epics of electric power plants and flame, we delight in the movements of comets and meteors and the gestures of searchlights that dazzle the stars.

Everyone who cares for his art seeks the essence of his own technique.

Cinema's unstrung nerves need a rigorous system of precise movement.

The meter, tempo, and type of movement, as well as its precise location with respect to the axes of a shot's coordinates and perhaps to the axes of universal coordinates (the three dimensions + the fourth—time), should be studied and taken into account by each creator in the field of cinema.

Radical necessity, precision, and speed are the three components of movement worth filming and screening.

The geometrical extract of movement through an exciting succession of images is what's required of montage.

Kinochestvo is the art of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the properties of the material and the internal rhythm of each object.

Intervals (the transitions from one movement to another) are the material, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movements themselves. It is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to a kinetic resolution.

montage. In Russian a single word conveys notions that in English are rendered by the two words *montage* and *editing*. In most instances, one English meaning has been chosen according to the context—trans.

material. This term is frequently used by Vertov and others to mean film footage. Its constructivist connotation is significant with respect to Vertov's theory and practice—trans.

The organization of movement is the organization of its elements, or its intervals, into phrases.] X

In each phrase there is a rise, a high point, and a falling off (expressed in varying degrees) of movement.

A composition is made of phrases, just as a phrase is made of intervals of movement.

A kinok who has conceived a film epic or fragment should be able to jot it down with precision so as to give it life on the screen, should favorable technical conditions be present.

The most complete scenario cannot, of course, replace these notes, just as a libretto does not replace pantomime, just as literary accounts of Scriabin's compositions do not convey any notion of his music.

To represent a dynamic study on a sheet of paper, we need graphic symbols of movement.

WE are in search of the film scale.

WE fall, we rise . . . together with the rhythm of movements—slowed and accelerated,

running from us, past us, toward us,

in a circle, or straight line, or ellipse,

to the right and left, with plus and minus signs;

movements bend, straighten, divide, break apart,

multiply, shooting noiselessly through space.

Cinema is, as well, the *art of inventing movements* of things in space in response to the demands of science; it embodies the inventor's dream—be he scholar, artist, engineer, or carpenter; it is the realization by kinochestvo of that which cannot be realized in life.

Drawings in motion. Blueprints in motion. Plans for the future. The theory of relativity on the screen.

WE greet the ordered fantasy of movement.

Our eyes, spinning like propellers, take off into the future on the wings of hypothesis.

WE believe that the time is at hand when we shall be able to hurl into space the hurricanes of movement, reined in by our tactical lassoes.

Hurrah for *dynamic geometry*, the race of points, lines, planes, volumes.

Hurrah for the poetry of machines, propelled and driving; the poetry of levers, wheels, and wings of steel; the iron cry of movements; the blinding grimaces of red-hot streams.

The repertoire planned for summer production, both here and in the Ukraine, does not inspire the least confidence.

The proposals for broad experimental work have been passed over.

All efforts, sighs, tears, and expectations, all prayers—are directed toward it—the six-act film-drama.

Therefore the Council of Three without waiting for the kinoks to be assigned work and ignoring the latter's desire to realize their own projects, are temporarily disregarding authorship rights and resolve to immediately publish for general use the common principles and slogans of the future revolution-through-newsreel; for which purpose, first and foremost, kinok Dziga Vertov is directed, in accordance with party discipline, to publish certain excerpts from the pamphlet *Kinoks: A Revolution*, which shall sufficiently clarify the nature of that revolution.

The Council of Three

In fulfillment of the resolution of the Council of Three on April 10 of this year, I am publishing the following excerpts:

Upon observing the films that have arrived from America and the West and taking into account available information on work and artistic experimentation at home and abroad, I arrive at the following conclusion:

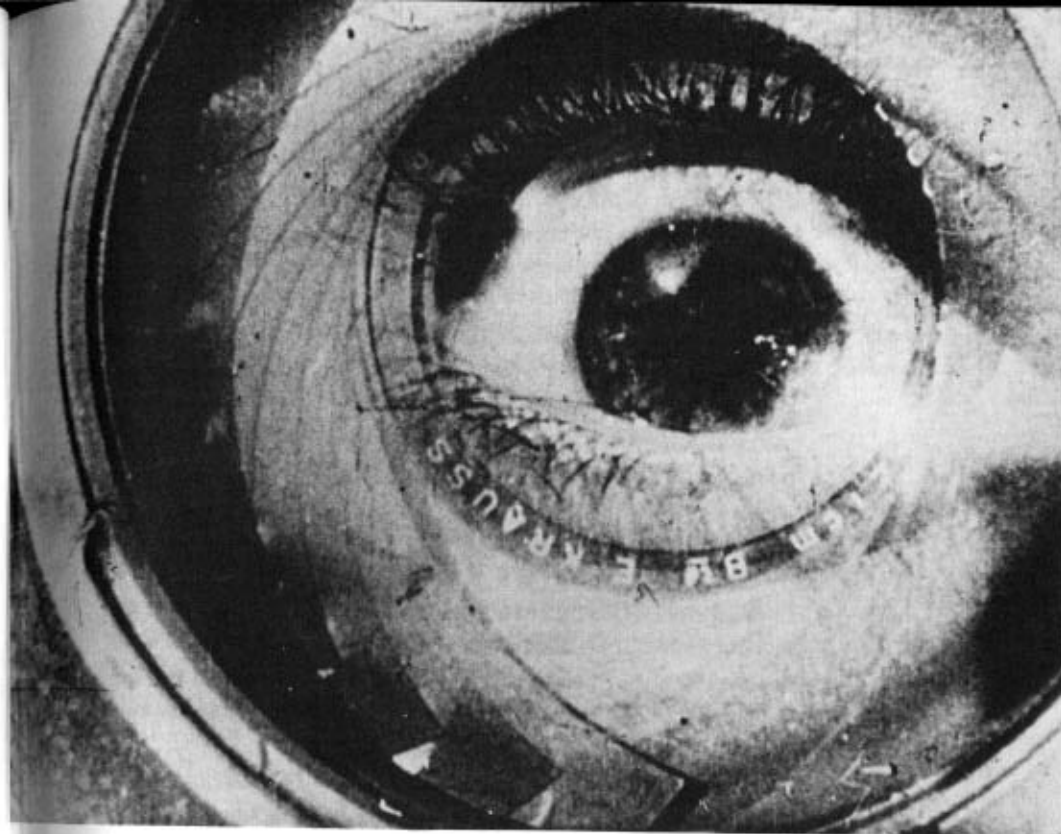
The death sentence passed in 1919 by the kinoks on all films, with no exceptions, holds for the present as well. The most scrupulous examination does not reveal a single film, a single artistic experiment, properly directed to the emancipation of the camera, which is reduced to a state of pitiable slavery, of subordination to the imperfections and the shortsightedness of the human eye.

We do not object to cinema's undermining of literature and the theater; we wholly approve of the use of cinema in every branch of knowledge, but we define these functions as accessory, as secondary offshoots of cinema.

The main and essential thing is:

The sensory exploration of the world through film.

We therefore take as the point of departure the use of the



The Man with a Movie Camera

camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye, for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills space.

The kino-eye lives and moves in time and space; it gathers and records impressions in a manner wholly different from that of the human eye. The position of our bodies while observing or our perception of a certain number of features of a visual phenomenon in a given instant are by no means obligatory limitations for the camera which, since it is perfected, perceives more and better.

We cannot improve the making of our eyes, but we can endlessly perfect the camera.

Until now many a cameraman has been criticized for having filmed a running horse moving with unnatural slowness on the screen (rapid cranking of the camera)—or for the opposite, a tractor plowing a field too swiftly (slow cranking of the camera), and the like.

These are chance occurrences, of course, but we are preparing a system, a deliberate system of such occurrences, a system of

seeming irregularities to investigate and organize phenomena.

Until now, we have violated the movie camera and forced it to copy the work of our eye. And the better the copy, the better the shooting was thought to be. Starting today we are liberating the camera and making it work in the opposite direction—away from copying.

The weakness of the human eye is manifest. We affirm the kino-eye, discovering within the chaos of movement the result of the kino-eye's own movement; we affirm the kino-eye with its own dimensions of time and space, growing in strength and potential to the point of self-affirmation.

2

I make the viewer see in the manner best suited to my presentation of this or that visual phenomenon. The eye submits to the will of the camera and is directed by it to those successive points of the action that, most succinctly and vividly, bring the film phrase to the height or depth of resolution.

Example: shooting a boxing match, not from the point of view of a spectator present, but shooting the successive movements (the blows) of the contenders.

Example: the filming of a group of dancers, not from the point of view of a spectator sitting in the auditorium with a ballet on the stage before him.

After all, the spectator at a ballet follows, in confusion, now the combined group of dancers, now random individual figures, now someone's legs—a series of scattered perceptions, different for each spectator.

One can't present this to the film viewer. A system of successive movements requires the filming of dancers or boxers in the order of their actions, one after another . . . by forceful transfer of the viewer's eye to the successive details that must be seen.

The camera "carries" the film viewer's eyes from arms to legs, from legs to eyes and so on, in the most advantageous sequence, and organizes the details into an orderly montage study.

3

You're walking down a Chicago street today in 1923, but I make you greet Comrade Volodarsky, walking down a Petrograd street in

1918, and he returns your greeting.

Another example: the coffins of national heroes are lowered into the grave (shot in Astrakhan in 1918); the grave is filled in (Kronstadt, 1921); cannon salute (Petrograd, 1920); memorial service, hats are removed (Moscow, 1922)—such things go together, even with thankless footage not specifically shot for this purpose (cf. *Kinopravda* no. 13). The montage of crowds and of machines greeting Comrade Lenin (*Kinopravda* no. 14), filmed in different places at different times, belongs to this category.

I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I've created today, in an extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by me in various parts of the world. In bringing together shots of walls and details, I've managed to arrange them in an order that is pleasing and to construct with intervals, correctly, a film-phrase which is the room.

I am kino-eye, I create a man more perfect than Adam, I create thousands of different people in accordance with preliminary blueprints and diagrams of different kinds.

I am kino-eye.

From one person I take the hands, the strongest and most dexterous; from another I take the legs, the swiftest and most shapely; from a third, the most beautiful and expressive head—and through montage I create a new, perfect man.

I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it.

Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse, I plunge full speed into a crowd, I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations.

Freed from the rule of sixteen-seventeen frames per second,



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free of the limits of time and space, I put together any given points in the universe, no matter where I've recorded them.

My path leads to the creation of a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you.

5

Once more let us agree: the eye and the ear. The ear does not spy, the eye does not eavesdrop.

Separation of functions.

Radio-ear—the montage "I hear!"

Kino-eye—the montage "I see!"

There you have it, citizens, for the first time: instead of music, painting, theater, cinematography, and other castrated outpourings.

Within the chaos of movements, running past, away, running into and colliding—the eye, all by itself, enters life.

[A day of visual impressions has passed. How is one to construct the impressions of the day into an effective whole, a visual study? If one films everything the eye has seen, the result, of course, will be a jumble. If one skillfully edits what's been photographed, the result will



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be clearer. If one scraps bothersome waste, it will be better still. One obtains an organized memo of the ordinary eye's impressions.]

The mechanical eye, the camera, rejecting the human eye as crib sheet, gropes its way through the chaos of visual events, letting itself be drawn or repelled by movement, probing, as it goes, the path of its own movement. It experiments, distending time, dissecting movement, or, in contrary fashion, absorbing time within itself, swallowing years, thus schematizing processes of long duration inaccessible to the normal eye.

Aiding the machine-eye is the kinok-pilot, who not only controls the camera's movements, but entrusts himself to it during experiments in space. And at a later time the kinok-engineer, with remote control of cameras.

The result of this concerted action of the liberated and perfected camera and the strategic brain of man directing, observing, and gauging—the presentation of even the most ordinary things will take on an exceptionally fresh and interesting aspect.

How many people, starved for spectacles, are wearing away the seats of their pants in theaters?

They flee from the humdrum, from the "prose" of life. And mean-

while the theater is almost always just a lousy imitation of that same life, plus an idiotic conglomerate of balletic affectation, musical squeaks, tricks of lighting, stage sets (from daubs to constructivism), and occasionally the work of a talented writer distorted by all that nonsense. Certain masters of the theater are destroying the theater from within, shattering old forms, and advancing new slogans for theatrical work; to further their rescue they've enlisted biomechanics (in itself a worthy pursuit), and cinema (honor and glory to it), and writers (not bad in themselves), and constructions (there are some good ones), and automobiles (how can one not admire the automobile?), and gunfire (something dangerous and impressive at the front); and by and large not a damned thing comes of it.

Theater and nothing more.

Not only is this no synthesis; it's not even a legitimate mixture. And it cannot be otherwise.

We kinoks, as firm opponents of premature synthesis ("For synthesis must come at the summit of achievement!"), understand that it's pointless to mix scraps of achievement: the little ones will immediately perish from overcrowding and disorder. And in general—

The arena's small. Come out, please, into life.

This is where we work—we, the masters of vision, the organizers of visible life, armed with the omnipresent kino-eye. This is where the masters of word and sound, the most skillful editors of audible life, work. And I make bold to slip them the ubiquitous mechanical ear and megaphone—the radiotelephone.

This is:

newsreel,
radio-news.

I promise to drum up a parade of kinoks on Red Square on the day when the futurists release the first issue of a radio-news montage.

Not the newsreels from Pathé or Gaumont (newspaper chronicle), not even *Kinopravda* (political newsreel), but a real kinok newsreel—an impetuous survey of visual events deciphered by the camera, bits of real energy (as opposed to theater) joined through intervals into a tectonic whole by the great craft of montage.

Such structuring of the film-object enables one to develop any given theme, be it comic, tragic, one of special effects, or some other type.

It's entirely a question of the particular juxtaposition of visual details, of intervals.

The unusual flexibility of montage construction enables one to introduce into a film study any given motif—political, economic, or other. And therefore:

- As of now, neither psychological nor detective dramas are needed in cinema,
- As of now, theatrical productions transferred to film are no longer needed,
- As of now, neither Dostoyevsky nor Nat Pinkerton are to be put on the screen.
- Everything is included in the new conception of the newsreel. Into the jumble of life resolutely enter:

1. kino-eye, challenging the human eye's visual representation of the world and offering its own "I see," and
2. the kinok-editor, organizing the minutes of the life-structure seen *this way* for the first time.

1923

On the Organization of a Film Experiment Station

The film office and editorial staff of *Kinopravda* are being eliminated. A small nucleus of workers, united by inner discipline, is being formed—the first film experiment station.

By organized work, the agency aims to break through the front of despair caused by idleness, among other factors, if only on one sector of this front—that of the newsreel and of experimentation. In addition, experimentation is also to be regarded as a kind of ferment that involves interested colleagues in intensive cooperation—a method that is tried and true.

Prospects for the future (a high objective): an institute for continuous invention and perfection, a stake in the worldwide quality of production, the cinema-lighthouse of the USSR.

Let those inclined to smile take note: the higher the objective, the