
**Selected Writings**

**FROM THE MANIFESTO OF THE BEGINNING OF 1922**

You—cinematographers:

directors without occupation and artists without occupation, flustered cameramen

and scenario writers scattered the world over,

You—the patient public of the movie houses with the tolerance of mules under the load of served emotions.

You—the impatient owners of the not-yet-bankrupt movie theaters, greedily snapping up the scraps off the German table, and, to a lesser extent, the American table—

You wait,

Debilitated by memories, you day dream and pine for the MOON of the new six-reel feature . . .

(nervous persons are asked to close their eyes),

You wait for what will not happen and what you should not expect.

My friendly warning:

Don’t bury your heads like ostriches.

Raise your eyes,

Look around—

There!

Seen by me and by every child’s eye:

Insides falling out.

Intestines of experience

Out of the belly of cinematography slashed

By the reef of the revolution,

there they drag

leaving a bloody trace on the ground, shuddering from terror and repulsion.

All is ended.

Dziga Vertov
Resolution on the cine-front: Consider not in favor.
First Russian productions shown us, as expected, are reminiscent of the old "artistic" models in the same way that the NEP-men remind us of the old bourgeoisie.
Projected production schedules for the summer, here and in Ukraine inspire no confidence.
Possibilities of wide experimental work is in the background.
All efforts, all sighs, tears, and hopes, all prayers are to her—the six-reel cine-drama.
Therefore, be it resolved, that the Council of Three, not waiting for the admission of Kinoks to production and, in spite of the desire of Kinoks to realize by themselves their own projects, forgoes for the moment the right of authorship and decrees:
publish immediately for broad distribution the general basis and credos of the impending revolution through the Movie newsreel, for which purpose Dziga Vertov is hereby directed, along the lines of party discipline, to publish these passages from the book, Kinoks Revolution, which describe the substance of the revolution.

Council of Three

Carrying out the resolution of the Council of Three of April 10, 1923, the following excerpts are published:

1.

Watching the pictures that came from the West and from America, taking into account the information we have on the work and searching abroad and here—I come to the following conclusion:
Verdict of death, decreed by Kinoks in 1919, to all motion pictures without exception, is in effect to this day.
The most careful inspection does not reveal a single picture, a single searching, that tries correctly to unerasge the camera, now in pitiful slavery, under orders of an LEGALIZED MYOPIA imperfect shallow eye.
We do not object if cinematography tunnels under literature, under theater; we fully approve the utilization of the cinema for all branches of science, but we recognize these functions as accessory, as offshoots and branches.
The fundamental and the most important:
Cinema—the feel of the world.
The initial point:
The utilization of the camera, WAY FOR THE MACHINE as a cinema eye—more perfect than a human eye for purposes of research into the chaos of visual phenomena filling the universe.
The eye lives and moves in time and space, perceiving and record-
ing impressions in a way quite different from the human eye. It is not necessary for it to have a particular stance or to be limited in the number of moments to be observed per second. The movie camera is better.

We cannot make our eyes better than they have been made, but the movie camera we can perfect forever.

To this day, the cameraman is criticized if a running horse moves unnaturally slowly on the screen (quick turn of the camera) or, conversely, if a tractor ploughs too fast (the slow manipulation of the camera crank).

These, of course, are incidental, but we are preparing a thoughtout system of these incidents, a system of apparent abnormalities that organize and explore phenomena.

To this day, we raped the movie camera and forced it to copy the work of our eye. And the better the copy, the better the shot was considered. As of today, we will unshackle the camera and will make it work in the opposite direction, further from copying.

Out with all the weaknesses of the human eye.

We hereby ratify the eye, which is groping in the chaos of motions for a movement of its own and in its own right; we validate the eye with its own measurement of strength and in potentiality before the self-ratification.

2.

... to induce the viewer to see in a way that is best for me to show. The eye obeys the will of the camera and is directed by it to that sequence of moments of action that best brings out a cinemaphrase, the sequence that raises and lowers dénouement with the greatest brilliance and speed.

**System of the Continuity of Actions**

Example: Shooting a boxing bout not from the point of view of a member of the audience, but on the basis of showing off as best as possible the sequence of holds of the boxers.

Example: Shooting a group of dancers—but not from the point of view of the audience, sitting in an auditorium and having in front of it scenes of a ballet.

For the viewer of a ballet haphazardly follows the whole group, or incidental performers, or some legs—a series of scattered observations, different for everyone in the audience.

**THE MOST INEFFICIENT, THE MOST UNECONOMICAL RENDITION OF A SCENE IS THE THEATRICAL RENDITION**
The movie viewer cannot be presented with this. The system of consecutive actions demands filming the dancers or the boxers in a way which would account for consecutive events with certain details and actions forced upon the viewer, so that there is no chance for him to miss these.

The camera drags the eyes of the viewer from hands to legs, from legs to eyes, in a way that is the most efficient. It organizes the parts into an edited orderly study.

3.

You are walking on a Chicago street today in 1923, but I make you nod to comrade Volodarsky, who is, in 1918 walking down a street in Petrograd; he acknowledges your greeting.

Another example: They are lowering the coffins of national heroes (shot in Astrakhan in 1918), they fill in the graves (Cronstadt, 1921), cannon salute (Petrograd, 1920), memorial-service hats come off (Moscow, 1922). These actions go together even in the ungrateful, not specially filmed, material (see Kino-Pravda, No. 13). Crowds greeting Lenin in different places, in different times are also in this category (see Kino-Pravda, No. 14).

\[\text{HUMAN RACE OF KINOKS COUNCIL OF THREE. MOSCOW, HALL OF INTERVALS TODAY-TODAY APRIL 3 REPORT BY DZV ON THE THEME CHAMBRE CINEMA-PHRASE BEGINNING 8:30 P.M.}\]

\[\text{I am eye. I have created a man more perfect than Adam; I created thousands of different people ELECTRIC YOUNG MAN in accordance with previously prepared plans and charts. I am eye. I take the most agile hands of one, the fastest and the most graceful legs of another, from a third person I take the handsomest and the most expressive head, and, by editing, I create an entirely new perfect man. I am eye. I am a mechanical eye.}\]
I, a machine, am showing you a world, the likes of which only I can see.

I free myself from today and forever from human immobility, I am in constant movement, I approach and draw away from objects, I crawl under them, I move alongside the mouth of a running horse, I cut into a crowd at full speed, I run in front of running soldiers, I turn on my back, I rise with an airplane, I fall and soar together with falling and rising bodies.

This is I, apparatus, maneuvering in the chaos of movements, recording one movement after another in the most complex combinations.

Freed from the obligation of shooting sixteen-seventeen frames per second, freed from the frame of time and space, I coordinate any and all points of the universe, wherever I may plot them.

My road is toward the creation of a fresh perception of the world. Thus, I decipher in a new way the world unknown to you.

... Let us agree once more: The eye and the ear. The ear peeks, the eye eavesdrops.

Distribution of functions.
Radio-ear-edited, "Hear!"
Cinema-eye-edited, "See!"

There it is, citizens, in the first place instead of music, painting, theater, cinematography, and other castrated outpourings.

In a chaos of movements running past, streaking away, running up and colliding—only the eye enters life simply. The day of visual impressions is past. How to convert the impressions of the day into a functional whole—into a visual study? To film everything that an eye has seen will result in a jumble. To edit artfully what had been photographs would result in a greater clarity. It would be better yet to scrap the annoying rubbish. Thus we get organized memoirs of impressions of a simple eye.

A mechanical eye—that’s the movie camera. It refuses to use the human eye as if the latter were a crib-sheet; it is attracted and repelled by motion, feeling through the chaos of observed events for a roadway for its own mobility and modulation; it experiments, extending time, dissecting movement, or, on the contrary, absorbing into itself the time, swallowing years and, thus, diagramming some processes unattainable to the normal eye.

... In aid to the eye-machine is the Kinok, the pilot, who not only steers the apparatus, but also trusts it in experiments in space and in whatever may follow. Kinok, the engineer, directs the apparatus by remote control.

This concerted action by the liberated and perfected apparatus
and the strategy-making brain of man—directing, observing, compensating, will result in an unusual freshness, and even the most commonplace will become interesting.

..........................................................................................

... They are many who, hungering for spectacles, lost their pants in theaters.

They run from weekdays, run from the "prose" of life.

And yet the theater is almost always only a scabby surrogate of this very life plus an idiotic conglomerate from balletic contortions, musical squeaks, clever lighting effects, stage sets (from those smeared on to those constructed) and sometimes good work from literary masters perverted by all this hogwash.

Some theater overseers enlist help: bio-mechanics (a good pursuit by itself), cinema (bestow it honor and glory), literatures (not bad by themselves), constructions (some are not bad), automobiles (how can we not respect them?), rifle shooting (dangerous and impressive thing in the front lines). But, on the whole, not a goddamm thing comes out of it.

Theater and nothing else.

Not only no synthesis but no orderly mixture either.

Could not be otherwise.

We, Kinoks, resolute opponents of premature synthesis ("To synthesis at the zenith of accomplishment"), understand that to mix the crumbs of achievements is to have the infants perish from crowding and disorder.

In general—

ARENA IS SMALL

Please come into life.

Here we work—craftsmen of seeing—organizers of visible life, armed all over with the maturing eye. Here work the master-craftsmen of words and sounds, the most skillful editor-cutters of the heard life. To them, I also dare slip over a mechanical ever-present ear and megaphone—radio telephone.

This is

NEWSREEL
RADIO NEWS

I promise to wangle a parade of Kinoks in Red Square in case the futurists come out with No. 1 of their edited newsreel.

Neither the newsreel of "Pathé" nor of "Gaumont" (newspaper chronicle) nor even the Kino-Truth (political chronicle), but a real Kinok-type of a chronicle—a dashing survey of visual events deciphered by the movie-camera, fragments of actual energy (as
against theatrical energy), with their intervals condensed into a cumulative whole by the great mastery of an editing technique.

Such structure of a cinematic thing allows a development of any theme—be it comical, tragic, or anything else.

It is all a matter of juxtaposition of one visual moment with another, all a matter of intervals.

This unusual flexibility of edited structure allows to introduce into a movie continuity, any political, economic, or any other motif.

Therefore

As of today cinema needs no psychological, no detective dramas,
As of today—no theatrical productions shot on film,
As of today—no scenarioization of either Dostoyevsky, or Nat Pinkerton.

Everything is included in the new concept of the newsreel.

Into the confusion of life, hereby decisively enter:

1) The Eye, disputing the visual concept of the world by the human eye and offering its own “I see” and

2) Kinok-editor, who organizes, for the first time, what had been so perceived into minutes of life structure.

(1923)

CREATIVE PLANS, TESTIMONIALS, IDEAS

1. If Kino-Pravda is truth shown by means of the cinematic eye, then a shot of the banker will only be true if we can tear the mask from him, if behind his mask we can see the thief.

2. The only way we can divest him of his mask is by concealed observation, by concealed photography: that is, by means of hidden cameras, supersensitive film and light-sensitive lenses, infrared film for night and evening shooting, noiseless cameras. Constant readiness of the camera for filming. Immediate shooting of a perceived object.

Not in the theater, but in life, the thief plays the role of the cashier in order to rob the cash register. Or else the confidence man plays the role of a doting suitor to seduce and, then, rob a woman. Or else the hustler plays the simpleton in order to fool his victim. Or else the prostitute plays the girl-with-a-bow to make a fool of the nincompoop. Or else the hypocrite, the flatterer bureaucrat, the spy, the bigot, the blackmailer, the contriver, etc., who hide their thoughts while playing one role or another, take their masks off only when no one can see them or hear them. To show them without their masks on—what a difficult task that is, but how rewarding.

3. All this when a man plays someone else’s role in life. But if we take a professional actor, playing a role in the theater, to film him through the “Kino-Eye” would be to show the agreement or disagreement between the man and the actor, the correspondence or lack of correspondence between his words and his thoughts, etc.

I am reminded of one actor who was playing in one of the old silent
films. Dying from wounds in front of the camera, showing suffering on his body and face, he was at the same time telling an anecdote which was amusing everyone—apparently showing off his ability to act while not feeling the emotions he was portraying. If the convulsions of the wounded man could have been recorded for sound, then in place of moans we would hear, to our astonishment, something directly opposite to what we were seeing on the screen: words with double meaning, jokes, giggling . . .

Apparently, the actor had to die so many times before the camera that it had become automatic; he did not have to use his mind to act. His mind was free to tell jokes. This—the ability to dissimulate, to affect two identities—seemed quite disgusting to me at the time.

To show Ivanov in the role of Petrov, as seen through the “Kino-Eye,” would be to show him as a man in life and as an actor on the stage; not trying to pass off acting on the stage as life, and vice versa. Complete clarity. Not Petrov in front of you, but Ivanov playing the role of Petrov.

4. If a fake apple and a real apple are filmed so that one cannot be distinguished from the other on the screen, this is not ability, but incompetence—inability to photograph.

The real apple has to be filmed in such a way that no counterfeit can be possible. The real apple can be tasted and eaten, while the artificial one cannot—a good cameraman can understand this easily.

(1944)
Translated by Val Telberg

KINO-EYE, LECTURE I

The history of Kino-Eye has been a relentless struggle to modify the course of world cinema, to place in cinematic production a new emphasis of the “unplayed” film over the played film, to substitute the document for mise en scène, to break out of the proscenium of the theater and to enter the arena of life itself.

Let me attempt to sum up the results obtained in this direction by the Kino-Eye.

1. The manifesto of the “Kinoks” on the cinema, free from the actors, was published and later developed and popularized in a number of articles and in several public discussions.

2. In order to confirm the contents of the manifesto, there were produced and exhibited about 100 films without actors. These were of a wide variety, from primitive newsreels to extremely complex documentary films of the “cinethings.” We can cite, for example, the Weekly Reels, History of the Civil War, Calendars of Goskino, and the Cine-Translations. Outstanding among those films, which were responsible for heavy blows at the theatrical cinema, must be mentioned: The Struggle Under Tzarism, Life Caught Unawares, Lenin’s Truth, Forward Soviets!, The Sixth Part of the World, The Eleventh Year, and, finally, The Man with a Movie Camera.
Among the films produced by some of my pupils may be mentioned: *Moscow Nursery, For the Harvest, A Holiday for Millions*.

3. We have developed a language, proper to the cinema, special methods of shooting and montage, which are not those of the enacted film. The language of the film has become absolutely distinct from that of the theater and literature. We have created the conception of *documentary cinematography*. 

4. We have established an experimental studio for the recording of facts, and later *Pravda* on July 24, 1926, published plans for a “factory of unplayed film,” a “factory of facts,” that is to say, pure documentary.

5. At an open meeting that took place in Moscow in 1924, followers of Kino-Eye revealed the existence of a directive by Lenin that pointed out the necessity of changing the proportion of fact-films on film programs. Finding support in this directive, the followers of Kino-Eye declared that they demanded an immediate reorganization of all Soviet film production and exhibition; they requested an internal apportionment, that is to say, a certain proportion between the theatrical cinema, the enacted film, the cine-plaything on the one hand, and, on the other, the cinema which is not played, the cine-eye, the fact-film.

This proposal was boldly called the “Leninist Film Proportion.” Attempts were made to publish the proposal in the cinematographic press. N. Lebedev, the editor-in-chief of the only movie magazine appearing at that time, *Kino-Journal*, returned the manuscript to me, declaring that he protested the term “Leninist Film Proportion” and that he was against this attempt to utilize an “accidental” phrase by Lenin, and to present it as a sort of testimonial directive. The proposal of the “kinoks,” rejected by the cinema press, was nevertheless published later by *Pravda* on the 16th of August, 1925. The very term itself, “Leninist Film Proportion,” was not current for very long, and it is only today, in 1929, that it has been taken up again.

6. Kino-Eye has exerted considerable influence on the theatrical film, the language of which it has modified. More and more, our cinema has borrowed the methods of Kino-Eye, superficially, at least, to create what is known as the “art” film. We cite as examples *Strike, Potemkin*, and others. These borrowings have been sufficient to arouse attention and have created quite a stir at home as well as abroad in the domain of the theatrical, enacted film.

Nevertheless, these directed films, the methods of which were superficially taken from Kino-Eye, present only a particular and incidental facet of the Kino-Eye movement, the spread of which continued uninterrupted.

7. Kino-Eye has exerted a considerable influence on almost all the arts, notably in the sphere of music and literature. We will recall here that in their manifesto of the unplayed film, the exponents of Kino-Eye asked workers in the word, workers in letters, to initiate
the oral chronicle, radio chronicle. We recall that following this, in Prosvda in 1925, N. Ossinski asked that literature engage itself upon the road traced by Kino-Eye, that is to say, that it attempts to present facts—documentary elements—in an organic form.

"Vertov is right," wrote O. Brik in Soviet Cinema, No. 2, 1926, and he demanded of photography that it follow the example set by Kino-Eye. "It is necessary to get out of the circle of ordinary human vision; reality must be recorded not by imitating it, but by broaden- ing the circle ordinarily encompassed by the human eye."

In their earliest declarations on the subject of the sound film, which was not yet even invented then but which was soon to come, the Kinoks, who now call themselves the "Radioks," that is, followers of Radio-Eye, traced their path as leading from the Kino-Eye to the Radio-Eye; in other words, leading to the sound Kino-Eye transmitted by radio.

A few years ago I wrote an article entitled "The Radio-Eye" which appeared in Prosvda under the general heading "Kino-Prosvda and Radio-Prosvda." I stated in that article that Radio-Eye was a means of abolishing distances between men, that it offered an opportunity for the workers of the world not only to see themselves, but to hear themselves SYNCHRONOUSLY.

The declaration of the "Kinoks" provoked at the time most passionate discussions in the press. I remember a long article by Fervralski, "Tendencies in Art and Radio-Eye." I recall a special publication, Radio, which devoted one of its issues exclusively to Radio-Eye.

The followers of Kino-Eye, not confining themselves solely to the development of the unplayed film, were preparing themselves to work on the Radio-Eye, the talking and sound film without the play of actors.

Already in The Sixth Part of the World, the subtitles are replaced by an oral theme, by a radio theme, contrapuntally adapted to the film. The Eleventh Year is already constructed like a visual and sonal cine-thing, that is to say, that the montage was done in relation not only to the eye, but also to the ear.

It is in the same direction, in passing from Kino-Eye to Radio- Eye, that our film The Man with a Movie Camera was mounted.

The theoretical and practical work of the kinoks-radioks (differing in this respect from theatrical cinematography, which has found itself caught off-guard) have run ahead of their technical possibilities and, for a long time, have been awaiting a technical basis the advent of which will be late, in relation to Kino-Eye; they await the Sound-Cine and Television.

Recent technical acquisitions in this area lend powerful arms to the partisans and workers of documentary sound cinematography in their struggle for a revolution in the cinema, for the abolition of play, for an October of Kino-Eye.

From the montage of visual facts recorded on film (Kino-Eye)
we pass to the montage of visual and acoustic facts transmitted by radio (Radio-Eye).

We shall go from there to the simultaneous montage of visual-acoustic-tactile-olfactory facts, etc.

We shall then reach the stage where we will surprise and record human thoughts, and, finally

we shall reach to the greatest experiments of direct organization of thoughts (and consequently of actions) of all mankind.

Such are the technical perspectives of Kino-Eye, born of the October Revolution.

(Excerpts from a lecture given in Paris in 1929)

KINO-EYE, LECTURE II

Kino-Eye is a victory against time. It is a visual link between phenomena separated from one another in time. Kino-Eye gives a condensation of time, and also its decomposition.

Kino-Eye offers the possibility of seeing the living processes in a temporally arbitrary order and following a chosen rhythm, the speed of which the human eye would not otherwise be able to follow.

Kino-Eye avails itself of all the current means of recording ultra-rapid motion, microcinematography, reverse motion, multiple exposure, foreshortening, etc., and does not consider these as tricks, but as normal processes of which wide use must be made.

Kino-Eye makes use of all the resources of montage, drawing together and linking the various points of the universe in a chronological or anachronistic order, as one wills, by breaking, if necessary, with the laws and customs of the construction of a cine-thing.

In introducing itself into the apparent chaos of life, the Kino-Eye tries to find in life itself an answer to the questions it poses: To find the correct and necessary line among the millions of phenomena that relate to the theme.

Montage and a Few Principles of Kino-Eye

To make a montage is to organize pieces of film, which we call the frames, into a cine-thing. It means to write something cinematic with the recorded shots. It does not mean to select pieces to make "scenes" (deviations of a theatrical character), nor does it mean to arrange pieces according to subtitles (deviations of a literary character).

Every Kino-Eye production is mounted on the very day that the subject (theme) is chosen, and this work ends only with the launching of the film into circulation in its definitive form. In other words, montage takes place from the beginning to the end of production. Montage being thus understood, we can distinguish three periods:
First period: The "Montage Evaluation" of all the documents that are directly or indirectly related to the chosen theme (manuscripts, various objects, film clippings, photographs, newspaper clippings, books, etc.). As a result of this montage, which consists in picking and grouping the most precious documents or those simply useful, the plan indicated by the theme becomes crystallized, appears more evident, more distinct, more defined.

Second period: "Montage Synthesis" of the human eye concerning the selected theme (montage of personal observation or of reports by the information-gatherers and scouts of the film). Plan of shots, as a result of the selection and classification of the observations of the "human eye." At the moment when this selection is made, the author takes into account the indications of the thematic plan as well as peculiarities of the "machine-eye" of Kino-Eye.

Third period: "General Montage," synthesis of the observations noted on the film under the direction of the "machine-eye." Calculation in figures of the montage groupings. Unification of homogeneous pieces; constantly, one displaces the pieces, the frames, until all shall have entered a rhythm, where all the ties dictated by the meaning shall be those which coincide with the visual ties. As a result of all these mixtures, of all these displacements and of all these reductions, we have a kind of visual equation, a visual formula. This formula, this equation, which is the result of the general
montage of the cine-documents recorded on the film, is 100 per cent the cine-thing: I see, I cine-see.

Kino Eye is:

*montage*, when I select a theme (to pick a theme among a possible thousand);

*montage*, when I keep watch over the execution of the theme (of a thousand observations, to make a proper choice);

*montage*, when I establish the order of exposition of what has been shot according to the theme (of a thousand possible combinations to select the most adequate, basing one’s self as much upon the qualities of the filmed documents as upon the requirements of the chosen theme).

The school of Kino-Eye requires that the cine-thing be built upon “intervals,” that is, upon a movement between the pieces, the frames; upon the proportions of these pieces between themselves, upon the transitions from one visual impulse to the one following it.

Movement between the pieces—spectacular interval—spectacular relations between the pieces. According to Kino-Eye: a great complexity, formed by the sum total of the various relations of which the chief ones are: (1) relations of planes (small and large); (2) relations of foreshortenings; (3) relations of movements within the frame of each piece; (4) relations of lights and shades; (5) relations of speeds of recording.

Starting with this or that combination of relations, the author of the montage determines: the duration of each piece in meters for each of the images, the duration of projection of each distinct image. Moreover, at the same time that we perceive the movement that determines the relation between images, we also take into consideration, between two adjoining images, the spectacular value of each distinct image in its relations to all the others engaged in the “montage battle” that begins.

To find the most convenient itinerary for the eyes of the spectator in the midst of all these mutual reactions, of these mutual attractions, of these mutual repulsions of images among themselves, to reduce this whole multiplicity of intervals (of movements from one image to the other) to a simple spectacular equation: to a spectacular formula expressing in the best possible manner the essential theme of the cine-thing, such is the most difficult and important task of the author of montage.

This theory which has been called the “theory of intervals” was launched by the “kinoks” in their manifesto WE, written as early as 1919. In practice, this theory was most brilliantly illustrated in *The Eleventh Year* and especially in *The Man with a Movie Camera.*

(Film Culture, No. 25, Summer 1962)

Translated by S. Brody