

**Long Statement:** I've been exploring the flicker technique over the past few years, and for each film, it has gained different meaning. In *Wishing Well*, I loved to conceive of the flicker, and the interruptions that the black frames pose, as a metaphor for streams of consciousness: thoughts are never constant, continuous or absolute, but always disrupted and fragmented; by internal and external sensory impressions, by dreams, memories, projections, and general mind wandering. When combining the flicker technique with layered cross dissolves, none of the images are shown in their entirety, are only partially visible, and always interlaced with other images. The fluidity of one image appearing, before it slips away again, the way one fades into another, and the abstract articulations of multiple, layered sequences—all of these compositional features afford possibilities of meaning. For *Wishing Well*, the structural elements of the montage became symbolic for how things appear, remain, are suppressed, or disappear from the conscious, subconscious and unconscious of the human mind.

In many cultures, in ceremonies, in religion and in rites, but also in literary works, music, and films, the forest appears almost universally: as a backdrop, as a stage, as a mystical, spiritual, or transcendental space, as a place for children's (and adults') stories, as a setting for education, asceticism, or for encounters with the supernatural. The forest is also popular in German cultural history, at times it's even been labeled a typical motif: from ancient Germanic myths, to romantic paintings, poems, fairy tales and songs of the 19th century, to more recent environmental activism—depending on the era and genre, the forest has been charged with varied symbolic, metaphorical or allegorical meaning.

Here are two quotes taken from disparate modes of writing, and while they seem to correspond across time and contexts, the symbolism of the forest and the subtle evaluation of its attributes and agency couldn't be more different:

"Thoughts grow in me like a forest, populated by many different animals. But man is domineering in his thinking, and therefore he kills the pleasure of the forest and that of the wild animals. Man is violent in his desire, and he himself becomes a darker forest and a sickened forest animal." (Carl Jung, *The Red Book*)

"Animals lurked in the forest like *tromp l'oeil* figures, some of them horrific beasts he had never seen before. He would eventually have to pass through the forest, but he felt no fear. Of course—the forest was inside him, he knew, and it made him who he was. The beasts were the ones he himself possessed." (Haruki Murakami, *After the Quake*)

Murakami often builds psychological narratives around a forest: a walk into the woods is usually more than just a literal walk—it's a journey into the mind. I'd be remiss not to admit how much I've loved his use of symbolism, some of which, I think, might be reinterpreting (even subverting) Carl Jung's theories on archetypes: symbolic images whose manifestations provide a basis for analysis; images that connect the individual personal unconscious with a larger, collective unconscious.

Time and time again, I have used images of trees and forests as metaphorical carriers in my films. When making *Wishing Well*, I wanted to focus entirely on the

representation of the forest: I wanted to create an allegory for human consciousness. But using shots of the forest alone, as I had initially intended, didn't quite achieve what I wanted, so I introduced a human figure, a young preschool boy, alone, seemingly unafraid, who goes on a quest. The fact that he is on his own, venturing into what appears to be a near magical, luminous forest, pays tribute to fairy tales in which children find themselves lost or abandoned in the woods. I didn't want to create a linear narrative, in which there is an apparent reason for why the child goes into, and how he comes out of the forest.

Unlike above quotes, animals don't feature in my forest. But for a brief moment, an older man, in black and white, shows up like a fleeting apparition, as if seemingly stepping out of mysteriously translucent seeds that the boy holds in his open palms. For me, the older man and the young boy are one and the same, but it's unclear which time the film inhabits: are we looking at a memory of the old man of himself as a young boy, or is the old man a projection of the boy's future?

Just as one can sense, in the features of any child, expressions of a lifetime; echoes of a childhood are inscribed in every person, who faces the end of their human time. I've always been fascinated with this, to conceive of time, present(s), past(s) and future(s), as embodied and visible, all at once, if only as a notion, an aura, or an imagination. In that way, the juxtaposition of the boy and the man, perhaps, is a minute visualization of a human life span, but the old man appearing out of the hands of the young boy, in the context of the film, is also a mini metaphor for personal agency.

While I was making the film, I had suffered my first depression induced by climate change. This frame of mind deeply informed the subtext of the work: in the middle of the film, after, by means of superimposition, the river water seems to burst out of the boy's hands, there are layers of image sequences, barely visible, that show landscapes destroyed by storms and floods. Interweaved also, are images of celluloid film with heavy water damage, which, in its very own material way, erases representations of life into patterns of oblivion. I didn't want to make an instantly recognizable environmental film, after all, my main focus was on psychology; and also, it was simply not the mode I work in. I wanted to create possibilities for open interpretations, and allow the audience to have their own associations. But I deliberately embedded this theme into the timeline—submerged, subliminal, subconscious—and the way it is largely obscured is my observation of the ways that this topic has widely been treated: with mechanisms of retiring a problem into the recesses of consciousness; perhaps one explanation for the lack of collective demand/effort/action for the dramatic systemic changes that are necessary to tackle the cataclysmic climate events that have been unfolding in recent years.

The images of the boy were taken out of an educational short film from the 1970s, in which the child walks into the forest and sees man-made environmental pollution. I matted the child frame by frame, to isolate the protagonist and to erase the original background. In my film, we no longer see the things that the boy is looking at: empty cans of soda littering the forest floor, thrown away car tires, air pollution from nearby traffic, forest clearances for logging. In the source film, the boy resolves to plant a handful of acorns. This is both a symbol of hope and activism: to plant new trees not only to help new plant life grow, but also to fight the destruction of the ecosystems in

the forest. For my film, I decided to matte the acorns that the boy holds in his hands, so that they appear translucent when superimposed with other footage, in this way magnifying a kind of alternate visibility. Aside from creative possibilities this offered, I wanted to open this sequence up to ambiguity. Children themselves have become a symbol of sorts for the climate crisis: they are carriers of hope, in that every generation seems to defer, and pass on the responsibility to act, to the next.

In the end of my film, the boy still plants the seeds, but while his motions and gestures are there, it's almost impossible to recognize what exactly he is doing. Perhaps we have long arrived at the point where political agency on every level—personal, proxy, collective—must move beyond symbolism, into immediate action, in order to maintain any futurity of hope. (Berlin, October 27, 2020. Sylvia Schedelbauer)