# LOG:: 03 Arrested Development

C'était un endroit, le cinéma, c'était un territoire.

—Jean-Luc Godard[[1]](#footnote-2)

## Cinematographic Imagery & Kernel Panic

*One of the fascinations about the cinema is that when the lights went down, you’re in the dark, director David Lean told Melvyn Bragg on ITV’s South Bank Show in 1985. It’s very private and I used to turn round and look at that beam going through the tobacco smoke. And it still holds a fascination for me. That beam showed me places I’d never thought I’d visit. It showed me characters that I’d never meet in my ordinary, dull, suburban life.[[2]](#footnote-3)*

Being without a body in the dark in a room with many others is the magic of cinema. It is only the screen and you, the moving pictures, your eyes, the brain, and its world. Just your mind floating. *Cinema* is a mode of watching the world un-viewed.[[3]](#footnote-4) You perceive cinema as a living arrangement of things and ideas.

Through the years, the technological, industrial, and social shifts in cinema and film have allowed seamless convergence with other media. Not only is film no longer *filmed* and does not need celluloid as a physical medium for transporting images or pictures, but cinematic presentation is no longer bound to a specific architecture and form of exhibition and consumption. *Cinema* moved to mobile phones and public facades.

The glamorous world of cinema, its stars and stories, have moved to streaming platforms with warehouse catalogs of items ready for continuous automated play in binge-watching. Platform films produced by streaming capital are entering world-renowned festivals and competitions in Berlin and Cannes. 2019, just before the pandemic, had already been declared the year of kernel panic by candy and popcorn-selling cinema owners in big Western cities. The *blue screen of death*, the sign of an ultimate system crash on a computer, increases worldwide fear. However, there are no safety measures for the termination of cinema as a building and location in the center of the city, a former dispositive which now appears publicly as abnormal or beyond common interest.

The move of transformed cinematic narrative fictional platform media into the glamorous hall of fame of the idealized memory of cinema dominated the Oscars in 2019. By 2024, after the pandemic and amid the debacle of generative AI, Hollywood (the classic cinema industry) and capital have found a way to get along with streaming platforms. As the hype around platforms slows, the world of cinema—its creme de la creme, its festivals, Cannes—is bringing back its old, recently retired Gladiators: the stars of what was once the new, innovative cinema of the 1970s (e.g., directors like Francis Ford Coppola), in a celebration applauded by the stars of social media, the serials of the streaming platforms and worldwide television, whom nobody knows anymore by name besides their social media followers.

In his book on 1990s Turkey, Dogan Gürpinar argues that media at the time manufactured lasting stars.[[4]](#footnote-5) These stars remain prominent in entertainment even today, three decades later. However, after the 2000s, especially the 2010s, fame has become fleeting. Social media, now abuzz with Cannes 2024, thrives on fleeting images. Fame is instant but quickly forgotten, swept away by autoplay. At Cannes 2024, the afterglow of films is replaced by selfies with fading stars, a snapshot of a moment and place. The promenades are now dominated by Turkish TV stars and influencers plucked from global streaming platforms. Even cinema itself has become a self-referential fiction, a realm of a thousand rehashed stories.

How to debug cinema? Could cinema be an institution in which the people is missing, recalling Deleuze’s note on the creative act?

*And what relationship is there between human struggle and a work of art? The narrowest and for me the most mysterious relationship of all. Exactly what Paul Klee meant when he said: “You know, the people are missing.” The people are missing, but at the same time, they are not missing. The people are missing means – it isn’t clear, it will never be clear — that the fundamental affinity between a work of art and a people that does not yet exist.[[5]](#footnote-6)*

*Le cinéma.* Truffaut and Godard called for an ontological framework—cinema as a formal description of our existence, an unfulfilled role up to the present. What happens today to cinema happened nearby in a similar way in the late eighties, with the birth of cable television and the increasing commodification of Hollywood. The TV series *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were the newborn rising stars. Televisual consumption was understood to replace the seventh art. But, as put simply by Godard, *la télévision fabrique de l'oubli, alors que le cinéma fabriquait des souvenirs:* television produces forgetting while cinema produced memories.[[6]](#footnote-7)

At Cannes 2024, cinema, the original grand narrative, celebrated its survival. In reality, outside of the social media sphere of selfies and instagram stories

*[…] Cinema should have remembered that people still go to spas, temples, churches and still crave for a little bit of insulation as long as it is coupled with mystery, sour suspense and emotion. The cinema theatre could have grown up from a popcorn restaurant to so many other things. But now we have a television at a home and a television in a darkened room. We have home theaters at all because cinema theaters are nothing more. Even commercial jets offer a more adventurous experience. […][[7]](#footnote-8)*

The size of Ankara’s Roman bath confirms the principle of simple pleasures…Moviegoers in 2023 showed they crave originality. Sequels and recycled stories just aren't cutting it anymore. To compete with home entertainment and streaming giants, cinemas need to offer something new, exciting, and bursting with ultimately fresh ideas, and not an attempt to sell to a young generation what has already been sold to an older generation as innovative (Barbenheimer).

The magic of cinema lies in transporting us to unseen worlds, introducing us to unique characters and concepts, and sparking emotions: always a first time. It's about authenticity, not manipulation. It's about helping us understand the world around us, not simply telling us what to think. We crave beauty, desire, chills, and giggles: a full cinematic experience, a story to live.

Remember those films that had everyone talking? The ones that stayed with us long after the credits rolled, followed by inspiring parodies and endless discussions? These movies didn't shy away from difficult topics. They sparked essential conversations on a grand scale. Films like *Straight Outta Compton* challenged perceptions of race relations, *Inside Out* tackled mental health in a rarely seen way, and *Wolf of Wall Street* made us question modern cultural excesses.

Today, cinema feels scattered and unfocused. Yet, the need for powerful, culture-shifting blockbusters is greater than ever. These can unite us, spark emotions, and leave a lasting impact on cinematic art for years to come.[[8]](#footnote-9)

## The Dream Machine Stutters

Cinema, once a wellspring of fresh dreams, seems to have stumbled. The stories have grown monotonous, mirroring a homogenized reality. We've either created a version of ourselves based on the silver screen, or the silver screen now reflects a version of ourselves we've built. This is cinema's failing. Obviously, the transportive power of cinematic dreams can't be replicated on a tiny phone screen.

Cinema boasts a history intricately woven with technology and society. From its very birth, cinema has been entangled with commerce. The Lumiere brothers, Edison, even Georges Melies – they were all as much *exploiters and businessmen* as they were inventors. Cinema is more than just a technical marvel; its development is a complex dance with the evolution of electronic image reproduction. It's a story of multiple forces, not isolated inventions. It’s a commercial practice of movement generation and continuous, attention-grabbing production.

## Cinema's complexities

Cinema has indeed a complex relation to its own history. Jean-Louis Comolli proposed the concept of *signifying practice,* acts of meaning-making that people engage in, to address the intricate relationship between cinema and its history. Comolli argued that a materialist understanding of cinema's history is impossible without acknowledging this concept of a practice.[[9]](#footnote-10) In a further theoretical approach, Jean-Louis Baudry explored the implications of the basic cinematic apparatus and questioned whether its technical aspects inherently produce specific ideological effects, and if these effects are shaped by the dominant ideology of the time.

These theoretical approaches question meaning-making, ideology, social aspects, and subjectivity within cinema. Such exploration furthermore prompts a reevaluation of technological communication systems, similar to what Bertholt Brecht and Raymond Williams did with radio and television. Williams and Brecht both argued that these technologies were initially developed without predetermined content. Engineers in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s tried to imagine, in their journal, the possible use scenarios for a new system of television to be established, but were far from content programming forms.[[10]](#footnote-11)

*Häufig wird die Ansicht vertreten, dass es für eine erfolgreiche Einführung des Fernsehens genügt, wenn die Apparatur genügend weit durchgebildet ist, die Schaffung von befriedigenden Fernsehprogrammen biete dan keine Schwierigkeiten mehr. Diese Ansicht würde, nachdem sich jetzt der Tonfilm durchgesetzt hat, richtig sein, wenn der Fernseher ein Ersatz des Lichtspielhauses wäre, und eine gleiche Leistungsfähigkeit erreichen könnte, wie die Einrichtung für unmittelbare Projektion. Beide Voraussetzungen treffen jedoch nicht zu.[[11]](#footnote-12)*

The *cinema-machine* itself, considering the conditions that enabled its development, is shaped by its ongoing changes, adaptations, and realignments. Stephen Heath highlights how it brings together the technical and the symbolic, the technological and the ideological, creating the current ambiguity surrounding the term *apparatus.[[12]](#footnote-13)* The concept of the classic cinema experience, with its specific architecture, technology, and storytelling format, might not be the only way to think about film and cinema. Movies have constantly pushed boundaries and redefined this structure. From the pioneering work of Abel Gance with his multi-screen displays to experiments with duration and audience interaction, the cinema of attractions, expanded cinema, and exhibition-based cinema movements, film has ventured far beyond the darkened theater, challenging traditional models of representation, creating new ways for audiences to engage with film, and breaking with (and developing) conventions and practices.

Jean-Louis Baudry offered a concept, *dispositif* (derived from the Latin *dispositio,* for arrangement), that delves into the psychological impact of cinema on viewers. Drawing inspiration from Plato's allegory of the cave and Freud's theories of dreams, Baudry finds parallels between these experiences and the way cinema affects us. For him, the *dispositif cinema* is a complex web formed by social norms, technical aspects of filmmaking, and the viewer's own imagination.

The *dispositif* is understood as the nexus of the spatial and technical arrangement of the apparatus in cinema, which constitutes the cinematic perception with each screening (and beyond). Independently of the content conveyed by the media, an ideological effect develops from the *dispositif*, which aims at both the impression of reality, the quality of experience, and the suggestion of participation. In other words, it essentially determines cinematic perception.[[13]](#footnote-14)

The elements of the *dispositif* include, among others, the dark cinema room, the placement of the audience in it (axial alignment), the film space inherent in the image, and so on, which together form a *dispositif* network in connection with the mental disposition of the audience. The concept brings together elements that were previously considered separately, such as cinema technology, cultural traditions of perception and the work of psychological processing.

What is the pleasure of cinema? What desires does it satisfy, and what is a possible explanation for the reality impression in cinema?

The concept of *dispositif* helps us to understand cinema as a complex network of diverse elements, including technology, institutions, discourses and cultural norms—in short, the unsaid as well as the said. This network shapes how we experience film. If you remove the key element of physical location from this network, cinema opens up new possibilities.[[14]](#footnote-15) We can project films onto houses, bodies, or even ourselves, blurring the line between representation and reality. This shift can lead to a more immediate and subjective experience, transcending the limitations of celluloid and objective storytelling. ‘The world is no longer simulated; rather, the possibility of producing world is demonstrated.’[[15]](#footnote-16)

It is valuable to revisit the works and writings of the 1970s and inhale its push for a transformative character of cinema that might encompass new technologies like video, computers, and even light itself. Electronic media allows cinema to move away from commercial, narrative formats and to create experiences where the image itself becomes an active element in space, rather than simply representing something else.[[16]](#footnote-17) Peter Weibel, Gene Youngblood, and Vali Export envision an *expanded cinema* that draws inspiration from various art forms and media, going beyond the traditional film experience.[[17]](#footnote-18) This vision, which took shape in a pre-digital, analogue era of video, foresaw the major expansion that cinema would undergo in the decades to come, fueled by technological and societal changes. As the fight for audiences continues, waged with television and platforms, cinema constantly needs to reinvent itself, demonstrating its remarkable adaptability.

The ever-growing landscape of video (moving imagery) media makes it difficult to define clearly what cinema is. The classic definition is lost. Vertov’s Kino-eye and Deleuze’s Brain Screen[[18]](#footnote-19) don’t seem to be sufficient theoretical frameworks or tools anymore. Cinema needs to maintain specificity and find a way to distinguish itself from other media, proving its unique value proposition against global technologists and capitalists.

The traditional way we understand cinema (the *classical dispositif*) faces a crisis similar to the breakdown of authority and origin associated with lists and maps.[[19]](#footnote-20) The concept of *World Cinema* appeared when film theory and culture began to question the very nature of cinema. This questioning can be seen as a problem of organization: where does cinema fit as a medium, an institution, a collection of films? *World Cinema* offers a solution by proposing new ways of categorizing films. On one hand, *World Cinema* can be seen as an attempt to restore a unified view of cinema as a whole. It helps redraw the map of cinema, encompassing its experiential aspects, emotional impact, and cultural significance. Whether we discuss the crisis of the *classical dispositif* or the various ways to categorize films, we're essentially engaged in a process of *spatial ordering*—creating systems for understanding cinema.

On the other hand, categorization is just the beginning. It's a stepping stone towards deeper analysis—an intermediate stage. The real goal is to ask productive questions and move beyond an initial framework to explore the underlying relationships that shape film. Rather than what or where is it, the question is, what will come next? How can we use our accumulated knowledge of the boundaries of cinema for a cinema to come?

## The location of the moving image

In this line of inquiry a question surfaces: Where is the location of the moving image? Does anybody ever ask such a question, or precisely this question? Why ask this question? Is there a need for this question, or does it amount to asking where ‘cinema’ is? There is a place of a lost cinema in a desert, where somebody speculatively built a gigantic open air cinema, which slowly now fades away. Google Earth still shows you its traces in 2024.[[20]](#footnote-21)

But, actually the question is asking for an object: the moving image. It does not ask where this object is, but rather indirectly looks for its location. The word *location* from the Latin ‘locus’ refers to a particular point and, therefore, to a specific coordinate. That means an exact point and coordinate in an exact descriptive system of an actual space or environment. Why is this in question?

Several assumptions are at play here. The most basic is that the moving image is an object, and that this object has a location. A location is a place or a point in space. Therefore, the moving image has a place, owns a place, occupies a place, or is placed somewhere. Overall, it is related to a place.

The most straightforward, most general answer would be that this place points to what is called cinema, architecture, or a room, or it points to an object itself, a television, an object placed in a room, or any kind of screen anywhere by itself or attached—that is, any other object with an ability to comfort, carry, or host the moving image. Such spaces or locations are not cinemas.

Cinema and TV don’t describe a specific or precisely defined location, which would be *the* cinema or *the* TV, and would there be unique. They don’t lead towards the *locus* but to a *locus*. However, a *locus* named cinema leads to a specific place described as a cinema, which might be unique. The cinema, like the theatre, is a building in a city. In Europe, it is a building in the center of a town. The cinema can be a part of a building or included in a building belonging to a shopping mall, a multipurpose center, a museum, a place where people come together or which many people frequently use, a place where a collective viewing can take place and be experienced.

The home is a place for the Television. An object listed in a household register for insurance purposes, attached to walls or placed, set on stands, amid expanses of furniture.

Cinema and Television are seen in direct relation to a viewer. The viewer meets with the moving image in the form of presentational architectures or presentational objects—a device, a carrier with visible moving imagery, other carriers with invisible, boxed, or stored moving images. It is a physical activity and experience. Cinema and Television are old systems in established places with *informed* conditions. Film, tape, and cassette are carriers of the moving image, which need a kind of specific machinery to make the moving image visible.

In the 1980s, film history, as taught at numerous film schools, was a list of films manageable with clear genres and style, relatively easy to curate in an educational framework.

## Expanded Cinema Stretch

What expands cinema, moving image, and video media is the incorporation of new technologies like immersive sound, IMAX, 3D, computer-generated imagery (CGI), and, lately, generative AI, including spatial explorations in AR, VR, and MR in production and experience. More easily accessible mobile technologies and a new culture of creation allow more people to produce and share films. Affordable filmmaking tools and online distribution platforms have empowered audiences to become creators, producing such fan-made content as remakes, recuts, and mashups. Consumption has created influencers in smaller and smaller social media environments. Audiences are no longer passive consumers. Online platforms allow for discussions and interaction around films, shaping their reception while making them, at the same time, a product to be capitalized upon. Time spent in participation is valuable, marketable and generates Transmedia storytelling, sequels, adaptations, remakes, and participative forms with growing blogs, social media outlets, and new spaces embedded in cinematic universes for sharing as integral to the production process and the underlying expanding business model.

*Cinema* needs to embrace its evolving nature, redefine itself in the context of technologically-driven media developments, and utilize this drive to expand its expressive potential while staying true to its core identity and maintaining its connection to the real world. ‘[*Cinema*] is the only aesthetic language suited to the post-industrial, post-literate, man-made environment with its multidimensional simul-sensory network of information sources.’[[21]](#footnote-22)

The *fusion of aesthetic sensibility and technological innovation* produces a shift from representing phenomenal reality to representing human consciousness.[[22]](#footnote-23) Based on assumptions from the experimental film environment of the 1960s, Gene Youngblood imagined a cinema machine that aimed at intensifying the level of the cinematographic experience through greater involvement of our senses—more deeply engaging, for example, our vision through ultra-high-definition resolutions, or our hearing through complex sound environments.

**Cinema is no longer rendered optical, it becomes a natural environment in which our entire body is engaged**

Paratexts accompany other texts to offer a broader discourse and new interpretations of these texts. They are supposed to intensify the textual experiences and provide the possibility of a personal path in the industry-controlled version—a fake cause of being scripted in advance.[[23]](#footnote-24) Hollywood, however, absorbs home producer practices, using media expansion in the home or grassroots productions as quasi-open sources, and operates through a gift economy, as fans do.

A film is part of a cinematic universe. It could be born in any theme park, continue as a video game, generate a wide range of products linked to its narrative world, run on a platform as a series, and finally return to cinemas in town as a film, or in shopping malls as a comic or novel. Simple examples are the universes of Marvel and Disney or movies like *The Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Star Wars*.

The 1970s also predicted the merge with computer and digital technology. The digital image supports the creation of algorithmic-based worlds, leaving any mold of the real world aside. Through the digital, film ceases to be a direct witness of real events.

Cinematic narration continues to function as a model.[[24]](#footnote-25) The shift to digital inaugurates a new mode of representation. Even when all images are artificial and algorithmically generated, it is the process through which we, the audience, understand what is shown to us as real, and this is the same as the process set into motion by the cinematographic picture. Digital images have allowed cinema to expand and acquire new possibilities. However, it must still define where it is or what cinema is.

The immersive documentary *32 Sounds* by Sam Green[[25]](#footnote-26) and *Eno*, the generative documentary on Brian Eno by Gary Hustwit in 2024[[26]](#footnote-27) are remarkable steps in a direction of newness in bringing *sensory experience, aesthetic sensibility and technological innovation* to global attention, reformatting the documentary narrative format.[[27]](#footnote-28)

In its most and least problematic context, its most profound and its poorest, the domain of cinema is nothing but moving images displayed on a screen. Maybe it will be wise to follow Serge Daney and choose the term visual rather than image.

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## The Snackification of Cinema?

What if, from its very inception, cinema was—and still is—precisely a way of organizing masses of human beings into processes of imagining, producing, and exchanging stories and images that, at the same time, solicit our sense of futurity while foreclosing our hopes that we might ourselves be agents of that future?

Cinema makes us modern, and it does so by announcing to us that the future is already here. Naturally, then, what usually follows this future-that-is-already-here is nothing short of apocalypse—an apocalypse we can only imagine resolving itself in our favor through some heroic return to a recognizable, if reconfigured, *Edenic, Shangri-la, Heaven-on-Earth*, a long-gone past.

In a 2014 talk at the German Film Academy, the film producer and screenwriter James Schamus argued that cinema is a double-edged sword: it allows us to dream and fantasize, but the very technology behind it reflects the potential for destruction.[[28]](#footnote-29)

Why, he asks, does nobody seem concerned that Georges Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* ends in violent war? Similarly, why do so many films, including *Interstellar*, depict the future as destruction and a return to our past social structures, often emphasizing rural life? Cinema's focus on individual heroes reinforces the idea that we cannot envision a collective future, one we build together. Eisenstein already detected a fascinating contradiction in Hollywood's rise. D.W. Griffith's films showcased the towering skyscrapers and bustling capitalism of New York City. Yet, the characters seemed trapped in a narrow, almost Dickensian mindset. Modernity existed alongside a surprising parochialism. Fast cars zipped by, yet traffic crawled, and the high-rise apartments held on to small-town sensibilities, with doilies and faux-Victorian furniture. Siegfried Kracauer, influenced by Marcel Proust, took a different approach. He viewed the camera as a *death-machine,* in a positive light; by capturing and presenting the world, it inevitably alienated and objectified what we see. However, this *death* of our usual perception allowed us to notice the overlooked and forgotten aspects of our surroundings. The camera forced us to see anew. For Kracauer, cinema's photographic nature was the key to breaking free from the limitations of traditional art. Traditional art, he believed, limited the world through rigid structures, with tragedy as the prime example. Cinema, even when striving for tragic closure, had a built-in escape. It could capture the mundane and the overlooked alongside grand narratives, creating a unique balance.

In the digital age, Kracauer's valued balance between recording reality and shaping it through form is fading. The photographic, indexical function of cinema, the ability to capture the world, appears to be disappearing. To truly envision a future for cinema, we need to break free from simply recycling a decaying past. We need films that genuinely contemplate the future, not just regurgitate tired tropes.

Cinema's economic model has undergone a dramatic shift. For decades, ancillary revenue streams—from video rentals to streaming—were the lifeblood of the industry. Theatrical releases were often loss leaders, advertisements to be consumed later on smaller screens. Can the future of cinema simply be about selling overpriced snacks to a captive audience? Currently, the *No Outside Food or Drink Allowed* policy seems like a key pillar of the business model. Is cinema destined to just be about gathering large crowds to consume popcorn and watch screens?

Historically, cinema thrived as a community event. Double features, newsreels, and trailers created a shared, plural experience. The assumption that cinema starts with a singular theatrical experience followed by a digital afterlife is a recent invention.

One defining characteristic of cinema is that a film's conclusion is often preordained. Unlike television, which can endlessly adapt and evolve, cinema starts with an ending in mind. In a world of endless content, is this inherent finitude a death knell for cinema?

‘It is not that film producers create cinema, but rather that cinema, as an ideology and institution, produces cinema producers.’[[29]](#footnote-30) Movies aren't just about visuals, sounds, and emotions. They also create a complex behind-the-scenes network. This network involves administrators who translate money, intellectual property, and creative work into protocols and relationships. These protocols and relationships are then embedded within the movie itself, designed to travel across different media platforms. Think of it like a hidden language—a network of co-production treaties, credit lines, contracts, licensing deals, special accounts for holding funds, talent agreements, and even marketing tools, all working together to create and target audiences.

Traditionally, cinema expertise is seen as existing on a spectrum between *artistic merit* and *commercial success*. This creates a false dichotomy. The assumption is that focusing on artistic merit means the film won't make money, and vice versa. We see producers as the ones who have to manage this *art vs. money* balancing act.

However, the reality is that cinema itself exposes this as a myth. *Art* and *money* aren't opposites; they actually depend on each other. Art, when present in a world where everything can be reduced to a price tag, allows us to imagine human creativity as something *priceless*, something beyond mere exchange value. At first glance, cinema might appear as a vanishing pool for financial resources. Investment pours in, and the films themselves become part of our cultural landscape. This artistic aspect of cinema seems to reject the idea that money is the only way to envision the future. This perspective is an illusion. It reinforces the notion that a world dominated by money, practicality, and logic is the only *real* world. This *real world*, in reality, can often feel like a dystopian nightmare of exploitation, destruction, and a warped sense of reality.

The logic used by governments to monitor threats is eerily similar to how companies like Netflix predict user choices. The effectiveness of this method relies on users believing they have free will, while their options are subtly manipulated. This mirrors corporate-controlled elections, where voters are presented with limited choices. As these predictive technologies become more refined, the future of cinema seems tied to a shrinking window of possibilities. The very concept of a future built on diverse choices seems to be replaced by a series of immediate decisions. The idea of a *cinematic citizen* who can watch films without being tracked and predicted is a point of resistance against this reality. Cinema can be a tool to imagine and resist the predicted future.[[30]](#footnote-31)

## We are Visually Sophisticated and Visually Illiterate

Film blogger Tony Zhou published a video analyzing director Michael Bay's signature style, which he humorously calls *Bayhem*. Bay's technique includes rotating shots, multiple moving elements, and low angles, which Zhou argues are often used without a clear purpose, resulting in a lack of substance and meaning in the story. Zhou believes this style is popular because people can process visual information quickly but need help to think critically about what an image means. Regular consumption of images and photographs does not necessarily or naturally develop visual literacy. It needs to be taught. People are visually sophisticated when using various mobile phone apps to achieve particular effects like nostalgia, or to emulate film or force focus on an element. Still, they often need a deeper understanding of why they are using these techniques. Visual literacy is not just about appreciating the technical aspects of photography, but also about understanding the context and meaning behind an image.

‘It’s fun to be sophisticated, but it’s dumb to be illiterate.’[[31]](#footnote-32)

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## on cinema alone or the uniqueness of cinema

*‘The cinema was only really alone, truly alone, between the arrival of the sound film and the arrival of television, which more or less applies to what André Bazin called the cinema of reality (even if his description has assumed many more definitions than he could have imagined).’[[32]](#footnote-33)*

Despite having different goals, cinema and television developed in tandem. Television's roots go back to the silent film era, or deeper in time, with advancements then happening in the US, England, and Germany. While sound film initially overshadowed television's potential, both technologies continued to evolve. Unchallenged, cinema would reign supreme. The fusion of image and sound, encompassing dialogue, effects, and music, birthed a revolutionary *realism* unlike anything ever experienced. Television, with its distinct apparatus, had yet to emerge as a competitor. Sound film altered fundamentally our experience of moving pictures. Voice and sound became *a new dimension of the visual image*. Sound ‘makes visible in itself something that did not freely appear in the silent film, effectively denaturalizing’ the visual image.[[33]](#footnote-34) The established order is disrupted; the image is no longer simply *seen* while speech is *read*. Instead, the *speech-act becomes visible at the same time as it makes itself heard*, and the visual image itself becomes *legible as such*.[[34]](#footnote-35) This shift from classic to modern cinema, as Deleuze terms it, involves a *new use of the talking [sic], sound and the musical*. Sound becomes more independent, with a tendency towards *free indirect discourse,[[35]](#footnote-36)* where the image carries the weight of meaning rather than the spoken word.

Such transformation elevates the image's role; it becomes *readable* in a new way. The *speech-act* itself becomes *an autonomous sound image*. Bellour further connects this development to television, suggesting that television represents a *second stage* of sound film. While television enabled this evolution, it failed to exploit its own creative potential, necessitating cinema to provide a *pedagogical lesson*.[[36]](#footnote-37)

To understanding cinema's unique qualities, Bellour argues for a perspective rooted in the personal experiences and deep love for film held by French cinephiles, particularly those associated with the influential magazine *Cahiers du cinéma*. Following the ideas of André Bazin and the *Politique des Auteurs* approach, this movement championed Hollywood's classical era and the second stage of sound film. Filmmakers like Rossellini, Renoir, Hitchcock, Hawks, Welles, and Bresson became central figures in their discussions. The journal's focus reflected a growing recognition of film's distinct artistic character. This awareness coincided with a decline in cinema's dominance as a medium, leading to a heightened appreciation for its unique qualities. Filmmakers like Jean-Marie Straub and Jean-Luc Godard aimed to preserve the distinctiveness of cinema and film.

Bellour's concept of *cinema, alone* is intricately linked to the notion that cinema's unique identity began to fade as its self-awareness and appreciation blossomed. The core idea is to safeguard cinema's unique character across all its transformations and challenges. Such a perspective raises a critical question: how does contemporary cinema relate to its original form? The introduction of sound, for instance, brought the element of time to film, and filling this time necessitates a viewer capable of piecing together the film's information as a whole.

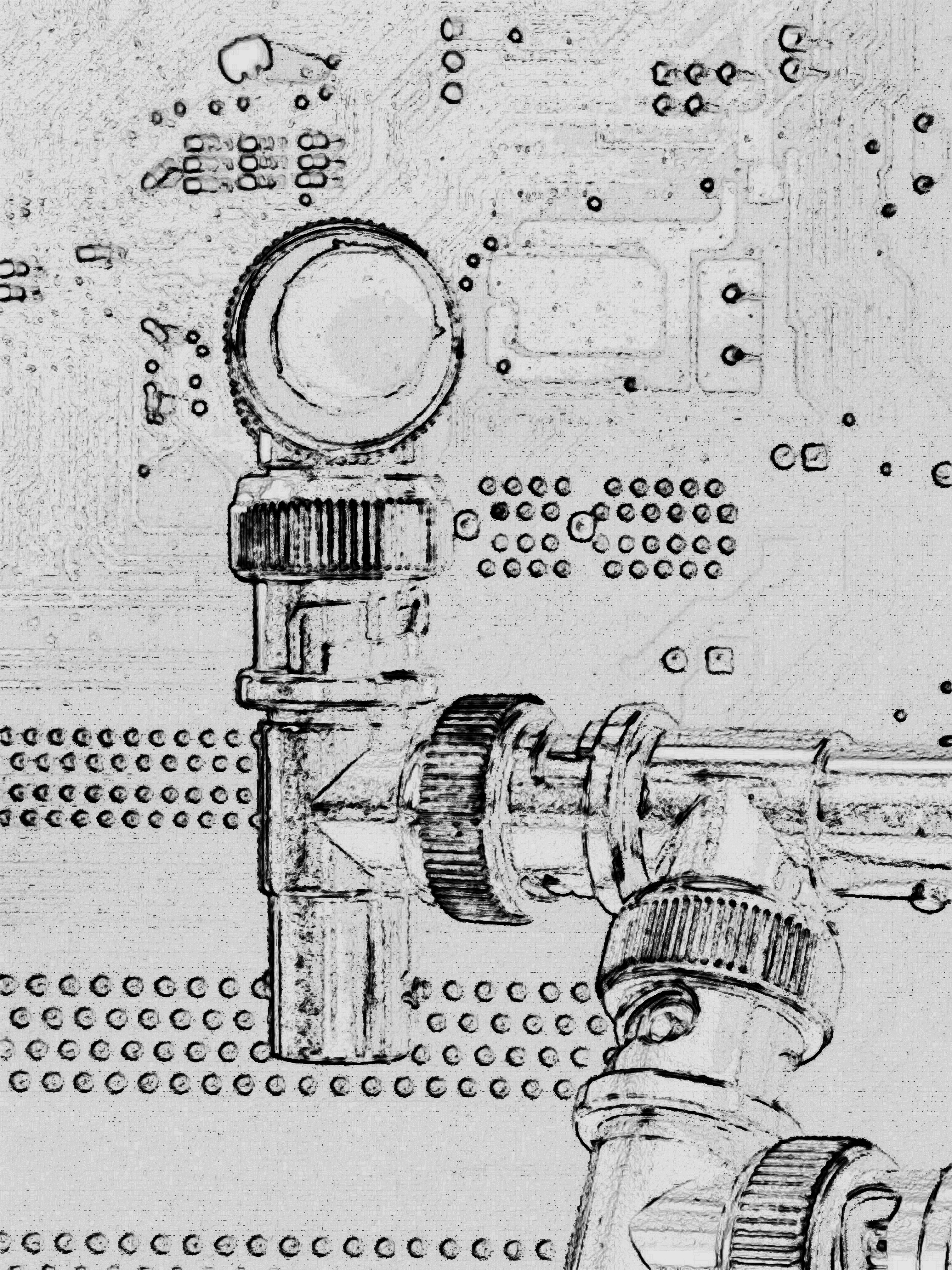
Chris Marker's *Level Five* may not be his best film, but it is, for Bellour, significant in its own right. It is the first example of a film that creates an intimate relationship between memory, image creation, and the computer as a machine and *dispositif, t*hrough the practice of the filmmaker Marker. This film opens a wound in the *cinema-dispositif* and places itself within it.

*Level Five* was made simply and modestly, using a single room and no crew. Marker claims that this approach allows for a new intimate, solitary filmmaking practice. He further claims he opened up …

*one of several possible kinds of cinema, that's all…You could never make Lawrence of Arabia like this. Nor Andrei Rublev. Nor Vertigo. But we possess the wherewithal—and this is something new—for intimate, solitary film-making. The process of making films in communion with oneself, the way a painter works or a writer, need not be now solely experimental (qtd. in Walfisch).[[37]](#footnote-38)*

While working on his CD-ROM project *Immemory* [[38]](#footnote-39), Chris Marker also explored the concept of cinema's future within the CD-ROM’s *Cinema* section. He ponders the possibility that cinema may have reached its full potential, paving the way for something new. Marker quotes Jean Prévost, who suggests death isn't a tragedy, but rather a reunion with all that's been loved and lost. In the same way, cinema's potential demise could be seen as a vast memory, an honorable fate.

Even though cinema may seem lost, it's constantly reignited by exceptional films that continue to be made.[[39]](#footnote-40) These films deliver on the core promises and possibilities that cinema, as a unique medium, has always offered. I am thinking of Peter Tscherkassky’s film work, or the 2023 *Anatomy of a Fall* by Jutine Triet, narrating and performing so-not-seen kinds of cinema.

Fig. 4. AMPHENOL

Amphenol Corporation is a major producer of electronic and fiber optic connectors, cable and interconnect systems such as coaxial cables.[3] Amphenol is a portmanteau from the corporation’s original name, American Phenolic Corp. Amphenol was founded in Chicago in 1932 by entrepreneur Arthur J. Schmitt, whose first product was a tube socket for radio tubes (valveholder bases). Amphenol expanded significantly during World War II, when the company became the primary manufacturer of connectors used in military hardware, including airplanes and radios. From 1967 to 1982 it was part of Bunker Ramo Corporation. The company sells its products into diverse electronics markets, including military-aerospace, industrial, automotive, information technology, mobile phones, wireless infrastructure, broadband, medical, and pro audio. Operations are located in more than 60 locations around the world.

1. Engl.: *It was a place, cinema, it was a territory.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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11. Rudolph Thun, Die Bedeutung des Programms für einen Erfolg des Fernsehens, In: Treske, Andreas. Fernsehen - Eine Zeitschrift - Ein Verein: Beiträge Zur Fernsehdiskussion Aus Der Zeitschrift "Fernsehen" Von 1930 Und 1932. Forschungsschwerpunkt Massenmedien u. Kommunikation an d. Univ., Gesamthochsch, 1986. p. 34: It is often held that for the successful introduction of television, it is sufficient if the equipment is sufficiently developed, and the creation of satisfactory television programs will then no longer pose any difficulties. This view would be correct, now that sound films have become widespread, if television were a replacement for the cinema and could achieve the same performance as direct projection equipment. However, neither of these assumptions is true. (Translation by the author). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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