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'The place of our dreams': Łódź Film School and the Workshop of the Film Form

Introduction

"(...) at the film school, we developed a concept of an open school, not only a school for cinematography but for all possible disciplines. That concept was elaborated on and articulated in great detail, but martial law ruined all that and we left the film school for a very long time. I returned only in 1995. And today the school is turning into the place of our dreams, a multimedia place."¹

In a conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist published in 2010 - forty years after the formation of the Workshop of the Film Form— Józef Robakowski frames the Workshop as a means to develop and establish an open concept of education. This concept was elaborated within the specific context of Łódź Film School², which was (and continues to be) one of the most world's most celebrated national film schools. The Workshop's core members, including Robakowski, were students at the Film School in the late 1960s or early 1970s and, working with its resources, they made numerous short 35mm films and videos. The Workshop members used every official and unofficial opportunity offered by the Film School to develop international contacts. For example, they would often present their work informally to the various international visitors invited by the School to Łódź, eventually receiving invitations to participate in many prestigious festivals and exhibitions, including Documenta 6 in 1977.

The artistic and cultural significance of the Workshop of the Film Form has been widely recognised by practitioners and scholars of art and experimental film and video. But the impact and legacy of its critique of film education has not yet been fully explored within the context of film and media studies. Workshop members favoured a laboratory-like model of education, emphasising the importance of experiments and tests, exploring a range of media and technologies, extending well

¹ 'Józef Robakowski in Conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist', *Józef Robakowski: My Own Cinema*, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, 2012, p. 29.

² I have taken the title Łódź Film School from the institution's own official website, but in English language publications of the Workshop of the Film Form, dating from the 1970s, it is usually titled "Łódź Film, TV and Theatre School".

beyond the norms of industrial film and television production. Workshop members had extensive knowledge of film theory and of the history of avant-garde art practice directly connected to Poland and to Łódź in particular. The official Film School curriculum, in contrast, tended to prioritise the knowledge gained from practical assignments, closely linked to industry norms and standards, overseen by professors who were well-established in the Polish film industry as directors or cinematographers.

Rather than simply rejecting the educational and professional opportunities provided by Łódź Film School, the Workshop members appropriated and repurposed the existing academic structures, forming a student society to ensure access to material resources allowing them to make their own films. The Workshop therefore operated differently from student-led protest movements emerging in other educational contexts during the late 1960s. Nonetheless, their struggle for greater creative freedom—achieved in part through their embrace of the role of ‘artist’—resonates with aspects of the ‘artistic critique’³ identified by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in relation to contexts such as the student and worker movements of May’68 in France. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, these movements articulated a demand for increased autonomy, which has since been appropriated and exploited in newer forms of management, which promise workers a high degree of autonomy and creativity, often at the expense of job security and stability.

In this essay, which is informed by interviews with Paweł Kwiek, Janusz Połom, Józef Robakowski and Andrzej Różycki conducted in Łódź and Warsaw⁴, I explore the relationship between the Workshop and the infrastructure and organisation of Łódź Film School in the 1970s. I outline some of the strategies used by Workshop members, collectively or individually, to establish themselves as artists and to develop creative and professional networks extending beyond the Polish film industry. I consider the legacy and ongoing significance of this artistic critique of industry-oriented film education, both in Poland and elsewhere. My discussion is informed by Duncan Petrie and Rod Stoneman’s *Educating Film-Makers: Past, Present and Future*. In this study, Petrie and Stoneman examine the history of industry-oriented film education before and after 1989, within many different

³ E. Chiapello, „Evolution and Co-optation: The ‘Artist Critique’ of Management and Capitalism”, *Third Text*, Vol 18, Issue 6, 2004, pp. 585-594. See also L. Boltanski E. Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2007.

⁴ These interviews took place at various locations in Łódź and Warsaw in May 2016 and they were arranged by Marika Kuźmicz of Arton Foundation, who was also the interpreter.

national contexts, arguing that (in some contexts at least) film schools have begun to emphasise technical and professional specialisation instead of critical and creative development.⁵

I also draw upon research within the fields of cultural industry studies and production studies, including Petr Szczepanik's analysis of the 'state-socialist mode of production' in East-Central Europe, which focuses on the political history of Czech, East German, Hungarian and Polish film production cultures.⁶ Szczepanik is careful to differentiate between these cultures, noting that film directors occupied a particularly significant role within the Polish cultural context.⁷ Although he does not deal directly with the Polish film school environment, his research indicates that industry professionals in some state-socialist production cultures played a central role in the authorisation of practical film education. In some instances, they rejected state-sanctioned educational models that did not conform to their norms and standards, partly as a way to assert their authority, expertise and relative autonomy from state controls.⁸

According to Szczepanik, 'historians and filmmakers have noted that in spite of their oppressive aspects, the nationalized film industries of East-Central Europe provided unprecedented levels of material and professional support for those involved in the production of art cinema'⁹. These 'oppressive aspects' were quite varied, including not only state censorship and other mechanisms of direct control but also more complex and subtle 'negotiations of power that [...] involved rewards, punishment, paternalism and corruption'¹⁰. Significantly, Szczepanik argues that workers in state-socialist film industries may have experienced different levels of exposure to oppression, depending upon their professional role. He differentiates, for example, between the situation of camera operators, editors and production managers, who often 'enjoyed long careers from the 1930s to the 1960s'¹¹, and the situation of many directors, screenwriters, dramaturgs and unit heads¹². He argues

⁵ D. Petrie, R. Stoneman, 'Introduction', *Educating Film-makers: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Duncan Petrie and Rod Stoneman, Bristol: Intellect Books, 2014, pp. 3-11.

⁶ P. Szczepanik, 'The State-Socialist Mode of Production and the Political History of Production Culture' in *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures*, edited by P. Szczepanik, P. Vonderau, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 113-134

⁷ P. Szczepanik, *ibidem*, p. 117. He describes the Polish production units as 'quite unique' within the context of East-Central European industries.

⁸ P. Szczepanik, *ibidem*, p. 129. The example given is of a one-year crash course devised to educate Czech labourers as directors, producers, camera operators and production managers. Industry 'patrons' were assigned to each student but they rejected their roles.

⁹ P. Szczepanik, *ibidem*, p. 114.

¹⁰ P. Szczepanik, *ibidem*, p. 114.

¹¹ P. Szczepanik, *ibidem*, p. 125.

¹² Szczepanik identifies the 'unit' as a mechanism for the organisation of film production within the State-Socialist system. He compares unit heads to producers but notes that they had less control over finance and marketing than Hollywood producers, p. 119.

that this latter group of industry workers were more vulnerable to Communist Party ideological and political shifts.

In the years that have passed since the end of the state-socialist system described by Szczepanik, the economic, political and social context for film and television production (and education) has changed radically, in Poland and elsewhere. Film and television workers, including camera operators, editors, production managers, directors and screenwriters, have had to reconfigure their work practices in order to survive and prosper with a new commercial economy, which is explicitly focused on commercial competitiveness. Szczepanik points out that, even though Polish films have attracted 'sizeable' domestic audiences, the 'media industries of East-Central Europe are still struggling to respond to the dissolution of the state-controlled economy and its organizational structures, and to their marginal geopolitical position, and have been unable to develop internationally competitive strategies'¹³. The widespread use of digital technologies since the early 2000s has also brought about radical changes to film and television production methods and workflows. Consequently, employment instability has become a condition that is now shared by almost all workers in the media industries. This radically-altered environment provides the context for my reconsideration of the relationship between the Workshop of the Film Form and the Film School.

Film Education and the State

In their critical history of practical film and television education, Petrie and Stoneman identify several distinct phases in the development of state-sponsored film education, beginning in 1919 with the establishment of the (highly influential) Vserossiyskiy Gosoudarstvenni Institut Kinematographii/All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow. They suggest that 'propagandistic aims' were central to the establishment of VGIK and also the next major film school to be founded in Europe—the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, established in Rome by Mussolini's Fascist administration in 1935¹⁴. But following the end of World War II, a new wave of film schools emerged in many European national contexts, often seeking to 'rejuvenate or create vibrant national film industries and moving image cultures'¹⁵. During this immediate post-war period, film schools were founded in Hungary (1945), Czechoslovakia (1946), Poland (1948), Bulgaria (1948), Romania (1950) and East Germany (1954). Numerous Western European countries also established their own schools in the 1940s and 1950s (with Spain, Greece and Austria followed by

¹³ P. Szczepanik, *ibidem*, p. 113.

¹⁴ D. Petrie, R. Stoneman, 'Introduction', *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁵ D. Petrie, R. Stoneman, *ibidem*, p. 3.

the Netherlands and Belgium), a succession of Scandinavian countries, West Germany and, in the 1970s, the UK.

Some of these schools had been preceded by earlier educational initiatives. For example, a training workshop for filmmakers had existed in Kraków in 1945, but the decision was made to locate the new Polish national film school in Łódź, in part because the city was already home to a studio, established with equipment captured from the retreating German army. As Petrie points out, Łódź Film School benefitted from the expertise of several individuals associated with the Society for the Promotion of Film Art (START), a cine-club founded in the 1930s.¹⁶ Jerzy Toeplitz, one of the cineastes who had established START, was to become a leading figure in Polish film education in the post-war era. Toeplitz was appointed as President of Łódź Film School from 1949 to 1952 and held this role again from 1957 to 1968. During this second period of leadership, the remit of the Film School expanded beyond its initial emphasis on cinematography and directing to include actor training when, in 1958, it merged with the long-established Leon Schiller National Drama School.

Petrie describes the state-socialist model of the film school as a ‘cornerstone of state centralization, providing aspiring practitioners with a single approved route’¹⁷ into the industry. Yet he also notes the complex role assigned to film within communist ideology, emphasising that it was often acknowledged as an ‘art form’ with a role to play in national culture, rather than simply a mass entertainment, a view expounded by Toeplitz among others. By the mid-1950s a new generation of Polish filmmakers, many of them graduates of Łódź Film School, had emerged onto the international stage. Encompassing such celebrated figures as the directors Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk and Janusz Morgenstern and the cinematographers Jerzy Lipman, Jerzy Wójcik and Mieczysław Jahoda, the new movement (very often termed the ‘Polish School’) articulated a ‘revisionist analysis of the experience of war that resisted the rigid formulations of socialist realism’¹⁸. While some of these filmmakers migrated, due to pressures faced in the era of Stalinism, others retained a strong association with the Film School and combined their teaching responsibilities with professional commitments as directors and cinematographers.

¹⁶ D. Petrie, ‘Continental Film Schools: A Brief History of the “National Conservatoire”’, *Educating Film-Makers: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Duncan Petrie and Rod Stoneman, Bristol: Intellect Books, 2014 pp. 29.

¹⁷ D. Petrie, *ibidem*, p. 29.

¹⁸ D. Petrie, *ibidem*.

In 1965, Toeplitz was invited to present a lecture on 'The Creative Impulse in Film-Making' at Edinburgh film festival¹⁹. According to Petrie, the lecture emphasised the importance of engaging with the history of film art but, more specifically, it outlined a demanding four-year curriculum of production for directors and cinematographers. In accordance with this curriculum, first year students at the Film School worked as a group to devise a documentary, which was shot by a professional director and cinematographer, with each student then required to produce their own edit. In second year, students made both a silent fiction film short and documentary short with sound, followed in third year by a longer fiction film, a TV show or a 'live' film. Students could then choose from four possible formats for their final year project (fiction, documentary, TV or educational film).

The Łódź Film School model was recognised, even prior to Toeplitz's presentation, as distinctive both because of the emphasis placed on silent, and therefore image-led, assignments and for the sheer volume of material shot by camera students.²⁰ The school's international standing had also been enhanced by the critical success of student productions such as Polański's film *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958), widely screened at festivals. In 1968, however, a pro-nationalist and anti-Semitic campaign led to the expulsion of over 15,000 Polish Jews and Toeplitz was forced out of the Film School. This situation, Petrie notes, allowed 'the return [...] of some of the more conservative "founding members"' of Łódź Film School²¹. The Workshop of the Film Form emerged within this charged context of social, political and institutional unrest. Robakowski, who began his studies in the school's cinematography department in 1966, after completing an art history degree in Toruń, emphasises that many students protested against government anti-Semitism²². But Robakowski also points to some pre-existing difficulties with the curriculum and administration at Łódź. For example, he notes that filmmakers employed as professors in the school were frequently absent, attending international festivals or participating in juries etc. This was a source of frustration for some students, who had succeeded in a highly competitive admission process. They sought a more robust programme of studies, which would not be dominated or disrupted by the demands of the film industry.

Infrastructure and Influences

¹⁹ D. Petrie, op. cit. p. 30. Petrie lists only the English language title for this paper.

²⁰ This high volume of production was noted in a report on the Film School written by Robert Gessner, published in *Sight and Sound* 32.2, 1963, cited by Petrie, *ibidem*, p. 30.

²¹ D. Petrie, *ibidem*, p. 31.

²² Personal interview with Józef Robakowski, Łódź, 12 May 2016.

By 1970, Robakowski would have been coming to the end of his formal studies at Łódź but he had established strong connections within the Film School, contributing as an assistant to the teaching team. So he was highly familiar with the existing institutional structures and systems and played a key role in establishing the Workshop a student association. This meant that members could access material and technological resources such as equipment, film stock and professional broadcasting facilities, and also use the educational context of the school to engage in a range of artistic and pedagogical experiments. The early enthusiasm of some Film School personnel, such as Jerzy Kotowski, had helped to ensure that the new student society was formally accepted by the board of the school. Once this recognition had been achieved, Robakowski describes the activities of the Workshop as a programme of 'self-education' that involved tapping into resources overlooked by many professors. But he also notes that some of the members continued to produce their school assignments, while also working experimentally.²³

The Workshop seems to have functioned very effectively as a mechanism of self-education, and as a structure for accessing and utilising all available resources. Workshop members knew that the Film School was the main contact point for foreign embassies seeking to promote their national cinemas internationally. Since it had been established as a student society, the Workshop could access preview copies of British, French and US films, screening them for free in the School's own cinema. In addition, as students and associates of the Film School, Workshop members sometimes found opportunities to travel internationally, visiting festivals and schools in Moscow, East Berlin and Budapest and establishing important dialogues with other filmmakers and students, particularly in Hungary²⁴.

Robakowski was not the only Workshop member who understood how to utilise the infrastructure and organisation of the Film School to achieve critical and artistic objectives. He was also just one of several Workshop members to be employed by the school and the others included Wojciech Bruszewski, Paweł Kwiek, Janusz Połom and Ryszard Waśko. Połom, a student in the cinematography department and a member of the Workshop from 1971 onward, maintained a particularly long association with the Film School and he eventually became Dean of the Faculty of Cinematography and Directing in the early 1980s. Połom acknowledges that some of the film professors were absent due to industry commitments during the late 1960s. He emphasises that the workshop initially received significant support from within the Faculty (citing Jerzy Mierzejewski as

²³ Personal interview with Józef Robakowski, Łódź, 12 May 2016.

²⁴ Personal interview with Józef Robakowski, Łódź, 12 May 2016.

particularly important)²⁵. But, Połom notes, when the cinematography students started to make their own short films, independent of the directing students and without conventional scripts²⁶, problems arose. By moving away from the established director-led and usually script-based system, the Workshop may have challenged long-standing concepts of authorship, disrupting administrative routines and systems used to govern and regulate production assignments in any Film School.

Workshop Pedagogy and Process

During their primary period of activity, from 1970 to 1977, Workshop members produced a huge variety of films, videos, artworks and performances, both individually and collectively. It is clear that the Workshop's members wanted to develop alternatives to the established norms of cinematography associated with the Polish school²⁷. Many works by Robakowski, Kwiek and Różycki, focused attention aspects of the filmmaking process, including camera operation, editing and direction, which might otherwise be overlooked. It is possible to identify several works that draw attention to the body of the camera operator, the body of the actor, and the body of the film, often by using unconventional techniques or methods, which were sometimes conceived or conducted as pedagogical exercises.

In Robakowski's film *I'm Going* (1973, b/w, sound, 2mins 57). Instead this film focuses attention on the body of the artist in the role of camera operator. This film consists of a single unedited shot filmed by Robakowski as he steadily ascends the steps leading to the top of a metal tower used in parachute training at a pre-World War Two Sports stadium. *I'm Going* can be understood as the document of a performative action, the structure of which is determined by the material bodies of the tower and the artist. Reflecting upon this work, Robakowski specifically emphasises his intention to remove the camera from the eye and from the role of observer, treating it instead as a part of his body. It is possible to situate *I'm Going* within the context of a much broader investigation of the camera during the early 1970s. There are parallels (for example) with the work of Jonas Mekas, known for his sustained interest in the camera as prosthetic extension. But while Mekas worked primarily with narrow gauge film, and subsequently video, Robakowski was carrying a heavy 35mm film camera, and the physical effort involved in the climb is vividly registered in the sounds of breathing. Lukasz Ronduda describes him as 'delving into his own materiality' so that the subject

²⁵ Personal interview with Janusz Połom, Warsaw, 14 May 2016.

²⁶ Połom emphasises that scripts were not used in the making of workshop films, noting that only short descriptions were prepared in advance of films.

²⁷ Różycki notes that, at that time, Łódź Film School was strongly associated with one specific cinematographic style, usually characterised by a slow pace of action, with long takes and composition used to establish m

‘becomes merely a thing among things, a living fragment of the matter’, articulating ‘a non-anthropocentric point of perception of the world’²⁸.

I’m Going also seems to articulate the experience of the labouring, camera-bearing body that is often absent from cinematography. It is particularly at odds with the vantage point of the disembodied floating perspective enabled by stabilising technologies such as the steadicam, developed in the late 1970s. While *I’m Going* emphasises the bodily presence and agency of the individual filmmaker, Robakowski also realised a number of ‘assembled’ films, involving the participation of students. In *22x* (5mins, 1971, b.-w., 35mm) he gave each student several metres of unexposed film stock, inviting them to apply their chosen material procedures. Most used chisels and cutters to scratch the emulsion and many of them also manipulated the optical sound strip on the film. Edited by Robakowski into a single sequence, with each strip numbered, this film articulates some of the contradictions integral to the workshop, manifesting a collaborative mode of production, but fusing the roles of director and teacher. *22x* has been described by Robakowski as an attempt to produce an ‘objective’ cinematic presentation of an artistic community – a community that clearly included students and educators.

It was hugely important for the Workshop to establish a strong artistic community, which was not dependent upon official modes of assessment and validation, but was rather connected to a rich history and legacy of avant-garde practice. Many of the Workshop members were interested in recovering overlooked aspects of Polish avant-garde practice and, for this reason, they made several films about Polish artists, including Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, Tytus Czyżewski, Leon Chwistek, Witkacy, Waclaw Szpakowski and Henryk Stażewski. The Workshop was also a means to question prevailing definitions of the contemporary ‘artistic community’. Robakowski observes that, in the 1970s, it was necessary to be a graduate of the Fine Art academy and a member of the association of artists to be recognised as an artist. In contrast, the Workshop offered a much more open space, reaching out to practitioners who were outside the official systems of art and film education.²⁹

The Workshop also engaged in events and actions that extended beyond established contexts and formats such as the cinema screening and the exhibition, often using art galleries and public space as performance spaces. Andrzej Różycki devised several gallery performances, including

²⁸ Ł. Ronduda, *Polish Art of the 70s. Avant-garde*, Warsaw: CCA Ujazdowski Castle, 2009, p. 282.

²⁹ For example, Robakowski describes Andrzej Partum, an actor and self-educated practitioner, as ‘extremely important’ to the art scene. Personal interview with Józef Robakowski

Ostensible Identification (1973) an action involving projection onto his own body. He wanted to use projected photographic images to explore how the film 'protagonist' is defined, questioning whether a protagonist could exist before and after a film. So, for example, he showed slide images of himself engaged in simple activities, such as playing football, and then during the projection he performed these activities. In another work, entitled *Living Projection* (1975)³⁰, he investigated the notion that 'film is movement' by suspending a piece of film (just five frames) in front of the projector so that the current of warm air from its motor would cause the film strip to move gently. So this work created an impression of projection, without actually projecting film.

Into the Television Studio

Of all the workshop filmmakers, Paweł Kwiek was the one most influenced by cybernetic theory, approaching the film school as one element of a larger cultural, economic, political and social system.³¹ This focus on cybernetics was obviously not specific to the Polish context in the 1970s, and there are many interconnections with (for example) the work of artists such as Hans Haacke and Steven Willats, as well as others working more specifically with film and video, including Les Levine, David Lamelas, Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider. Unlike some of these artists, however, Kwiek (along with other members of the Workshop of the Film Form) had very direct and sustained access to a television studio and could readily experiment with broadcasting technology and organisational systems. In works such as *Video A (A Studio Situation)* (1974) Kwiek takes on the role of director and performer, conducting a test involving three camera positions. A subsequent work, *Video C* (1975) introduces a new element in the form of a computer graphic interface. Like Robakowski, Kwiek was interested in the relationship between humans and machines. But while *I'm Going* articulates a continual, and forcefully embodied, movement through space, Kwiek's video deal with a 'studio situation' in which physical motion is both constrained and reduced. This is particularly apparent in *Video c*, which features various details of the human-machine interface, such as the arrows visible on the screen and the levers that form part of the control desk.

Kwiek emphasises that, because the Workshop members 'had professional skills and status' due to their association with Łódź Film School, 'they were not considered as outsiders to the TV studio'³². Janusz Połom notes that the Director of Polish national television was

³⁰ Personal interview Andrzej Różycki, Łódź, 12 May 2016.

³¹ Kwiek was also very interested in psychometric approaches to the study of human intelligence, such as those developed by J.P. Guilford and utilised in the training of soldiers and pilots encompassing 'understanding, systems, relations, changes, classes, independent people, operations, memory, cognition'. Personal interview with Paweł Kwiek, Warsaw, 14 May 2016.

³² Personal interview with Paweł Kwiek, Warsaw, 14 May 2016.

‘enthusiastic’ about the workshop, ensuring its members had full access to the broadcast facilities, including the mobile broadcast unit³³. In practice, however, Workshop members had to find ways of operating within existing hierarchies and structures, communicating their requirements to engineers and other studio personnel. Kwiek’s performative actions were filmed, under his direction, by colleagues from the camera department at Łódź, but he also required the assistance of a studio engineer who he describes as ‘quite cooperative’. Kwiek suggests that his video works have sometimes been (mis)interpreted as a critique of the Polish television institution, and also of ‘the system, the communist party and censorship’³⁴. It seems that he was more concerned with television (in general) as an institution that involves the control and mediation of communication, through the agency of engineers as well as editors, who determine what is ‘seen on TV’.

It is unclear whether Kwiek’s studio situation works were ever broadcast, but he recalls that several Workshop members participated in a televised discussion with other filmmakers, devised for an arts programme that was broadcast live on Poland’s second TV channel in 1975. There are parallels to be drawn here with other contexts, both in Europe and in the US, since many broadcaster seems to have been interested in radical film and video cultures in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The history of *Black Gate Cologne*, an experimental event devised for German television, broadcast in 1968, is relatively well known. But British broadcasters were also interested in aspects of this experimental culture and, in the late 1960s, London-based artist and activist John Hoppy Hopkins had founded a radical video group called TVX with Cliff Evans, who was then working at the BBC as a trainee cameraman. TVX organised a series of experimental ‘happenings’ at the New Arts Lab in London, in collaboration with the London Film Makers Co-op, using video equipment donated by John Lennon³⁵. In 1969 they were invited, by Tom Corcoran, the director of the BBC2 arts show *Late Night Line Up*, to take advantage of studio downtime by staging a gathering of musicians and friends.³⁶ The result was *Videospace*, which Hopkins describes as including ‘a light show, a studio discussion, and some experimentation in the control room with a vision mixer [...] synthesiser or colouriser’.³⁷ This material was never broadcast but TVX were subsequently

³³ Personal interview with Janusz Połom, Warsaw, 14 May 2016.

³⁴ Personal interview with Paweł Kwiek, Warsaw, 14 May 2016.

³⁵ S. Partridge, ‘Artists’ Television: Interruptions – Interventions’, in *REWIND | British Artists’ Video in the 1970s & 1980s*, edited by Sean Cubitt and Stephen Partridge, New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2012, p. 75.

³⁶ A. Lockhart, ‘A Brief History of Video – Time and Base’, in *REWIND | British Artists’ Video in the 1970s & 1980s*, edited by Sean Cubitt and Stephen Partridge, New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2012, pp. 182-183.

³⁷ John ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins, cited by S. Partridge, *ibidem*, p. 76.

commissioned to produce a series of short promotional 'visualisations', which were aired by the BBC, yet proved to be controversial.³⁸

Also worth mentioning in this context is the work of the US-based video group Videofreex, particularly their tape *process video revolution*, which documents a failed attempt to make a public TV show about video collectives in April 1971³⁹. The tape was shot in a working television studio and it depicts broadcast personnel struggling to integrate the broadcast system with the portable video technology used by the Videofreex and other collectives. Rather than participating in the discussion with other activist groups, the bearded and casually-dressed 'freex' move around, recording the clean-shaven and smartly-dressed broadcast production personnel at work. One of the broadcast engineers warns that they "can't shoot in the studio" and when the Videofreex crew persist, they are told, in a vaguely threatening tone; "This is a union shop. You can't do that here".

At that time, television studios in both the US and Poland would have been staffed by engineers, camera operators and other workers who were most likely union members, with highly regulated and standardized workflows and roles. John T. Caldwell and Deirdre Boyle have both produced interesting accounts of the tensions between guerrilla TV collectives and broadcasters in the US during the 1970s.⁴⁰ These tensions were partly ideological but also linked to labour changes associated with new video technologies. For example, when video was used in television news gathering, the smaller handheld cameras meant that the size of the crew could be reduced. Television personnel had to adapt to new production processes and altered workflows, associated with the introduction of each new technology. Writing in the UK context, John Wyver has also highlighted tensions in the relationship between artists and TV workers in the European context, noting that artists often saw themselves as reformers of television and tended to disregard the technical and craft-based knowledges of broadcast engineers, editors and camera operators⁴¹. In some instances these conflicts were related to differences in education and it is here that the

³⁸ M. Dickson, 'Vide Verso: Video's Critical Corpus', *REWIND | British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s*, edited by S. Cubitt, S. Partridge, New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2012, p. 129. Dickson does not specify whether the 'visualisations' were shown on BBC1 or BBC2, but he notes that TVX were subsequently 'banned from the BBC', p. 29.

³⁹ D. Boyle, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp.17-25.

⁴⁰ J. T. Caldwell, 'Worker Blowback: User-Generated, Worker-Generated, and Producer-Generated Content within Collapsing Production Workflows' in *Television as Digital Media*, edited by James Bennett and Niki Strange, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011, p. 302 ; D. Boyle, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited*, ibidem. pp. 17-25.

⁴¹ J. Wyver, 'TV Against TV: Video Art on Television' in *Film and Video Art*, edited by Stuart Comer, London: Tate Publishing, 2009, pp. 122-131.

particularity of the Workshop comes into focus, because the Film School was a recognised pathway into Polish broadcasting and its students had a high level of technical knowledge.

Yet even though they were being trained to work within an industrial context, the Workshop members consciously and consistently sought recognition as artists. This was achieved through their collaborations with other artists, including those associated with the Fine Arts Academy, through their participation in gallery exhibitions, performance and actions, their films about the history of avant-garde, and their development of projects that did not conform to the dominant script-based, director-led model of production in Polish cinema. The position of 'artist' may have been especially appealing to Workshop members seeking to circumvent the dominance of the director as auteur, within the Polish School and within cinematography generally⁴². From this perspective, *I'm Going* is a particularly significant and effective articulation of the camera operator as artist since, like much performance art of the 1970s, it explored and manifested a strong sense of bodily presence and endurance.

Conclusion: Workshop Legacies

By the mid-1970s, Łódź Film School was becoming less hospitable to the Workshop. Robakowski suggests that Stanisław Kuszewski, who was a head of the Film School in Łódź, from 1973 until 1980 was frustrated by the attention and interest generated by their activities⁴³. Financial support for the society was withdrawn and the members needed to find new sources of funding. But even though their shared activities declined after 1977, following their involvement in Documenta, many workshop members remained closely involved in the school. Kwiek taught there in the late 1970s⁴⁴ and together with other Workshop members and associates, including Połom, Robakowski and Ryszard Waśko, he contributed to the establishment of new movement for the 'restoration' and reform of the school⁴⁵. The restoration committee organised various strikes and protests, with the aim of opening the school to other media, including photography and, after negotiations with Ministry of Culture, a new system was introduced to ensure a free election of senior faculty.

Połom was subsequently elected as Dean of the Faculty of Cinematography but his appointment in 1981 coincided with the implementation of Martial Law in Poland in an attempt to

⁴² C. Greenhalgh, 'Shooting from the Heart – Cinematographers and their Medium', in *Making Pictures: A Century of European Cinematography*, edited by Michael Leitch, Imago, The Federation of European Cinematographers and Harry N. Abrams, 2003, p. 146.

⁴³ Personal interview with Józef Robakowski, Łódź, 12 May 2016.

⁴⁴ Personal Interview with Paweł Kwiek, Warsaw, 14 May 2016.

⁴⁵ Personal Interview with Paweł Kwiek, Warsaw, 14 May 2016. This history is documented by Ł. Ronduda, *Polish Art of the 70s. Avant-garde*, op. cit., p. 273.

crush political opposition. This period, which lasted officially until 1983 but continued to affect political, social and cultural life for many subsequent years, was marked by political repression, censorship, travel restrictions and also economic hardship, all of which led to increased emigration. Although Połom remained in the role of dean for several years (emigrating to Mexico in 1984), it was increasingly difficult to negotiate between the radical aspirations of the students and the demands of a restrictive cultural and political administration. By the end of the 1980s, many of the former Workshop members had left the school, or emigrated, but this dissociation was not permanent. In 1995, Robakowski again began teaching at Łódź and he has continued to play a role within the Film School. He has witnessed significant shifts in the institution, to the extent that he now recognises the curriculum 'as the one we wanted to have in the 1970s' since it now encompasses previously excluded media such as 'animation, electronic art, photography'⁴⁶.

Robakowski's ongoing involvement in the Film School helps to ensure a continued awareness of the Workshop and its critique of film education,⁴⁷ at least in Łódź. But the positive developments he describes are in contrast to the broader trends analysed by Petrie and Stoneman in *Educating Film-makers*. While their study is not specifically concerned with developments at Łódź Film School, they identify significant changes in film education after 1989, explicitly shaped by the demands of globalisation and the marketplace. Petrie and Stoneman argue that many film schools have now moved away from the earlier model of cinema as an 'auteur-driven, socially-relevant cultural expression'.⁴⁸ In this globalised marketplace, they argue, even the most 'established' school struggles to function as 'a site for innovation and new thinking', tending instead to 'adopt a more overtly professional role, dictated by the needs of industry, which has served to reproduce commercial forms and arguably discourage genuine originality'⁴⁹.

Interestingly, Petrie and Stoneman are openly in favour of 'innovation', a buzzword of neoliberal cultural and economic policy, so they do not actually reject the demands of the globalised marketplace. They insist, however, that innovation cannot be fostered by market-driven models of specialisation and they specifically bemoan the emergence of separate spheres of practical and theoretical film education, which has severed practice from critique. It seems difficult, at first, to reconcile Duncan and Petrie's rather grim account of post-1989 developments in industry-oriented film education with the progressive environment described by Robakowski at Łódź and it is certainly

⁴⁶ Personal interview with Józef Robakowski, Łódź, 12 May 2016.

⁴⁷ The curriculum still does not fully address the history of multimedia and histories of art and film tend to remain separate from each other. Personal interview with Andrzej Różycki, Łódź, 12 May 2016.

⁴⁸ D. Petrie, R. Stoneman, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

⁴⁹ D. Petrie, R. Stoneman, ibidem. p.6.

possible that the Polish educational context simply differs from the norm. Petrie does acknowledge the existence of ‘countervailing tendencies’ in film education, citing the critical and commercial success of the Danish model in the late 1990s, a period marked by the emergence of the Dogme 95 movement. He notes that students in all departments in the Danish National Film School are required to study dramaturgy and to work within clearly assigned limits and constraints⁵⁰, engaging in exercises that do not involve reproducing industry formats.

It is clear that new skills and attributes are required to operate in an increasingly unstable labour environment, almost all film and media workers, whether they are above or below the line, must now use a range of new strategies and techniques to negotiate and secure work assignments. So, for example, they must continually extend and maintain their professional networks, engaging with new technologies, radically-altered workflows and hierarchies (particularly in the camera department), insisting upon the employment rates and standards secured by guilds and unions through collective bargaining, while also asserting their adaptability and flexibility⁵¹. John T. Caldwell has used the term ‘worker blowback’ to describe some of the strategies used by film and media professionals to assert their professional (and artistic) credentials, while also airing grievances and anxieties, via industry-focused social media. Through these forms of protest and critique, film and media practitioners may frame their own anxieties through reference to concerns about declining standards, appealing to abstract artistic (or craft) values assumed to be under threat.

As students of Łódź Film School in the late 1960 and early 1970s, the Workshop members were being educated to operate within the well-established culture and relatively protected labour structures of state-socialist film production and distribution. Despite the restrictions associated with this system - such as the pressures of censorship - the conditions of employment for technical workers were fairly stable. Yet within the Polish context, production processes and systems were very often organised around the figure of the auteur-director. Through their critique of conventions and norms of filmmaking, the Workshop members imagined, and sought to create, an alternative economy of production and distribution, which offered much greater artistic autonomy for cinematographers, enabled new and unconventional forms of interdisciplinary collaboration and supported experimentation with new media and technologies. In the process, they devised a whole array of strategies that might now prove particularly useful for students seeking to navigate a radically-altered labour environment, characterised by new (and shifting) professional assignments, hierarchies and identities.

⁵⁰ D. Petrie, *op. cit.*, pp 38-39.

⁵¹ J. T. Caldwell, *op. cit.*, , pp. 283-310.

Many researchers have highlighted the challenges that are now faced by workers in the film and media industries, particularly those positioned ‘below the line’⁵², including precariously-employed production researchers, runners, visual effects artists, or self-employed videographers. To date, however, relatively little attention has focused on the industry-oriented film school, as an environment in which professional expectations and entitlements are cultivated and managed⁵³. There is much to be gained by analysing the processes through which concepts of ‘professionalism’ (and related notions of ‘labour’, ‘craft’, ‘art’ and ‘innovation’) are continuously formed and articulated within film education. National film schools are especially significant, as state-sponsored and professionally-recognised environments that either critique or replicate the behaviour and values of specific production cultures and labour environments. The history of the Workshop of the Film Form, and its complex relationship to Łódź Film School, offers a particularly important resource in thinking about the past, present and future of film education.

⁵² V. Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011, p. 1.

⁵³ There some exceptions, such as Daniel Ashton’s analysis of the expectations and experiences of film and media students and graduates entering the UK industry, in ‘Making Media Workers: Contesting Film and Television Industry Career Pathways’, *Television & New Media* 16.3, 2015, pp. 275–294.