

Pictorialism in Cinema

Pictorialism in Cinema:

*Creating New Narrative
Challenges*

By

Jarmo Valkola

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I have been interested in pictorialism for decades, and written about it in many previous publications. I can only hope that readers will find this book illuminating and useful. The range is wide as we are dealing with a concept that is one of the basic elements of audiovisual communication. I can also only wish that my approach contains new perceptions and conceptions of our past and present understanding of this phenomenon. There is no one way of thinking and writing about it, although my perspective represents a possible way to do it. The final push for this book happened during the spring of 2014, when I was working as visiting professor at Sorbonne Nouvelle University (Chaire Roger Odin: Seminaires Arts & Medias) in Paris. I presented my research on pictorialism in several academic seminars, and got inspiring feedback from students and colleagues.

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Jyväskylä, August 2016
Jarmo Valkola

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of Greek director Theo Angelopoulos' film *The Travelling Players* (O thiasos, 1975), a group of people stands in the middle of a long shot in a Greek town square. They appear to us as stable entities. The careful composition and delicate framing of the shot exemplify this. Physically they are present in the moment, but psychologically outside of it. Their names—Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Orestes, Electra, Aegisthus, Chrysothemis and Pylades—refer to ancient history, although the background of their appearance looks modern. The immobilised performers literally embody the signs of Byzantine iconography, visualising the magic of a single image and performance, and signs of frontal, mosaic design. The characters are isolated in space and they exemplify the suspension of forwardness through their halted, slowly moving bodies. The image looks like a fresco, a canvas filled with temporal duration. After a few moments of their appearance, the characters cannot stand still anymore; they begin to move, and their body movements are about the continual effort to do so and meet the forthcoming expectation of motion.

Consequently, their movements imply a change in the condition of their environment. They are our anchors in time and space. They are located in the landscape and, at the same time, in our spectatorial mindscape. As the characters slowly walk across the screen, the contours of their performance start to develop, and this process is constructed as an exceptional choreography of human and camera movements. Entering into their specific state of appearance, the motion of the camera expresses their continuous body movements. We perceive their actions as a sequence of phases. The image of their presence turns into a *pictorial* representation of characters and their movements. During these moments, we are at the heart of pictorialism, as an audiovisual endeavour, and a cinematic tableau that connects diverse forms of art, architecture, photography, cinema and painting.

The progress of the performance is experienced as a happening in space where new aspects reveal new dimensions. The physical setting provides the framework, and the structure of the performance derives from the interaction of pictorial traces it leaves within us. The performance of the actors is very artistic as its observable features directly articulate in relation with other contextual factors with which the formal properties

here are in creative use. The opening of *The Travelling Players* consists not only of the actions performed but also of the sensible way in which those actions are directed towards an understanding of the pictorialist nature of the whole output. The performance goes straight to the heart of the matter, opening a plausible view to the style of Angelopoulos' cinema. In this kind of cinema, there is a need to experience a situation and a performance which creates a perceptual engagement between the performers and the audience. Furthermore, as we shall see, this performance also raises distinct kinds of philosophical perspectives. The plan-sequence created by Angelopoulos comprises the essence of stylisation. Time emerges precisely within the visual unfolding of the performers' attempts to re-enact and visualise the historical ideals, and the viewer's acknowledgement of their on-going effort to cope with the possibility of change in this re-enactment. Indeed, at the start of the narrative the performers have the monumentality, control, and perfection of models of history: they stand motionless, in photographic stillness, within the public space. But as the performance unfolds in time, as the "living" component of the performance deploys itself in the long duration of the scene, movement sets itself in.

To phrase this elegantly, photographic stillness and the phantasmatic, iconic control of being are continued in *The Travelling Players* by the gradual integration of various movements which shape the following scenes. The work refers to the political reality of Greece's past by emphasising the unproductiveness of its endeavour. The storyline focuses on a group of actors, touring and performing a sentimental melodrama, *Golfo the Shepherdess*, throughout Greece. The individual fates of the performers mirror the experiences of the Greek nation in the years between 1939 and 1952.¹ Each time they try to perform *Golfo the Shepherdess*, their performance is interrupted by a connection to the Greek past. These are portraits based on real events, and also manifestations of time's fleetingness underlying the presence of the performers in the middle of these events. Angelopoulos shows the immensity and frustration of these performances.

The Travelling Players documents these performances and practices in which the performers face their inability to really influence the passage of time that mobilises their lives. More fundamentally, *The Travelling Players* is about the presence of history, the idea of remembering and translating historical dimensions into a cinematic tableau as an equivalence of experience. Such a fusion of historical times is achieved by means of the preference for long, partly static and theatrical shots and the montage of time. This can happen even inside a single image. The soundtrack

emphasises the timeless representation of their performances, portraying a perspective where sounds and images are working together to create the final outcome. There is also an attempt to archive these moments. Admittedly, the transmission of these standing bodies and the moving gestures connected with the anticipation of future events, materialise these processes into a pictorialist spectacle articulating a clear viewpoint of these operations. These unifying procedures have the ability to spell out Angelopoulos' main points in sharing the walking attributes of the communication of these performances.

These are perceptions of the calmly opposed movements and changes and the eternal passage of time that are unfolding these phenomena, and structuring our comprehension of the relations between human beings and their environment. Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Travelling Players*. Stillness and momentary silences require us as viewers to be still, to observe, watch, and have the patience to wait for the emerging solutions. They allow us to make observations that might normally be left out and not noticed. In this regard, Angelopoulos' film renews our viewing habits in requiring the intense following of events, and heightens our perceptual acuity. There is also the idea of perceptual and temporal connections, as, for example, actions in a pictorialist film by Theo Angelopoulos, do not correspond to the exact time taken for them to develop, but more crucially to the time taken to perceive them.

Angelopoulos systemically filmed historical subjects and objects that are existing or have existed and disappeared, or are on the threshold of disappearing. *The Travelling Players* forms a circle of all this in its display of human failings and historically flawed actions, human and natural phenomena moving alongside the crisis and changes in Greek history together with time's elusiveness and evanescence portraying the lives of these aging artists. In the narrative, silence is marked by the movement of the viewer's attention. A number of important questions arise when we try to understand pictorialist cinema. In the first place, questions about the nature of pictorialism in film, and, in the second place, questions about the significance of pictorialism in cinema generally. It will be helpful to use this distinction between two kinds of questions to structure our exploration on pictorialism. Questions can be ontological (e.g., what is the real nature of a pictorialistic film, and how is it generally related to the development of cinema?), and epistemological (e.g., how does pictorialism contribute to the appreciation of cinema?). A further question that needs clarification is the scope of pictorialism, and thus the extent to which pictorialism falls within the domain of cinema.

As a general consequence, we can state that cinema is a form of art with audio-visuals in motion, and a pictorially-oriented filmmaker can make the most of that. In certain moments, a single film can attain “a pictorial state of expression” by holding the views (images) long enough to make a lasting impression for the spectator. The question is, of course, how long is it possible to hold the spectator’s attention by holding the image? The answers vary, and there is no definitive answer to that question, since a pictorially-minded cineaste aspires to fulfil the requirements for this specific occurrence in a director’s oeuvre. Space, time, and the movements of the performers and film camera will gain new meanings and dimensions through this pictorial search for ideas and viewpoints. This has a lot to do with the aesthetics of the film form, the atmospheric quality of expression, and cinema’s own, very specific communicating style. It features an understanding of the details and context of any art and other influences that can bring in emotional cues and their psychological equivalences through which the spectator works out various stimuli in his/her mind. Through this pictorial concern for film’s audiovisual interaction between images and sounds, a filmmaker can develop various stages of expressive moments, “painting” and planning them in her mind, staging the pictures and, for instance, creating a montage of images and sounds, or a montage-in-the-image through her pictorial angle of visual design.

Orchestration of Forms

For example in the history of cinema, an expressionist director like Fritz Lang could create different rhythms inside his filmmaking practice even in his early silent features (*Der Müde Tod* 1921, *Dr. Mabuse, The Gambler* 1922, *Die Nibelungen* 1924, *Metropolis* 1927), and also later on in sound films (*M* 1931, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* 1932). Lang expressed an orchestration of masses, individuals, and movements, and through his slow, ominous style the cineaste could work with performers, objects, and their shadows to diffuse and deepen the atmosphere, surrounded by a characteristic quality of architectonic atmosphere. Most of it was there to pinpoint Lang’s specific thrust on cinematic planning, invigorating the promise of efficient design. These sites of representation in the work of a single filmmaker respond adequately to the relationship of these filmic forms as artistic signs, images and sounds emerging and developing further into emblems of modernist affectation. Lang’s fundamental concern, which sustained his whole productive activity, deals with a specific search for *pictorial* combinations (architectural spaces with an archaeology of the past), and historical attempts to provide a variety of

solutions for partly futuristic, modern ideas of filmic desires, creating urban sites of architectural orchestrations. This created the consistent *look* of his works, possessing the potential of the camera and the performers, and inviting us as spectators to feel and sense the phenomenological atmosphere of the filmed scenes.

Let us consider that in visual arts and the language of cinema, the recognition of images can be compared with previously un-experienced targets or views with insufficient information, which both require more of a specific perception than a familiar view. Needless to say, the perception of images requires some kind of thinking, comparison, knowledge, experience, and attention. So far, we may think that through experience an observer works toward a solution that is highly appropriate, and this process leads into interpretation. As Richard L. Gregory has pointed out, at most it shows that the process is partly unconscious, and that is why an observer sees the target through image perception, and does not consciously think all of one's choices (1970: 30-2).² Representing this as a valid argument, it leads us to the following: if we think of image perception as pictorial thinking, we can assert that there is a lot of unused information in the image. Another conclusion is that we can identify different targets based on very little information. Consequently, perception is not just recognition, but it is more or less the perception and understanding of spatial structures, as well as the understanding of different objects and parts and their relations in the visual field through pictorial thinking.

Angelopoulos works through his tableau-like images which concentrate on the changes between the pictorial design of his foreground and the background elements tied to the representation of single moments that have their spatial and temporal contours. Angelopoulos and other pictorialist filmmakers select their visions and create their own aesthetic that functions as a vector for the spectator's imagination to fulfil and construct the needed operations in order to extend the perceptual experience of the work of art. This is pivotal especially in the way the represented space, or in Angelopoulos' case, the surrounding landscape keeps expanding as the performers move on the screen. Let us be specific here. These films are not only about the relationship between characters and landscape, but also about the film's narrative capacity, and the value of the director's imaginative ability to capture and *pictorially* present the essentials of the human past and present conditions, which are sometimes considered difficult to catch or even perceive. They show a deep concern for the narrative to evolve and raise questions about the artistic signs and meanings of developing these "intersubjective" states between the history

and the present. In his own realistic and intuitive way, Angelopoulos understands how Greek people live and feel and through his films he documents these aspirations and takes fundamental care of these matters. For Angelopoulos, the past forms a rich collection of views and perspectives, an archaeology of events that also functions as part of the present life, and from which there is lot to learn. The events and sites of the narrative are not only places where things happen, but also something else since they convey memories and recollections. The buildings, as the architectural sites of the past, work as a means to rebuild a certain historical potentiality of architectural concerns that function together with other meanings of the images and sounds. Angelopoulos engages with the shifting moods of narrative and creates a form of aesthetics in which the Greek cultural heritage is presented by a filmmaker who produces a pictorial language of cinema that works as a surface forming a common, communicative boundary and an interface between art, history, and aesthetics.

One has to use a variety of narrative, aesthetic, technological and other audiovisual strategies, which can cast doubt on the realism of the presented images, and point out a certain tension between the nature of the film and the possible references to the historical and philosophical developments of our time. In the works in question, the images and sounds are arranged to illuminate an impression of continuation between the spatial and temporal passing of single moments, elements of narrative that have the effect and sometimes illusion of a constructed entity. The idea or content of a narrative originates in the mind of its creator, and becomes concrete through the use and modes of expression related to the possibilities of audiovisual language structures. These possibilities profoundly affect the nature of the emotions, themes and ideas conveyed to the audience by means of the narrative. One can understand cinema's universe as a kind of microcosm, a world with its own order and logic but also a world with associations and connotations related to its viewing process; when a spectator puts her soul into that world, she sees that it is a "picture" of that world; one can feel oneself "inside" that picture, but in a second one can move "outside" of it and observe the whole process.

We could maybe situate ourselves in the middle of all these phenomena and mediate in the same way as the French visionary filmmaker Chris Marker (1921-2012) did through his films, rejecting the idea of history as simply a "mirror" of events. Marker implied instead that the writing of history does not simply record or reproduce events as they were but gives form to, and perpetually transforms, those events. Our understanding of the past is therefore only the total sum of representations that can be made

of it at any moment in time. Yet, the problem is deeper than a self-conscious recognition of the limits of historical recuperation. For the problem of historical interpretation is also bound up with the experience of temporality. History is caught in a double bind; if what the present understands about the past is never simply the past as it was, it is equally true that our understanding of the present is always refracted through our imperfect recollection of the past. This implies that past and present are ultimately inseparable, for the present continually inhabits our perception of the past and the past inhabits our perception of the present. According to this vision, we are ultimately unable to disentangle what we project back onto the past from the past itself, for we are incapable of detaching ourselves fully from the present. Our inability to stand “outside of history” means that we are ill-equipped to judge whether there is an underlying order to the apparent randomness and chaos of historical events, because the order of history—if, indeed, it exists—must exist beyond the limits of our perception, and thus beyond the reach of our understanding. The problems of history become enmeshed in a series of problems of perspective. The fact that the observation of history is made from a vantage point within history relates the knowledge that it seeks to provide of the world, and thus undermines its claims to objective neutrality or secure foundations.

In his films, Marker emphasised the dialectic of montage, which was not only within a shot, or between different shots, but also between any details and their overall context. Through montage one can think that cutting is, in a way, inseparable from selecting the shots and arranging the images, and often it is also a question of staging the elements inside and between the shots. On a cognitive level, the problem of representing history through film and media is bound up with finding a way to write history, a way that acknowledges rather than occludes, the processes of constructing history as a form of history that finds a place for history's indeterminacies—in terms of both the limits of representation, and the problems that beset our understanding of the temporal. Marker consistently refused to be fixed in any one role. His identity was, in this sense, changing and dynamic and his position in the field of cinematic expression reflected the challenges of a cineaste in evolution to inscribe the broad parameters of filmic passion. Marker's methods engaged us in the mechanisms of cinematic display as a multiple view of possibilities in the contemporary terrain of visual arts.

Theoretical and other Specifications

This is an effort to investigate a dimension of film which I call pictorialism. This is a step-by-step reconstruction of a long research process trying to elucidate the phenomenal contours of the subject at hand, and a few specifications are called for in response to some of the most challenging ideas around pictorialism. Looking backwards into the history of film, I am also trying to reinvent the landscape around pictorialism and the discourse it has produced.³ This propels a voyage into the heart of the phenomenon, and the resulting cultural “picture” is a figuration of these arrangements that became part of the history of cinema. As a creation of elements that has taken place in this cinematic discourse, *Pictorialism in Cinema* closely involves social and artistic aspects illuminated through a different set of perspectives moulding the development of audiovisual design. This book recapitulates the classic journey into the essence of cinema. In this regard, it forms a passage around this specific phenomenon, orientating itself in order to capture the cultural and historical sensibility of this issue to affirm this “pictured physiognomy of appearances” that shapes its audiovisual qualities provoking a response from the author in question. Over the course of this filmic voyage, I am taking several basic interrogative expressions to delineate the tradition of pictorial endeavours in cinema in order to create an imaginable form for this panorama of viewpoints. This activation of matters is not guaranteed, since the impulse here is to re-activate, reconfigure, and re-interpret theoretical and practical issues of expression to build a significant and multifaceted façade, a trans-disciplinary mediation of views and perspectives surrounded by personal aspirations. Looking back at the origins of this retrospective circulation of pictorial expressions, some basic questions lie ahead of this particular espionage in scholarly speculation, in its reordering of the designation of historical knowledge. What is the place of pictorialism in cinema? How can we define pictorialism, and where are its roots? Has pictorialism deepened the aesthetic dimension of cinema? Who are the main developers of pictorialism in cinema?

The aim is to conceptualise these matters and, in many ways, this is an archaeological idea, which in consonant with these and other precisions will help us to demarcate more intensively what pictorialism truly means, and to understand the nature of this phenomenon. It will also help us to situate pictorialism historically, in relation to other similar phenomena in media history with a specific concentration on challenges concerning media education. This is both a theoretical and practical challenge since we are dealing with an interest in mapping transnational networks of

different influences in terms of narrative and pictorial stylisation that has existed but also transformed through time. This shaping of forms and traditions is affecting our mediascape constantly, creating global challenges through an increased circulation of images and narratives. This evolution can be depicted from several media educational perspectives and viewpoints offering new insights into the questions raised. In this context, our media educational perspective would serve to demystify these viewpoints and create criticism of these questions. This is no simple representation of these matters, but mostly a complex discourse to reveal the historical, aesthetic, and other values concerned here. Our initial target is to identify more precisely these new strategies that have emerged at the end of the twentieth century, the new modes and visions of thinking that have formed and created original typologies inside the whole media circle. This analysis is useful in relation with media education challenges which have evolved around concepts of visible evidence of the authenticity of images in the age of digital media where truthfulness acquires new forms. These discourses are also related to moral and ethical questions concerning encounters between film and media apparatuses. There is a need to create and establish an argumentative logic that borders objective and subjective approaches challenging dominant discourses inside the collective mediascape of different phenomena. Our interdisciplinary and comparative approach exists in a variety of theoretical and other debates around these issues. General questions on the forms of art and their overlapping dimensions will clear pictorial inferences, and also ameliorate to define the continuities between different forms of art, especially the connections and linkages between painting, architecture, photography, and film. These larger issues may be tackled more productively if viewed within the broad parameters of cultural dimensions inscribed and constructed as essential connections with pictorial aesthetics. The outcome here can also suggest a change in thinking about the mode, form, and style of pictorial fashion in connection with its general theoretical viewpoints.

From the discursive viewpoint, pictorialism is a unique phenomenon in cinema and media. In its own way, it is one of the basic traits of all cinematic expression. Its originality comes from its constant attempt to connect phenomenologically- and historically-oriented dimensions of film art with other disciplines in art and aesthetics. The products of pictorialism can be perceived by way of using different interpretative strategies and models through which we can connect them theoretically. As we will see, pictorialism is motivated by the commitment to develop and increase the function and effectiveness of images, sounds, and performances that aesthetically formulate, translate, and change the effects of contemporary

cinema into somewhat higher dimensions and qualities of art, and connect to and acknowledge a certain level of filmic expressiveness to come forward in the works of pictorialist film heritage. Contemporary cinema is a pivotal site of pictorial experimentation. In this study, we have to leave a hypothesis in order to show how pictorial qualities and their operations unfold symbolically and aesthetically, and why the whole pictorial system in cinema is being explored through specific processes concerned with filmic audiovisual design and other structures that may have an influence on the whole of the pictorial outcrop in narration. This explains how pictorial endeavours form a genuine and fruitful part of art, aesthetics, and cinema, but in ways that are not always so well-known, especially in film and media studies, and consistently isolate them from other ways of stylising the narrative.

In most cases, pictorialism is left out as being a part of modern cinema's general structural communication, and its specific qualifications have not been explored thoroughly. The big question is still there: how do film and other forms of art use and perform pictorial qualities in their wholeness? Through these specific ideas we try to understand what pictorialism really means, and how it addresses its actual expressiveness in cinema and other arts. What are its subjective, objective, aesthetic, phenomenological, and metaphysical and physical outcomes in its most expressive moments in the history of art, film and media education? From my point of view, pictorialism means an attempt to define the pictorial qualities of narration, suggesting the overall audiovisual structure of cinematic experience, and this is performed through associations and connotations on the level of cinematic narration and on the level of the spectator's imagination including the mental aspect of the narrative. This book explores the questions to discover the criteria for the legitimacy of narrative challenges within the discipline of pictorialism. For me, pictorialism represents a theory and practice of art in trying to depict the artist's audiovisual creations, ideas and thoughts through a pictorial manner of expression. I aim to give a reason for the causes depicted here, and show a possible development of the relationships between various items. I aim to explicate a detailed analysis, adding the use of the imagination to a special knowledge to clarify and interpret the contours of pictorial framing in cinema. In this regard, pictorialism forms a body of principles and perspectives offered to explain the specific connection of film's aural and visual qualities.⁴ Pictorialism's liking for pictorial art is related to architecture, painting, and photographic imagery, resembling "painted scenes" on the level of cinematic representation. Montage (the act of an artistic composition uniting different items), narration (the act or

of the content, and finally serve a number of distinct articulatory functions. In this context, the triad formed by narration, montage and pictorialism combines these elementary perspectives in narratives that can extend temporally between past, present and future, and *vice versa*. The main advantage of this approach is its ability to represent pictorialism as a style in which, for instance, spatiality arises from the blend of the three elements of the language of cinema.

The re-evaluation and re-contextualisation of the theory and history of cinema are in this sense related to the aforementioned stylistic modes of representation as they relate to old and new technologies. This is connected with my own approach to find sustainable ways of articulating the fact that films work in relation to different modes of perception and filmmaking stylisation. The lack of reference works devoted to exploring these connections, as described here, opens a field of study, inasmuch as it allows me to develop my own context around these issues. I also sincerely hope that my approach fills a gap in the academic criticism of cinema. The scope of my book relates to pictorialism while also observing the functions of other elements and it seems to me appropriate to focus on certain directors and their films as examples of pictorial stylisation in cinema. In this sense, I have chosen the films of Theo Angelopoulos and Béla Tarr as prime examples of modern cinema to highlight my study of pictorialism, since I feel that they represent my approach more fully than films by other directors, although I will include many other directors in this study as well. These manners and methods of performing cinematic sentences are seen in accordance with characteristic matters of individual filmmaking practices. Taken together, these premises also represent the heterogeneous nature of pictorialism throughout the history of cinema, the way it is understood as a part of the filmmaking process. In this regard, my point of view relates to a larger understanding of pictorial meaning in the language of cinema, by pointing out the comprehension of the importance of pictorialism as a force and theoretical unit inside the whole cinematic process. This perspective is focused more on cinema as an art form than cinema as entertainment. So to understand what pictorialism actually means, we must comprehend the operational and aesthetic qualities that surround it. Technologically, pictorialism is attributed to the actual filmmaking process; aesthetically, its relationship to the language of cinema is more dialectical, concerning its use as a theoretical and aesthetical concept or idea. It is also noticeable that we cannot take these perspectives for granted, since the use of any perspective is not obvious or even clear. Different theoretical (and practical) viewpoints refer to the concept of pictorialism in different ways and for different purposes. Therefore it is

useful to clarify what pictorialism is from a theoretical or practical perspective, and this does not lead us to the same conclusions. Actually, the idea or nature of pictorialism and its appropriation seem to depend on what different observers have said about it, and what they have thought about it. No clear consensus exists in this area because of the lack of definitions. A good understanding of these problems demands sufficient knowledge and a widening of the spectre around this phenomenon. In order to develop a formal analysis of pictorialism in cinema, I have organised my approach and my case studies so that I will begin first with historical and theoretical perspectives of pictorialism. Thus, the first part of this book deals with the conventions of pictorialist connections in architecture, painting and photography, and their influences on cinematic representations, and also on film studies and film theory. The films analysed in these sections combine various styles but the aim is to track down pictorialism's influences through a large spectre of matters. The next part of the book will focus on pictorialism's development in different surroundings, in Hollywood cinema (von Sternberg, Hitchcock, and film noir), in European Cinema (German Expressionism, French Impressionism, Antonioni, Tarkovsky, Jancsó, and Greenaway), in avant-garde film (Deren), in documentary (Marker and Luostarinen), as well as, in other connections (İñárritu and Kaplanoğlu). Finally, the European pictorialist connection continues, and there are three large sections devoted to the developers of modern pictorialist cinema. The directors of these sections are Theo Angelopoulos, Aki Kaurismäki and Béla Tarr. In the final perspective, my approach is a way to understand the main ideas, subjects and stylisation of pictorialism in cinema, to explore the main ingredients of this phenomenon and to focus on narratives that are in the service of pictorial matters. All this is helped through the use of a selection of filmic examples that illuminate this circle of affairs.

Pictorialist tendencies have not been very thoroughly accounted for in their persistent being and recurrence among the arts. Specifically, the aesthetic procedures of pictorial formations need to be concurred phenomenally, and explored cinematically as images and sounds and their integrated outcomes move through history and contemporary times. In so doing, contemporary artistic and filmmaking practices are not only questioning the past—what has historically happened before—but also highlighting their own historical and contemporary situations and the spaces of this approach—conditions and mediations in the larger sphere of filmic procedures. In our pictorial investigation, aesthetics suspends the linearity of cinematic movements of narrative, and the movement of performance and moving bodies of characters in the middle of it. This also

deals with the continuity of the narrative to examine the audiovisual tendencies and articulations constituting the whole of narration as a surface of diverse processes. In this regard, pictorialism injects its forms and outcomes into the present through its qualitative and narrative formations. Pictorialism activates its forces in the hands of contemporary filmmakers, and verifies how this connection and interaction have been provided in the phenomenological reality of events and their modern assessment of various disciplinary and communicative accounts.

Diverse Connections

Here I have chosen some filmmakers to represent my idea of pictorialism. Of course, there are other filmmakers (Lisandro Alonso, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Lav Diaz, Tsai Ming-liang, Carlos Reygadas, and Apitchapong Weerasethakul) in the history of cinema which might also fulfil the criteria and could be included in this representation, but the ones I have chosen represent exactly my understanding and clearance of pictorialist principles since they are all significantly related to my approach. All the works described here show pictorialism's treatment of filmic narration, activating and modifying or, in some instances, simply narrating and disclosing the viewer's ability to connect together audiovisual features of narration. They spatialise and, in some cases, excessively hold the image to appear and become a pictorial entity. In this regard, they enlarge the spectator's capacity to grasp the pictorial meanings of the narrative. By regenerating and understanding the pictorial mode of narration, they also create new and absolutely modern paradigms of perception. To develop my proposition, the following lines will propose that, essentially, the aesthetic strategy and model of pictorialism are the main procedures through which it is represented insofar as it is experienced by the viewer. This emphasis on experience supports an elaboration and observation of pictorial narrative and film language, one that significantly highlights the enduring effects of this mode of communication. The procedure here entails analytical ideas that are devised to elucidate the effects of pictorial transmission that can be observed and explored to complicate the functions of narrative and the functions of pictorial qualities. In a specific sense, pictorialist narrative articulates the filmic sequences and designates the understanding of them by structuring narration in accordance with the perspective of a single filmmaker. According to an idea here, pictorialism features the director's selective choice in using the images, their inner and outer strength and their audiovisual connections as the illuminative and aesthetic force of the

narrative to enhance and highlight his/her aspirations of control as the key source of filmic expression.

For the pictorial system in film, at least, the pictorial model of narrative predicts the synchronisation of spatially and temporally separate fields within visual areas of cinema to account for the integration of perceptual information across different locations in the visual field.⁷ The pictorial flow of images and the experience of them are never simply continuous or discontinuous insofar as the spectator negotiates in his mind with the visual and aural details represented in a work, letting the visual override the aural and *vice versa*.⁸ The question of authority, either by image or sound, orients our perception when we are experiencing a sequence in film. This image-sound combination varies its intensity from one moment to the next, oscillating between the visual and aural dimensions, which are echoed related to the persistence of our perceptual skills. Whether there is reconciliation, achieved or not, remains an open question.

To further locate these genealogies, we could say that pictorialism is a key component of and contributor to the aesthetic exploration and possibility of cinema's audiovisual dimensions. It insists on the requirement to focus on these narrative possibilities wherever its connection with the historical aspect in arts leads us. We as viewers are engaged in this development of the ontology and relation of image and sound, and through this immanent process we are given crucial prospects for reinterpretation. In the visual sense of the word, pictorial narrative is made to be perceived. It even structures our perception and manifests itself in the artwork. Additionally, it is conceived, elaborated and structured by the viewers as their perceptual experience consists of these audiovisual presentations, conditioned and formed through their noticeable actualisations. This procedure enables the perceptual discrepancies to appear in the segments of audiovisual flow of the narrative.

Pictorialism can go beyond itself in its relation to the depicted cinematic world of happenings. As stated metaphorically, pictorialism conceptualises an environment of the film's overall stylisation. It is recognisable as itself, as a form of style, and as an image-like network and assemblage of psychological and physiological states, signs, shapes, textures, faces, bodies, performances, clothes, everyday objects, instruments, and elements of nature. It is itself a mode of audiovisual display to be experienced and conceptualised. Its relevance, and also its ability to be folded in upon itself, make it a mobile and ambivalent phenomenon which does not have a simple outlining or absolute

incarnation in the sense of understanding it as an embodied substance of filmic narration.

Pictorialism can emphasise the passing of time when materialising the images with operations that can have an added quality of experience in depicting past and historical circumstances. As a consequence of this, it partakes in the modern way of storytelling in arguing that it tries to convey and restage the exhibition of cinematic space, which not only proposes the different perspectival views of narration, but also articulates their constant overlapping with the earlier traditions and forms of historical representation. All this is set into play to produce unique and counteracting forces between filmic display and historic explanation. As a whole, pictorialism's challenges come from its audiovisual dimensions that function as characteristically endowed in the memory values and spatial and temporal qualities of our appreciations.

In many cases, pictorialism works through extended shot and image lengths, the purpose of which is to prolong and stretch the impact of the image-formation. Chiefly, this increase in duration goes beyond the usual limits of image and shot lengths. Admittedly, the effects of duration in representation are pivotal consequences of this process. This specific modification of the language of cinema is typical for pictorial tendencies. The shots, often long takes, have an aspiration to hold the single image as long as it is necessary to construct a pictorial affection and dimension of cinema. The elevation of the temporal plane, taking place especially in the long take, is achieved through spatial manipulation, which means that the way the space is perceived by the viewer undergoes a qualitative change. As an extension of this, the camera movement in the long take reveals a single vision of an event, instead of providing a multiplicity of views. More importantly, the physicality of space becomes manifest because of this identification with the camera. The feature has already been underlined in the early writings of Hungarian theorist and filmmaker Béla Balázs, describing an experience of a long take in the following way:

Spatial continuity is not disrupted. We do not feel the space, nor merely as a temporal container, a frame for the objects, but *the space itself*, independently of the individual objects that it contains. (2010:137-8)⁹

Moreover, in addition to the sense of embodiment, the long take can be described as a temporal continuity, where every moment is a memento of a transcendental quality since the viewer tracks a sweeping moment without any motor effort on his or her own part. As Jacques Aumont suggests, the viewer's glance occupies a privileged, unique space, which is also "the place of God, or the all-perceiving subject, gifted with ubiquity" (1992:

214-5).¹⁰ Related to the work of Andrei Tarkovsky, Nariman Skakov determines:

The spatio-temporal dynamics are even more intricate in the renowned Tarkovskian long take, with which the director created some of the most memorable images of temporal flow. The single continuum of the long take purposely stretches a monotonous, mundane experience and provides an alternative mode of perceiving reality. Once external spatial markers are removed, time is exposed as a fleeting phenomenon. Action or movement, as an agent of space, ceases to have a purely narrative end—the very fact of their continuous presence in time becomes more significant. (2012: 125)¹¹

The purpose of the specific holding of the image is to keep the uninterrupted interest and attention of the image to make a lasting impression on the spectator. In this regard, it is possible to think that a pictorialist filmmaker is somehow devoted to such an aspiration. The hold is considered to be an increase of the maintenance of a certain moment, mood, or atmosphere of filmic ambience. This selected moment is valid, and can sometimes work as a key point or image in a given narrative. It can also appear as an ordered arrangement or qualification of the narrative, or as an indication that something inside the narrative should be reserved, momentarily highlighted, or just simply delayed to bring forth a strong aesthetic impact. These key images and moments can, in some cinematic cases, form an idea or symbol inside the narrative, or create a tonic relation, characteristic to the tone of the “voice” of the film. By repeating these pivotal elements inside the narrative, they can likewise emerge as regulators of the visual spreading of narrative devices throughout the filmic work.

It is noticeable that diverse media connections inside the narrative can possess a specific capacity to serve as a means of communication, to transfer and deliver, for instance, moments of still-life or pictorial stillness, which can come across and mediate images and pictures consisting of predominantly non-moving characters or inanimate objects. As these elements appear in the narrative, pictorialism also renews itself, foreboding future narrative developments. Of course, these pictorial reflections can also mediate movement, implying no more than the idea of the changed positions of the characters or, as in the case of Miklós Jancsó, Theo Angelopoulos, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Béla Tarr, showing a series of actions taken by a group to achieve an impression of joined movement on the scale of narrative, repeated actions. These are specifications of pictorialism, detailed and precise presentations of pictorial outcomes in the

modern language of cinema. They consist of architectural forms, filmic inventions, and single items of this selective representation. They can bring tenseness or density to a single scene or image adopted for the further purpose of the narrative. In my mind, these relations form a unique corpus and, in some sense, even a principal substance of the narrative whole. As an individual designer, the filmmaker has the possibility of controlling the narrative actions. She has the ability to enforce or produce changes inside the narrative chain. This can emerge as the unfolding of events, which can be arranged and marked by present actions, or have the nature of symbolically implying further indications of represented actions.

On a large scale, these movements of the narrative can also be capable of referring to historical states or conditions of cinematic language. By this I mean that it is a question of working out and developing the evolution of cinema and virtual culture since, through pictorialism, we have arrived at a new stance and another kind of intellectual and emotional readiness, connected with late modernism, through which we can find new ways to connect different forms of media, causing interactions inside the cinematic canon and forming a display of noteworthy events. As a mode of filmmaking practice and style and as a variation of aesthetic, technological and other qualities of representation pictorialism is both an independent sign of stylisation and a unit of the language of cinema, a part of the total structure and an arrangement of the tones, schemes and expressions of the filmic universe. Its value comes from the relative importance and magnitude of its possession of control and influence to act as an audiovisual centre and force implying physical, mental (or even spiritual) abilities, or a quality of characteristics that enables its workings inside the narrative chain to produce imaginable meanings and connections. In this regard, pictorialism works as a stronghold of the means of communication associated with various forms of art: photography (the process of producing images on a sensitised surface or virtually); cinema (the process of producing moving images through audiovisual display—from the Greek *kinēma*, motion); painting (the process of representing lines and colours on a surface by applying the substance of pigments); and architecture (the art or science of designing and building structures). As this makes clear, pictorialism combines the spatial (extents in which objects and events occur) and temporal (time-related) dimensions of cinema in bringing together the formal (and mental) act of the still-life representation and visual presence of proposals for action to adjourn and enlighten the scope of narrative. This works as a combination and coexistence of these diverse forms of presenting images (and sounds) to serve and act as signs and symbols in certain phases of narrative to produce an especially marked

influence or effect on the sense and mind of the spectator. This can appear as a form or impression of the depiction of an image or a scene evoking a sense of historical or other realities processed under the skin of the narrative; or as a mental continuity of events occurring in the narrative chain. As a conclusion to these modulations, the tension between instances of motion and movement and immobile almost frozen action is brought into existence.

Pictorial Stillness as Unification

Yet, surely the stillness of the camera (like the equally artificial tricks of a kinesthetic camera in rapid varieties of a movement) must, in the long run, come to seem mannered here as the distant protagonists approach it without haste, with an intolerable leisureliness, carrying their suitcases and making their way step-by-step through the space of the narrow city streets, as if that slowness and that movement were an event in itself.¹²
—Fredric Jameson

In its many compelling forms, pictorialism can work as a filmic operation carried out in order to discover how much a filmmaker can trust the development of creating picture-like qualities and piece them together in the narrative. In pictorialism, characters are linked together with the surrounding landscape to articulate and, in some cases, stress the need or desire to accomplish the pictorial mode of storytelling: a condition of narrative in which the images and sounds, and especially their duration on the screen is extended as if to imply a capacity of a specific continuity, achieved through the holding of the image. Theoretically this means that a pictorial narrative deals with a different kind of continuity-structure than a work of art which does not use these cinematic devices in the same way as a pictorially-oriented film narrative. Another connected element is the procedure—the extended hold of the image—which allows a way for the spectator to approach the narrative solutions. It activates distinctive narrative processes through which the characters and objects in the frame are constructed. This is in conformity with the approach to enclose as little transformation as possible in these moments of painterly impressions when the narrative seems to possess some efficient and enlightening views. During these moments, the narrative of a single film seems to enter into a state of fulfilment of an affective intention of pictorial possibilities. These elements of narration have gained a particular material and aesthetic expression that may refer both to the internal structure and external outline of the narrative that establish a cinematic form of assimilative direction of attention, especially in the moments of extended duration.

Cinema is the newest form of pictorial qualities which has its roots in the earlier forms of representation. The camera in itself is the latest form of transformations in a technological sense, which cover the whole history of figural ideas in presenting visual forms for the spectator. In cinema, the pictorial presence of things is built into the medium, and pictures with light bring in the visual structure and essence of things and reflect our innermost desires in their material and spiritual sense. Pictorialism deals with illustration. Our lives are illuminated through our visual perception, which has a clear connection with our individual psychic levels. Drama lives in pictures, and in sounds, as already realised by Wagner in his way of speaking to the unconscious by mixing together musical and pictorial elements. The precision of the formal qualities of the cinematic composition is needed to communicate the pictorial characteristics of a scene. In pictorialism, the compositional force is born out of the often slowly integrated movements that manifest the necessary repetitive aspects of a scene to work out pictorial controversy. This is done through perceptual factors; the simplicity of the movements, the orderly grouping of the performers, the distinction of figures and ground, and the use of light and perspective to design the spatial values of the narrative.

The account of pictorial seeing applies as easily to pictures of mythical or fictional kinds as to pictures of actual kinds.¹³
—Malcolm Budd

From the beginning of cinema, a single film was assumed to be tied to the representation of “pictorial moments”, a point-of-view highlighted and produced from the perspective of early film-journalism. According to this idea, pictorial qualities of existence were associated with the director’s ability to produce images of “visual beauty” or “haunting landscapes” by selecting the most impressive moments in a given narrative for pictorial views. In photography, pictorialism was used to describe images in which the artistic quality was more important than the scene depicted. The cineaste who could advocate pictorial *stillness* in his/her works, could also gain and connect extended powers in the overall design of the narrative. Generally speaking, film can be considered as an intermediate approach among the arts, and the architectural, photographic, painterly and pictorial dimensions are united and dialogically composed in moments of pictorial stillness during the narrative. The evolutionary and dialectical history of cinema has a specific emphasis and structural realisation in segments when these interdisciplinary approaches are elevated and highlighted; they can become inventions and conventions of a broader comprehension of filmic possibilities.

The photographic dimension of stillness is strongly rooted in the essential nature of the photography itself, and usually understood as a photographic freeze of the image. The immobility of the image increases its expressive strength, and the use of this immobility in a moving media like film has other consequences. Pictorial stillness in film means that the image itself can appear in a frozen form in the middle of narration, but as it is used in filmic connection, its “form” gains a supplemental level of meaning. This is clearly exemplified in silent films like Carl Th. Dreyer’s *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (*Le Passion de Jeanne D’Arc* 1926) and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922), and in sound films like Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1959), among others, and this extended signification is aligned with the pictorial producing of images through this operational stillness.¹⁴ The aesthetics of pictorial stillness follow the line of understanding the motionless being of a single image inside the linear roll of cinematic images. The same freeze that controls the photography’s immobile artistry also affects the style and existence of paintings. A single painting similarly appears as a frozen, motionless “image” or as a single “photograph”, but film’s moving features—when aligned with immobile imagery—create an extended outcome, producing the represented image embedded with pictorial stillness and duration. This durational aspect of the moving image has the ability to hold the mental attention of the spectator longer than usual, and to my mind, this is the crucial effect, the presence and existence of a still-life vision through which we can approach the significance of pictorial stillness in cinema. A clarification of this would include that filmic style that emphasises pictorial stillness can also reflect the workings of the inner, private world of a character, as happens in the balanced pictorial compositions of Tarkovsky’s *Nostalgia* (1983). The directing of psychological enlargements emphasises introverted notions, and the focus of the narrative is upon the emotional stakes of the character. The effect of filmic duration through long takes enhances the nature of Tarkovsky’s filmmaking practice by enlarging the depicted spaces in time, and retracing the emblems of cultural history and memory. The question of reflexivity is connected with this, and it is inseparable from the larger issue of representation as a function of memory. Tarkovsky’s “Zone” of happenings, a reference to *Stalker* (1979), reflects a world transmuted by thought, a “place” on the threshold of consciousness and a vehicle for expressing the dilemmas of representation and history.

This process of the archaeological uncovering of diverse impulses connects the different parts of the filmic discourse and brings forth this examination and mode of representation as a diagram of Tarkovsky’s

passage through exterior and interior landscapes. The experiences expressed here can grow into metaphors crossing the borders of traditional representation in constructing a scenic choreography of movements and their cinematic navigation. This interplay deals with the essential act of lighting as the basic source of filmic fascination, composed and constructed through a montage of visions adding their faithful attachments to the overall array of landscape design and decoration. This translation of light into movements is filled with pictorial codes that oscillate between personal insights and visionary experiences reflecting the installation of pictures in their creator's mind. Tarkovsky's gallery of approaches features narrative components that suggest allegorical reading and propositions connected with visuality, and a contemplation of affairs in the mood of painterly touches and embraces. Following this thought, we can consider that pictorialism is more concerned with the aesthetics and the emotional impact of the image than what was actually in front of the camera.¹⁵ This can create deeper filmic references, in the middle of which, the linear orientation of cinematic time can be broken and sculpted and, from then on, the narrative can be affected by further temporal changes.

Such a selection of images (whether in cinema or in photography) when successfully processed promises to create the "pictorial spirit" of the spectator's imagination. Pictorial aesthetics of the images seek to find new ways of expression both through historical and contemporary filmmaking practices. History is a key word in understanding the development of pictorial processes. Pictorialism has historically been treated as a phenomenon related to the visual composition and cinematographic planning and practices of the filmic medium. This means that, for instance, westerns, films by John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Anthony Mann, contain pictorially enchanting, atmospheric moments. Among more contemporary filmmakers, Sergio Leone, for example, has used various cinematic techniques to produce pictorially convincing scenes. In Leone's films, the pictorial pleasure of watching these scenes reveals some of the main expressive devices a filmmaker can use in creating pictorially convincing works. One of them is the hold of the image, which Leone uses in many poignant scenes with very specific results. In *Once upon a Time in the West* (C'era una volta il west 1968), the narrative turns out to be a deep and structured perspective of the milieu, rituals, and history of social and cultural circles developed on this non-illusionistic level to which daily life also contributes. At the same time, it forms a viewpoint towards a timeless time depicting myths and stereotypes with a merciless eye. Still, the story is performed without simplified and naive characterisation, and through a non-idealistic perspective. The narrative of *Once upon a Time in the West*