"Art cinema - the relation of cinema to art & moving images"
by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne

This short discourse would like to contribute to a discussion about the changing values and conditions of *cinema* and *art* in times when the arts are merging and the boundaries between the arts are vanishing through the use of new technologies und perceptions.

At the beginning, I would like to state, that there does not exist a binding definition of the terms "*art*" & "*cinema*", which would be understood in all countries, languages and cultural backgrounds alike, which is making a serious discussion generally quite crucial. My considerations are based on a Western view on art/contemporary art and the relevance of moving images and my personal practice in using "*art & moving images*".

The combination of *art & cinema*, as it is used in the title, is representing a mind provoking contradiction in itself. I meant mainly the fundamental difference of the concepts of both, which is manifesting itself basically in the immaterial orientation of "art" and the material (economical) orientation of cinema, but also how these contradictory concepts changed and slowly merge to be hardly.noticed due to a assimilation of technical, technologial and philosophical/conceptual condtions.

My position is not the one of a theorist, but a practioneer, who ist not only a videomaker himself since 2000, but also a curator and director of *Cologne International Videoart Festival* which is celebrating in 2014 its 10th festival edition in sequence, so this anniversary of dealing actively with the genre "*art & moving images*" can be understood as one reason for writing this discourse.

My view on moving images is influenced less by reflecting the system of the commercially orientated production of feature and short films, but the (immaterial conceptual) relevance of moving images for contemporary visual art: moving images as a counter concept to the classical static image or object in form of painting, sculpture or photography, but also to the classical film making.

When I speak of art, I do not mean anything unspecified, nor cinematographic art in particular as an integral part of what is called " *the arts*", but contemporary (visual) art and its conceptual extensions through expanding new media like digital video or the Internet, and when I speak of cinema, I do not mean just the location of the "*cinema theatre*" or the space for screening movies to an audience, or just cinematographic works to be displayed at such a location, but also cinematographic art as it is used in terms like "*French cinema*", *German cinema*" or "*Russian cinema*" etc, indicating the respective countries hosting a relevant film industry producing films according to certain national or ideological characteristics. So, the terms of "*art*" and "*cinema*" are both multifacetted in their meaning and relevance.

Tthe combination of both terms "*art*" & " *cinema*" as "*art cinema*" may have different meanings, as well, the *cinema* as a synonym for the location or place for screening art (films), whereby the classical "*cinema theatre*" is definitely not the best space for screening "*art & moving images*", too much is that kind of space pre-occupied by wrong audience

expectations, while the concept of art to be screened in form of videos is following different rules of itsown.

But also the term "*art film*" or "*art video*" may be interpreted differently, eg films about art, films which are art, and films which do not exclusively following an economical, but mainly an artistic orientation, but also a special type of cinematography which can be classified as cinematographic art, but also cinematography as a particular art expression, and cinematography dealing with art as a topic.

So, the different definition and interpretation of the combination of both terms indicate also different relations between both.

The second part of the discourse title is using expressingly, "*art & moving images*" for describing that specific genre, I am personally completely devoted to.

I am explicitly not speaking of "*film*" or "*video*" for describing the specific "*genre*", because both terms are very general and additonally alread occupied by art criticism and all day language, and this way, they lead consquently to misunderstandings.

Of course, I am also using the term "*film*" but only if I would like to describe the classical feature and short film or the sequence of images forming a filmstrip as they can be found on a film reel, a video tape or a digital video clip.

Similar is good when I use the term "*video*", for instance in the name of *Cologne International Videoart Festival*, because then "*video*" is used for the medium of "*video*" as well as the specific (digital) video technology. In this way "*videoart*" needs to understood as an art medium which is using video technology, according to this, from my point of view it should be avoided to use "*videoart*" as a term for the current video creations, as this was established in the 70ies and 80 ies for 20th century more than 40 years ago based on analog video technology and generally different conditions.. Not only the technology, but much more art using the technology cannot be compared with each other. One needs to accept, that "*analog videoart*" is representing a historical phenomenon, which stopped when digital video technology was replacing the old analog technology.

Each video is representing a film in form of a sequence of frames (images), but viceversa, not every film is automatically representing a video,

The combination of "*art*" and "*moving images*" as one term is not reduced to a certain "*moving image*" technology like 8mm, Super8, 16 mm or 32mm film, analog or digital video etc or a specific art medium like "*video*" or "*animation*" etc but is including all possible technologies and media using moving images in art and all kinds of representation forms., like screening, projection and installation., whereby one needs to state, that the analog film and video technologies are mostly not supported by companies any more, and are therefore not easily available for artistic use, and in fact, practiced only exceptionally by artists if analog technology like Super8 is offering specific aesthetics which the digital technology does not provide. In this way, one can state that the digital technology has replaced the analog film formats substantially, while some analog aspects remain as mere decoration.

The term "*art cinema*", however is resticting on one hand the wide field of *art and moving images* to those works that can be screened like classical feature or short films., on the other hand at the same time the digital technology is expanding the spatial possibilities for screening dramatically through a new definition of space and materiality.

While the classical film requires the classical cinema theatre as a place for a specific kind of spatial and sensual experience, this did not change by the continuously changing technologies during the history of cinema, digital video as a format is not restricted that way, but has its relevance to be presented at any space where the required equipment is available, this may be in a movie theatre, a café, an opera house, a museum, the living room at home, via the Internet, or the screen of a computer, a tablet or a mobile to be run at any place and enviroment which allows the use of these electronic devices. In this way, depending on the location and the size of the screen, "art cinema" gets a different meaning and experience due to the different sizes and environments.

In my festival practice, artists and filmmakers are invited to submit only a hybrid kind of digital video, which can be used for different representation purposes, for the classical screening, projection at different locations and the installation in different forms, but also for being presented on a computer screen from the online presence of the festival.

Again the practice shows, that the screening is representing the most flexible representation format, while there are much less occasions for using the videos for projection or installation in the context of an exhibition.

But the representation is not only a matter of space or time, but mainly also of funding, because the technical and technological equipment for expanded media art exhibitions is potentially requiring much more financial resources, which often are not available due to the lack of funding.

The presentation and use of single channel videos for screening is representing the economically most affordable and effective way to present *art and moving image*s to an audience, which makes the screening possible at any place or location due to the minimum requirements of technical and technological equipment.

This is one idea to offer access to new experiences with moving images to as many people as possible, and if possible via free access, so that experiencing new forms of moving images do not become a matter just for privileged people, who can afford to pay tickets.

On the other hand, in terms of visiting a cinema theatre and watching movies, nobody would get the idea, that this would be free of charge due to the established commercial cinema system.

The way, how people nowadays unterstand art as a free human expression is the result of a development of hundreds of thousands of years of human civilization, technology and media, based on the relevance of the "*image*", respectively the most prominent of all human senses - the "*visual*" sense, starting from an exclusively cultic orientation of art and images and a restricted acccess to their use just for a few privilieged individuals, up to a completely liberated and democraticizing orientated use when everything is defined as art, so that art is

loosing its actual relevance, and the term *art* is described as a lable (and illusion) for increasing material and immaterial value.

There are several milestones in the development of visual art which was totally devoted to the "image". The Renaissance was representing such a milestone while the artist as an individual creator of an image had no relevance before although he was in a most privileged position as the executor of a divine mission and commission, but the Renaissance was placing the human individual for the first time in the focus, so that until the industrialisation in the 19th century, art and the artist were well respected in society, due to the social status coming mostly from the upper or middle class . The social revolution caused by the industrialisation was also resulting the access to higher education for people from lower social levels. The stereotype idea of the "starving artist" or "unprofitable" art (brotlose Kunst), came up only when the majority of artists leaving the art academies entered the "art scene" without the financial family background, the midde class artists had before.

Whether by coincidence or in mututal interaction, the democratization of art started at the same time when photography established as a cheap visual medium to reproduce reality via camera and the photographic image became the starting point for making the images *move*.

In the history of moving images, *cinema* is standing for a commercial, profit orientated system established by private film production and distributing companies, firstly in USA, later in Europe and the rest of the world, but also for the initial motor for developing media and technology as they can be perceived nowadays.

Differently than theatre and opera run by public or privat authorities as a kind of higher entertainment for the privileged, cinema was always thought to be a commercial system established by private companies for making money by producing and distributing entertainment for the masses. The cinema theatre hadn't only the purpose to represent that location for screening films and import the money for the production company which was pre-financing the film to be screened, but also to have a share of the higher prestige of a "*theatre*".

This did not change until this days, but during the historical progress, the cinema theatre lost its monopoly for moving images, and step by step its exclusivity when the technological development was raising new competitors after World War II. In this way in its history, *cinema* threatened with extinct had to react on the latest technological developments, eg the television in the 50ies and 60ies, the availability of the technology to the masses for making films themselvs (video technology) in the 70ies and 80ies and the digital revolution launching the Internet from the 90ies on until thesedays, and later the mobile device of these days.

It is useless to say, that the way how the non-profit orietated art is dealing with contents had to be most different than the profit orientated cinema, because the financial success had to be in the foreground. The film to be screened to the audience had to import the money for re-financing the movie production, and the more spectacular a movie was, the more it was likely that a film was importing that money by beeing screened all over the world.

So, famous film directors and actors, spectacular technologies and formats enhanced the attraction and this ways potentially the economical success, while artstic quality is said to be success killing. Of couse, the exception proves the rule, but the statistics say its true mostly.

Human life was always influenced by the "*image*" due to the prominence of the visual sense, but the development of the media and technology was causing these days an overwhelming dominance of the image anywhere via advertising launched by commercial and ideological propagada, in the print media, moving images via film, television, Internet and mobile device. Countless sources try to get influence on individual and public opinion, but the image is never telling an objective truth, it is a vehicle to transport open and secrete messages to conciousness and unconsciousness, but always only the reproduction or reflection of reality. While this perception is generally true, the digital technology is offering new tools for manipulating and falsifying the reality and the truth, so that we can be sure, that truth and reality are no more than a illusion or mere speculation, and we all have to be aware it.

Before photography was invented, it was usual that the image was handmade and represented a subjective interpretation of the intellectually and sensually perceived but never claimed to tell the objective truth, while before the Renaissance the image had an orthodox, even dogmatic orientation, claiming the abolute truth, like it can be perceived in the iconography of the orthodox church, the Islam or any totalitarianism whereever on the globe in the Past and Present, and the access and permission to use the image was controlled by a privileged class.

The photographic image was said to reproduce the reality, but it was always the reality from the point of view of the photographer, and in this ways, nearly as subjective as the painted image. That's also the reason, why the quality of a photograph is depending on the photographer, and his personal use of the camera, photography is not photography.

As long as moving image were no more than fiction, they were reproducing that staged fictional reality, but news reels which were accompanying the screening of the feature films for many decades from the very beginning, as I still experienced it in 50ies and 60ies when I was visiting movie theatres, were spreading news via moving pictures filtered by subjective, uncontrollable criteria by the redaction of a commercial company, bringing news from all over the world to anywhere where a movie theatre was existing, on the other hand, it was easy to manipulate public opinion and the news reel had not other value than being a kind of propaganda, because it actually was no more than another kind of fiction, because the viewer had no chance to compare different sources for the truth in order to make up one's mind

The moving images were loosing finally their innocence during *World War I* when they were bluntly misused as propaganda by the war parties and the ideal tool for the first media war in history

Caused by the industrial revolution and new perceptions on the relevence of technology and its influence on society and art, during the first two decades of 20th century the intellectuals and artists developed revolutionary ideas about the future of the human species, of culture and art. They started to experience on different artistic fields at the same time fusing the arts that way in spectacular new kind of art creations and productions.

While visual art was still focussed mainly on handmade media, artists wanted to overcome the conventions crossing all existing boarders. One of the most revolutionary and important perceptions established at that time, that artists were capturing new technologies and media as soon as they were avaliable (eg affordable), a perception which is still marking the understanding of contemporary art.

So, it was a revolution, when artists started experimenting with moving images killing the monopoly of the static image in art. Despite the fact that there was no open and affordable access to technology of the commercial filmmaking, artists were experimenting with the idea of film as a sequence of images or frames of a filmstrip. There were using not only photographic but also handmade imges, so that the first artistic animations were created at that time.

These early experiments, however, stopped when the right wing ideology was spread through out Europe during the 30ies and Auschwitz and World War II were killing the most talented people in the 40ies , but these early experiments represent actually the real roots of what these days is called "*videoart*" or "*art and moving images*" or *experimental film*.

Moving images became relevant in art only again in the 60ies, when Nam June Paik was creating his installations based a new forms of dealing with art – through media criticism on television and the influence of technology on the society and individual .in general and the moving images transported via television in particular This artist was inventing a new way of forming artistic contents by reflecting art and technology, but he did not continue that kind of early experimenting with moving imges from the 20ies, so that honestly Nam June Paik is not representing that pioneer of "videoart" as he is sometimes claimed to be.

"*Videoart*" as it was practiced by a number of artists during the 70ies and 80ies was based on the analog video technology of that time, for instance BETACam or VHS, while Betacam, a high standard techology used also by the television and was mainly not affordable for the usual artist, VHS – the analog video recorder and video tapes - was the first technology of moving images which was affordable to an artist, but had the disadvantage that a professional postproduction was required in order to get a finalized video, but this way the 70ies and 80 ies were the high time of analog videoart, which however became obsolte when the first digital video camara entered the market in the 90ies, and digital video and its use in Internet and mobile device finally replaced any analog technology completely after the companies producing film equipment decided to stop its production.

During the 1st decade of our century, (digital) video became that mass phenomenon due to the access to the affordable technology, eg. hardware and software, offering also to an artist the possibilities to keep control over the entire film production in one hand, and produce videos independently from commercially orientated production companies, but also the possibilities to share and distribute the video production via the Internet and mobile decive.

The fact, that a computer is involved in an artistic creation is still out of the imagination of some people, while most people accepted the computer as a usual tool in daily life, while walking through the streets, it is representing an exception when someone isn't holding a mobile in his hands.

But not only *cinema* and *visual art* was undergoing revolutionary developments, but the other fields of art, as well, like music, literature, performing arts or architecture were not less revolutionary, this is good for the first decades of 20th century, as well as the post-World War II era and the digital revolution since 2000. In all these fields, there were media specific new developments using the same digital technology, computer or mobile.

In fact, in many cases one cannot speak any more of a pure visual artist or a musician, or a writer, a performing artist or a film maker, because using the digital technology is always exeeding boundaries, artistic fields merge temporarily, most artists using new technologies do it in a transmedial, interdisciplinary way, offering new fields of activities and perceptions.

That kind of creativity is not limited to a specific field of art, but by doing, the artists train a kind general creativity which does not stop at the boudaries of an artistic field or the individuality of a single person.

The digital technology does not only encourage people to interact in a network and use the creative potential of a network this way, but the use of the technology actually only really is making sense in a network.

Not every artist's personality is made for that, especially those type of artists, who follow the ancient ideal of a privileged artist who does not share success, the idea of working in a network is forming a new type of artists who recognize the relevance of mutual communication as an essential part of the common creative process working in a network.

This does not mean, that the artist's personality has to give up one's individuality , but recognize the potential of an expanding kind of creativity for the individual art creation.

But what about the *audience*? Due to routine in viewing and perceiving images with our senses caused by the overwhelming flood of static and moving images through all kind of media, this perception is categorizing, pre-filtering, pre-judging and pre-classifying the sensually perceived according to the experiences already made, causing stereotypes of perception.

Before an art student is allowed to enter the art school, he is requested to learn to see, how to use the visual sense.

The same is good for someone who wants to view "*art and moving images*" for the first time - independently from the representation form like screening, because the visual sense got a wrong education through the daily routine in dealing with static & moving pictures.

It is no surpise, that people experiencing art (video) screened in a cinema theatre, leave often completely disappointed because they did not understand due to wrong expectations being focussed on the existing experiences in film, television or Internet.

So, for presenting programs of my festival, it is important to me to give instructions to the audience to be open for the unexpected to come, this is principally good for any art using moving images, and the audience needs to know about the fundamental difference of the

trained viewing routine and new ways of seeing to be learned which extend the spectrum of the sensual perception and the understanding of provided contents and information.

The relation between *cinema* and art & *moving images* is actually simple and a complicated matter alike, if there would not be evolutionary developments which solve the contradiction between the concepts of both, whereby this discourse was speaking of different levels of relations.

There is remaining the difference between *cinema and art* in terms of the different types of narration and story telling. While *cinema* needs a strong story lasting the duration of a feature or short film, whereby the narration and its progress are fundametal for the story board, the screnes of a story are not only relevant for the film making as such, but represent also unities providing content and information. *artvideo*, eg moving images in audio-visual art using the video technology, need a concept, but no story or dialogues behind, there is existing also a kind of narrative, but a narrative developping according to the artistic concept through the sequence and the relation of the images among each other and the medium as such, whereby the individual image and the information these images are transporting get a new and fundamental relevance , while the individual image of the feature movie is loosing its relevance, like the individual image is loosing relevance in an overwhelming und confusing flood of static and moving images.

It is no problem to visit the toilet while watching a feature film, because the type of storytelling allows to follow the story even if 5 or 10 minutes are missing , but if people miss 3 minutes of 4 minutes film, there is neither the chance for taking it up again nor to repeat the missed minutes,and the information to be transported, and thus the whole film is definitely lost.

So, also the relation of the images of feature film and the images of an artvideo are fundamentally different.

As it was already written, also the motivation to create or produce a film or video are also fundamentally different, while the creator of an art video is doing this mostly due to an internal artistic, non-profitable orientated necessity, cinema is always following primarily an economical necessity due to the concept of commercial and profitable orientation. Even if a feature film has higher artistic claims, the financial success has all priority.
Thus, also the contents and its representation through *moving images* is following in both cases their own particular motivation.

While there is existing a huge commercial *film market*, many major festival are serving, while there is existing a most relevant commercial market *for art,* there does not exist such a "market" for "*art and moving images*", because nobody recognized the economical value, yet, despite many attempts to establish such a commercial market.

The cinematographic work needs a lot of time, mostly the standard duration of feature film to tell the story and give also the audience the reason for paying the ticket.

The art (video) has not that kind of restrictions. Time may have many functions, and the duration of a work does not indicate how much time is packed in the piece of art, even the shortest works may contain a huge amount of time.

The moving images as such, are representing in any case, the common between *cinema* and *art*, but also the technology, eg hardware and software, available for their use, however the way how the images are used is remaining fundamentally different.

While the digital technology and the used hardware and software are nowadays nearly the same in *cinema* and *art*, and while it is most important for cinema to use technology and film formats in a most professional way, in terms of art it is not necessary for the creator to have the most advanced skills and use a most advanced equipment for making an excellent art work, in so far technology is no more than just a tool like a brush.

Using the moving pictures is meaning using the completed film. It is evident that due to an ongoing crisis of the *classical short film* which is mostly misunderstood by the filmmakers and production funders as a kind of short feature film instead as a specific film format of itsown, this classical film format is loosing continuously relevance and many established festivals of the classical shortfilm are in a process of re-orientation by including new short film categories like artvideo and experimental film, increasing the relevance of the non-commercially orientated short film.

Due to technological assimilation, also a conceptual assimilation is slowly going on towards art and the non-commercial, non-fiction orientated shortfilm, which is underlined and supported by the conceptual expansion of cinema as a physical location for presenting moving images through virtual space on a computer, the Internet or mobile device and their exhibition is physical and virtual space.

In a very fruitful relation between cinema and "art & moving images"*, art cinema* can be anywhere where people have access to a minimum requirement of technical and technological equipment.

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Links:
CologneOFF – International Festival Network
http://ifp.newmediafest.org

CologneOFF – Cologne International Videoart Festival
http://coff.newmediafest.org/

animateCOLOGNE – Cologne Art and Animation Festival
http://caaf.newmediafest.org

artvideoKOELN international - platform of art & moving images
http://artvideo.koeln