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## THE MEANING OF FREEZE FRAME

Freeze frame (German Standbild) is the inclusion of a static sequence into a film, which implies the repetition of one and the same frame, due to what an illusion of frozen action is created and the spectator has a feeling that the time has stopped.

The first experiments with freeze framing were made by classical film-makers of silent film and great masters of trick filming George Méliès and Segundo de Chomón – real film magicians, who are widely known.

These were real exponents of silent cinema. They understood the magic of film development, the magic of conveying motion on the screen and they wanted to stop the motion, which was initiated by themselves. And they did it. Being able to accelerate the time and to decelerate it, they were also able to stop it.

We also have to mention innovative experiments of Sergey Eisenstein, who compiled efficient sequences of freeze frames. We meet them, for example, in the film “October”, – Eisenstein was very attentive to individual objects and compiled different expressive sequences out of them. It is interesting that the remaining version of Eisenstein’s film “Bezhin Loug” (which has not been preserved to the present day) is actually a mix of small cuts and thus, it turned into a set of freeze frames. Needless to say that it looked very expressive at the turn of 1960-ies (that was exactly the time, when the film was restored). That was also the time of the new wave in French cinema and against the background of daring experiments with mixing techniques and freeze frames the innovations of Eisenstein seemed especially expressive.

The turn of the 1960-ies was a real era of experiments in film art. The fashion for freeze frames came to Russia from the West. French new wave was all the rage in the Soviet Union. The final sequence of “Les quatre cents coups”, in which the main character looks at the sea with wonder was a real sensation for Soviet theatrical release. The film was much argued about and different viewpoints were expressed concerning the translation of the title. Some film directors imitated the manner of Truffaut and even shot films about Soviet children using his techniques. Truffaut conquered the hearts of Soviet audience, even though his films were seldom issued into theatrical release. More popular was the filmmaker André Cayatte, in whose films we also find various time tricks, including experiments with freeze frames.

Where else do we find freeze frames? Talented film-maker Agnes Varda created the film called “Daguerrrotype”, in which static episodes are placed in a very expressive context. It was a kind of homage to static photography and silent film. The final sequences of Финал “Daguerrrotype” find parallel in the film “The Postmaster”, shot by Sergey Solovyov. At the end of the film we see Dunya coming to the grave of Samson Vyrin. It is interesting that following the aesthetics of Agnes Varda, Solovyov present these scenes as “fake” freeze frames. We have a feeling of slight motion, not of complete statics, as if there were photographic cameras in Pushkin’s time and the characters are posing in front of the camera.

Here is an example of a real freeze frame, which is converted into a semantically important technique. That is the spying of Launfield (Ladeinickov) in the film “The Dead Season” (1968, directed by Savva

Koulish). The mixing is such that the spectator, having seen one freeze frame of Ladeinickiv, starts to get excited, waiting for the next one – he waits for another moment when the agents would photograph the main character of the film. Clicks of the camera and conversion of motion into statics create suspense effect.

Several years after issuance of “The Dead Season” into theatrical release the film Uncle Vanya was shot in the USSR (this screen adaptation of a play by Anton Chechov was shot by Andron Konchalovsky). A color film starts with black-and-white freeze frames, devoted to the life in Russia at the turn of the 20th century. It is known that Konchalovsky planned to shoot a film, which completely consisted of freeze frames. In connection with this the word photofilm appeared in the Russian language. This idea was never realized, however, in the well-known film “The Lovers’ Romance” (1974), which was a great success in the USSR, we find a sequence of blue-colored freeze frames (it is connected with the episode of the catastrophe), which is characterized by obvious expressive force.