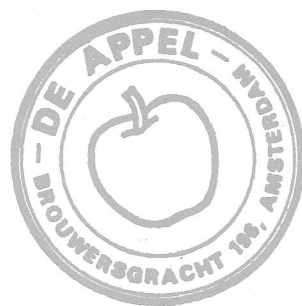


**international art manifestation amsterdam**

**works**

**and**



**words**

# TOMISLAV<sup>®</sup>

## TOMISLAV GOTOVAC

Tomislav Gotovac was born February 9th, 1937 in Sombor, Yugoslavia. From 1940 to 1967 he lived in Zagreb. In the period between 1967-1977 he lived in Belgrade. End 1977 he returned to live in Zagreb.

He started his first actions in '56; his first photographic series in '60; his first films were made in '62; his first collages in '64 and his first sound-object in '78. He is a graduate of the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts/Fakultet dramskih umetnosti u Beogradu/ in film direction.

Address: T. Gotovac, Krajiska 29, 41000 Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

Photographic Series GLAVE 1960/HEADS 1960/  
Zagreb, 1960

1. myself in front of a film developing bowl, a light bulb, wire on the neck, mirror, cigarette in mouth: this photograph is in honour of Jacques Prévert and the films for which he wrote the scripts:

-QUAI DES BRUMES/Port of Shadows

-LE JOUR SE LEVE/Daybreak

-LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS/The Children of Paradise.

2. myself behind wooden bars/this is in fact a drum for drying films/"I am making love to the bars": this photograph is in honour of the American prison films:

-THE BIG HOUSE /German version/ Paul Fejos

-BRUTE FORCE/ Jules Dassin

-BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ/ John Frankenheimer

3. myself with a spot-light shade and huge light bulb in my hand and my face strongly lit: photograph in honour of the Soviet war films:

-BALLADA O SOLDATYE/Ballad of a soldier/ Grigori Chukhrai

-LETYAT ZHURAVLI/The Cranes are flying/ Mikhail Kalatozov.

4. myself in front of a spot light: photograph in honour of the American detective films:

-THE ASPHALT JUNGLE/ John Huston

-DETECTIVE STORY/ William Wyler.

5. myself under the shade of a spot-light, mouth open, cigarette butt in the shade. Photograph in honour of the American war films:

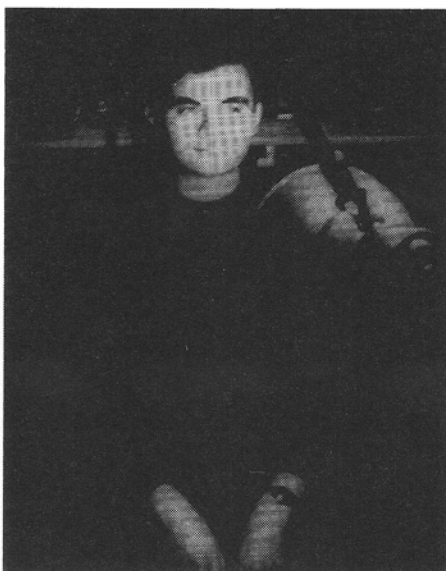
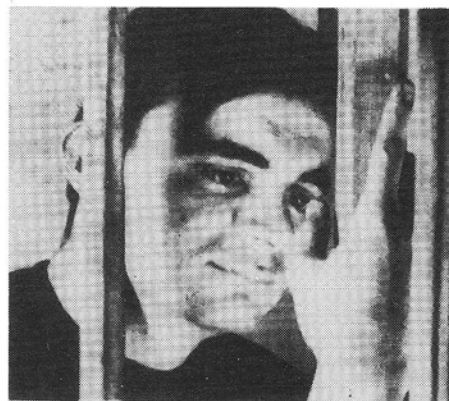
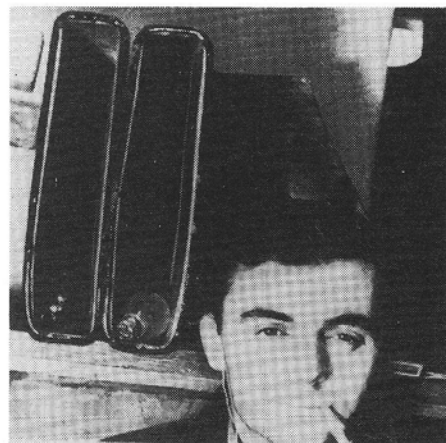
-BATTLEGROUND/ William Wellman

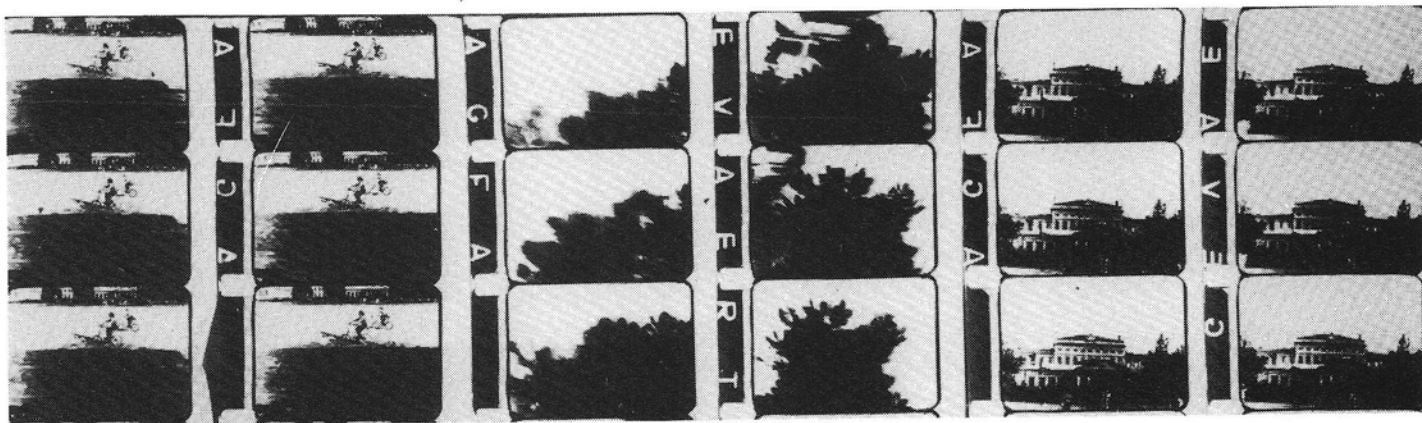
-HALLS OF MONTEZUMA/ Lewis Milestone.

The props used in this series are objects used in film-making. The series is a kind of photographic essay about the medium film.

Zagreb, 1960

Tomislav Gotovac.





#### CHARACTERISTICS OF TOMISLAV GOTOVAC'S FILMS

1. GOTOVAC is an unusually consistent artist, his works showing a clarity of form and firmness of direction. The basic characteristics of his films make themselves quickly and forcefully evident.

In the first place, GOTOVAC's films are 'empoverished', i.e. the actions are reduced. Further, they are minutely planned, firmly thought out in advance and such a concept is extremely prominent and evident in his films. At the same time it seems to be the only organizational intervention on the part of the author. The rest of the film seems to be left over to chance, to the influence of the special conditions during the shooting and production of the film. And finally, the films last longer than is necessary for noticing the concept behind them. Attention is faithfully transferred from the concept to the information offered by the 'arrested' case. Let us take a closer look at these characteristics:

2. GOTOVAC's selective reduction of actions works as follows:

GOTOVAC endeavours to select one or a number of cinematographic forms, giving them emphasis while neutralising the others. These forms will then constantly weave in and out for the duration of the film, giving it something quite unique. For example, in his film *PRIJE PODNE JEDNOG FAUNA* (1963)/*THE MORNING OF A FAUN*/ the camera is static so that a change of camera position at the same time means a new sequence in the film. The film consists of three sequences, the first of which is filmed with a fixed objective while for the other two he makes continuous use of the zoom. In his film *PRAVAC/STEVENS-DUKE* (1964)/*STRAIGHT LINE (STEVENS DUKE)*/ the camera travels forward most of the time; in *KRUZNICA/JUTKEVIC-COUNT* (1964)/*CIRCLE (JUTKEVIC-COUNT)*/ the dominant camera angle is a panorama in always the same direction with the camera slowly rising, while in *PLAVI JAHAC/GODARD-ART* (1964)/*THE BLUE RIDER (GODARD ART)*/ and in his film 'S' (1966), the scenes were shot with a shaky hand-held camera.

Another aspect of this reduction is the selection of just one scene or a few scenes on which he concentrates by means of selected cinematographic procedures. For example, in *PRIJE PODNE JEDNOG FAUNA* we are dealing with three scenes: a hospital terrace, a wall and crossroads. In *PRAVAC* we have a tramline as seen from a moving tram. In *KRUZNICA* we have the terrace of a multi-story building and its surroundings. In *PLAVI JAHAC* we see the interiors of cafés and the people inside of them. In *GLEN MILLER I./HIGH SCHOOL BACKYARD I.* (1977)/*GLENN MILLER I. (SREDNJOSKOLSKO IGRALISTE I.)* it is a secondary school playground and its surroundings which dominate, etc.

This feeling of reduction would, however, hardly be noticed if it were not for the fact that the selected procedure runs through the film in continuous variations or with frequent repetitions. The films are usually quite long so that the repetition and continuity of a certain procedure or scene is in no way ambiguous.

3. Both the reduction and the variable repetitions point quite clearly to that prominent feature in GOTOVAC's

films: their well-planned quality. Both the cinematographic approach and the subject are firmly determined in advance and they are usually quite easily distinguishable; once the film has been running for a few minutes, the viewer can easily work out the plan according to which the film was shot.

By virtue of the planned reduction and variation in his films, GOTOVAC's work constitutes an original contribution to the genre known as 'structuralistic film', A.P. Sitney having called them in this manner. However, there is quite an emphatic difference between certain makers of structuralistic films. On the one hand we have those whose basic aim is to explore the complex structures as such: every new film of them strikes us with the novelty of its structure (Frampton, Kubelka, for example). On the other hand there are filmmakers for whom the discovery of different structural principles is just a means to an end. TOMISLAV GOTOVAC belongs to this second group. That is to say, the structural planning of his films is not intended to amaze us with its complexity and novelty, but to encourage the unforeseen, to provoke coincidence within the planned pointers. The planned quality of GOTOVAC's films is in fact a means of conditioning the appearance of a certain kind of coincidence, of centering attention upon those features of the scene and of the actual process of filming which are not directly connected with the plan, which are, from the point of view of the plan, dysfunctional. From the cognitive point of view they are not in the least dysfunctional, they enrich us with details to which in a differently structured film we would not pay attention at all. As a result of this participation and importance of coincidence, GOTOVAC's films leave us with an impression of fascinating realism, of a total document, both on what he is filming and on the actual shooting and production process of a film.

4. All of this is not without its worldview implications. It is this very ability to find a system which will point to accidental phenomena, and which will make it possible to give to accidental phenomena an unexpected systematic value, that constitutes GOTOVAC's unusual talent. It is in this that we find GOTOVAC's general attitude towards the world, the way in which he cognitively experiences and orders the world, and this is equally evident both in his films and in his meditations about the world, in his artistic and photographic searchings, as well as in the way he sees film as a whole, including traditional film. Contrary to the culturally standardised forms and ways of explaining phenomena, GOTOVAC centres attention on dispersed, 'accidental' details, believing that they can be more important, richer and more varied than the intentionally drawn details which are generally accepted as being important. According to him it is this personal principle of structuring information which makes a true understanding of the world possible, and which makes us more sensitive to phenomena which, in the conventional system, we difficulty can centre upon with a similar sensibility.