

Transgressive Cinema

“When confronted by visual taboos... such as real sex or death
—we immediately feel an element of risk and primordial danger”

Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art*¹



Arthouse Hardcore

The first non-pornographic film to show an erection was Jean Genet's *Un chant d'amour* (1950), which the U.S. Supreme Court declared obscene in 1967. In the 1960s, several artists produced short, experimental hardcore films, the first being Barbara Rubin's *Christmas on Earth* (1962). Films featuring erections were not initially classified by the British Board of Film Censors, though screenings were permitted at private cinema clubs in London. One such screening of *Flesh* (Paul Morrissy, 1968), at the Open Space Theatre in 1970, was raided by the police. *In the Realm of the Senses* (Nagisa Oshima, 1976) introduced unsimulated sex into arthouse cinema and is, as Linda Williams writes in *Screening Sex*, “the first example of feature-length narrative cinema anywhere in the world to succeed as both art and pornography”.²

The BBFC (by this time renamed the British Board of Film Classification) permitted hardcore content for the first time in the video documentary *The Lovers' Guide* (Simon Ludgate, 1991) and subsequently in the stag film compilation *Polissons et galipettes* (Michel Reilhac, 2002). The most sexually explicit imagery on British television—a close-up ejaculation—appeared in the BBC1 documentary *The Human Body: An Everyday Miracle* (Christopher Spencer, 1998), though it was cut from repeat broadcasts and video releases. Hardcore video footage has also been used as a backdrop for several theatrical performances, including *Joyce* by performance artist Ron Athey (2002), *Kimura-san* by video artist Tadasu Takamine (2002), *XXX* by theatre group La Fura dels Baus (2002), and *Kim Noble Will Die* by comedian Kim Noble (2009).

¹ Amos Vogel (1974) *Film as a Subversive Art*, New York: Random House, p. 195.

² Linda Williams (2008) *Screening Sex*, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 183.

The following non-pornographic films feature erections and/or unsimulated sex:

- *Un chant d'amour* (Jean Genet, 1950)
- *Christmas on Earth* (Barbara Rubin, 1962)
- *Oh Dem Watermelons* (Robert Nelson, 1965)
- *Fuses* (Carolee Schneemann, 1965)
- *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966)
- *Flesh* (Paul Morrissey, 1968)
- *Besonders Wertvoll* (Helmuth Costard, 1968)
- *Dom kallar oss mods* (Stefan Jarl and Jan Lindkvist, 1968)
- *Touching* (Paul Sharits, 1968)
- *Fuck* (Andy Warhol, 1968)
- *Stille dage i Clichy* (Jens Jorgen Thorsen, 1970)
- *Gotter der Pest* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1970)
- *W.R. – Мучепује организма [W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism]* (Dusan Makavejev, 1971)
- *Il Decameron* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1971)
- *Growing Up* (Martin Cole, 1971)
- *Cry Uncle!* (John G. Avildsen, 1971)
- *Apres-Ski* (Roger Cardinal, 1971)
- *Luminous Procuress* (Steven Arnold, 1971)
- *Pink Narcissus* (James Bidgood, 1971)
- *Storie scellerate* (Sergio Citti, 1973)
- *Une collection particuliere* (Walerian Borowczyk, 1973)
- *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1974)
- *Flesh Gordon* (Michael Benveniste and Howard Ziehm, 1974)
- *Blue Tape* (Kathy Acker, 1974)
- *Sebastiane* (Derek Jarman, 1976)
- *愛のコーリ—ダ [In the Realm of the Senses]* (Nagisa Oshima, 1976)
- *Through the Looking Glass* (Jonas Middleton, 1976)
- *La derniere femme* (Marco Ferreri, 1976)
- *Johan* (Philippe Vallois, 1976)
- *Im Lauf der Zeit* (Wim Wenders, 1976)
- *L'Ange et la femme* (Gilles Carle, 1977)
- *Kleinhoff Hotel* (Carlo Lizzani, 1977)
- *La Svastica nel Ventre* (Mario Caino, 1977)
- *The Forbidden* (Clive Barker, 1978)
- *Hermes Bird* (John Broughton, 1979)
- *Immagini di un convento* (Aristide Massaccesi, 1979)
- *Caligula* (Tinto Brass, 1979)
- *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980)
- *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1980)
- *Prostitute* (Tony Garnett, 1980)
- *Barnens O* (Kay Pollak, 1980)
- *Loads* (Curt McDowell, 1980)
- *Spetters* (Paul Verhoeven, 1980)
- *Die Alptraumfrau* (Lothar Lambert, 1981)
- *Les fruits de la passion* (Shuji Terayama, 1981)
- *Taxi Zum Klo* (Frank Ripplloh, 1981)
- *Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography* (Bonnie Sherr Klein, 1981)
- *Scandale* (George Mihalka, 1982)
- *Fanny Hill* (Gerry O'Hara, 1983)
- *Taking Tiger Mountain* (Tom Huckabee and Kent Smith, 1983)
- *L'Homme blesse* (Patrice Chereau, 1985)
- *The Celluloid Closet* (Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 1995)
- *Il Diavolo in corpo* (Marco Bellocchio, 1986)
- *She's Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 1986)
- *Mon bel amour ma déchirure* (Jose Pinheiro, 1987)
- *Hotel St Pauli* (Svend Wam, 1988)
- *Two Moon Junction* (Zalman King, 1988)
- *Annabelle partagee* (Francesca Comencini, 1990)
- *The Adjuster* (Atom Egoyan, 1991)
- *Les amants du pont-neuf* (Leo Carax, 1991)
- *No Skin off My Ass* (Bruce La Bruce, 1991)
- *The Lovers' Guide* (Simon Ludgate, 1991)
- *トノリ—ズ [Tokyo Decadence]* (Ryu Murakami, 1992)
- *L'Amant* (Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1992)
- *Cling Film* (Anna Thew, 1993)
- *Super Eight-and-a-Half* (Bruce La Bruce, 1993)
- *The Soft Kill* (Eli Cohen, 1994)

- *The Color of Love* (Peggy Ahwesh, 1994)
- *Angels and Insects* (Philip Haas, 1995)
- *La Fille seule* (Benoit Jacquot, 1995)
- *Hustler White* (Bruce La Bruce, 1996)
- *La vie de Jesus* (Bruno Dumont, 1997)
- *Assassin(s)* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1997)
- *Seul contre tous* (Gaspar Noe, 1997)
- *Idioterne* (Lars von Trier, 1998)
- *Fiona* (Amos Kollek, 1998)
- *Good Boys Use Condoms* (Lucile Hadzihalilovic, 1998)
- *Head On* (Ana Kokkinos, 1998)
- *L'Ennui* (Cedric Kahn, 1998)
- *Extension du domaine de la lutte* (Philippe Harel, 1999)
- *Skin Gang* (Bruce La Bruce, 1999)
- *Les terres froides* (Sebastien Lifshitz, 1999)
- *Pola X* (Leo Carax, 1999)
- *La donna lupo* (Aurelio Grimaldi, 1999)
- *Guardami* (Davide Ferrario, 1999)
- *Romance* (Catherine Breillat, 1999)
- *Cremaster II* (Matthew Barney)
- *More Intimacy* (Tony Wu, 1999)
- *Subconscious Cruelty* (Karim Hussain, 2000)
- *In Extremis* (Etienne Faure, 2000)
- *O Fantasma* (Joao Pedro Rodrigues, 2000)
- *Presque rien* (Sebastien Lifshitz, 2000)
- *IKU* (Shu Lea Cheang, 2000)
- *Scrapbook* (Eric Stanze, 2000)
- *The Atrocity Exhibition* (Jonathan Weiss, 2001)
- *La pianiste* (Michael Haneke, 2001)
- *KI* (Karl Lemieux, 2001)
- เมืองร้าง [*Sigh*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2001)
- *Intimacy* (Patrice Chereau, 2001)
- *A ma soeur!* (Catherine Breillat, 2001)
- *Investigating Sex* (Alan Rudolph, 2001)
- *Hundstage* (Ulrich Seidl, 2001)
- מאוחרת [Late Marriage] (Dover Koshashvili, 2001)
- *Baise-moi* (Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi, 2001)
- *Le pornographe* (Bertrand Bonello, 2001)
- *Polissons et galipettes* (Michel Reilhac, 2002)
- *Ken Park* (Larry Clark and Edward Lachman, 2002)
- *La novia de Lazaro* (Fernando Merinero, 2002)
- *Le loup de la cote ouest* (Hugo Santiago, 2002)
- *La chatte a deux tetes* (Jacques Nolot, 2002)
- *Les Diables* (Christophe Ruggia, 2002)
- หัวใจต้องสาป [*Voodoo Girls*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2002)
- *Irreversible* (Gaspar Noe, 2002)
- *Lucia y el sexo* (Julio Medem, 2002)
- *The Last Great Wilderness* (David Mackenzie, 2002)
- *Choses secretes* (Jean-Claude Brisseau, 2002)
- สุดเสนาห่า [*Blissfully Yours*] (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2002)
- *The Principles of Lust* (Penny Woolcock, 2003)
- *Bodysong* (Simon Pummell, 2003)
- *Making Maps* (Tony Wu, 2003)
- *The Dreamers* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003)
- *Rossa Venezia* (Andreas Bethmann, 2003)
- *The Brown Bunny* (Vincent Gallo, 2003)
- *Nine Songs* (Michael Winterbottom, 2004)
- *Antares* (Gotz Spielmann, 2004)
- *Garcon stupide* (Lionel Baier, 2004)
- มหัตตกรรมกรุงเทพ [*Unseen Bangkok*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2004)
- *The Raspberry Reich* (Bruce La Bruce, 2004)
- *Anatomie de l'enfer* (Catherine Breillat, 2004)
- *De Lama Lamina* (Matthew Barney, 2004)
- *Sindrome* (Liberto Rabal, 2004)
- *Story of the Eye* (Andrew Repasky McElhinney, 2004)
- *Karlekens Sprak 2000* (Anders Lennberg, 2004)
- *Nacktschnecken* (Michael Glawogger, 2004)
- *Batalla en el cielo* (Carlos Reygadas, 2005)

- *Princesas* (Fernando Leon de Aranoa, 2005)
- *Open Cam* (Robert Gaston, 2005)
- *Inside Deep Throat* (Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, 2005)
- *Kissing on the Mouth* (Joe Swanberg, 2005)
- วันที่ฝนตกลงมาเป็นคู่สุด [*Vous vous souviens de moi?*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2005)
- *Endless Story* (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2005)
- *Lie with Me* (Clement Virgo, 2005)
- *Destricted* (2005)
 - *Balkan Erotic Epic* (Marina Abramovic),
 - *Hoist* (Matthew Barney)
 - *Sync* (Marco Brambilla),
 - *Impaled* (Larry Clark),
 - *We Fuck Alone* (Gaspar Noe),
 - *House Call* (Richard Prince),
 - *Death Valley* (Sam Taylor-Wood)
- *All about Anna* (Jessica Nilsson, 2005)
- *Glue: Historia adolescente en medio de la nada* (Alexis Dos Santos, 2006)
- *Taxidermia* (Gyorgy Palfi, 2006)
- *Der Freie Wille* (Matthias Glasner, 2006)
- *Shortbus* (John Cameron Mitchell, 2006)
- *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, 2006)
- *Bareback ou la Guerre des sens* (Paul Vecchiali, 2006)
- *Otto, or Up with Dead People* (Bruce La Bruce, 2007)
- *Puffball* (Nicolas Roeg, 2007)
- *It Is Fine! Everything Is Fine* (David Brothers and Crispin Glover, 2007)
- *Bramadero* (Julian Hernandez, 2007)
- *Ex Drummer* (Koen Mortier, 2007)
- *Import/Export* (Ulrich Seidl, 2007)
- 快乐工厂 [*Pleasure Factory*] (Ekachai Uekrongtham, 2007)
- *Nessuna qualita agli rroi* (Paolo Franchi, 2007)
- *The Houseboy* (Spencer Schilly, 2007)
- *L'histoire de Richard O.* (Damien Odoul, 2007)
- มัชฌิม โลก [*Middle-earth*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2007)
- *Water in Milk Exists* (Lawrence Weiner, 2008)
- บริเวณนี้อยู่ภายใต้การกักกัน [*This Area Is Under Quarantine*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2008)
- *Les plages d'Agnes* (Agnes Varda, 2008)
- *J'ai reve sous l'eau* (Hormoz, 2008)
- *Nights and Weekends* (Joe Swanberg and Greta Gerwig, 2008)
- *Serbis* (Brillante Mendoza, 2008)
- *Tropical Manila* (Lee Sang-Woo, 2008)
- *Greek Pete: A Year in the Life of a Rent Boy* (Andrew Haigh, 2009)
- *Bruno* (Larry Charles, 2009)
- *Dishonoured Bodies: Juanma Carillo Shorts* (Juanma Carillo, 2009)
- *Infideles* (Claude Peres, 2009)
- *Enter the Void* (Gaspar Noe, 2009)
- *La angre y la lluvia* (Jorge Navas, 2009)
- *Hollywood, je t'aime* (Jason Bushman, 2009)
- *Antichrist* (Lars von Trier, 2009)
- *The Band* (Anna Brownfield, 2009)
- *House of Boys* (Jean-Claude Schlim, 2009)
- *Zivot i smrt porno bande* (Mladen Djordjevic, 2009)
- *Kynodontas* (Giorgos Lanthimos, 2009)
- *Killer Bitch* (Liam Galvin, 2010)
- *Bedways* (Rolf Peter Kahl, 2010)
- *Gandu* (Qaushiq Mukherjee, 2010)
- *LelleBelle* (Mischa Kamp, 2010)
- *Ano bisiesto* (Michael Rowe, 2010)
- *LA Zombie* (Bruce La Bruce, 2010)
- *Starlet* (Sean Baker, 2010)
- จูดี [*Reincarnate*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2010)
- แมลงรักในสวนหลังบ้าน [*Insects in the Backyard*] (Tanwarin Sukkhapsit, 2010)
- *Q* (Laurent Bouhnik, 2011)
- *Anti Reproductive Mating Ritual* (Vebjorn Guttormsgaard Mollberg, 2011)
- *Rundskop* (Michael R. Roskam, 2011)
- *American Translation* (Pascal Arnold and Jean-Marc Barr, 2011)
- 愛很爛 [*Love Actually... Sucks!*] (Scud [Danny Cheng Wan-Cheung], 2011)
- *Skoonheid* (Oliver Hermanus, 2011)
- ผู้ก่อการร้าย [*The Terrorists*] (Thunskas Pansittivorakul, 2011)

- *The Bunny Game* (Adam Rehmeier, 2011)
- *Into the Lion's Den* (Dan Lantz, 2011)
- *Jagten* (Thomas Vinterberg, 2012)
- *The Exhibitionists* (Michael Melamedoff, 2012)
- *I Want Your Love* (Travis Mathews, 2012)
- *Chroniques sexuelles d'une famille d'aujourd'hui* (Pascal Arnold and Jean-Marc Barr, 2012)
- *Paradies: Glaube* (Ulrich Seidl, 2012)
- *Goltzius and the Pelican Company* (Peter Greenaway, 2012)
- *Apres mai* (Olivier Assayas, 2012)
- *L'Inconnu du lac* (Alain Guiraudie, 2013)
- *Michael H – Profession: Director* (Yves Montmayeur, 2013)
- *Kink* (Christina Voros, 2013)
- *I'm a Porn Star* (Charlie David, 2013)
- *Nymphomaniac* (Lars von Trier, 2013)
- *Molly's Theory of Relativity* (Jeff Lipsky, 2013)
- *In Their Room: London* (Tavis Mathews, 2013)
- *Pornopung* (Johan Kaos, 2013)
- *Chocolate Strawberry Vanilla* (Stuart Simpson, 2013)
- *Feuchtgebiete* (David Wnendt, 2013)
- *Une nouvelle amie* (Francois Ozon, 2013)
- *Peter de Rome: Grandfather of Gay Porn* (Ethan Reid, 2014)
- *In Their Room: London, Berlin, San Francisco* (Travis Mathews, 2014)
- เหนือธรรมชาติ [*Supernatural*] (Thunskana Pansittivorakul, 2014)
- *Pasolini* (Abel Ferrara, 2014)
- *Blind* (Eskil Vogt, 2014)
- *Yo soy la felicidad de este mundo* (Julian Hernandez, 2014)
- *Diet of Sex* (Borja Brun, 2014)
- *El tercero* (Rodrigo Guerrero, 2014)
- *Viharsarok* (Adam Csaszai, 2014)
- *Mot naturen* (Ole Giæver and Marte Vold, 2014)
- *Stella cadente* (Luis Minarro, 2014)
- *Love* (Gaspar Noe, 2015)
- *At Any Price* (Ramin Bahrani, 2015)
- *Chevalier* (Athina Rachel Tsangari, 2015)
- *Malgre la nuit* (Philippe Grandrieux, 2015)
- *Like Cattle Towards Glow* (Zac Farley and Dennis Cooper, 2015)
- 同流合烏 [*Utopians*] (Scud [Danny Cheng Wan-Cheung], 2015)
- 성난 화가 [*Angry Painter*] (Jeon Kyu-Hwan, 2015)
- *The Night Before* (Jonathan Levine, 2015)
- *Theo et Hugo dans le meme bateau* (Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau, 2016)
- *Tenemos la carne* (Emiliano Rocha Minter, 2016)
- *Needle Boy* (Alexander Bak Sagmo, 2016)
- *La noche* (Edgardo Castro, 2016)
- *Rester vertical* (Alain Guiraudie, 2016)
- *Even Lovers Get the Blues* (Laurent Micheli, 2016)
- *Kater* (Klaus Handel, 2016)
- *Empathy* (Jessica Dunn Rovinelli, 2016)
- สุกงาล [*Homogeneous, Empty Time*] (Thunskana Pansittivorakul and Harit Srikhao, 2017)
- *Anna, mon amour* (Calin Peter Netzer, 2017)
- *A Thought of Ecstasy* (Rolf Peter Kahl, 2017)
- *Lady Bird* (Greta Gerwig, 2017)
- *120 battements par minute* (Robin Campillo, 2017)
- *The Misandrists* (Bruce La Bruce, 2017)
- 三十儿立 [*Thirty Years of Adonis*] (Scud [Danny Cheng Wan-Cheung], 2017)
- *Marfa Girl II* (Larry Clark, 2018)
- *Mario* (Marcel Gisler, 2018)
- *Nu ma atinge* (Adina Pintilie, 2018)
- *La disyuntiva* (Antonio Zucherino, 2018)
- *Holiday* (Isabella Eklof, 2018)
- *Wij* (Rene Eller, 2018)
- *Les Confins du monde* (Guillaume Nicloux, 2018)
- *Reforma* (Fabio Leal, 2018)
- *Dokunma Bana* (Adina Pintilie, 2018)
- *He Loves Me* (Konstantinos Menelaou, 2018)
- *A Rosa Azul de Novalis* (Gustavo Vinagre and Rodrigo Carneiro, 2018)
- ฤดูกาลในนรก [*A Season in Hell*] (Thunskana Pansittivorakul, 2018)
- *Desire: The Short Films of Ohm* (Ohm Phanphiroj, 2018)
- *DAY. Cawa Banepa [Dau: Sasha and Valera]* (Ilya Khrzhanovskiy, 2019)

- *ДАУ. Новый человек* [*Dau: New Man*] (Ilya Khrzhanovskiy, 2019)
- *ДАУ. Нора сын* [*Dau: Nora and Son*] (Ilya Khrzhanovskiy, 2019)
- *Mapplethorpe* (Ondi Timoner, 2019)
- *El Principe* (Sebastian Munoz, 2019)
- *Dronningen* (May el-Toukhy, 2019)
- *Siempre si* (Alberto Fuguet, 2019)
- *L'acrobate* (Rodrigue Jean, 2019)
- *Tekct* (Klim Shipenko, 2019)
- *Leave It to Levi* (Jake Jaxson, 2019)
- *Liberte* (Albert Serra, 2019)
- *Mope* (Lucas Heyne, 2019)
- *Muscle* (Gerard Johnson, 2019)
- *Jak zostalem gangsterem. Historia prawdziwa* (Maciej Kawulski, 2019)
- *A Vida Invisivel* (Karim Ainouz, 2019)
- *Out of Sight, Out of Mind* (Brian Follmer, 2019)
- สันติคีรี โชนาดา [*Santikhiri Sonata*] (Thunskha Pansittivorakul, 2019)
- แดนศักดิ์สิทธิ์ [*Avalon*] (Thunskha Pansittivorakul and Harit Srikhao, 2020)
- *Violation* (Madeleine Sims-Fewer and Dusty Mancinelli, 2020)
- *Sekt* (Eric Marcus Weglehner, 2020)
- *Vento Seco* (Daniel Nolasco, 2020)
- *Inspira* (Emma Orelove, 2020)
- *Pleasure* (Ninja Thyberg, 2021)
- มรณสติ [*Danse Macabre*] (Thunskha Pansittivorakul and Phassarawin Kulsomboon, 2021)
- *Theo et les metamorphoses* (Damien Odoul, 2021)
- *Todo a la vez: La mirada de Paco y Manolo* (Alberto Fuguet, 2021)
- *Public Eye* (Davo Hardy, 2021)
- *L'Evenement* (Audrey Diwan, 2021)
- *Desaprender a dormir* (Gustavo Vinagre, 2021)
- *Les attendants* (Truong Minh Quy, 2021)
- *El perfecto David* (Felipe Gomez Aparicio, 2021)
- *Babardeală cu bucluc sau porno balamuc* (Radu Jude, 2021)
- 十三門徒 [*Apostles*] (Scud [Danny Cheng Wan-Cheung], 2022)
- *Pornomelancolia* (Manuel Abramovich, 2022)
- *Los agitadores* (Marco Berger, 2022)
- *Easy Tiger* (Karel Tuuyschaever, 2022)
- *Mars exalte* (Jean-Sebastien Chauvin, 2022)
- *Rotting in the Sun* (Sebastian Silva, 2023)
- *Daddio* (Christy Hall, 2023)
- *Drifter* (Hannes Hirsch, 2023)
- โอเอซิส [*Oasis*] (Oat Montien, 2024)
- *Eros: The Secret Room* (Vichai Imsuksom and Kittisak Tongprasert, 2024)



Mondo Violence

The mondo documentary (or 'shockumentary') sub-genre is named after Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi's *Mondo cane* (1962). As David Kerekes and David Slater demonstrate in *Killing for Culture*, mondo films became increasingly transgressive, to the extent that "the world of mondo was effectively edging toward snuff cinema."³ Later mondo documentaries released on video, such as *Faces of Death* (Conan LeCilaire [John Alan Schwartz], 1978), focused on news footage of human deaths. The controversial documentary *Executions* (David Herman, 1995) was the first such video to be classified by the BBFC.

George Franju's *Le sang des betes* (1949), a documentary filmed in a Paris slaughterhouse, is a less exploitative mondo precursor, and the autopsy art films *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (Stan Brakhage, 1971) and *Le poeme* (Bogdan Borkowski, 1986) were influenced by Franju's poetic documentary. Hollis Frampton's experimental films *Apparatus Sum* (1972) and *Magellan: At the Gates of Death* (1976) also contain images of bodies in morgues.

Mondo-style autopsy footage has occasionally been included in narrative cinema: *Superbeast* (George Schenck, 1972), *Black Mamba* (George Rowe, 1974), and *Providence* (Alain Resnais, 1977) all feature footage of real autopsies. T.F. Mou claimed that the autopsy of a boy in his film *黑太阳731 [Men Behind the Sun]* (1988) includes genuine medical footage. *Thriller: En Grym Film* (Bo Arne Vibenius, 1973) apparently utilised a real corpse for its eye-gouging sequence. Juan Logar concocted the plot of *Autopsia* (1973) as an excuse to insert footage of a real post-mortem. Three underground music videos—Hijokaidan's *Live and Confused* (1988), and SPK's notoriously offensive *Despair* (1982) and *Two Autopsy Films* (1983)—also feature autopsy footage, and Suicide's music video *Frankie Teardop* (directed by Michael Robinson, 1978) was partly shot in a mortuary, as was the horror film *Unrest* (Jason Todd Ipson, 2006).

Arguably the most famous death on film, the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy, was captured by Abraham Zapruder on his home movie camera. *Life* magazine immediately purchased all rights to his 8mm film, and published selected frames from it a week after Kennedy was killed, showing "for the first time and in tragic detail, the fate which befell our President."⁴ *Life* did not print the headshot, seen in frame 313, and the film itself was not shown to the public until an unauthorised copy was aired on ABC's *Good Night, America* on 6th March 1975.

Thai artist Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook has produced a series of contemplative video works—collectively titled สนทนากับความตายบนถนนสายแรกของชีวิต [*Conversation with Death on Life's First Street*]⁵—in which she reads aloud to corpses in a morgue. These include *Reading for One Female Corpse* (1997), *Reading for Two Female Corpses* (1997), *Reading for Three Female Corpses* (1997), *Reading for Male and Female Corpses* (1998), *Reading for Female Corpse* (2001), *Chant for Female Corpse* (2001), *Conversation I-III* (2002), *Death Seminar I-II* (2005), *The Class I-III* (2005), *Pond* (1998), *Lament* (2000), *Three Female-scape* (2002), *Thai Medley I-III* (2002), *Wind Princess White Birds* (2002), *Sudsiri and Araya* (2002), and *I'm Living* (2002).

³ David Kerekes and David Slater (1994) *Killing for Culture: An Illustrated History of Death Film from Mondo to Snuff*, London: Creation Books, p. 113. Second edition (1995); third edition, *From Edison to ISIS: A New History of Death on Film* (2016), Manchester: Headpress.

⁴ 'Split-second Sequence as the Bullets Struck', *Life* (29th November 1963) vol. 55, no. 22, p. 24.

Chinese artist Zhu Yu has created some of the world's most controversial artworks, several of which incorporate real human body parts. For 全部知識學的基礎 ['intellectual brain'] (1998), he put human brains into a blender and decanted the resulting paste into jars, exhibited alongside a video documenting the entire process. For 献祭 ['sacrifice'] (2002), he artificially inseminated a surrogate mother and fed their aborted foetus to his dog, again capturing the process on video. He was interviewed in the Channel 4 documentary *Beijing Swings* (Martin Herring, 2003) discussing 吃人 ['eating people'] (2000), a series of photographs documenting him eating a human foetus.

The first animal death on film dates from 1903, when Thomas Edison recorded the electrocution of Topsy the circus elephant. Animal killings in narrative films are most notoriously associated with the Italian cannibal exploitation cycle of the 1970s and early 1980s, a sub-genre that began with Umberto Lenzi's *Il paese del sesso selvaggio* (1972). The most notorious examples are Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal holocaust* (1979) and Lenzi's *Cannibal ferox* (1981), both of which were prosecuted for obscenity in the UK as 'video nasties'.

The following films feature real animal deaths:

- Michael Haneke's *Benny's Video* (a pig is shot, 1992)
- *Le temps du loup* (a horse's throat is cut, 2003); also by Haneke
- *Cache* (a chicken is decapitated, 2005); also by Haneke
- Scott Sidney's *Tarzan of the Apes* (an out-of-control lion is killed, 1918)
- Adel Abdessemed's *Don't Trust Me* (a deer, goat, horse, pig, sheep, and ox are killed; 2007)
- Paul Kocela's *The End of One* (a seagull dies, 1971)
- Umberto Lenzi's *Il paese del sesso selvaggio* (a snake and crocodile are eviscerated, 1972)
- *Mangiati vivi* (a crocodile and iguana are killed, 1980); also by Lenzi
- *Cannibal ferox* (a monkey, alligator, and turtle are killed; 1981); also by Lenzi
- Ruggero Deodato's *Ultimo mondo cannibale* (a crocodile is eviscerated, 1977)
- *Cannibal holocaust* (a muskrat, snake, monkey, and pig are killed; 1979); also by Deodato
- Sergio Martino's *La montagna del dio cannibale* (a monitor lizard is eviscerated, 1978)
- Jean Renoir's *La regle du jeu* (rabbits and pheasants are shot, 1939)
- Sergei Eisenstein's *Стачка* [*Strike*] (cows are killed in a slaughterhouse, 1925)
- Marian Dora's *Melancholie der Engel* (several animals, including a pig, are killed; 2009)
- Mariano Peralta's *Snuff 102* (various animals, including a pig, are killed; 2007)
- Eloy de la Iglesia's *La Semana del asesino* (cows are killed in a slaughterhouse, 1972)
- Luis Bunuel's *L'Age d'Or* (a rat is killed by a scorpion, 1930)
- Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi's *Mondo cane* (pigs and dogs are ritually killed, 1962)
- Roberto Rossellini's *Paisa* (an eel is killed, 1946)
- Thomas Edison's *Electrocuting an Elephant* (Topsy the elephant is killed, 1903)
- Barbet Schroeder's *Maitress* (a horse is killed, 1976)
- Gaspar Noe's *Carne* (a horse is killed, 1991)
- Juzo Itami's *Tampopo* (a turtle is killed, 1985)
- Walter Hill's *Southern Comfort* (a pig is killed, 1981)
- Robert Bresson's *Mouchette* (a rabbit is killed, 1967)
- Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's *In a Blur of Desire* (pigs and cows are killed, 2007)
- Thierry Zeno's *Vase de Noces* (a chicken is decapitated, 1974)
- Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright* (kangaroos are killed, 1971)
- Fred Vogel's *August Underground's Penance* (a live rat is fed to an alligator, 2007)
- Ermanno Olmi's *L'Albero degli zoccoli* (a pig is killed, 1978)
- Rene Cardona's *Tintorera!* (several sharks are killed, 1977)
- Fernando Arrabal's *Viva la muerte* (a bull and a lizard are killed, 1971)
- Brad F Grinter and Steve Hawkes's *Blood Freak* (a turkey is killed, 1972)
- Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (chickens have their heads shot off, 1973)
- Cornel Wilde's *The Naked Prey* (elephants are shot and eviscerated, 1966)
- Bert I. Gordon's *The Food of the Gods* (rats are killed, 1976)
- John Cardos's *Kingdom of the Spiders* (numerous tarantulas are killed, 1977)
- Jean-Luc Godard's *Week-end* (a pig is killed, 1967)
- Tinto Brass's *Salon Kitty* (more pig-killing, 1976)
- Frederick Wiseman's *Meat* (cattle and sheep are slaughtered, 1976)
- Peter Whitehead's *The Fall* (a chicken is killed, 1969)
- Catherine Breillat's *Une vraie jeune fille* (a chicken is killed, 1976)
- *Une vieille maitresse* (another chicken is killed, 2007); also by Breillat
- John Waters's *Mondo Trasho* (chickens are decapitated, 1970)
- Adam Simon and Darren Moloney's *Carnosaur* (more chickens are decapitated, 1993)
- Jose Mojica Marins's *Exorcismo negro* (a woman bites a hen's head off, 1974)
- Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (a slaughterhouse sequence, 1978)
- Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (a buffalo is sacrificed, 1979)
- Richard Linklater's *Fast Food Nation* (a slaughterhouse sequence, 2006)
- Hollis Frampton's *Autumnal Equinox* (filmed in a slaughterhouse, 1974)
- Elwood Perez's *Silip* (a buffalo is killed, 1985)

- Kim Ki-Duk's *섬 [The Isle]* (flesh is cut from a live fish, 2000)
- Lee Kang-Sheng's 幫幫我, 愛神 [*Help Me, Eros*] (a carp is eaten alive, 2007)
- Andrei Tarkovsky's *Андрей Рублёв [Andrei Rublev]* (a horse is killed, 1966)
- Jorg Buttgerit's *Nekromantik* (a rabbit is skinned, 1987)
- *Nekromantik II: Die Rückkehr der Liebenden Toten* (a seal is killed, 1991); also by Buttgerit
- Robert Bierman's *Vampire's Kiss* (the eating of a live cockroach, 1989)
- Herb Robins's *The Worm-Eaters* (worm-eating, 1977)
- Rui Zhang's 盜馬賊 [*The Horse Thief*] (a lamb is killed, 1986)
- Crispin Glover's *What Is It?* (snails are killed, 2005)
- Jiri Menzel's *Postriziny* (a pig is killed, 1981)
- Herman Yau's 伊波拉病毒 [*Ebola Syndrome*] (chickens and frogs are killed, 1996)
- Hyeon-II Kang's 마고 [*Naked Paradise*] (frogs are trampled on, 2002)
- Park Chan-Wook's 올드보이 [*Oldboy*] (a live octopus is eaten, 2003)
- Monte Hellman's *Cockfighter* (cockfighting scenes, 1974)
- Naomi Kawase's 2つ目の窓 [*Still the Water*] (goats have their throats slit, 2014)
- Bernardo Bertolucci's *Novocento* (a pig is killed, 1976)
- Dennis Hopper's *The Last Movie* (sheep are killed, 1971)
- James Frawley's *Kid Blue* (a chicken is decapitated, 1973)
- Luciano Sacripanti and Edward Dmytry's *Bluebeard* (a hunting scene, 1972)
- Hans F. Geißendorfer's *Jonathan* (a rat is trodden on, 1970)
- Ilya Khrzhanovsky and Ilya Permyakov's ДАУ. Вырождение [*Dau: Degeneration*] (a pig is killed, 2020)
- Marco Ferreri's *La grande bouffe* (a goose is decapitated, 1973)
- Chaweng Chaiyawan's หัวใจมอละ [*Please... See Us*] (a pig is killed and dismembered, 2021)
- Eddie Romero and Gerado de Leon's *Mad Doctor of Blood Island* (sheep are killed, 1969)



Cinema of Abjection

In her essay on abjection, *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva associates visible bodily waste with mortality: “These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being.”⁵ This notion of the border is central to taboos against bodily emissions, as their transgressive power is derived from their liminality.

In the 1960s, the Wiener Aktionismus art group—including Gunter Brus, Otto Muehl, and Hermann Nitsch—organised performances involving urination, defecation, orgies, and animal sacrifice. These events, or ‘actions’, were often raided by the Austrian police, and were documented by Kurt Kren and other experimental filmmakers. Kren’s role became increasingly participatory, and he is seen performing with Muehl in *Campagnereiterclub* (1969) and *Scheisskerl* (1969); in their notorious *Oh Sensibility* (1970), a goose is decapitated. Brus and Muehl both received jail sentences after their *Kunst und Revolution* action in 1968, performed at the University of Vienna. (The only records of the event are fragments of footage filmed by Ernst Schmidt.) Kren’s *20. September* (1967), featuring Brus, was the inspiration for Thai artist Vasan Sitthiket’s video *There Must Be Something Happen* (1993), and Muehl appears in Dusan Makavejev’s equally scatological Serbian film *Sweet Movie* (1974).

A manifesto by Nick Zedd set out the objectives of his Cinema of Transgression movement: “There will be blood, shame, pain and ecstasy, the likes of which no one has yet imagined.”⁶ Zedd directed the confrontational short film *Whoregasm* (1988); Ian Kerkof’s *The Dead Man II: Return of the Dead Man* (1994), which includes a ‘Roman shower’ sequence, is equally transgressive. The documentary *Hated* (Todd Phillips, 1993) profiles rock musician G.G. Allin, who was notorious for defecating on stage, and coprophilia is a central theme of Matthew Barney’s epic *River of Fundament* (2014).

Pink Flamingos (1972), directed by John Waters, is perhaps the ultimate transgressive film, breaking every cultural taboo: sex (a parody of the ‘porno chic’ trend established by *Deep Throat*), death (a chicken’s head is cut off), and even coprophagy. A monologue by the lead character, Divine, encapsulates the film’s transgressive philosophy: “Kill everyone now! Condone first degree murder! Advocate cannibalism! Eat shit!”

⁵ Julia Kristeva (1982) *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 3. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez from the French, *Pouvoirs de l’horreur* (1980), Paris: Editions du Seuil.

⁶ Orion Jericho [Nick Zedd] (1985) ‘The Cinema of Transgression Manifesto’, *The Underground Film Bulletin* no. 4.

© 2006–2024 Matthew Hunt
www.matthewhunt.com