

# Techniques of a director – ingmar bergman essay sample

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



### *Introduction*

The dictionary meaning of the word "auteur" is:

*(in film criticism), a director who so dominates the film-making process that it is appropriate to call the director the auteur, or author, of the motion picture. The auteur theory holds that the "director is the primary person responsible for the creation of a motion picture and imbues it with his or her distinctive, recognizable style".*

Auteur theory came into existence after Second World War; it is the theory of filmmaking in which the director is viewed as the major creative force in a motion picture (encyclopedia Britannica definition). Hence, this theory originated after analyzing the particular stylistic marks that each director left on his/her motion art which made it easy to distinguish between films made by two directors (each inculcating his/her own personality into the film). The basis of auteur theory is that instead being a co-operative, industrial product, a film becomes identified with its director, who is seen as the ultimate creative impetus or force behind the film. It is actually more complex than this in theory but it does attempt to insert an author into the film. Auteur theory is also very pervasive and has entered the popular discourse on films with critical opinion and reviews often articulated from this point of view for instance: "The latest Tarantino release" etc.

Auteur directors exhibit thematic and stylistic consistencies throughout their careers, which seems as a prerequisite for the auteur theory to be acceptable. Auteur work is a timeless coating on a director`s film, which

keeps it a classic through the future. Ingmar Bergman, One of the greatest film makers, he was known for his name for art houses but because he put forward a method of watching films that was the touchstone of the art house experience. His films are not brimming with violent events or they are not well composed. His films always demand the concentration and tolerance of the viewers, as they are rich in provocations.

An auteur of a film is distinguished by the theme, style, ideology used in that film, i. e. the plots, places and faces used in the film and most importantly, time. The Time is a main theme in Bergman's work. From his childhood pressures Bergman later drew material for his plays and films. Many of Bergman's works explored the father-god trauma, including the films *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961) and *Winter Light* (1963) (unknown, 2008). He made his debut in feature movies in 1944 as a screenwriter to the Alf Sjöberg *Hets* (Frenzy). *Fängelse* (1949, The Devil's Wanton), shot in two-and-a-half weeks, was the first film Bergman both wrote and directed. Swedish critics referred Bergman as "the puberty crisis director" specializing in "delayed adolescence". The artistic breakthrough came with *Gycklarnas Afton* (1953, Sawdust and Tinsel), in which Bergman described an artist's life as despised and wasted. The background is a third class circus environment. "It is true people often talk about 'decisive moments,'" Bergman said once. "Dramatists in particular make much of this fiction. The truth is probably that such moments hardly exist, but just looks as if they do... The actual breakthrough is a fact far back in the past, far back in obscurity." (from *Private Conversations*, 1996).

Bergman had a very close relation to human face and depicted never before explored aesthetics of human face in his work. Mr. Bergman once told Dick Cavett — “ I’m passionately interested in human beings, the human face, the human soul.” By and large, today’s audiences do not seek such explorations at the movies. They are more prone to having fun with Mr. Bergman verging on pretentiousness. His work is easily parodied.

*Our work in films must begin with the human face. We can certainly become completely absorbed in the esthetics of montage; we can bring objects and still life into a wonderful rhythm; we can make nature studies of astounding beauty, but the approach to the human face is without doubt the hallmark and distinguishing feature of the film medium (Quoted in Hollis Alpert, “ Style Is the Director,” Saturday Review of Literature, Dec. 23, 1961, p. 40).*

Bergman was called “ *poet with the camera*” (Rothstein, July 30, 2007), His camera work was so up close and personal, that one could see *the pores in his actors’ skin* - an intimacy of shooting style that corresponded to an almost psychiatric dissection of the characters’ plights (Gritten, 2007). Critics wondered whether there was a general message in his films. Bergman sometimes denied he had one. Yet he usually found a saving moment in the misery: a selfless communication, in word or gesture, between two human beings. At the end of “ Wild Strawberries” the hero, an aged professor, is belatedly reconciled with his family and his past. As the scene was filmed, Bergman noted, the old actor’s face “ shone with secretive light as if reflected from another reality”. That secretive light, or hidden love, was just what the director had been searching for. Whatever his limitations, however,

his accomplishments are genuine. Most obviously, he has brought to the cinema a sense of form which is exceptionally acute. It is of more particular significance, though, that Bergman's very specialized talent-his capacity to bring fantasy, dream, and myth once again within the area of major cinematic interest-constitutes a valuable counterpoise to the dominantly realistic, socially oriented film of Western Europe (Scott, 1965)

*Portrait of youth in Bergman's works* : (Kaminsky, 1974),

In films of Ingmar Bergman, children live in a world of tormented innocence. They are surrounded by tortured adults who cannot or will not communicate to them the reasons for their anguish. Distrustfully, the children seek their own answers by observing and eavesdropping on the adult world. They try, as they develop understanding, to personify and simplify good and evil. Like heroes of Greek tragedy, they are driven by curiosity, a need to know. If the child does make contact, either by his own experience or a shared experience, his protective innocence is torn away or he must face the insight which he has only vaguely sensed.

He must face the realization that God does not exist or does not communicate, that terrible things are possible because man is unprotected, that death exists as a frightening and final end. This, to Bergman, is what it means to become an adult. As an adult, the former child can only find solace for his lost innocence in the acceptance of love, a love which Bergman tells us can range from pure animal passion to almost-spiritual devotion. If a child is unable to accept this insight, he grows into an even more tortured adult

without innocence, clinging to childhood fears which cannot sustain him, unable to accept or seek the solace of love (Kaminsky, 1974, page 1). For instance the works of the problem of youthful loss of innocence emerges artistically in *Summer Interlude* (1950), develops in *Secrets of Women* (1952), *Wild Strawberries* (1957), *The Magician* (1958), and *The Virgin Spring* (1959). It culminates explicitly in *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961).

#### *Images and words in Bergman's works :*

To a great extent Bergman's films from the fifties—*The Seventh Seal*, *Wild Strawberries*, *The Magician*, *Smiles of a Summer Night*, *The Virgin Spring*—do start from the written text, from a *dialogue* meant to convey both thematic meaning and emotional tension. When Professor Borg in *Wild Strawberries* looks into the microscope in one of the dream sequences and sees nothing but his own eye, we are *told* this. At the end of the same examination sequence we are given a neat verbal summing-up of Borg's state of alienation; from a visual point of view the sequence has added nothing to our understanding of Borg. Similarly, in *The Magician*, the attic confrontation between Vogler and Dr. Vergerus, the rationalist, tends to be little more than a cinematic tour-de-force, revealing nothing about the two characters that we do not already know: their attitudes have been most explicitly *stated* in their first encounter in Consul Egerman's livingroom.

#### *Camera work in Bergman's works :*

Whereas his favorite approach to the characters in the Gothic films was to let the camera sneak up on them, so that the person closest to the camera was

seen from behind with the director assuming the position of a peeping Tom, Bergman allows the faces of his people in the chamber films to dominate the screen. A shot of the young boy Johan in *The Silence* shows him in a typical Bergman composition, with the human figure up front and a second figure in the background. Only occasionally can a Bergman close-up have the effect of an unexpected confrontation, such as the handheld camera sequence in *Shame* with Max von Sydow “tracking” down Liv Ullman through the frenzy of the pursuer’s eyes; or the instance in *Persona* where the mute Elizabeth Vogler is taking random pictures on the beach, then disappears from the screen only to pop back into the frame like a jack-in-the-box, to photograph us (Steene, 1970, page 6). Actually, such handlings of the close-up by Bergman are more than technical experiments with camera and audience reaction; first and foremost they are meant to tell us something about his characters. As always in Bergman’s case it is futile to approach his close-up style from the viewpoint of cinematic intention; rather, any changes in style must be related to central themes, character motivation and other quite “literary” subjects.

Bergman rarely turned his lens on the cheerier side of the human condition, but he never averted his eye from the truth as he saw it. He created films for adults, especially for adults who, he believed, were as serious as he was about making sense of their own humanity. More than any other single director, he established an uncontestable niche for cinema as a true art form. After Bergman, intellectuals no longer had to apologize for writing and

thinking about films. Bergman's legacy staggers the imagination. Looking over his filmography is

like picking up a volume of Shakespeare's complete works. One wonders how a person could create so much in one lifetime, and most of it extraordinary. In addition to the more than 50 films Bergman scripted and directed, he wrote for the stage, for radio and television; he authored novels and an autobiography; he taught theater and staged performances of classic plays and operas all over the world. Ever true to his own sense of the self, he remained in Sweden, confident that if he had something important enough to say, audiences would make the effort to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers to listen. He never needed Hollywood, the English language or international stars to ensure his success, since he defined success on his own terms, and these did not include huge box-office returns.(Blake, 2007)

*Regardless of whether I believe or not, whether I am a Christian or not, I would play my part in the collective building of the cathedral* : Ingmar Bergman

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