



En construcción

José Luis Guerín

SPAIN, 2001

PEDAGOGICAL PACKAGE

European Cinema Education
for the Youth



I – INTRODUCTION

- CinEd : a collection of films, cinema education programme **p. 3**
- Editorial **p. 3**
- Technical specifications **p. 5**
- Cinematographic questions concerning a photogram **p. 5**
- Synopsis **p. 5**

II – THE FILM

- Context and creation **p. 6**
- The author: José Luis Guerin, the multiple forms of film **p. 7**
- Filmography **p. 9**
- *Work in Progress* in José Luis Guerin's career: a new way of working, a portrait of the city **p. 10**
- Reflections by José Luis Guerin **p. 11**
- Reflections by Núria Esquerria and Amanda Villavieja **p. 13**

III – ANALYSIS

- Breakdown of sequences **p. 14**
- Questions of cinema **p. 20**

IV – CONNECTIONS

- Comparing Images **p. 27**
- Connections between films: *Work in Progress* and *Il Posto*: the city and faces **p. 28**
- Connections with other arts **p. 29**
- Reception of the film **p. 31**

V – LEARNING ACTIVITIES p. 32**CINED : A FILM COLLECTION, PEDAGOGY OF CINEMA**

CinEd has joined a mission of transmitting the 7th art as a cultural object and as a support to understand the world. For that reason it was elaborated a common pedagogy, starting from a collection of movies produced in the European countries, partners to this project. The approach intends to be adapted to our era, marked by a rapid, major and continuously change, regarding the way of seeing, receiving and producing the images. These last are viewed on a variety of screens: from the biggest – those in the halls, to the smallest – (to smartphones) ticking, of course, TV sets, computers and tablets screens. The cinema is still a young art whose death has been predicted many times. It is very clear that this didn't happen.

These changes affect the cinema, transmission must seriously take into account the manner increasingly fragmented of viewing movies, starting from this screen diversity. CinEd publications propose and talk about a sensitive, inductive, interactive and intuitive education providing knowledges, analysis tools and dialog between image and film possibili-

ties. The works are described on different levels, of course, viewed in entirely and in pieces, according to different temporality, fixed image, plan and sequence. Educational brochures invite us to take the movie with freedom and suppleness. One of the major challenges is to intelligently get the movie open – mindedly: description, essential step of any analytical enterprise, the ability to extract, select, classify, compare, confront the images between movies and with the images of other performing and exposure arts (photography, literature, painting, theatre, comics...) The purpose is images not only to run but to create emotions ; cinema is an artificial art, extremely valuable for build and consolidate the vision of the young generations.

Educational file prepared by **A Bao A Qu**

Gonzalo de Lucas is professor of cinema at Pompeu Fabra University, programmer of Xcèntric (CCCB) and editor of the magazine *Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema*. He has written articles in about thirty books, collections and special publications; *il est auteur de Vida secreta de las sombras et d'El blanco de los origenes, et coéditeur, avec Núria Aidelman, by Jean-Luc Godard. Thinking between images.*

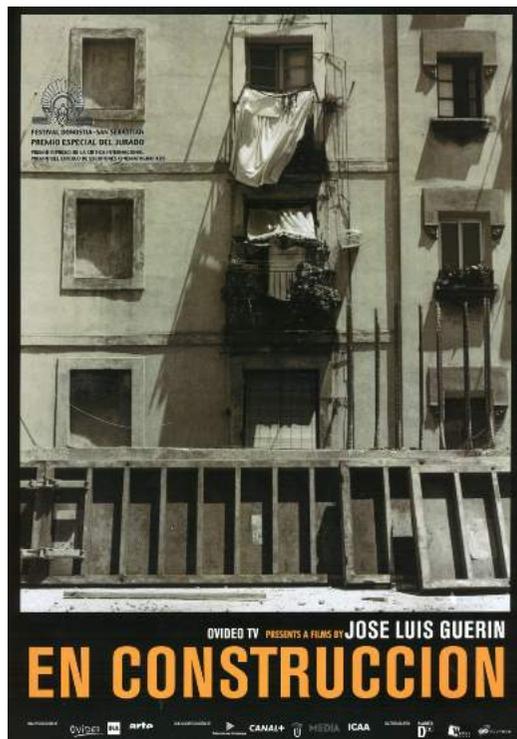
Jordi Balló Context and creation
Núria Esquerria and **Amanda Villavieja** Reflections
Núria Aidelman and **Laia Colell** Learning activities

Coordination CinEd in Spain : **A Bao A Qu**
 Pedagogic coordination : **Cinémathèque française / Cinéma, cent ans de jeunesse**
 General coordination : **Institut français**
 Copyright : **CinEd / Institut français / A Bao A Qu**

This content is protected by Articles L.111-1 and L.112-1 of the Intellectual Property Code (CPI).

EDITORIAL

José Luis Guerin is one of the leading auteurs of contemporary Spanish cinema. He is responsible for an extremely diverse filmography, with each of his films involving research and in-depth reflection about film and a new way of exploring it. This applies to *Work in Progress*, a film that is characteristic of the last twenty years of cinema. It is a documentary which reminds us that great cinema does not understand labels and that a great film is great whatever the genre assigned to it (fiction or non-fiction).



The film is a portrait of Barcelona, the filmmaker's first work about his own city: a portrait of faces and people, and their neighbourhood and surroundings. It is a wonderful film for helping us understand this essential power of the cinema to show the world using cinematographic means, just like the very first filmmakers, the Lumière brothers that Guerin so admires. This makes it the perfect film for observing the filmmaker's choices: the value of each frame and each composition, the meticulous work on sound, the construction of the film through editing, etc.

Work in Progress can also be seen as a film about transmission: through the relationships woven together throughout the film, the reflections we see about work and life, and the very context in which the film was created, by a group of students entering the world of film working alongside José Luis Guerin.

Finally, *Work in Progress* deals with many key issues in the world today and the history that has made it this way: the processes of gentrification being experienced (and suffered) by large (and not so large) European cities; the role of town planning in the life of people; people of different origins and social strata living side-by-side; the layers of history present (although often unnoticed) around us... It is a film for thinking about both film and the world. Like every great film.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Original title :	<i>En construcción</i>
Genre :	documentary
Runtime :	125 min
Year :	2000
Country :	Spain
Languages :	Spanish, Catalan, Arabic
Director :	José Luis Guerin
Assistant director:	Abel García
Second assistant director :	Elena Marí
Screenplay :	José Luis Guerin
Executive producer :	Antoni Carmin Díaz
Production director :	Joan Antoni Barjau
Production assistant :	Francina Cirera
Photography :	Alex Gaultier
Second operator :	Ricardo Íscar
Sound :	Amanda Villavieja, Kiku Vidal
Sound assistant :	Marta Andreu
Editing :	Mercedes Álvarez, Núria Esquerra
Production :	OVIDEO in collaboration with La Sept-Arte/INA
Line producers :	Gerard Collas and Jordi Balló
Associate producers :	Dana Hastier and Thierry Garrel

Film made as part of the Master in Creative Documentary of Pompeu Fabra University.

With appearances from: : Juana Rodríguez Molina, Iván Guzmán Jiménez, Juan López López, Juan Manuel López, Sonia, Pedro Robles, Santiago Segade, Abdel Aziz El Mountassir, Abdelsalam Madris, Antonio Atar, Pere Lluís Artigas, Jesús M. Eiris, Francisco Gómez, Juan M. Ortiz, Jordi Martínez

THE WINDOW AND THE
FRAME WITHIN A FRAME

PRESENT AND
PAST



PORTRAITS

WORK

CONVERSATION AND THE POWER OF WORDS

CINEMATOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS CONCERNING A PHOTOGRAM

PORTRAITS

Work in Progress (En Construcción) is a portrait of people and of a neighbourhood. The film's characters are builders working on a new building in the Raval, and the residents of this symbolic historical neighbourhood of Barcelona. Throughout the film, Guerin focuses on their faces and gestures, on how they speak and on how they occupy spaces. The composition of the shots is fundamental to his portrayal of the characters. The streets and spaces of the Raval, a popular working class neighbourhood in the city centre undergoing gentrification, are the other characters of the film.

CONVERSATION AND THE POWER OF WORDS

Through words, people with very different life stories and origins truly get to know each other: they listen to each other and they talk to each other. During the building work they learn to understand each other, to work together, to pass on their skills and to forge friendship. This sequence takes place when both the construction work and the film are coming to an end, and the viewer feels that a community has been created which connects the workers, local residents and also the film crew. Words are also often the means by which characters often become memorable for us, allowing us as viewers to learn to know and love them.

WORK

This is a film about work. It is about the builders working on the building, but also the filmmaker, Guerin and his student film crew, working to create a film over the two years during which they filmed the construction of the building. In this image, the builders are involved in the manual work of building a window. In the same way, the filmmaker uses the camera to create another window, the frame, to compose each shot in a meaningful way. Thus the construction of the building, brick by brick, progresses in parallel to the film, shot by shot. When the

building is completed, so is the film.

THE WINDOW AND THE FRAME WITHIN A FRAME

The windows connect the outdoors and the indoors, the homes and the neighbourhood. Through the windows, the new building is incorporated into and visually connected with the neighbourhood, so that the interiors (the private spaces of homes) are linked with the exterior (the city). While Guerin uses his shots to create frames or visual windows showing the architecture, the shots are also transparent windows for seeing and documenting the life and reality of the neighbourhood. It is a visual idea of pictorial tradition that is characteristic of many of the film's shots: the frame within a frame. In this photogram it is expressed by means of the connection between the foreground, showing the builders inside the building, and another frame in the middle distance: the window showing the façade of the church of Sant Pau del Camp.

PRESENT AND PAST

Different layers of time and history are brought together in a single image: the new construction of the building still in progress, the church which is still standing after eleven centuries, and even further away, other buildings from the 20th century. This gives a glimpse of a neighborhood, in which many different eras, cultures and origins coexist. And one of the main themes of the film is highlighted: the passing of time, the contrast between the stable and the transitory, the tension between construction and destruction, and memory and loss.

SYNOPSIS

In a characteristic working class neighbourhood of Barcelona, under threat from a regeneration plan, a block of flats is being built. We wanted to find out all about a building project from the inside, so we went in when this space was still a piece of land where kids played football. On this site we attempted to coexist, get to know and film, in this order, so that we could cover anecdotes from the building itself and those created around it, in the day-to-day routine of local residents and the neighbourhood itself, shaken up by the noise of the demolition (in fact, the image of the neighbourhood was expressed by the handful of faces we felt represented it). Within this process, we soon noticed that the change in the urban landscape also entailed a change in the human landscape, and that certain echoes of the world at large could be identified in this shift. On these foundations, we built a film.

José Luis Guerin summarised the film in a text published in April 2001

II – THE FILM

CONTEXT AND CREATION

Renovation work was going on next to where José Luis Guerin lived. This allowed him to observe the builders and the precision of their movements as they worked, and on their break times, when they held conversations about the most unexpected subjects. This daily encounter with a working situation gave Guerin an idea, which he expressed as follows: “We all live in spaces built by strangers”. This observation gave rise to the film *Work in Progress*, which would describe the experiences of those who built the spaces in which we live our day-to-day lives.

Work in Progress was one of the first films to come about as a result of the Master in Creative Documentary of Pompeu Fabra University. Guerin and a group of students worked together on the whole process of creating the film, right from the preparation stage. This preliminary phase was fundamental, because in order to create a film about builders on a project it was necessary to find the location, the “work in progress” which could provide the narrative trunk of the film. In the end, the choice was a new block of flats to be built in the ultimate working class neighbourhood in Barcelona: the Raval.

This choice turned out to be much more of a determining factor than it had seemed in the beginning, since the choice of neighbourhood became one of the film’s layers of meaning. The Raval is the neighbourhood of the city with the most history, and home to its most extreme situations of exclusion. It always has, and continues to be, the neighbourhood of immigrants, where people of different origins live side by side. It was also the neighbourhood of prostitution, housing the underbelly of society, which, in the years of renovation of the city that followed the Olympics celebrated in Barcelona (1992), underwent a process of transformation exemplified by this new block of flats. New residents from more the well-off classes were coming to live in this working class area. In fact, Barcelona is one of the great exponents of the cities that have undertaken profound reurbanisation projects in the past decades, transforming their historical centres and industrial parks. This is what is known as “gentrification”, which refers to the process in which the original population of an area or neighbourhood, generally central and popular, is progressively displaced by a wealthier population.

It is also interesting to establish the years in which the movie is filmed (1998-2000) as a particularly intense moment in relation to some historical events such as the war in Kosovo, that emerges and becomes present in the film through television and radio news reports and some dialogues.

Yet the central universe of the film continued to be the life and work of the bricklayers, carpenters and various assistants. Guerin and his team drew up a specific plan of work in order to observe them and earn their trust. The whole group went to the filming location first thing in the morning, at the same time as the bricklayers, and left when they finished. Most of the time there was no filming, they just observed. On the basis of what they saw and heard, they planned the scenes that would make up the body of the film. Over a year many of these situations were filmed, but only a small proportion of them made the final cut.

So, for example, the sequence showing the unexpected discovery of the bodies from a Roman cemetery hidden under the foundations of the new building became a fundamental part of the film, changing its nature. This sequence led to something unexpected and wonderful: many residents of the Raval came to talk about the finding, and so it became part of the film. From then on, *Work in Progress* was not just a film about the builders, but about the relationship between them and a neighbourhood undergoing widespread transformation of its urban and human geography. This connects the film with universal issues, because these changes to neighbourhoods were occurring, and continue to occur, in many cities throughout Europe and other continents. Those who appear in the film were unaware of the real implications *Work in Progress* might have: they thought it was the work of a solitary director, who was coming into the neighbourhood with a group of students, almost as if they were working on a university project. But when the film was screened at the San Sebastian International Film Festival in 2001, and won the Special Jury Prize, the effect of the film’s innovation first became apparent. “Masterpiece in the Raval”, was the headline in some Barcelona newspapers the day after its premiere, a premonition of the critics’ acclaim, which highlighted the achievement of filming moving fragments of reality, sometimes using devices which seemed to be exclusive to fiction, such as conversations filmed with two cameras in shot reverse shot. In fact *Work in Progress* was one of the first documentaries to compete in festivals alongside fiction films, thus breaking through a barrier which had seemed unbreakable: it demonstrated that regardless of categories, what matters is that it is all cinema.

Work in Progress became an unexpected success in Spanish cinemas, something almost unprecedented for a documentary film. This success aroused interest around Europe because it was discovered that documentary films were perfectly at home in screening spaces, because they responded to the viewer’s desire for reality. Other European experiences in subsequent years, such as *To Be and to Have* by Nicolas Philibert (*Être et avoir*, 2002) confirmed this discovery of how to reach a wide audience using a documentary film with a very similar production system: long filming period, in this case in a primary school, close observation and a final cut that summarises the film, and is both moving and revealing.

Some films break the established norms and open new spaces for creative liberty. The success of *Work in Progress* demonstrated that a different type of cinema was possible: a different kind of working team, with young people who were gaining experience and with innovative drama strategies which have become part of the heritage of the community of filmmakers.

Jordi Balló,
Director of the Master in Creative Documentary of Pompeu Fabra University
and line producer of *Work in Progress*

THE AUTHOR : JOSÉ LUIS GUERÍN, THE MULTIPLE FORMS OF FILM

José Luis Guerin had a vocation for film from a very early age. At the age of fifteen he started making short films in super-8, as travel notes or sketched depictions, with the belief he still holds today that film can be used as a diary and record of encounters. He was twenty-four when he finished his first full-length film, *Los motivos de Berta* (Berta's Motives) (1983), influenced by filmmakers such as Robert Bresson, Aleksander Dovjenko and Víctor Erice.



Los motivos de Berta (1983)



Tren de sombras (1997)



Innisfree (1990)

Guerin has always considered himself a viewer first and foremost, rather than a filmmaker. Many of his films have been inspired by his cinema-going experience and curiosity about films he has seen, such as *Innisfree* (1990), which he filmed in the same Irish village where John Ford had filmed *The Quiet Man*, (1952), and *Tren de sombras* (1997), a visual essay about the mysteries of certain mute images which he came up with during the centenary of film.



The Quiet Man, John Ford (1952)



Innisfree (1990)



Innisfree (1990)



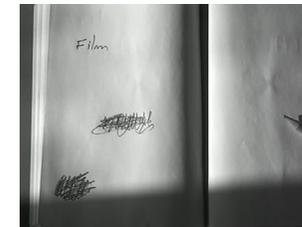
Tren de sombras (1997)



This dialogue with tradition and his inspirations is never however imitative or redundant. Using the resources available today, Guerin tries to recreate the pleasure of filming (and reinventing) a form of forgotten or uninterrupted film, such as the amateur cinema of the time of silent films in *Tren de sombras*, or classic film in *Innisfree*. To achieve this, his creation processes are extremely meticulous right from the preparation stage, until he finds a singular and pure style to express a concept. As he feels that making a film is about researching, reading, watching other films, travelling, thinking, rehearsing and taking notes with the camera, his process for creating full-length films lasts for several years. All of his life experiences thus influence how he sees filmmaking: the trips he takes, the exhibitions he visits and the streets he walks along. All of these become material for his films, and sometimes these notes or sketches are even shown in his films.



In the City of Sylvia, José Luis Guerin (*En la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007)



Correspondence: Jonas Mekas – José Luis Guerin (2011)

This is also why he has included teaching within some of his work as filmmaker, when he always conveys the message that the desire for a film does not come from finished images, but from images we have not yet seen or that are still to be made. In fact, Guerin normally starts a film project based on a speculation or fantasy; until he finds the images from the locations or people he films. In his films there tends to be a documentary undercurrent to the cinematographic reality based on the space chosen (the village in *Innisfree*, the castle in *Tren de sombras* and the neighbourhood in *Work in Progress*). In addition, Guerin works on the layers of time in the image to reveal its fantastical and poetic nature: the suggestive power of the shadows, reflections, light, etc.



Tren de sombras (1997)



"It is not life, but its shadow", wrote Gorki when he discovered film. Possibly this idea could summarise Guerin's films, where the reality of the image prevails over the image of reality. From the fleeting encounters with the faces he films, or in a neighbourhood which is being transformed or disappearing as in *Work in Progress*, almost all his shots are about the ephemeral, that which is impulsively restrained in its fleetingness, and which suddenly disappears: an unexpected movement, the moment of a look, or a chance encounter. It is a type of composition or choreography of the fleeting moment, a reflection.



In the City of Sylvia, José Luis Guerin (En la ciudad de Sylvia, 2007)

Many of his films came about in this way, based on absent, desired, lost, invisible or past images, which were already myths or legends, casting a shadow over or running below the film he is to make. This is why he starts *Work in Progress* with the film *El carrer/La calle*, by the photographer Joan Colom, which shows images of the Raval in the 1960s: the film is created on the basis of this memory. Along the same lines, *Innisfree* is a visual dialogue with the spectres left behind by Ford's filming in the Irish village, but also about the excitement and beauty of that period of Hollywood cinema, which still has an influence today. *Tren de sombras* goes back to the earliest cinema and amateur filmmaking, to use the editing process to research certain familiar images until all their poetic possibilities are visible: an image can always be interpreted, it always contains something that goes unnoticed, something we cannot name. This effect is also exaggerated in the photosensitive film itself (the support, canvas or material with which the filmmaker works), which is also exposed to deterioration or the effect of time.



Tren de sombras (1997)

In this way (through images) the filmmaker rehearses, reflects and demonstrates the art of capturing a face: the fragile nature of the face which, when captured in an image, expresses all of its fleetingness and evanescence.



Photos in the City of Sylvia (2007)

He continues this search in the diptych he makes after *Work in Progress*. His films *En la ciudad de Sylvia* (*In the City of Sylvia*) (2007) and *Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia* (*Photos in the City of Sylvia*) (2007) are based on the story of a filmmaker who wishes to recover (via suggestions, hypotheses, guesswork) a memory of his youth, an encounter with a woman twenty-two years ago in a foreign city. While he wanders around this city again, he imagines the face the girl would have today. A double story, which brings together two focuses: a filmmaker preparing a film project and a memory. While *En la ciudad de Sylvia* was made in 35 mm, with actors and a filming team, *Unas fotos...* was filmed by Guerin alone, using the images recorded with his video camera on his trips: the film is composed of fixed black and white images, in silence, with phrases interwoven with the photographs and on the screen in black.

The use of two different production methods and the different natures of the films shows Guerin's curiosity about exploring the wide variety of filming possibilities: from filming with a team of young students as in the case of *Work in Progress* to making films with a small video camera during his travels, as in the recent *Guest* (2010) and *Correspondence* (2011) with the filmmaker Jonas Mekas, or filming in collaboration with the lecturer Raffaele Pinto about the transmission of the poetic word in *La academia de las musas* (2015). In the end, all of these make up a beautiful collection of motifs and images which complement each other, a great film which is an extension of the idea of opening to the world, or cinema as a garden, which started with the Lumière brothers.



Tren de sombras (1997)

Correspondencia (2011)

FILMOGRAPHY

- *Los motivos de Berta* (1983)
- *Souvenir* (Short film, 1986)
- *Innisfree* (1990)
- *Tren de sombras* (1997)
- *En construcción* (2000)
- *En la ciudad de Sylvia/Dans la ville de Sylvia* (2007)
- *Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia/Photos in the City of Sylvia* (2007)
- *Las mujeres que no conocemos* (installation, 2007)
- *Guest* (2010)
- *La dama de Corinto* (installation, 2010)
- *Dos cartas a Ana* (moyen-métrage, 2010)
- *Correspondencia* Jonas Mekas-José Luis Guerín (2011)
- *Recuerdos de una mañana* (moyen-métrage, 2011)
- *Le Saphir de Saint-Louis* (moyen-métrage, 2015)
- *La academia de las musas* (2015)



Los motivos de Berta (1983)



Souvenir (1986)



Innisfree (1990)



Tren de sombras (1997)



En construcción (2000)



En la ciudad de Sylvia (2007)



Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia (2007)



Las mujeres que no conocemos (2007)



Guest (2010)



La dama de Corinto (2010)



Dos cartas a Ana (2010)



Correspondencia (2011)



Recuerdos de una mañana (2011)



Le Saphir de Saint-Louis (2015)



La academia de las musas (2015)

«WORK IN PROGRESS» IN JOSÉ LUIS GUERIN'S CAREER: A NEW WAY OF WORKING, A PORTRAIT OF THE CITY

The *Work in Progress* project was unique and different to José Luis Guerin's previous films for two main reasons. Firstly, it was his first video film, so for him it was an exploration of and learning experience in the possibilities offered by the medium. And, as has been said in "Context and creation", p.6, it was carried out collectively with a team of students from the Master in Creative Documentary of Pompeu Fabra University.

In a way, both circumstances provided the creative methodology for the film. The *Work in Progress* cinematographic experience was both Guerin's passing on filmmaking to his students, and a shared experience of learning a new tool (video). For the first time, in many situations he decided to film with two simultaneous cameras, leaving a fair amount of space for improvisation and the unpredicted in the conversations and scenes filmed. This meant that filming could be very flexible and dynamic, filming much more material than would have been possible in 35 mm (they had over 200 hours of filmed material!). Much of the editing took place in parallel to the filming, becoming a major writing and composition process.

Work in Progress was also Guerin's first film in an urban setting. The city of Barcelona is the great visual motif and cuts through the shots: life is captured on the streets, in flats, traffic, sounds, bars, squares and collective spaces. All of this is composed of fixed shots (with the single and significant exception of the final shot), according to geometrical concepts and visual layers within the frames.

As a result the film pays wonderful attention to hard work, to the hands of the workers with their tools and to their movements. It was undoubtedly the same attention Guerin and his team paid to the tools they were learning to use themselves: the video camera, microphones, spots for lighting, etc. The very idea of the film is to record the process, for example, how a wall or staircase is made, and to see where what we normally see already made or finished comes from.

In earlier films like *Innisfree*, Guerin had already focused on the sense of community generated in work, but in this film he was able to make it a major theme defining many of the scenes and shots, where the whole, the shared movements and the team work are the main characters.

In his films, this collective sense is also made visible and unique through the encounters and the portraits of the faces he films. Faces are another great urban landscape of this film, expressing emotion, curiosity and ingenuity. In the faces we also see the dramatic echoes of the construction work, and the effects of the transformation of the neighbourhood, from those who move there to those who have spent their whole lives in the same place.

In fact, the portrait is one of the major themes in Guerin's work: «[...] cinema as the great art of the portrait. When you film a person and you ask how to extract the most representative, unique and beautiful from them, whether a professional actor or not, to a degree you are asking the same questions as the classical painters did when they considered questions such as where to situate this person, where the look should be projected, what situation to create in order to capture the person being portrayed. [...]».

In *Work in Progress* he developed on certain editing aspects that had been rehearsed in the bar scene of *Innisfree*, with extraordinary chorus scenes such as those of the local residents observing the Roman ruins. Guerin focuses on the expressiveness and uniqueness of the faces, using all aspects of the documentary register to capture something of great authenticity and truth: the starring role of working class life, with its routine activities and familiarity, created on a daily basis by the inhabitants of a city, by those who rarely appear in the cinema or on television.

The film chooses Juani and Iván to fulfill this desire to show the experience of the neighbourhood subjectively and get to know the domestic sphere. Their relationship history is told above all by their faces, through gestures, the relationship between their bodies and the looks they exchange.

In the end, *Work in Progress*, like all of Guerin's films, is a reflection on cinema: updating the tradition of urban symphonies in silent films, making the camera an eye which moves around all spaces to create a temporal experience (in two hours we feel that we have lived in the neighbourhood for months). This portrait of the city is also a self-portrait of the filmmaker himself through his gaze and his work.

1. Reflections published in Álvaro Arroba, « Conversación con José Luis Guerin ». Letras de cine nº 6, 2002, p. 68. The passage is transcribed on the page 11.

REFLECTIONS BY JOSÉ LUIS GUERIN

CINEMA: WONDER AND THE ABILITY TO MAKE VISIBLE

I think the great artists are ability to amaze us again with what others have made into a cliché. Although it is reasonable for us to wonder if today it is possible to film a sunset again, when it has already appeared in so many calendars, on so many tourists' photographs, the original view is always there, we can always get back the excitement of the first time, recover the first feeling of wonder. Undoubtedly, this has been replaced by the success of getting a new car, or other artificial and imposed sources of wonder. I think we need to bring back the ability to rediscover this feeling of wonder.

A filmmaker must find out the best places to discover a person, and work out what are their expressive or significant gestures. I don't think there are weak and strong moments, they are all similar in quality. Today's viewers are used to being told what to look at, which makes them very receptive to loud cinema, full of shouting, and this precisely makes it difficult for them to listen to the whispers. [...] The day-to-day routine contains an infinite power to express meaning. The filmmaker's task is to make the great spectacle of daily life visible, and the problem is working out how to reveal the hidden side of this spectacle. In short, the problem of filmmaking is always how to give visibility. The new tenants come to the building, and while they are imagining the décor in the living room they are right next to Abdel but they do not see each him or acknowledge him. A child observes an old man in the building opposite, and this instant is reflected symmetrically by the scene in which the worker waves at the baby on the balcony. It is in these moments that film makes visible what is invisible: two worlds in a single room and not seeing each other.

Where we learned to understand and love you [referring to Abdel Aziz, with whom he is having this conversation], I think, was in the editing, because when filming, you are always confused with the equipment, production adversities, etc. In editing, you learn to weigh up the value of a sentence you hadn't noticed, or the deeper meaning of things and their context. I came to understand the characters during editing. For example, in connection with the theme of the turn of the century, I tend to talk about the disappearance of a rural society, and it is true that the rural origins of all the characters in the film is one of the reflections we discovered in the editing room. This is one of the things that mark the speed of the film. All of the characters show signs of a separation from their roots, because they have been swallowed up by the grasping nature of the big city.

Reflections collected in Gonzalo de Lucas, « La sonrisa y la nieve. Conversación con Abdel Aziz y José Luis Guerín », La Madriguera nº 44, 2001, pp. 69-73.

PORTRAIT

An affinity for the portrait: cinema as the great art of the portrait. When you film a person you wonder how to extract the most representative, unique and beautiful aspects of them. Whether a professional actor or not, to a certain extent you are asking the same questions as the classical painters did when they considered questions such as where to situate this person, where the look should be projected, what situation to create in order to capture the person being painted, which gestures to look for and how to achieve them, what staging objects are available, how to arrange them in space, etc. [...] The pleasure of extracting what I call the "revealing gesture", which is something that goes far beyond the boundaries between documentary and fiction. Flaherty was a great portrait artist, especially in *Nanook of the North*. When he shows the gramophone with the record to *Nanook*, he is introducing an element that is completely foreign to the daily life of the Eskimo, altering it. It is an interference by the filmmaker in order to capture an expression, an intensity, and *Nanook's* smile is priceless. This is the pleasure in the portrait in filmmaking, something I would like to develop.

SETTING THE SCENE

I have some minor philosophers wandering around the film, and I also really like the short sentences by the foreman. In fictional cinema, it will never be possible to aspire to this type of dialogue, because written down they would be improbable. Can you imagine the labourer saying "nature is whispering to Barcelona through the snow", and you think, how is a builder going to say something like that? Well, you can see that reality has more nuances and is more complex. [...] That is what I call "setting the scene", which is similar to staging but has different nuances: it means creating a situation and choosing the characters (because in a film of this kind the idea of casting is essential). After this, what counts is not just these people, but rather their interaction. If Abdel works so well, it is due to the contrast with a completely opposite character, the Galician bricklayer. I think that the choice of casting is much more decisive even than in a fiction film. While in fiction we talk about the chemistry between characters, in the documentary this chemistry becomes central to everything, and transcends the idea of performing because they are co-scriptwriters and dialogists on the film. [...]

In terms of plastic beauty, I find digital video horrific, I accepted it very reluctantly in *Work in Progress*; I had to assume a change of tool to find a more modern and relevant beauty, one which goes alongside Rossellini, and has nothing to do with pretty images, but rather accurate images, necessary images.

Reflections collected in Álvaro Arroba, « Conversación con José Luis Guerín », Letras de cine nº 6, 2002, pp. 68-73.

VIDEO AND THE POSSIBILITY OF WAITING

I had never seen a film made in video before making *Work in Progress*; it was a massive leap and a great risk. In the film by Victor Erice, *El sol del membrillo* (1992), he did not have sufficient resources for some of the film's sequences and he had to use video, which led me to discover another way of filming which made it possible to wait a lot: to wait for the moment of revelation. Waiting is a very important moral principle of filmmaking: being able to wait, not wanting to disrupt reality to obtain something. I think about *Nanook of the North* (1922) and again I see Flaherty with his camera, on the ground, in front of Nanook with his harpoon, waiting until there is something to capture. Both of them are waiting. To me this is a fundamental image of Nanook, which means a lot to me. The filmmaker's time is the same as the Eskimo's time. If there is no fishing, there is no shot, and both return. This attitude is completely contrary to the television reporter, who has no time to wait, who feels his or her time is more valuable than the Eskimo's time. With video, there is a possibility of waiting while continuing to film.

NEED FOR A FRAMEWORK

I need restrictions to get to the point, to tell myself that it is that image that is right and not another. I believe very much in the «framework» in composition. The temporal framework, but also the framings that make it possible to order the objects, the world. These restrictions, these limits, this struggle with technique, build my writing. Banality scares me very much. In a world with so many images, how can we create images that make sense, that have a semantic charge, a poetry?

EDITING AS A PROCESS OF UNDERSTANDING AND BUILDING THE SCRIPT

During editing I had the most interesting revelations. Filming is always too complicated, you don't have time to think. In a documentary film sometimes it is not until the editing stage that you truly understand what a person wanted to say, when you assess the value of a pause, a word or phrase of which you had not grasped the significance during filming.

[...]Having a closed script from the beginning of filming is something that kills my desire to make films. If you know in advance how you are going to make the film, if everything is laid down in the script, there is very little room for new revelations. When the production system allows, I try to film in stages. I film, then I start to analyse a first edit. This analysis gives me the guidelines for the subsequent filming. I took this procedure to the extreme for *Work in Progress*, where I alternated weeks of filming with weeks of editing. The story, in the sense of the narration, was supplied from the editing phases.

Reflections collected in « Un désir de révélation : entretien avec José Luis Guerín »
Documentary images, José Luis Guerín, n° 73/74, pp. 23-27.

REFLECTIONS BY NÚRIA ESQUERRA

Since *Work in Progress*, she has been the editor for all of José Luis Guerin's full-length films except *Guest*.

Before *Work in Progress*, my only experience in editing was a few short films by other students at university. Even so, I had the feeling that if one day I worked in filmmaking, my place would be editing: in the shadows, based on reflection, order and meticulous work, almost solitary, using the images already filmed.

The creation process for *Work in Progress* was unusual: a group of students collaborating with a filmmaker right from the initial idea for the project, in searching for locations and characters, filming, and in my case, and almost two years later, right up to the sound mixing. I had the good fortune to learn editing by editing, and moreover from José Luis Guerin, a filmmaker-editor who writes his films in the editing phase. Guerin had edited his earlier films with a Moviola, searching, cutting and pasting the photograms himself. In the case of *Work in Progress*, as it had been filmed in video, the first editing phase (viewing, selection, first pre-editing and search for characters) was carried out in a small "cut" video editor", and José Luis delegated the technical and manual tasks.

This sequence pre-editing phase was used to define and redefine the concept, which led to a second filming phase with staging of the reality and characters that were already more defined. After this second round of filming, the continuous and simultaneous editing work became more intense and we started working with the editing software "Avid" to tackle the last phase. This included reconstruction of the sound (one of the unique features of José Luis Guerin's way of working is that when editing the image he already creates as much as possible of the sound track based on words, sounds and direct background noise from shots which will not be used), tentative structures and final construction of the film as we know it. As a result, although I didn't realise it at the time, I learned on probably the most complex film I have ever encountered in terms of editing: no script, many hours of material, reconstruction of the direct sound, etc. I realised this on my subsequent projects as editor and, above all, when editing fiction films with a script prepared in advance. For ten years I have been teaching editing, which forces me to rethink my work as an editor so that I teach not only the technical part, which is undoubtedly the simplest part, but also working methods and strategies, such as how to recognise problems in order to be able to offer better solutions; in short, something much more difficult to transmit: how to think about editing.

REFLECTIONS BY AMANDA VILLAVIEJA

Since *Work in Progress*, she has been a sound engineer on all José Luis Guerin's full-length films.

When José Luis encouraged me to be responsible for the sound on *Work in Progress*, I responded that I had never held a microphone before. But then I thought: if what I wanted was to be involved in the filming phase, the place where things happen for the first time, why not do it through sound? I wanted to learn by watching him work.

I couldn't image that José Luis would place so much importance on the sound engineer position in filming and that I was going to learn so much with this new tool, which I barely knew.

The filming of *Work in Progress* lasted almost two years and it was a real process of "work in progress". Many days were spent just observing in the neighbourhood, listening, noticing the details, and watching many films, trying to work out how to express the different situations the filming threw up from a technical perspective.

I feel it was the best way to learn, all of us together trying to find a way of working that would allow us to think about and depict the reality before us.

Work in Progress was my first film and that was when I thought I would like to work in sound. I had one principle to follow, the same one that led me to take up a microphone that first time: continue learning to watch and listen.

"Things seen and heard", can be read in the film's opening credits.

III – ANALYSIS

BREAKDOWN OF SEQUENCES

List of sequences as prepared by Núria Esquerra, editor of the film.

«It is particularly illuminating to examine the list of sequences and see how the structure is built up based on the repetition of motifs, spaces and elements which are transformed over time and over the length of the film.»



1 – Barcelona's Barrio Chino (Chinatown) in 1960 (archive images) (00:00:32–00:01:34)



2 – Wall with eyes, local streets and introduction to first characters (Antonio, Juani, Iván). Demolition. (00:01:34–00:06:00)



3 – Football in the square (Juani, Iván and other local residents) (00:06:00–00:07:03)



4 – Demolition on site, from the exterior and various shots from inside flats (00:07:03–00:07:51)



5 – Juani and Iván talk in the bedroom (00:07:51–00:10:33)



6 – Demolition on site. The Three Chimneys of Poble-sec with crane. Nightfall with cranes. Facade at night (00:10:33–00:11:24) (See «A photogram. The Three Chimneys: variations for constructing time and space»),p. 20]



7 – Start of construction work. Workers and residents (Sonia and elderly people) (00:11:24–00:12:36)



8 – Carpenters at lunch, singing a bolero (Pedro, Juanma) (00:12:36–00:13:31)



9 – Perforations for placing pillars, cats, local residents watching the building work (Juan) (00:13:31–00:14:27)



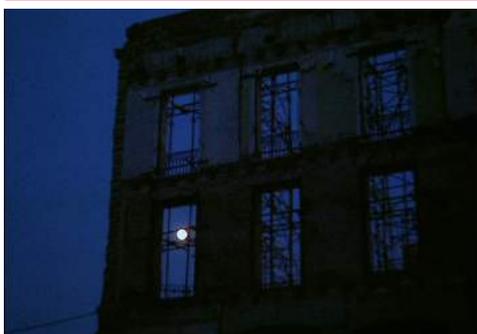
10 – Start of excavations on site and discovery of Roman cemetery. Comments by Antonio and the workers (00:14:27–00:17:57)



11 – Children, young people and the elderly discuss, reflect and create theories about the cemetery remains (00:17:57–00:26:42)



12 – Demolition and neighbours talking about housing problems (00:26:42–00:28:31)



13 – Facades and Roman cemetery by night. The moon (00:28:31–00:29:00)



14 – Scenes from the neighbourhood: demolition, construction, conversations in the bar (00:29:00–00:30:08)



15 – Lunch with Antonio and two friends in the bar, remembering what the Barrio Chino used to be like. Television news (00:30:08–00:32:37)



16 – Demolition in the neighbourhood and local streets (00:32:37–00:33:25)



17 – The carpenters at work (00:33:25–00:33:54)



18 – Building the staircase and conversation between Juan and his son Juanma (00:33:54–00:38:03) [see « A sequence. The stairway: work and transmission », pp. 22, 23]



19 – The carpenters and Abdel Aziz at work. Local residents watching from the windows (00:38:03–00:39:22)



20 – Conversation between Abdel Aziz and Abdel-salam, who wants to work on the construction of the building (00:39:22–00:41:02)



21 – Juanma exchanges glances with Sonia, who is on the balcony (00:41 min:02–00:41:58)



22 – Local residents and the building work (00: 41:58–00:42:33)



23 – Conversations at work (Abdelsalam, Santiago, Abdel Aziz) (00:42:33–00:44:06)



24 – Late afternoon in the neighbourhood: facades, children, streets, square, prostitution, bar, revolving clock (00:44:06–00:46:03)



25 – Night. The Three Chimneys. Juani in the street (00:46:03–00:46:37)



26 – Clock, cranes and the construction site from the school window (00:46:37–00:47:09)



27 – Waiting for the concrete. Clothing in the wind and cranes. Conversation between worker and local baby (00:47:09–00:54:15)



28 – The concrete arrives at dusk. Juan in the portacabin (00:54:15–00:55:02)



29 – Night. The Three Chimneys. Bodega Apolo. Juani and Iván on the arcade games (00:55:02–00:56:00)



30 – The children build a den on the building site (00:56:00–00:57:36)



31 – Abdel Aziz and Abdelsalam (00:57:36–00:58:24)



32 – Conversation between Juanma, on leave, and Sonia, who is moving to Poble-sec (00:58:24–00:59:42)



33 – Juani and Iván on the roof watch Abdelsalam working
(00:59:42–01:01:31)



34 – Streets alongside the building site
(01:01:31–01:01:58)



35 – Juani and Iván talking in the bedroom
(01:01:58–01:06:43)



36 – Antonio and his friend Luis talk about the housing problems outside a building site
(01:06:43–01:07:33)



36 – On the bar's television, images from *Land of the Pharaohs*, by Howard Hawks.



37 – Nightfall in the neighbourhood. Antonio with his trolley. *Land of the Pharaohs* on the facades of the neighbouring buildings (01:07:33–01:09:06) The sound of *Land of the Pharaohs* mixed with other sounds in the neighbourhood



38 – Juani and Iván inside, with sound from *Land of the Pharaohs* (01:09:06–01:09:29)



39 – *Land of the Pharaohs* on local residents' televisions (01:09:29–01:10:35)



40 – The building work has made good progress. Juan and Pedro talk about “the soul of a structure”
(01:10:35–01:11:30)



41 – Conversation between Juan and Pedro about the construction of Sant Pau del Camp, the Sagrada Familia, construction today, the pyramids, etc. Conversation with the girl who had been on the building site (01:11:30–01:17:1)



42 – Taking down the wooden wall covered with the children's drawings. Demolition in the neighbourhood (01:17:11–01:17:46)



43 – Demolition of Juani's house: from inside and outside (01:17:46–01:18:04)



44 – Waste from the demolition. Skip outside the building site. The local residents and Antonio find paintings and objects in the skip (01:18:04–01:19:34)



45 – Night. Bodega Apolo. Iván and Juani (01:19:34–01:20:23)



46 – Late night conversation at the building site between Santiago and Abdel Aziz (01:20:23–01:26:22)



47 – Cranes and roof of the new building (01:26:22–01:26:37)



48 – Juani and Iván in the building site. Dusk (01:26:37–01:29:23)



49 – The building work through the windows of neighbours and the school (01:29:23–01:29:57)



50 – The snow. Santiago, Abdel Aziz and Abdelsalam (01:29:57–01:34:03) [See «A shot. The snow: rediscovering the ability to be awed», p. 21]



51 – Lunch made on the stove. Santiago, Abdel Aziz and Abdelsalam (01:34:03–01:37:39)



52 – Demolition in the neighbourhood (the wall with painted eyes from the start of the film) (01:37:39–01:38:12)



53 – Antonio and his friend Luis in the bar (01:38:12–01:44:14)



54 – Antonio and his things on the demolished site. Nightfall (01:44:14–01:44:54)



55 – The top floor of the building through the neighbours' windows (01:44:54–01:45:14)



56 – Santiago and Abdel Aziz continue to build the walls (01:45:14–01:46:45)



57 – Abdel Aziz and Juan beside the completed window (01:46:45–01:47:52)
(See « Cinematographic questions concerning a photogram », p. 5)



58 – Santiago and Abdel Aziz talk over lunch (01:47:52–01:49:29)



59 – Building work: plastering walls, testing doorbells, finishing facades (01:49:29–01:50:25)



60 – New Year's Eve. A tramp has dinner in the half-finished building (01:50:25–01:52:08)



61 – Street, neighbour's terrace and completion of the building work (01:52:08–01:53:10)



62 – Visits from the future residents of the flats: comments about the locals. Conversation between child and local resident (01:53:10–02:01:46)



63 – Tracking shot. Juani gives Iván a piggyback along a local street (02:01:46–02:05:35)



64 – Final credits (02:05:35–02:07:30)

QUESTIONS OF CINEMA

A PHOTOGRAMME.

THE THREE CHIMNEYS: VARIATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTING TIME AND SPACE

[Séq. 6 – TC : 00:10:33–00:11:24]



Shot of The Three Chimneys

This photogram appears at the minute 10 of the film, after the first conversation between Juani and Iván followed by two shots of work on the construction site. Then, for the first time, a shot of the Three Chimneys, an iconic element of Barcelona that will punctuate the whole film and will mark the passing of time.



1



2



3

By means of the visual and sound editing —the construction sounds are mitigated progressively until they disappear making way for the buzz of the city— the day's pace is marked, from the diurnal and noisy work at the construction site to nightfall. The photogram is coloured by twilight; it is an open shot in which a worker descends from a crane positioned in the foreground; in the background, the hotel and, closer, the Three Chimneys: The image, therefore, fixes an instant of the day and the construction work while situating the space in relation with the city.

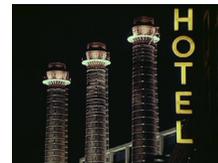
The idea is that the viewer can construct the space accurately, relating the building with the nearby streets, with the neighbourhood and with the city. The film is a montage of fragments of spaces, which build up the overall image.

In order to arrange this landscape for the viewer, Guerin uses different motifs which reappear at different times in the film, and which contribute to us making a “map» of the location, connecting them to each other. Many of the shots are empty or with just one small movement or figure in the frame. One of these recurring images is that of the Three Chimneys close to the building. It is an image, which recalls the shots by the Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu, one of Guerin's favourite references due to his subtle method of filming the passing of time.



*An Autumn Afternoon/Sanma no aji,
Yasujiro Ozu (1962)*

The chimneys reappear in other shots of the film, with different framings and at different times of the day. These shots are fundamental in the film because they structure it using rhymes, repetitions and variations, which allow us to return to the known as the construction work advances.



Séq. 25, TC : 00:46:00



Séq. 30, TC : 00:56:00



Séq.47, TC : 01:24:00



Séq. 55, TC : 01:00:00

The frames are fixed, and they are very careful compositions. They are brief moments or temporary impressions composed by the camera, which create the cinematographic space, document the real space and demonstrate the transformation of the city. As the film draws to a close, the viewers share in the familiar emotions of the residents of the neighbourhood, and they recognise the experience of things disappearing and other new ones appearing in their place.

A SHOT. THE SNOW: TO REDISCOVER THE ABILITY OF WONDER

[Séq. 50 – TC : 01:29-57–01:34:03]

After an hour and a half of the film, unexpected snow falls on the city. Guerin films his characters —Abdel, Santiago, Abdesalam— contemplating and reacting to the snowfall while they continue with their work and talk about solitude, politics and their memories. The snow keeps falling with an increasing intensity as the shots draw on (we see the church, the school, the sky, the workers...). In this shot, Guerin isolates Abdel's figure in a half frame in which we see him in front of the church's façade covered with the falling snowflakes. It is an image that, as we will see, brings us to his point of view and emotion of contemplating the snow.

The long filming period for *Work in Progress* was partly a response to the desire to discover the film through its process, along with its characters, allowing for the unexpected in the filming experience. This meant that Guerin was able to react to an unusual and extraordinary event in Barcelona: a major snowfall in November 1999 which reached as far as the lowest zone of the city, close to the sea, in the Raval neighbourhood in which the film is located.

No documentary script could have predicted this moment; it could only be created by reality. To capture the situation and position it within the film, Guerin decided to film a scene starring Abdel and Santiago, two workers with almost opposite characters, who end up striking up a relationship of friendship and complicity over the course of the film. They both observe the snow differently, in complete contrast: while Santiago concentrates on his work, Abdel plunges himself into contemplation and memories.

About this scene, Guerin commented: “we should bring back the ability to rediscover the feeling of wonder. Sometimes I talk about travelling in this way: by going along my street so often, I am no longer able to see it. The most useful thing about travelling is that everything surprises you because you are predisposed to it”.

In the film, Guerin wanted to rediscover his own city. As a result, in this scene there is an impressionist version the church of Sant Pau del Camp, present in so many frames, creating a new landscape. Throughout the film, shots using variations of a single motif generate layers, which express the passing of time: the church from different windows, at night, at dusk or under the snow. The church of Sant Pau del Camp became a living presence in the 19th century, and is a relatively permanent reference in a changing city. This was how Guerin wanted to film the wonder at seeing the snow: he wanted it to be felt as something extraordinary, an unexpected and lyrical composition of the urban landscape we had previously seen and from which the film is pieced together. To achieve this, the experience is shown from the subjective viewpoint of Abdel, who remembers the first time he saw snow, when he was a child in Morocco.



« Nature is whispering to Barcelona through the snow. »

The shot becomes a chant, a celebration of the present, at the same time showing Abdel's wonder and his ability to poeticise reality, when he extemporises: “nature is whispering to Barcelona through the snow”. As Guerin himself says, it would be difficult for a scriptwriter to come up with a phrase like this; in the very unique and genuine way that Abdel expresses himself. Thus, he always wanted the characters to use their own words and ways of expressing themselves during conversations in order to maintain their authenticity. Guerin explained it as follows: “That is what I call “setting the scene”, which is similar to staging but has different nuances: it means creating a situation and choosing the characters (because in a film of this kind the idea of casting is essential), then afterwards what counts is not just these people, but rather the interaction between them. If Abdel works so well, it is due to the contrast with a completely opposite character, the Galician bricklayer. [...] It transcends the idea of performance, because they are co-scriptwriters and dialogists for the film¹. »

1. Álvaro Arroba, « Conversación with José Luis Guerin ». *Letras de cine* n° 6, 2002, p. 70. The passage is shown on p. 11.

A SEQUENCE.**THE STAIRCASE: WORK AND TRANSMISSION**

[Seq. 18 – TC : 00:33:54–00:38:03]

The sequence shows the Juan López, the formwork commander, and his son, Juan Manuel López, building a staircase. Both have appeared separately in earlier moments of the film, but it is the first time we see them together. Their conversation tells us that they are father and son and that Juan Manuel (Juanma) will soon be going to do military service and leaving the building project.

It is a sequence about passing things on, about how to teach a trade, but also about sharing and bequeathing a passion: “you need to be in love with your work”, says the father while he demonstrates the care and attention to detail that allows him to make the staircase properly, handling the tools and materials.

Cinematography is used to demonstrate this process of passing on the trade, connecting shots of their faces and movements. The montage shows the family connection and the learning experience, where skills are passed from father to son. Thus, for example, we see the father observing the calculation using a ruler with great concentration, and the next shot shows the son with a similar expression. [1, 2].



1



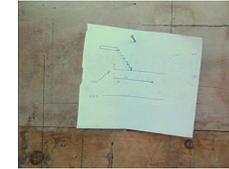
2

Over the four minutes and ten seconds the sequence lasts, there are forty-two shots. It is therefore a very constructed sequence in terms of editing. It is composed almost entirely of close-up and medium shots of the two characters, with little use of general shots showing the whole situation (in fact, father and son are not seen in the same frame until shot 27 [3]).



3

The scene starts with a shot of the drawing of the staircase they have to build [Fig. 4], and we then see a succession of fragmented movements, including the faces of the characters observing and calculating and their hands with the tools, which will in the end show the action in its entirety.



4

The work until the staircase is built, step by step, piece by piece, corresponds to the editing work itself, where shots are united (details of the face, hands, object) until a scene is created about the construction of the staircase.

In this scene, fragmentation into close-ups is a means of expression which allows us to get close to the viewpoint of the characters involved in their activity, creating a feeling of closeness and attention to detail in terms of physical reality (the wood, tools). Guerin places great importance to the hands, showing the beauty of their careful movements. In detailed shots, we see the rulers, tape measures, ropes and pencils they use [5 à 8].



5



6



7



8

Thus we see how, by increasing the scale of the details and objects on the projection screen, film brings us closer to the smallest and most solid reality in order to reveal its aesthetic powers. Taking advantage of the characters moving with the objects, sometimes Guerin maintains the shot so we see a visual transformation. For example, he might start with the ruler, maintain the shot after the character moves, and see the image he left below the ruler in the foreground: the wood with blue lines, in a composition that almost looks like an abstract painting [Fig. 9, 10]. In the same piece of reality two separate images are created. A new image appears under the first, going from figurative to abstract.



9

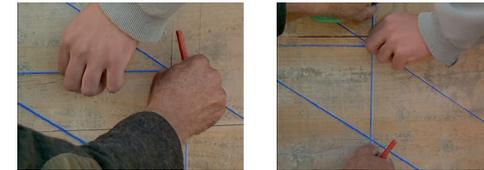
10

The beauty of these shots comes from their outward appearance, and the accurate representation of things. Cinema is the form of art that is closest to reality and its physical expression, at its best moments, is an appraisal, an intense insight, from the heart, into day-to-day life: in this place, the builder's theory ("you need to be in love with your work") is also the filmmaker's theory.

The sound editing should also be mentioned; it emphasises sounds such as the pencils tracing the lines on the wood, increasing the feeling of realism and proximity. In turn, editing makes use of the conversation where the father explains his trade to the son, or talking about his arrival in Barcelona and visits to the Raval neighbourhood when he was young to create continuity in the sequence and make sure all the images hang together temporarily.

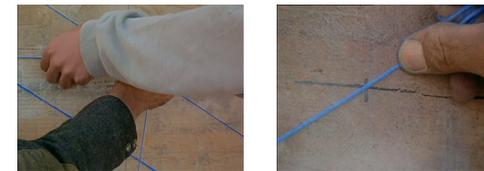
Juan López shares his way of understanding the trade and life, stating that "it is better to live life as it comes and without planning". The sequence shows us how to appreciate moments such as this that rarely appear in films, such as manual work to build something, where working time concentrated and shared. In another moment, the father says: "we set about making a new neighbourhood here and we're going to do it". Guerin does not use the larger and more general actions (precisely those we normally see in editing, which show how a building is constructed in a few seconds) to demonstrate the transformation of a city and the construction of a building, but the smaller and more ordinary ones, valuing the time spent with minimal movements.

The end of the scene reveals everything that has hinted at by means of a beautiful choreography of synchronised movements of the hands of father and son, with the dusty bluish string as drawing pen: when touched they look like vibrating strings on a musical instrument. Work brings together father and son, while the film allows us to observe in detail how things are built and the beauty to be found in wood, in blue lines and in hands [11 à 14].



11

12



13

14

CREATION OF THE FILM: THE EDITING

José Luis Guerin is a filmmaker-editor. This is not only because he himself used the Moviola to edit his films before *Work in Progress* and then started using digital editing software on his computer, but also because he comes up with his films through and on the basis of the editing. This is how he explained it in one interview: “During editing I had the most interesting revelations. Filming is always too complicated; you don’t have time to think. In a documentary film sometimes it is not until the editing stage that you truly understand what a person wanted to say, when you assess the value of a pause, a word or phrase of which you had not grasped the significance during filming. To him, editing is where the film is created and where it is found, and so he always organises the creative process by slotting a significant editing phase in between filming sessions. This intermediary editing allows him to direct the film and decide what still needs to be filmed.

In the case of *Work in Progress*, filming a long collective process, the construction of a building, led him to invent a filming and editing methodology to match. As a result, Guerin thought of the project as a work in progress (using this title in English during filming) in which the creative process (filming and editing) occurred in parallel with the workers’ construction of the new building. The film gradually revealed itself during the two years that he and his young team filmed the construction of a building and the life of the neighbourhood: “the experience that really interested me was starting with no script and over time discovering the film¹. »

Filming began in autumn 1998 and ended in January 2000. The editing took place alongside the filming. As he filmed, Guerin viewed and selected all the material, and the editors put it into order. The filming was also divided into two separate phases. The first was the search for and contact with the spaces and characters of the neighbourhood and the building site, followed by a period of editing only. The second was much more focused on creating specific situations and dialogue scenes. The editing helped him to discover and develop the characters, find possible storylines or come up with new situations.

Over two hundred hours were filmed, which were finally concentrated into 130 minutes of film. This task of elimination, selection and grouping of shots and scenes determined the dramatic structure. Right from the first shots, the editing plunges us into the life of the neighbourhood and the building work, making us sensitive to the effects of time. After the two hours of the film, we feel that we know the local residents and the workers, and the streets and their sounds. The overall structure, in addition to organising each scene, gradually and completely draws us into this reality, until we experience and live it from within, alongside the residents. We hear them reflect on the transformation of the area, and see them adapt to the changes. By living and sharing this experience we feel the passing of time at the end much more intensely. The film also describes our own lives, and how quickly the places we live change.

This experience of life is structured through extremely complex editing, made up of many relatively short shots (and many sounds). These are connected to each other at different levels: to create the space on the building site and its connection to the neighbourhood, to express the passing of time and to depict the work of the builders and the life of the local residents.

To put together this large volume of visual and sound elements so they appeared natural, the filmmaker and editors structured the film into twelve false days (with a vary variable duration and number of scenes), with eight nights as organising units, reusing recurring motifs over the days (e.g. the chimneys, the Bodega Apolo, the facades, the empty building site, the rotating clock). This is the internal structure of the film, which connects the passing of the seasons and the progress of the building work over these days.

On a structural level, we can distinguish between two major editing strategies. Firstly, there are continuity sequential blocks, such as the excavation or staircase scenes, the conversation sequences with Antonio or Abdel Aziz, and the gradual building of the wall with the windows. Secondly, there are motifs, characters and places that tend to reappear, reflecting each other and creating poetic associations. The film is created by means of variations: in the time of day, the seasons, the progress of the building work from demolition to completion. At the same time, all of these elements situate the building under construction and relate it to the neighbouring streets and buildings.

In this sense, the editing choices involved choosing scenes and motifs representing a much wider whole. For example, the sequence of building a staircase [see « A sequence. The stairway: work and transmission » pp. 22, 23] condenses the multiple processes of this type involved in the project, and at the same time portrays Juan and his son Juanma (Juan Manuel), explains the history of the neighbourhood, the value of passing on a trade, etc. On other occasions, Guerin works with a motif in continuity, such as the windows and the television screens in the bar and in the homes of neighbours while *Land of the Pharaohs*, (Howard Hawks, 1955) is being screened: the film images unite a community [seq. 38].



1. Interview of José Luis Guerin : [youtube.com/watch?v=NmBPPe4bWmQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmBPPe4bWmQ).

Certain visual motifs, such as that of the window, continue to generate connections throughout the film: connecting the windows of the new building with those of the homes in the neighbourhood, with the school and with the church of Sant Pau del Camp. They are connected both through internal montage (the connections within a frame, when we see the window of the new building and the buildings behind) and the montage, which establishes visual resonance in successive or separate shots within the structure.

Looking at the motifs edited in continuity, in sequence four, eight shots can be observed which share a series of visual motifs: the ruins, the dust, the figures of the workers in the background, the windows which frame the building site in the foreground (the space of the flat) and a second in the background (the builders, the demolished space) [Fig. 2 to 9]. Although short, these shots allow us to feel time pass, and to feel the day run its course. For example, in the shot of the woman and child the noise of the building work has stopped and there is no longer any movement outside (only the crane), possibly signalling break time or lunch time, before the work starts again in the next shots.



To lay the foundations of the film, Guerin chooses a series of visual motifs (e.g. the chimneys, the cranes, the church of Sant Pau del Camp, the street leading to the building site) which appear throughout the film in different frames, from different angles, at different times of the day or at different stages of the building work. Something similar occurs with the workers and local residents: some appear in just one scene, but others reappear in various sequences and in the end become stars of the film, recognisable characters representing their trade or community. Consider the children watching the excavation, who we will later see making a den and talking to the builders, or Abdelsalam, who starts off as a local resident watching the portacabin being installed and then asks for work on the site, where he remains until the end, and is also involved in a sequence connecting him to Juani and Iván. This type of transition between the streets, homes and new building leads to many editing tricks: characters who move between spaces, objects in the homes we then find among the rubble, etc. Sound is essential: it connects the building work to the neighbourhood (the sounds of the work in the neighbourhood and homes and the sound of the neighbourhood in the building site), it increases the sensation of time (the sounds of dawn or dusk, of the night or of public holidays), and the documentary undercurrent of the historical context (the Kosovo news we can hear, especially between sequences 14 and 16).

In this search for a documentary style, Guerin wanted to create blocks of reality by means of sequences. Along the same lines, one extraordinary scene is the discovery of the remains of the Roman cemetery from the 16th century during the excavations to lay the foundations for the new building. Guerin created a wonderful scene of the finding, giving it a structural role in the film: it is the first real contact between the building space and local residents, the moment the film opens onto the neighbourhood.

To organise this scene Guerin had a great editing idea, which determined the choices about what to film. It starts with a block focusing on the archaeologists discovering the bone remains, most recorded in detailed shots and with very precise sound, in the foreground. Gradually, the local residents trickle in: children, young people and older people of a wide range of origins who, as spectators, become the real protagonists of the scene. They form a kind of choir talking about the scene as the remains appear, making conjectures and reflecting with humour about life, time and the history of the city.



The success of this scene is down to the highly complex recording of the sound directly and afterwards, during sound editing. For recording, the sound engineers arranged themselves along a narrow strip beside the excavation, just below where the local residents where. Then, during editing, continuity was created by means of collective dialogue, with phrases off-camera and others capturing the conjectures, thoughts, expressions and imagination of the local residents. A situation that was extremely complex to film, with many people talking at once, was in the end transformed into a great scene as a result of the rhythm created by the editing and the progression caused through the initial expectations of the people (what will the archaeologists find?) and the progress of the events.

As this sequence shows, it was in the editing that Guerin found the main relationship that structures his film: the relationship forged between the building work and the neighbourhood, the builders and the local residents, the private and the collective. As the building work progresses, the neighbourhood is transformed; and at the same time, the film is made.

In the rapprochement between collective and private the film creates by means of editing, the most important scenes are those showing conversations between the characters. Many of these conversations were filmed with two cameras. Guerin gave indications as to the themes and motifs, but never asked the people he was filming to say or repeat any phrase: what interested him is that they used their own words and talked to each other naturally. During editing he tried to preserve the veracity of these discussions, with their silences and pauses, in order to portray the characters authentically. In the conversations between Abdel Aziz and Santiago, it can be observed that each character has a very different way of speaking, and from this difference a mutual understanding develops. The shots are used to show these contrasts, with their ironic reactions and very different tones: the more imaginative and poetic (Abdel Aziz) and the more realistic and pragmatic (Santiago).

This extremely elaborate editing of short shots is contrasted with the long shot closing the film, the tracking shot accompanying Juani and Iván along the street, making it even more intense and meaningful. It is the only moving shot in the film: a long sequence shot, without cuts, which travels around the neighbourhood with Juani and Iván, filled with sounds, and other local residents present in the background. Reality continues to run its course: the film ends, but life continues.



CINEMA AND WORK

COMPARING IMAGES



Equinox Flower, Yasujiro Ozu (Higanbana, 1958)



Good Morning, Yasujiro Ozu (Ohayo, 1959)



Washing hung in Work in Progress (2000)



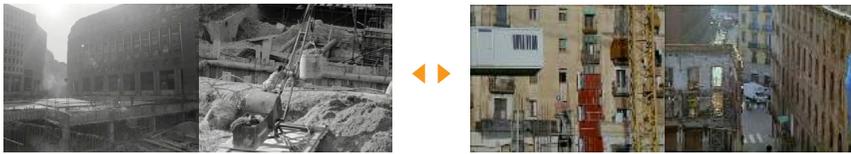
Playtime, Jacques Tati (1967)



Land of the Pharaohs on the neighbours' TVs of Work in Progress (2000)

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FILMS *EN CONSTRUCCIÓN* AND *IL POSTO* : THE CITY AND FACES

In *Work in Progress*, the transformation of the neighbourhood is an emotional landscape, showing the connection between the private and collective realities. In *Il Posto*, 1961, the young Domenico goes to Milan, a city in the midst of industrial regeneration, in search of work. The director Ermanno Olmi said that in his first films “there is always a bit of the history of our country, of the transition from a rural society to the world of the workers and the new bourgeoisie”.



Il posto (1961)

En construcción (2000)

Guerin and Olmi share the same appreciation for the documentary value of cinema, and its capacity to record how a city changes its appearance and how this process is responsible for affections, emotions and states of mind. As a result, both greatly value the idea of filming the city at the same time as faces are shown in the foreground, as a way of feeling the urban landscape. Domenico is alone and isolated in the city until he meets Antonietta, a girl who is training in the same company as him. Olmi's camera often frames them through glass, in an image, which sensitises the introspective space, the space of sentiment or internal thoughts, in its relationship with the city. Domenico is normally silent, observing what surrounds him, and the city he is discovering. The portrait of city is particularly detected in the way it is reflected in his face. In Olmi's own words: “the face of man is the height of expressiveness, reflecting not only the person but also the context in which he lives. For example, I can perfectly well observe a scene through the face of a man who is not the protagonist of this situation but merely a spectator. What happens in a man's face is even more important and illuminating than what happens around him”.



The dramatization of Domenico and Antonietta's faces in Il Posto (1961)

Similarly, in *Work in Progress* the faces of local residents filmed in their spaces (their homes, the neighbourhood bars) through windows or doors, also reflect how the new building affects them.

In both films, this dramatization of the face provides a glimpse of encounters, friendship or falling in love. The looks exchanged by Domenico and Antonietta [Fig. 1, 2], and their smiles as they share a coffee [Fig. 3, 4], are an expression of first love, of learning a new emotion: in such moments the city becomes an even brighter background which seems to vibrate alongside their feelings. “The most beautiful love stories, in terms of the intensity and quality of expression”, said Olmi, “are those chaste relationships at the age of fifteen or sixteen, when a long gaze or two hands joining together almost imperceptibly can generate an immense feeling”.



1

2

3

4

In a working world, José Luis Guerin also discovers the space for an amorous encounter in the two scenes in which, by means of a shot and reverse angle, the young bricklayer Juan Manuel talks to Sonia [Fig.5, 6], a local resident he ends up asking for a date, or in the intimacy he captures in the sequences starring Juani and Iván [Fig. 7, 8].



1

2

3

4

Olmi was from a farming family in the Bergamo region, and never had any desire to go to Rome, where the Italian film industry is located, so he learned all aspects of the filmmaking trade, from camera technique to editing, in his own region. His films have a real craftsmanship in the images and composition, and a great appreciation for the beauty of tools, objects, matter or reality we can touch with our own hands. Like Guerin, he strives for the greatest authenticity and truth possible, and both manage to fill their films with faces full of history and emotion, with gestures and features that also depict their lives and their time.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER ARTS

In his search for the most authentic and truthful record possible of life on the streets of the Raval at the turn of the century, the photographs of Joan Colom were one of the references and inspirations for Guerin's work on *Work in Progress*. Guerin makes this connection visible at the start of the film by using images extracted from the only film by the photographer, *El carrer*, a set of shots of the Barrio Chino in the 1960s.

Colom, who always thought of himself as an amateur photographer, also worked as an accountant for a textile company and only had the weekends to spend on his beloved photography. The most outstanding of his photographic works were of Barcelona's Barrio Chino between 1958 and 1960. During those two years, he plunged himself into the life of the neighbourhood with great intensity and passion, exploring every nook and cranny. The result is an extraordinary reportage, full of truth, spontaneity, rawness and emotion, showing the faces and gestures of the people of the neighbourhood and recording the

tumultuous life of a time that these photographs enable us to observe today.

In order to capture this reality, he decided to avoid making the camera the protagonist, and ensure the images were not prepared or overly composed: Colom sought the beauty of the unrepeatable, of something so fleeting (a look, an expression, a thought) that there is almost never time to retain or capture it. To achieve this, he learned to shoot with his Leica M2 without looking through the viewfinder. He practised his technique in front of the mirror, until he managed to photograph from below with such skill and speed that his fellow photographers marvelled. This allowed him to capture extremely vivid and natural images of people.



El carrer, Joan Colom (1960)



He generally sought out the times of day, such as nightfall, when the neighbourhood was starting to come to life. His regular photographs of the local residents over the two years (two years like Guerin) produced portraits transmitting a relationship of great openness and complicity. The landscape of the neighbourhood appeared above all as a human landscape: the looks, the poses, the faces marked by feelings.

Colom and Guerin were thus seeking many of the same visual features: spontaneity, exchanges of glances and genuine gestures that create stories within the image, stories of authenticity and human expressiveness, and of the features of the time.



El carrer, Joan Colom (1960)

While in photography Guerin appreciates the realist or documentary sensitivity of the image, another great inspiration for his work comes from his contact with painting, which he knows well and loves. In his way of seeing paintings, Guerin (as he teaches in his classes when he shows paintings) in fact tends to create “montages” within the composition: in the general scene he notices other images as if they were detailed shots. So in a piece like the Merode Altarpiece by the Flemish primitive painter Robert Campin, dating from around 1428, Guerin concentrates on certain parts of the side of the painting to see the artist’s realist representation of the tools or the studied expression of Saint Joseph in an unusual image of his work as a carpenter [Fig. 1 to 3]. This appreciation for the hands, gestures and materials, as the original form of realism, is the basis of *Work in Progress*.



Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece), Robert Campin (ca.1427-32)



1



2



3

RECEPTION OF THE FILM

Work in Progress was for many in Spain a revelation, realising that a documentary film could be seen and admired as a real film, a form of cinema, regardless of labels and typecasting. One of the most significant moments, and maybe to a certain point the trigger for this reception, was winning the Special Jury Prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival in 2001. It had been 20 years since a “non-fiction film” had competed in San Sebastian, and only three had done so in its 49 years of history. Shortly afterwards Guerin won the Spanish National Cinematography Award, which solidified his position as a leading filmmaker and made particular reference to *Work in Progress*. The film was also well received by viewers in cinemas and highly praised by critics. However, even today *Work in Progress* is probably one of José Luis Guerin’s films about which the least has been written and it has not often been the subject of academic study.

DOMÈNEC FONT

« **Valéry y los paletas** » *El País*, 16 October 2001

Patiently and with care, over a long period of three years, Guerin and his hardworking team rummaged around the underbelly of a deprived working class neighbourhood that was undergoing demolition. The result of this “intoxication of the will”, as Valéry would say, is an urban symphony full of daring visual and sound phenomena, which is sometimes on the ground between cement mixers and rubble, other times there is a vertical shot with the assistance of cranes, making the film fly. On both planes, Guerin sets to work to seek the density of reality on the surface and capture time as it travels through space. These make the sum of paradoxes for an exceptional film which, called *Work in Progress*, spends half the film amongst demolition and rubble. *Work in Progress* is a documentary, but this is really a misidentification. It is well known that one of the main problems with documentaries is that they always refer to the other side, fiction, as the real canon of the cinematographic establishment. With documentaries not having their own territory, or with the land occupied by a hybrid like television reporting, they have had to function under various connected names. This led to the categories of “direct cinema” or “cinéma vérité”, which caused such a furor in the 1960s: light equipment went up against the heavy machinery of the traditional industry in an attempt to direct filmmaking back towards its earliest simplicity. If we seek to define Guerin’s work within this panorama, the name to use would be “cinéma vérité”, a personal work which considers the terms real and imaginary, true and false, or objective and subjective as conspiratorial opposites. [...] Guerin likes to classify himself under the epic romanticism of Flaherty, who in 1922 made *Nanook* a masterpiece, using all the tricks of staging. Without wishing to disregard his own affiliation, it seems to me that the references in *Work in Progress* are closer to film documentaries like *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, Godard’s old surrealist project, in which he sought a parallel between the city and the *modus vivendi* of its inhabitants.

VÍCTOR VÁZQUEZ ALONSO

« **Un soplo de voces y de calles** » *Letras de cine* n° 6, 2002, p. 64

The last treasure on this tape is a grandiose display of conversation as a meeting place between men with common sense and those who are rather more excessive in the quixotic style. [...] In this vein, we need to talk about undoubtedly the most quixotic character of the film, and there are many: the sailor of inexhaustible wit and delicate tastes, who recounts to his companions at the bar his lifetime of solitary adventures. We can merely guess at his past of sea and great stories, as he subtly and fleetingly captures us with the tradition of the foolish gentlemen, the sad figure of the old man. He ensures that the film is not only an example of urban regeneration but a piece of art that includes this clear-thinking and deranged character who continually reinvents himself and keeps going. This figure appears regularly in the great works of Spanish art and literature, and in this film the curious nature of his crazy and marvellously delicate tastes stands out. This character could be looking in any of the mirrors in Valle-Inclán’s paintings, or he could be one of the grotesque creatures created by Goya. He is a character with a vague shape who gives glimpses of wisdom about life, alternating with the references fitting for a cultivated and careful traveller. Both his monologues and his dialogues show us the pensive interior, and the mental escape of a person who lives with absolute faith in his solitary world and his misery.

JEAN-MICHEL FRODON

« **En construcción, de José Luis Guerin. Sous un autre jour** » *Cahiers du cinéma* n° 637, septembre 2008, p. 24

On the one hand, it continually seeks viewpoints that surprise and intrigue us, through techniques such the way of filming the streets, the construction work, the more or less fortuitous alignments of perspectives, the effects of light at different times of the day, the unusual reframing caused by the walls filled with holes as a result of the demolition and the range of materials worn away by time. It calls for aesthetic qualities to be brought to what is real, and does not claim any benefit from being “pretty” but rather tries to show the trivial, even the filthy and damaged, in a different way. It is about coming back to the gaze on movement. Today, the sight of this building work inevitably reminds us of something similar, in *Still Life*, in particular the way that, even before Jia Zhang-ke, Guerin continually redefined the shot scales and the relative place of the characters in a space dramatized by falling walls, the destruction of commonplace items and the power of the machines used for the work.

Simultaneously, Guerin listens at length to many of the people present in the locations [...] While the territory is undergoing a major transformation, one which is a true architectural and social adventure, the individuals become contributors of fragments of stories, the stories of their existence.

BEFORE THE SCREENING

It could be interesting to situate the film in its urban and historical context: Barcelona, the Raval, end of the 90s. The city is in full urban transformation. We can familiarise ourselves with the neighbourhood: how is it and how it was, what changes has it lived, etc. Are there similar neighbourhoods in our cities or in cities we know? Have they lived similar processes?

It could be appropriate to point out that it is a long film (a little more than 2 hours), with a great richness of characters and many levels. It is also interesting to talk about documentary film and particularly the so-called creative documentary, in the way it distances itself from the report and the documentaries that we are probably used to. We will talk about it more thoroughly after the film, but to take it into account beforehand will probably enrich the viewing.

AFTER THE SCREENING

THE PASSING OF TIME

Work in Progress is a film about the passing of time: the time to construct a building, the time of day, the seasons, and the time to make a film. In addition to following the progress of the building work, the question of time can be analysed on two levels. On the one hand, the passing of hours and seasons. On the other, the film is connected to a long and deep-rooted Spanish literary and artistic tradition concerning the theme of time and death.

Show the passing of hours and days

Some spaces and architectural features punctuate the whole film: we encounter them time and again in different frames, with variations in the light depending on the time of day and season [see “Creation of the film: the

editing”, pp. 24-26]. Try to list some of these spaces and features which are repeated, appearing and reappearing throughout the film. It would be a nice idea to create captures (images-photograms) and afterwards make a large collage with the images of a single space or motif with different framing and lighting. In this respect a particularly significant feature is the wall built by Abdel Aziz and Santiago, with its windows framing the church of Sant Pau del Camp and the nearby school when the building is completed. Throughout the construction of this window, we experience the progress of the building work, and simultaneously the passing of the days (and nights) and seasons.

You can also observe your surroundings and choose a place from which to create your own “Diary of light” or “Diary of the seasons”. After analysing the characteristics of this space, choose what might be the best frame to show the passing of hours and days. Maintaining the same frame, photograph the space at different times in one day (if possible nightfall, night and dawn) and/or on different days over a long time period (e.g. from autumn to spring). The linear display of the series of photographs, situating the photographs in a line, one beside the other, will be a good demonstration of how light and the seasons transform spaces.

Time that flees and death that awaits

Beyond the general idea of the disappearance of a neighbourhood and certain ways of life, reflections on the passing of time, life and death weave together an underlying theme in the film. It works well that this reflection is constructed simultaneously and is interwoven on two levels: in the narrative and film structure of the film and in the conversations between many of its characters, who are thus included within a long Spanish literary tradition from “The Coplas on the Death of his Father” by Jorge Manrique to the “Elegies” by Miguel Hernández or Antonio Machado, via the sonnets of Francisco Quevedo.

Between the whole class, list, from memory, moments, elements and phrases which you remember about the passing of time: the discovery of the Roman skeletons and the conversations this sparks between the local residents (elderly people and children); the rotating

clock that punctuates the film and also the New Year’s Eve marking the change in millennium, the phrase by Abdel Aziz stating that “the problem is not dying, it’s waiting for death”, etc.

Coexistence between different times through the urban landscape

Many of the frames in *Work in Progress* create a common space for buildings or architectural features of different ages, thus highlighting one of the great values of cities like Barcelona, with a historical past that is still very present through buildings, streets, walls, factories that are now in disuse or converted, etc.

Think about places around you (village, neighbourhood, city) where different times can be found together. How would you frame them to show this superimposition of times? You can portray the history of a place through a set of photographs.

SPACE AND SOUNDS

Create space using sound

A particularly impressive aspect of the film is the creation of spaces by means of sound: through sound the building work extends to the buildings and to the neighbourhood, and the neighbourhood enters the building site [see “Creation of the film: the editing”, pp. 24-26].

Try to recall the sounds of the film: the building work, cars, radios, bottled gas delivery man, birds, music, voices, the archaeologists at work, the sound of *Land of the Pharaohs*, the children at school, etc. Then focus on one sequence and analyse the sounds in detail: When does each sound come in? Do they continue in the following shots? At what level? When do they disappear? How do they create the impression of space, of contiguity between spaces? We know, we feel, that two spaces are contiguous because they share sound. Certain sequences are of particular interest for this analysis: 16 and 17, 32, 55.

THE CHARACTERS

One of the things that most fascinates us in *Work in Progress* is the characters, who we get to know over time, through their expressions, their work or their wandering and, above all, through their words: what they say and

how they say it, their phrases and their silences, their conversations and their tone of voice.

José Luis Guerin has given each character a space so that, each in their own way, they create their own image over the length of the film. A nice touch is that this is not based only on respect, but also on affection: over the course of the film they learned to love each of the characters (in the interview by Gonzalo de Lucas “*The Smile and the Snow. Conversation with Abdel Aziz and José Luis Guerin*” the filmmaker says: “Where we learned to understand and love you was in the editing”; see « Reflections by José Luis Guerin, Amanda Villavieja and Núria Esquerra », pp. 11-13).

Each student or small group of students should choose a character they find particularly touching or interesting. Write a description of the character using their conversations, based on what they show of themselves throughout the film, maintaining the affection and respect shown by Guerin. How would you describe them to someone who hasn't seen the film?

THE END OF THE FILM

The last shot of the film is completely different to all the others. Try to describe the shot and why it is so different to the rest of the film's shots.

José Luis Guerin analysed it as follows: “In *Work in Progress* the last shot accompanies two young people from the neighbourhood, and rather than a separation, it reflects the moral position of who decides to be with

someone. At this moment, after a film created using fixed shots, going with them and accompanying them felt necessary”.

José Luis Guerin ends with a tracking sequence shot. Outside the building site that has been the centre of the film, focusing on Juani and Iván, the characters whose future probably seems most uncertain, moving the camera along a narrow street, no longer observing its traffic. The characters move towards the camera and look straight into it.

What feelings or ideas does this shot create in each of you? Think of theories explaining this choice by the filmmaker.

THE HISTORICAL TIME

From the historical time of the film to today

Work in Progress was filmed in Barcelona between 1998 and 2000. In addition to the specific history of a neighbourhood and real characters, many historical elements appear throughout the film: difficulties in accessing housing and property speculation, the Kosovo war (especially present between sequences 14 and 16), the change of millennium, etc.

It would be interesting to research these subjects a bit and think about what has happened with these issues almost 20 years later.

Urban transformation and gentrification processes

Barcelona is one of the great examples of cities which in recent decades have undertaken far-reaching urban regeneration projects, converting historical areas or industrial zones. In its case, the 1992 Olympics were the trigger for this process. You can think about your city, nearby cities or major capitals which have experienced similar regeneration processes: in which neighbourhoods this process has occurred, when, and why. This phenomenon is known as “gentrification”: you can study what this term means, the causes and effects, and what is your position towards it.

Editing practice

After the analysis, you can also practise creatively. Start by recording sounds around you: sounds that you hear every day but do not normally stop to listen to. Then take some photographs or shots of empty spaces, with no people. Edit the sounds with the images, thus creating a spatial unity between spaces that may be separated in reality, providing density to the spaces, creating time and bringing life to them.

VISUAL CREDITS

p. 3 : Original artwork of *Work in Progress* © Imagina International Sales / pp. 7, 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Los motivos de Berta*, 1983 © V.O. Films / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Souvenir*, 1986 © José Luis Guerin / pp. 7, 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Tren de sombras*, 1997 © Wanda Vision / pp. 7, 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Innisfree*, 1990 © Cine Company / p. 7 : John Ford, *The Quiet Man*, 1952 © Classic Films Distribución / pp. 7, 9 : José Luis Guerin, Jonas Mekas, *Correspondencia Jonas Mekas-José Luis Guerin*, 2011 © Intermedio / pp. 8, 9 : José Luis Guerin, *En la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007 © Wanda Vision / pp. 8, 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Unas fotos en la ciudad de Sylvia*, 2007 © Wanda Vision / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Las mujeres que no conocemos*, 2007 © José Luis Guerin / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Guest*, 2010 © Versus Entertainment / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *La dama de Corinto*, 2010 © Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Dos cartas a Ana*, 2010 © Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Recuerdos de una mañana*, 2011 © JIFF Project – Jeonju Digital Project / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *Le Saphir de Saint-Louis*, 2015 © Perspective Films / p. 9 : José Luis Guerin, *La academia de las musas*, 2015 © Los films de Orfeo / p. 20 : Yasujiro Ozu, *Sanma no aji*, 1962 © A Contracorriente Films / p. 27 : Yasujiro Ozu, *Higanbana*, 1958 © Shoichiku / p. 27 : Yasujiro Ozu, *Ohayo*, 1959 © DeA Planeta / p. 27 : Jacques Tati, *Playtime*, 1967 © DeA Planeta / p. 28 : Ermanno Olmi, *Il posto*, 1961 © Radio Films / pp. 29, 30 : Joan Colom, *El carrer*, 1958-1960 © Joan Colom / p. 30 : Robert Campin, *Triptyque de l'Annonciation (Triptyque de Mérode)*, vers 1427-1432 © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1956. www.metmuseum.org

Graphic design

Graphic design : Benjamin Vesco / Application graphique : CinEd coordination (Institut français)

How to quote this document

De Lucas, G. (2016) *En construcción*. Copyright - : www.cined.eu



CINED.EU: DIGITAL PLATFORM DEDICATED TO EUROPEAN CINEMA EDUCATION

CinEd proposes :

- A multilingual platform, accessible free of charge in 45 European countries, to organise non-commercial public screenings
- A collection of European films for ages 6 to 19
- Teaching materials to introduce and accompany the screenings: booklet on the film, pedagogical suggestions for the facilitator/teacher, worksheet for a young audience, educational videos for comparative analysis of film excerpts

CinEd is a European Cooperation Program for Education to the European Cinema.

CinEd is co-funded by the European Union's Creative Europe / MEDIA program.

INSTITUT
FRANÇAIS

Co-funded by the
European Union  Creative
Europe
MEDIA



os filhos de
LUMIÈRE

