

Invocation of Bliss

Video by Michael Pilz
Austria 2009, 92'

Khvajeh Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafez-e Shirazi,
727–791 A.H./1325–1389 a.d.

In May, 2006 I traveled around Iran, a small camera always close at hand, and experienced some of the most memorable „magical moments“ of my life. At Shiraz, I strolled through the garden of Hafez, the great Persian poet from the 14th century. There was this moment when I pointed my camera at the alabaster tomb at the center of the garden for about one minute. The footage shows a group of people of all ages that grew from just a few at first to about fifty. They all engaged in a meeting of a very special and personal kind and their behavior suggested something that can only be described as the spirit of Hafez.

I edited this succession of images and made it last 18 minutes. Then I added five duplicates of the resulting footage and inserted an additional close-up between them, which shows Arabic calligraphy of one of Hafez's most famous poems that is inscribed on his tomb.

The soundtrack is a composition that draws on different sources such as sound bites from Hafez's garden at Shiraz and other locations around the country. It also focuses on rain, wind, thunder, and a brook that I had my ears close to. To a large extent, Iran consists of sand and salt deserts as well as bare mountain ranges. In an environment of this kind, water means life, pure and simple, and people of all ages have built the most beautiful gardens and palaces around it. This is clearly another film for meditation.

Michael Pilz, Vienna, September 17, 2009

Frühjahr 2006. Mehrere Wochen lang reise ich durch den Iran. Mit einer kleinen Kamera filme ich mein Tagebuch. Ich bin überrascht von der Vielzahl "magischer Momente", die mir sowohl an historischen oder geheiligten Stätten, als auch ganz unscheinbar im Alltag begegnen. Ich fühle mich wie in einem dieser rätselvollen Filme Kiarostamis.

In Shiraz besuche ich die Musalla-Gärten, wo Hafiz, neben Rumi, Saadi u.a. vielleicht der größte, geheimnisvollste persische Dichter, begraben ist. Inmitten des großzügig angelegten Parks steht offen ein rundes Mausoleum, zu Ehren des Dichters in den 1930er-Jahren wiedererrichtet, die Kuppel getragen von acht Säulen. Über mehrere Stufen gelangt man vor den Sarkophag aus Alabaster.

In einem bestimmten Moment filme ich eine totale Ansicht, etwa eine Minute lang. Sie zeigt anfangs vereinzelt mehrere Personen, miteinander redend, in Hafiz' Gedichten lesend, wartend, die Atmosphäre genießend, bis zuletzt etwa fünfzig Personen die Szene beleben, jung und alt und jede Figur verhält sich, wie in einer perfekten Inszenierung, auf ganz besondere Weise. Darin liegt für mich etwas sehr Poetisches und ich habe den Eindruck, als würde der Geist von Hafiz auf geheimnisvolle Art und Weise sichtbar und fühlbar werden.

Diese Aufnahme dehnte ich durch Zeitlupe auf 18 Minuten, dann vervielfältigte ich sie fünfmal und tat jeweils eine Nahaufnahme dazwischen, auch in Zeitlupe, die sehr schöne arabische Kalligraphie eines berühmten Gedichts von Hafiz, wie sie die Oberseite des Sarkophags zierte (Ghasel 336).

Die Tonspur ist eine mehrschichtige Komposition verschiedener Quellen, die in sehr langsamen Überblendungen ineinander verwoben sind, Geräusche aus den Musalla-Gärten, aber auch Regen, Wind und Gewitterdonner aus anderen Landesteilen, sowie das Glucksen eines kleinen Bächleins, ganz nah.

Wasser bedeutet im Iran, der zu großen Teilen aus sandigen und salzigen Wüsten und unbewaldeten Bergzügen besteht, pures Leben und wo Wasser fließt, haben die Menschen, seit eh und je, die schönsten Gärten und Paläste drum herum gebaut.

Ein Film zur Meditation.

Michael Pilz, Wien, im September 2009



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Lieber Michael!

Hab gestern noch Deinen Film auf unsere Wohnzimmerwand projiziert.

Dort ist eine Art Fenster entstanden, offen nach einer anderen Dimension von Zeit, von Raum, von Wahrnehmung.

Es ist nicht zu viel gesagt: eine Ahnung der Schöpfung, ihrer noch unausgeloteten Möglichkeiten der Selbst-Bewusstwerdung – wie ein langsames Aufwachen – und der Friede hat kein Ende – ist im Sein, im Vergehen, selbst im Tod, und geht darüber hinaus.

Und jeder Neubeginn ist eine Wiedergeburt. Die (visuellen) Wiederholungen sind wie Atemzüge. Zusammen mit den (akustischen) Veränderungen entsteht eine spiralförmige Bewegung, ein in sich geschlossener, geborgener, sich aber ständig erneuernder Organismus. Das ist das Unglaublichste an diesem Film(?), dass mit jedem Wiederbeginn der Einstellung ein völlig neues Zeitalter anfängt, etwas Nie –Dagewesenes sichtbar, erlebbar wird. Läuft die Einstellung, rast die Zeit dahin, wird die Erde alt, in den Raum der Stille treten Beunruhigungen, Verschiebungen ein. Das Licht schwenkt, lässt selbst das Glas der Optik farbig aufleuchten, nichts ist mehr, wie es war. Bewegungen streben auf ein Ziel hin, Hände berühren die Grabplatte, dort angekommen, verebben sie, hören auf, wie ein Sterben, ohne Schmerz, hinein in einen Neubeginn. Wenn die Einstellung wieder „von vorne“ beginnt, beginnt mein Leben „von vorne“ – mein alt gewordener Blick klärt sich, etwas tritt ein wie die Glückseligkeit des Kindseins.

Danke für den Film, der eigentlich ein lebendiges Gemälde ist, das ich gerne immer an unserer Wohnzimmerwand hätte.

Peter Schreiner, Wien, am 1. Oktober 2009

Dear Michael!

Later yesterday, I projected your film onto our living room wall.

A kind of window made its appearance there, open towards another dimension of time, space, and perception.

It's not an overstatement: a distant idea of creation, its as yet uncharted possibilities of self-awareness – like a slow awakening – and peace has no end – it is embedded in life, its fading away, even in death, and goes beyond it.

And every new beginning is a rebirth. The (visual) repetitions are like a series of breaths. Together with the (acoustic) changes, a spiral-like movement emerges, an organism grounded in a feeling of safety and oneness, but one that, nevertheless, continually renews itself. Most incredible about this film (?) is that with each recommencement of the scene, an entirely new era sets in, something unprecedented is rendered visible and palpable. As the scene progresses, time races on, the earth turns old, in the space of silence, moments of uneasiness and dis-

placement ensue. The light pans, lets even the glass of the lens light up with colors, nothing is the way it was. Movements are oriented towards a goal, hands touch the memorial stone; after arriving there, they subside, cease, as if passing away, without pain, into a new beginning. When the scene „starts over,“ my life begins „anew“ – my aged eyes clear up, something like the blissful joy of childhood sets in.

Thank you for this film, which is actually an animated painting, one I would love to always see on our living-room wall.

Peter Schreiner — Vienna, October 1, 2009

Khawaja Samsu d-Din Muhammad Hafez-e Sirazi (Persian: *خواجه شمس‌الدین محمد حافظ شیرازی*), known by his pen name Hafez (approx. 1325–1389 a.d./727–791 A.H., Shiraz/Iran) is the most celebrated Persian lyric poet and is often described as a poet's poet. His *Divan* is to be found at the home of most Iranians who recite his poems by heart and use as proverb and saying to this day. His life and poems have been the subject of much analysis, commentary, and interpretation and had influenced the course of post-fourteenth century Persian lyrics more than anyone else has. His presence in the lives of Iranians can be felt through Hafez-reading (Persian: *فنا، حافظ*), frequent use of his poems in Persian traditional music, visual art and Persian calligraphy.

The major themes of his *ghazals* are love, the celebration of wine and intoxication, and exposing the hypocrisy of those who have set themselves up as guardians, judges, and examples of moral rectitude.

His father Baha'u d-Din, who migrated from Isfahan to Shiraz in the time of Atabeks of Fars, is said to have been a coal merchant who died when Hafez was a child, leaving him and his mother in debt. It seems probable that he met with Attar of Shiraz (Zayn al-Attar), a somewhat disreputable scholar, and became his disciple. He is said to have later become a poet in the court of Abu Ishak, and so gained fame and influence in his hometown. It is possible that Hafez gained a position as teacher in a Qur'anic school at this time.

In his early thirties, Mubariz Muzaffar captured Shiraz and seems to have ousted Hafez from his position. Hafez apparently regained his position for a brief span of time after Shah Shuja took his father, Mubariz Muzaffar, prisoner. But shortly afterwards Hafez was forced into self-imposed exile when rivals and religious characters he had criticized began slandering him. Hafez fled from Shiraz to Isfahan and Yazd for his own safety.

At the age of fifty-two, Hafez once again regained his position at court, and possibly received a personal invitation from Shah Shuja, who pleaded with him to return. He obtained a more solid position after Shah Shuja's death,

when Shah Mansour ascended the throne for a brief period before being defeated and killed by Tamerlane.

At age 60 he is said to have begun a chilla–nashini, a 40 day and night vigil by sitting in a circle which he had drawn for himself. On the 40th day, he once again met with Zayn al–Attar on what is known to be their fortieth anniversary and was offered a cup of wine. It was there where he is said to have attained „Cosmic Consciousness“. Hafez hints at this episode in one of his verses where he advises the reader to attain „clarity of wine“ by letting it „sit for 40 days“.

Twenty years after his death, an elaborate tomb (the Hafezieh) was erected to honor Hafez in the Musalla Gardens in Shiraz. The current Mausoleum was designed by André Godard, French archeologist and architect, in the late 1930s. Nowadays, the Hafezieh is visited by millions each year and regarded by countless people to be a veritable shrine.


Citation: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hafez>

مژده وصل تو کو کز سر جان برخیزم
طایر قدسم و از دام جهان برخیزم
به ولای تو که گر بنده خویشم خوانی
از سر خواجگی کون و مکان برخیزم
یا رب از ابر هدایت برسان بارانی
پیشتر زان که چو گردی ز میان برخیزم
بر سر تربت من با می و مطرب بنشین
تا به بویت ز لحد رقص کنان برخیزم
خیز و بالا بنما ای بت شیرین حرکات
کز سر جان و جهان دست فشان برخیزم
گر چه پیرم تو شبی تنگ در آغوشم کش
تا سحرگه ز کنار تو جوان برخیزم
روز مرگم نفسی مهلت دیدار بده
تا چو حافظ ز سر جان و جهان برخیزم

In the hope of union, my very life, I'll give up
As a bird of Paradise, this worldly trap I will hop.
In the hope of one day, being your worthy servant
Mastery of both worlds I'll gladly drop.
May the cloud of guidance unload its rain
Before I am back to dust, into the air I rise up.
Beside my tomb bring minstrels and wine
My spirit will then dance to music and scent of the cup.
Show me your beauty, O graceful beloved of mine
To my life and the world, with ovation I put a stop.
Though I am old, tonight, hold me in your arms
In the morn, a youthful one, I'll rise up.
On my deathbed give me a glimpse of your face
So like Hafiz, I too, will reach the top.

Hafiz, Ghazal 336

Translated from Persian by Shahriar Shahriari

Original title	Invocation of Bliss
English title	Invocation of Bliss
German title	Anrufung der Glückseligkeit
Country of production	Austria
Production	Michael Pilz Film
Producer	Michael Pilz
Shooting time	14 May, 2006
Shooting location	Musalla Gardens, Shiraz, Iran (Hafezieh)
Date of completion	22 September, 2009
Concept and realization	Michael Pilz
Cinematography	Michael Pilz
Original sound	Michael Pilz
Sound mix.....	Michael Pilz
Editing	Michael Pilz
Digital Mastering	Reinhard Feichtinger, Listo Video, Vienna
Featuring	People from Shiraz/Iran and anonymous
Original format	miniDV, 16:9, colour, stereo
Screening format	digital Beta, 16:9, colour
Sound system	Stereo
Running time	92 minutes
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