

The Minimalist Realism

Minimalism is an art as well as a science, and happy to those who truly grasp it, can work with anything at their disposal. At its core, *minimalism* is the intentional promotion of the things we most value and the removal of everything that distracts us from it. It is a life that forces intentionality. And as a result, it forces improvements in almost all aspects of your life.

In cinema, minimalism translates to presenting a narrative as 'realistically' as possible by eliminating cinematic techniques that draw attention to unnecessary narrative. This can mean some of the following:

- little or no use of non-diegetic music
- use of long shots and/or limited editing
- limited camera movement (or movement that is as naturalistic as possible)
- use of real-life locations instead of sets
- reduced reliance on conventional story structure
- the action happening in real-time, or in a limited time span
- use of improvisation

Artisans of the minimal have explored suffering, frustration, loneliness, boredom, terror and submission by stripping down all unnecessary elements that would only seem to hinder their explorations. Minimalist films stripped down to the essentials make you take notice of small things. The smaller things have greater importance and you notice them more since the film is stripped down of other elements.

Tuesday 9th January 2018

Tokyo Story

Directed by Yasujiro Ozu | Japan | 136 minutes | 1953

An elderly couple, make a trip to Tokyo to visit their children, who are now married. They arrive to discover that their children are unwilling to put them up and are even colluding to send the couple away to a hot springs resort. Only their daughter-in-law Noriko treats them with due respect. The situation is further complicated when Tomi suddenly falls ill.

Wednesday 10th January 2018

Down By Law

Directed by Jim Jarmusch | United States | 107 minutes | 1986

The film centers on the arrest, incarceration, and escape from jail of three men. It discards jailbreak film conventions by focusing on the interaction between the convicts rather than on the mechanics of the escape, a singular adventure ensues. Described by Jarmusch as a "neo-Beat noir comedy," Down by Law is part nightmare and part fairy tale, featuring sterling performances and crisp black-and-white cinematography by the esteemed Robby Müller.

Thursday 11th January 2018

The Match Factory Girl

Directed by Aki Kaurismäki | Finland | 69 minutes | 1990

Kaurismäki took his penchant for despairing character studies to unspeakably grim depths in the shockingly entertaining The Match Factory Girl. Kati Outinen is memorably impenetrable as Iris, whose grinding days as a cog in a factory wheel, and nights as a neglected daughter living with her parents, ultimately send her over the edge. Yet despite her transgressions, Kaurismäki makes Iris a compelling, even sympathetic figure. Bleak yet suffused with comic irony.

Friday 12th January 2018

The Mirror

Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky | Soviet Union | 106 minutes | 1975

Mirror is noted for its loose and nonlinear narrative. It unfolds as an organic flow of memories recalled by a dying poet (based on Tarkovsky's own father Arseny, who in reality would outlive his son by three years) of key moments in his life both with respect to his immediate family as well as that of the Russian people as a whole during the tumultuous events of the twentieth century. In an effort to represent these themes visually, the film combines contemporary scenes with childhood memories, dreams, and newsreel footage.

Saturday 13th January 2018

The Turin Horse

Directed by Béla Tarr | Hungary | 146 minutes | 2011

Bela Tarr's bleak parable tells a simple story with weighty conviction. The film is in black-and-white, shot in only 30 long takes by Tarr's regular cameraman Fred Kelemen, and depicts the repetitive daily lives of the horse-owner and his daughter. Two people struggle to make the best of a bleak existence in this powerful, deliberately paced drama. An elderly man (Janos Derzsi) shares a cottage with his daughter (Erika Bok) in a sparsely populated village plagued by constant windstorms. While the man tries to scrape together a living using his horse to haul things, the animal is growing old and feeble and refuses to cooperate.