

The background of the image is a scenic view of a coastline. In the foreground, white-capped waves are crashing against a dark, rocky shore. The middle ground shows a calm sea extending to a distant, hazy coastline. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, suggesting an overcast or misty day. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greys, and whites, with the red text providing a sharp contrast.

THE IMAGE
TO COME











How Cinema Inspires Photography

It is acknowledged, most people observe: a film is a film, it moves, it lives in front of our eyes, it is something ultimately different from a photograph. It doesn't leave us time; to reflect upon what we see, to analyse and understand. We are left with an overwhelming experience blurring into an amalgamation of emotions and striking visuals, sitting in a cinema seat we lose ourselves. It leaves a mark in our consciousness and our bank of experiences. A successful movie has a great effect upon us humans. And at the same time it is not actually that different from its mother, photography. Putting a frame around the world that surrounds us, it guides the eye, tells a story, conveys a perception of the world we live in, and thus creates its own.

Certain movies (spontaneously I think of Almadovar's work) are perfect photographs every 1/24 of a second, every still could hang in a gallery. You stand amazed in front of their beauty and power. A photograph, a film, is a fraction of a second in a certain reality in a certain time, it doesn't say what happens after what happened before, it makes us believe that we are inside/within that Spanish town or maybe in Vietnam when we are actually comfortably surrounded by security and peace in Europe or the US. And when we see a movie about the Vietnam War we believe that what we see is Vietnam, not knowing and not even being interested (at least as long as we confront the fast succession of images) in the fact that those trees may actually be Philippino trees and this river doesn't 'really' flow into the South China Sea but in the Laguna de Bay.

1974/1975 Francis Ford Coppola made his famous and beautifully shot, now classic, and at the time controversial movie *Apocalypse Now* about the war in Vietnam on the island of Luzon in the Philippines: some scenes in the town of Pagsanjan, near the waterfalls, others on the beaches of Baler. For us that landscape has ultimately become Vietnam, the backdrop for our visual imagination of the war.

A brief synopsis of the film can be found on IMDb:

"During the on-going Vietnam War, Captain Willard is sent on a dangerous mission into Cambodia to assassinate a renegade Green Beret who has set himself up as a God among a local tribe."

"The most important thing I wanted to do in the making of *Apocalypse Now* was to create a film experience that would give its audience a sense of the horror, the madness, the sensuousness and the moral dilemma of the Vietnam war..."

(Francis Ford Coppola, *The American War Film: History and Hollywood* by Frank Adam)

For this project I wanted to go on a journey of discovery, to travel to Baler and find out, see and document what the film might have left behind, how it may have influenced the place, what my own view of the town and the landscape, the people would be. Of course it doesn't pretend to be more „real“ than anything shown in the film or to reproduce the imagery, in fact it has an utterly different aim and is just not comparable. It was a personal journey. With the least preconceptions possible I tried to see the town and the famous Charlie's Point as it presented itself to me on December 26, 27, 28; demonstrating and investigating my own perception.

“So you’re going out there . Famous. Interesting too.” He gave me a searching glance, and made another note. “Ever any madness in your family?” he asked, in a matter-of-fact tone. I felt very annoyed. “Is that question in the interests of science, too?” “It would be,” he said, without taking notice of my irritation. “interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals on the spot, but...”

One of the most striking observations I could make were of course related to the philippino surfing culture, born through the movie - Coppola's crew had left some of the surfing boards in the town when they left. The young started to experiment and learned to ride the waves, soon addicted. The 'Charlie don't surf' made the place globally famous for surf tourists, still visiting Baler nowadays. **He surely wanted nothing from the wilderness but space to breathe in and to push on through. His need was to exist, and to move onwards at the greatest possible risk, and with a maximum of privation. ...**

**It seemed to
have consumed all th**

ought of self so completely, that even while he was talking to you, you forgot that it was he – the man before your eyes – who had gone through these things.

People were extremely welcoming and even though we had some trouble to find any information on the film at the beginning, I finally met a surf instructor that knew somebody who had been part of the crew (as a driver) in the 70's, a perfect opportunity to get some insight information. According to his account it was a glorious time for the town, that was still deprived of electricity at that time. „It was a fiesta every night“, the best time of his life, San Miguel beer at 6 Pesos, Coppola showing movies, the 'cinema' run by a generator. The crew brought work and money, many people helped on the production and were involved in the setting up that lasted a whole year, the filming itself only two months. The crew disappeared, leaving the surf boards and a deep mark in peoples lives behind, but the expected 'blessings' did not occur.

Even though Coppola donated **7 777 777, 77** Pesos (or Dollars?) to the Philippines it is very probable that those ended up becoming **777 777, 77** extra shoes in Imelda Marcos wardrobe.

They were conquerors and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. **They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle darkness.**

Nowhere did we stop long enough to get a particularized impression, but the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder grew upon me. As a matter of fact, when I arrived in Baler, I was immediatly amazed by the landscape, the particular atmosphere of the place, the sombre silent long beaches, the waves, the grey sand, a melancholic apathy as if in fact something had been left behind, left in suspension. There was the aspect of the decaying seatown, people going on with their lives, it was not dead but it was also not moving far beyond. Very concentrated on a small part of the beach, where surf instructors (now the sec-

ond generation of surfers) teach newcomers, was the organized life for tourists and visitors: restaurants flourish and hotels rent their rooms, but undernourished dogs were roaming the beaches, some gardening houses-

There was no sign on the face of nature of this amazing tale that was not so much told as suggested to me in desolate exclamations, completed by shrugs, in interrupted phrases, in hints ending in deep sighs

Walking along Charlie's Point, a little further down and difficult to access, deserted, the sand the sea, the grass, the plants and wood washed ashore, the decay, me surrounded by nature, strange compositions started to form in front of my eyes, become more, something else, something dead, skeletons or animal's bodies, organic, rotting, still beautiful, still delicate. The land seemed to say it So the finger went on the shutter and exposed and exposed and exposed

No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light. ... the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. **And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force**

But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes for what is it? Half-a-crown a

tumble - The sun went down, quickly as it does in the tropics and we needed to find the way home when it was still light, so I left Charlie's Point. Daylight: In the town centre boys were running around with their christmas presents, I have never seen that many plastic guns, in no other philippino town. If that has any-

thing to do with the movie, I cannot say, It is now more than **30** years ago. Hard to tell. And people live their lives have their businesses and jobs and dogs, busy and sleepy, selling and buying, not very different from any other philippino town, but it seemed well off, compared to many others I have seen. Open and chaotic, the best place to play for children, there are a million. about prospects, their prospects? Who knows. Future.

The mind of man is capable of anything because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. ... - but truth truth































stripped of its cloak of time. ... He must meet that truth
with his own true stuff with his own inborn strength.
Principals won't do.

In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing
into a continent.

**NO I DON'T LIKE WORK. I HAD
RATHER LAZE ABOUT AND THINK
OF ALL THE FINE THINGS THAT
CAN BE DONE. I DON'T LIKE
WORK; - NO MAN DOES - BUT I
LIKE WHAT IS IN THE WORK, THE
CHANCE TO FIND YOURSELF.
YOUR OWN REALITY - for yourself,
not for others, - WHAT NO OTHER
MAN CAN EVER KNOW. they can
only see the mere show, AND NEVER
WHAT IT REALLY MEANS.**

(The Heart of Darkness, 1902
Joseph Conrad, Inspiration for Apocalypse Now and me)



HOW CINEMA

INSPIRES

PHOTOGRAPHY