

Ondřej Vavrečka: About the lengthscore of my films

The idea of determining the length of the films I make from the lengths of the films I have already made originated in a pub on the square in Police nad Metují. I was editing my third film, called *The Interposed*. I had two paths to take. From what I had edited, I would either make a film of around 40 minutes or something over 300 minutes. The former seemed too little and the latter too much. Which way to go?

I thought like this: If the first film I made, *Beginning and Lion*, was about The Beginning, and the second film, *Ultimum Refugium*, is about The End, then all my other films should be somehow in between these films. Starting with the current film, which is about the interval between the Beginning and the End, all my films should be bounded by the Beginning and the End. The first two films became sort of the frames of the next films. Frames that a painter sets up before he starts painting.

I plotted the individual digits of the lengths of the films of The Beginning and The End on a horizontal axis and drew a corresponding square behind each digit – the most natural rule on square paper. And I lined up the squares with the lengths of the digits behind them in such a way as to make them look as harmonious as possible. By combining the most natural-looking rules based on the squares to form triangles in the most harmonious way possible, I constructed the left, rising side of the length chart.

For the sake of further regularity and harmony, which here represents symmetry and repetition, I added the rising side to form a pyramid. For the most regular squares with the most harmonious triangles, I came up with the digits of the lengths of the current film, 9 and 9. The film *The Interposed* will therefore be 99 minutes long.

By symmetry and repetition of the two simplest shapes in the square universe, I derived the lengths of the next two films, 66 and 31 minutes, creating a pyramidal pentalogy.

When I edited the fourth film, *De Potentia Dei*, and combined all the scenes and situations that were supposed to be in the film, the total length was 66 minutes without two frames! This confirmed that I was attuned to the length chart and in retrospect that the length chart projected well the future lengths of my films.

The problem arose during the editing of the next film – *The Personal Life of a Hole*. According to the whole pyramid-shaped diagram, this was to be my last ever film at 31 minutes. But I didn't want to stop making films. Moreover, I noticed one practical thing. I'm employed by a film school and therefore have to report annually on the artwork I've made. Depending on how many works an employee makes and what impact they have, the school is then evaluated by getting extra money in its budget. The evaluation system is set up in a way that favors short films. It's more profitable to make a hundred one-minute films than one hundred-minute film. The stupidity of an age that fears long compositions.

For these two reasons, I flipped the pyramid to create a sort of sawtooth rhythm to the diagram. Another 31 minutes were added to the 31 minutes. The resulting film, *The Personal Life of a Hole*, consists of two 31-minute films, allowing me to show two works in film school rather than one. The whole of the film, which deals with holes, contains within it a seam, a break between two eras. The seam, which is represented in the diagram by a circle of 2.25π cm, takes $1/50$ s in the film. This seemingly insignificant moment between two film windows, however, is crucial: by extending the diagram, I was able to continue scheduling other new films.

Moreover, the time flipping of the pyramid caused the originally planned pyramidal pentalogy to become a four-and-a-half-logy.

The length of the next film about the idea of Progress, called *I+I+I*, came naturally from the length of the previous film, 71 minutes.

Then something new happened. During the filming of *Lichens Are The Way*, cinematic expression ceased to be a matter of personal presentation for me. My self became you. The fact that I had reached and crossed the boundaries of the personal was reflected in the calculation of the film's length. In keeping with the symmetry and repetition of shapes in the diagram, in the space after the second digit of the length of the previous film, *I+I+I*, I erected a line of length 9, the maximum digit that can express the minute length of the film. This brings me to the boundary of the lower pyramid. And I crossed it by again plotting the maximum digit, i.e. 9. By simply adding the 9 cm long line to the square, I got the first digit of the film about the lichens: 4. It was clear that something unplanned and new had happened, something that disrupted the existing system of production. This large square did not fit exactly into the bottom pyramid. To make the system of squares and triangles complete, a square of the smallest possible size – 1 by 1 – had to be added at the foot of the bottom pyramid. The second figure for the length of *Lichens Are The Way* film is yet to be determined...