



European Cinema Education  
for Youth

## EDUCATIONAL TOOL

### LOOKS

#### ➤ **Looking, central element in the cinematographic experience**

Since the end of silent films (even though the showing was rarely silent because of the accompanying music and the barker), cinema has been an auditory and visual experience which, logically, requests vision and hearing. But looking is not only a spectator's action, it is also the characters' one present on the screen; the setup and the actors' directing manage precisely those looks, within one same frame, or through editing to link their presence between shots.

Looking is so attached to the cinematographic experience that it can intervene as a mirroring effect for the spectator; it is the case in *The Spirit of the Beehive* where a crowd of eyes is staring at a film being shown, an intimate communication of an extraordinary intensity ties itself between the stares and the screen. The frame closes down progressively on Ana: for her, for the time of the showing, the imaginary, which comes alive on the screen, replaces the world's reality.

#### ➤ **Experiencing and learning through looking**

In cinema, the established agreement (pact between the filmmaker and the spectator) implies that there cannot be any eye contact between the characters of the film and the audience. When a filmmaker breaks this agreement and makes that choice (camera look from the characters, like in the two extracts from *Pierrot le fou*), the aim is to unsettle the audience as this ruptures the illusion of fiction; these camera looks make us wonder about the status of what we are looking at.

In numerous extracts where children learn different new things, the look is crucial to experience the world. Fatima's looks is at the heart of *Little Light*: the little girl is testing reality through her eyes (and also her ears), with this question that is as naïve as profoundly philosophical: her eyes are like a projector, an imaginary source capable of creating a world. Other metaphor, the fridge light (first extract from *Little Light*) brings up shadows on the wall behind her, like, before the invention of cinema in 1895, magical lanterns.

➤ **Looking and desire to see**

The desire to see is often linked to a seduction plan. In the extract from *Time Out*, the two youngsters share and communicate only through looks, in a careful and discrete manner. Their relation and feelings are expressed that way because they are in a public and professional place where they cannot use words, movements, or physical proximity.

The spectator's status is reminded and illustrated in *The Spirit of the Beehive*, it is also, in a more symbolic way, in *Work in Progress*. Passers-by, in a very theatrical way, are placed around the pit and stare at the excavations down below, like in a show. The film opening puts us in front of eyes displayed on a wall, they watch us and announce the look experience built by the film, but also, more widely, by cinema. Since the film refers to the transformation of a popular neighbourhood in Barcelona, these eyes can also represent the past watching the present.

The desire to see can go all the way to the voyeuristic impulse, like in the extracts from *L'Intervallo* and *Uma pedra no bolso*. This desire to see without being seen is not characterised here by a vicious dimension but sends back, here again, to learning; the person being spied on unknowingly doesn't lie in a representation, these stolen looks – it is the case in particular in *L'intervallo* – enable to access people's truth.

INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS

Co-funded by the  
European Union

