

slaughter of a pig. Benny watches and rewatches a home video showing the obsessive consumption of videos. In the opening scene, despite from his affluent, disinterested parents through the *Video* (1992). It follows a young teenage boy who finds res- in-a-screen is seen in another of Haneke's films, *Benny's* Indeed, this passive consumption of the screen-with- fulfilled, resulting in a violent eruption of the Real of the body. by the sense that her own masochistic fantasies cannot be that informs Erika's perverse sexual life. This is accompanied nographic films which Erika watches at a local cinema. Through these interludes, we get a glimpse into the media including the banal medical soap operas, crime dramas and Throughout the film are insertions of other screens, appointment is always missed. Through the film are insertions of other screens, to fall flat; as Lacan states of our relation to the Real, 'The knot together desire, love and jouissance, something seems punitive fantasies. However, with each of Erika's attempts to student, Walter, who is drawn into her increasingly cruel and her dominating mother. Erika begins an affair with her young shadowed by her solitary masochistic sexual practices and atory, who's affinities for Schumann and Schubert are over- follows Erika Kohut, the titular teacher at a Viennese conserv- Michael Haneke's film *The Piano Teacher* (2001)



The Piano Teacher (2001)

The film is centered around a central act of violence, which is mediated through the virtual image of Benny's camera. In the same way that *The Ambassadors* alerts the viewer to the presence of the gaze, *Benny's Video* situates the gaze as 'caught, manipulated, captured, in the field of vision.' Haneke has infamously claimed that through his films he intends to 'rape the spectator into autonomy and awareness; This statement suggests an effort to dispel the illusion of control over the image; watching Haneke's films, we are not mere passive spectators but complicit in the violence of the cinematic fantasy. There is little pleasure in this — instead, a sense of fascination at the image that we aim to possess being beyond our control. The parents of both Erika and Benny play an integral function in the violent fantasies of their children. Erika's mother is an overbearing and punitive presence, and we learn that her father has died in a mental asylum some years before. The parents of 14-year-old Benny are hapless, and ultimately com- plicit in his crimes. In both cases, we can discern an absence of the Symbolic function of the parental couple; a Law through which the fundamental principles of social inter-relations be- come possible, introducing in its simplest form the prohibition against incest in the form of an Oedipal complex. Haneke elicits both our judgment and sympathy for the part Erika and Benny's parents have to play in the violence that ensues.



Benny's Video (1992)

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Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors* (1533)



In *Seminar XI*, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan introduces one of his most important examples of the scopoc function through Hans Holbein's 1533 painting *The Ambassadors*. The central subject matter depicted in the painting is irrelevant — rather, Lacan brings our attention to the very bottom of the image, which depicts a warped skull or *anamorphosis*. One assumes that this optical illusion was intended to be viewed as a form of *memento mori*, only revealed to the viewer as they ascended the stairs and cast a final glance back toward the painting. It is in this moment of looking back that the gaze of the viewer becomes most present and the subject's self-mastery over the image is suspended. However, the eye and the gaze are not one and the same; there is a split between the two, which has the effect of a discordance. Like the unconscious, the gaze only reveals itself through an oblique direction.

'...what I look at is never what I wish to see.'

Todd McGowan states that 'Cinephilia is an extreme response to the lure of filmic fantasies, but it nonetheless reveals something fundamental in the art of the cinema.' This is not through cinema's ability to reproduce or imitate reality but through its failure to do so, which produces an uncanny effect of identification, or a radical form of identification through alienation to the image which it aims to reproduce. Lacan provides an anecdote from his youth, of being 'watched' by a sardine can that glistened in the water, while fishing in a boat; 'It was looking at me at the level of the point of light, the point at which everything that looks at me is situated — and I am not speaking metaphorically.' The fascination produced by the gaze implies a loss of control and of ego — and a submission to the subject of desire. Under the gaze, according to Lacan, 'I am *photo-graphed*.'

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