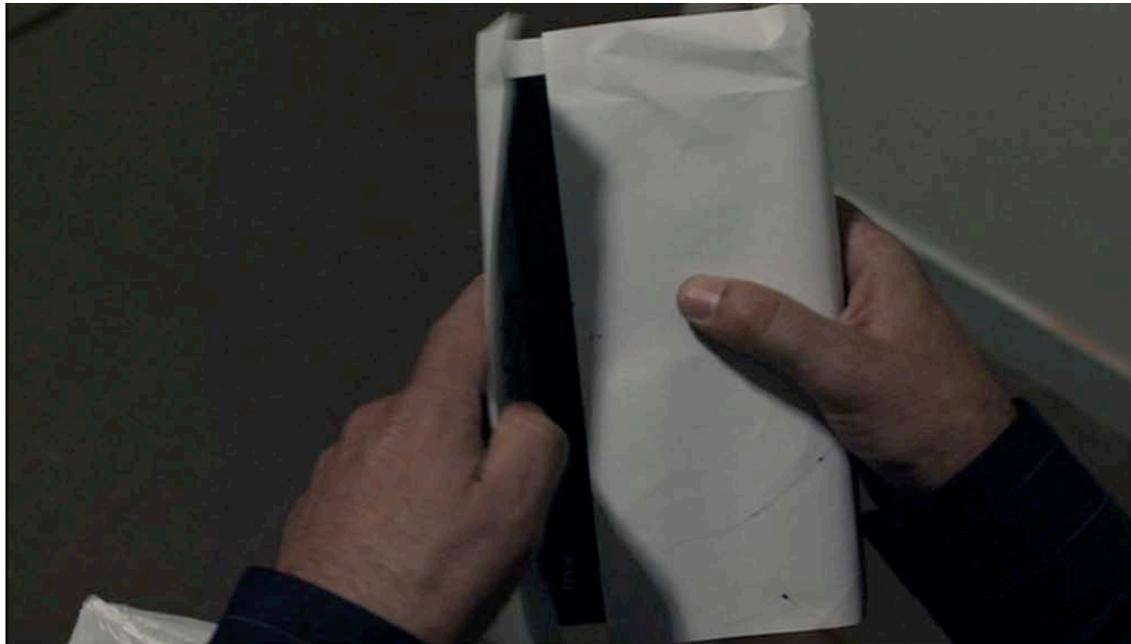


Hidden (Caché) [2005]

dir. Michael Haneke



**“Film is 24 lies per second
[.....] at the service of the
attempt to find the truth”**

Michael Haneke

Hidden (Caché) [2005]

- Directed by Michael Haneke, an Austrian film-maker.
- Shot in Paris & Vienna
- Shot entirely on **High Definition Video** and not on 35mm Film. This lends the film a distinct look and feel which we might equate with television images rather than with cinema; with realism, soap opera....
- and the use of video enables Haneke to make use of the video medium as a device within the narrative (the story/ plot). The use of video in production is essential to the story.

Story/ Plot Overview

- The film follows the lives of a family of middle class Parisians; George (a TV presenter), his wife Anne and their 12 year old son Pierrot.
- We watch the family as their private lives unfold onscreen, interrupted by the arrival on their doorstep of a series of 'video tapes'. The tapes suggest that the family is being observed, possibly stalked by an unknown 'watcher' or stalker.
- As more and more video tapes arrive, George (& we as the viewer) become "detectives", using the tapes as evidence to piece together the story of the film and attempt to reveal the identity of the unseen 'watcher'

NARRATIVE THEMES

TAPE ONE

Video as surveillance: Tape One opens the film; it establishes the setting for the film, just as in any film – it acts as an establishing shot. Haneke interrupts the shot by adding voice over – the characters in the film are discussing the shot, the image ‘rewinds’ onscreen. We are no longer watching the film establish the setting, but instead the image becomes an element of the action, of the plot.



By disturbing the opening shot, Haneke plays with the conventions of the image in cinema. The characters control the playback of the first image in the film, by doing so, we the audience question the status of the images presented. We the viewers are made aware that we are ‘watching’, are we are the hidden observer? We are also made aware that we the viewers are invading the private space of the family.

Hidden is a film about watching.

Haneke makes the audience aware of their status as the viewer, as the watcher. Just as the hidden observer is watching the family within the screen world, so too do we as the audience of the film, outside of the screen world

The viewer is 'the hidden' observer.....?

Public/ Private Lives: In his public life (as a TV presenter), George is happy to be observed – he is a character onscreen. However, when the videotapes start to arrive, Georges private world is presented to us. The tapes cross the boundary between private life and public life. This causes George considerable anxiety. Haneke again draws references to our status as viewers by creating a visual parallel between George’s TV show set and his home.....



By using similar sets, similar cinematography Haneke makes it clear to us as audience that *we* are entering the private space of the family home, the details of the ordinary lives of the characters are presented to us in the same visual style as the TV program. Again – we are watching, we are entering the private space of the characters. For us George’s private life is as real as his TV personae.

Through carefully designed mise-en-scene (what is in the frame), Haneke makes us very aware we are (on one level) the hidden, the un-named viewer.

For us as the viewer of the film, our pleasure is gained from entering the private world of the characters. Haneke wants us to know this. Within the onscreen world of the story, George's anxiety is caused by knowing someone is intruding upon his private world, making it public.....

The anxiety this causes George (and his family) forces George to investigate the central 'enigma', the central question in the film – Who is watching him? Why are they watching him? Georges need to solve this puzzle starts a 'detective style narrative', in which the video tapes become 'evidence that he must explore.

TAPE TWO

The Detective Narrative: When the second video tape arrives it signals the start of a detective style narrative. The tape reveals George's childhood home and as such pushes the story forward in two ways. Firstly, it reveals that the 'stalker' knows George, but also knows about his hidden, secret memories. Secondly the tape pushes the film narrative forward – in order to make sense of the tape George visits his childhood (he visits the house), he visits his mother....



The tape has the same function for George as it does for us as viewers, it hints at the identity of the 'stalker', whilst pushing the story forward by acting as evidence in George's detective narrative. George only visits his mother because the tape arrives. In this sense the video tape operates as a 'clue' for George (to find out who is leaving the tapes), but also a clue for us as viewers – it moves the story forward towards Georges past (and thus hints at 'why?' the videotapes are being left....)

The second tape operates as evidence, it enables George to investigate further his suspicions about the identity of the 'stalker/ watcher'.

A further 'enigma' is introduced to us – George's past. This helps us think about why he is being watched, but also suggests by who....

The tape triggers an investigation – it moves the story forward by guiding the actions of the characters. Without the tape, Georges hidden secret would not be shown to us as viewers.

The tape operates as 'narrative device' it exists in order to propel the story forward, it guides the actions taken by central characters.

TAPE THREE

Revealing the identity of the stalker/ watcher?: The third video tape directly leads George toward the identity of the stalker – it leads him to the front door of who *he thinks* is the stalker. When the tape is revealed to us as the viewer notice how it is presented as video ‘evidence’. George and Anne investigate the tape, looking for clues to its location – rewinding/ forwarding the tape, cross-referencing with a map to find the location.....



We investigate the third tape from the point of view of the characters – seeing it as evidence just as the family do. Again, the tape moves the story forward – the tape is the motivation for George’s next action – it moves the story forward. The tape leads him to the door of someone from his past, whom George already suspects.....

TAPE FOUR

Becomes evidence against George: The fourth tape shifts the focus of the detective narrative from finding out who is stalking George (and why?), to revealing George's lies. The video becomes evidence for Anne, directly moving forward the previous scene in which we hear George lie to Anne over the telephone. Immediately Anne is given story information, in the form of evidence (through the tape), to truth which we as viewers and George are privileged.



The fourth tape signals a shift in the story, directing our attention away from the original enigma towards a new central enigma; what is George hiding?

The four video tapes act as evidence in a detective narrative. The tapes guide the story forwards, without the tapes no story would be told, the narrative would be hidden.

The videotapes are the only 'object' within the film which moves the story forward. At each point a new tape arrives it sets into play a series of cause/ effect relationships. When tape two arrives – George visits his mother, It is revealed that George knows who is watching him, we learn more.

When tape three arrives, George investigates; following the clues and a possible suspect is revealed.

When tape four arrives it exists only to show George to be a liar....to make Anne aware of the truth.

Some Questions?

- Who do you think is the watcher/ viewer? Does Haneke provide us with enough evidence to know the identity of the stalker?
- What is the film really about? What is “hidden”? Why is the film called ‘Hidden’?
- What is happening in the final scene? Does it tell us anything more about what has happened in the film?

