



RETROSPECTIVES DOCLISBOA 2019

Casa do Cinema | Rua da Rosa 277, 2º
1200-385 Lisbon, Portugal
+ 351 96 91 65 978

In October, the whole world fits in Lisbon
www.doclisboa.org

Retrospective

The Rise And Fall of the Wall – The Cinema of East Germany

This year, we are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The DEFA, a state film studio, was founded just after World War II and remained active until 1991, producing hundreds of fiction and documentary films. Many talented filmmakers created a major body of films, which deserves to be rediscovered and re-evaluated, allowing us to better understand an exciting moment in the history of contemporary cinema from a current perspective.

This retrospective aims to show the abundance of cinematic forms and subjects of the films produced in East Germany, mostly by DEFA, both free and censored: propaganda and forbidden films, fiction and documentary films, shorts and features, directed by several generations of filmmakers, such as **Konrad Weiss, Gerhard Lamprecht, Karl Gass, Winfried Junge, Gerhard Klein, Jürgen Böttcher, Volker Koepp, Gitta Nickel, Andreas Voigt, Helke Misselwitz and Thomas Heise**, among others, without forgetting one of their best cinematographers, **Thomas Plenert**.

They depict the German people, sometimes following them through the years, living in a wounded country in a wounded territory.

Reconstruction, youth, women, work, daily life, the music scene and the artistic life and the city of Berlin are among the regular topics that these films propose in diverse cinematic languages. Watching them means not only digging into the past, but also rethinking our present.

Agnès Wildenstein

Curator of the retrospective

FILMS:

(Programming in update)

Rebuilding Berlin

Kurt Maetzig, 1946, 22min, b&w

This documentary film portrays the history of Berlin from 1895 to 1945 and the efforts of the inhabitants as they work to rebuild the destroyed city after the end of the war. The film is a compilation of material from the DEFA Eyewitness weekly news features as well as additional footage.

Somewhere in Berlin

Gerhard Lamprecht, 1946, 80min, b&w

After WWII, Berlin lies in ruins. For Gustav, Willi and their friends the rubble provides an adventurous, dangerous playground. For Gustav it also helps pass the time, as he longs for his father's return from a POW camp. One day a stranger arrives, looking helpless and hopeless...

Look at this City

Karl Gass, 1962, 85min, b&w

Fast paced montages represent West Berlin as the frontline of neo fascism, terrorism and neo colonialism, against which the peaceful city of East Berlin requires an "antifascist defense."

A strikingly modernist propaganda piece, it uses rare authentic images and newsreels from both sides to justify the erection of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961.

Unity SPD-KPD

Kurt Maetzig, 1946, 19min, b&w

This black and white documentary film presents the post war political climate of the time through an effective combination of film, text, and music. Marches, demonstrations and conventions are held in various cities by the Social Democrats and the Communist Party in preparation for the upcoming convention of the new Socialist Unity Party. This first DEFA documentary, which premiered on May 1, 1946, was simultaneously Kurt Maetzig's directorial debut.

We are building our gate to the World

Heinz Reusch, 1958, 27min, color.

In the summer of 1958, volunteers from across the GDR come together to build an open sea harbor for international trade near Rostock. In only six months, they are able to erect a 540 meter sea wall in Warnemünde.

Who ever loves the Earth

Uwe Belz, Joachim Hellwig, Jürgen Böttcher, Harry Honig, 1973, 68 min, color

This documentary about the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students contains no form of commentary and comes alive only through the original audio of the students in discussion, the musical contributions, and the speeches and presentations. The German -German encounters and the testimonies of solidarity for the suppressed people of the world are significant elements. The parties, ceremonies, solidarity gatherings, and the march of the national and international youth associations are also shown.

Special attention and consideration are given to the American civil rights activist Angela Davis, who gives a speech in German. The motto of the World Festival "For Anti Imperialist Solidarity, Peace and Friendship" is represented through the pictures of optimistic, cheering youths from all over the globe.

Steel and People

Hugo Hermann, 1956, 17 min, b&w

A gripping report shot at the Brandenburg steel and rolling mill from a visiting Austrian director's point of view. Void of any propagandistic interpretation, the film captures both the dynamic forces and the hazards involved in this work.

The Secretary

Jürgen Böttcher, 1967, 29 min, b&w

This documentary follows Gerhard Grimmer, the party secretary at a chemical plant in Bruna and the liaison between the plant's management and its employees, as he attempts to improve morale among the workers. Always concerned about the feelings and needs of the mostly-female employees, he is well-liked by them. Each day is a challenge for Grimmer as he tactfully uses his charming manner and smart appearance to improve the factory's atmosphere and solve various problems.

The Carbide Factory

Heinz Brinkmann, 1987-1988, 25 min, color

At the beginning of this short documentary, the commentary lets viewers know that the purpose of the film is to "get to know the workers" of the Carbide factory in Buna Schkopau. The audience is shown dirty, onerous scenes of the work conditions and production process. Shots of the old factory are sharply juxtaposed with the tranquil Buna Schkopau landscape surrounding it.

Leisure

Karl Gass, 1964, 39min, b&w

Without adornment or embellishment, Karl Gass presents the rough everyday life of assembly line operators after they get off work at the well-known model Schwedt plant. Their ribaldry and alcohol consumption stand in stark contrast to the official image of what leisure time was supposed to be.

TURBINE 1

Joop Huisken, 1953, 24min, b&w

In the early 1950s, frequent power outages hurt production in the GDR. Using an innovative method from the USSR, workers at the Zschornowitz atomic power plant in Saxony-Anhalt are able to quickly repair a turbine and prevent a long delay in energy output. This short documentary is filmed in the style of a sports report and captures the race against time with a combination of suspense and attention to detail.

Furnace Builders

Jürgen Böttcher, 1962, 15min, b&w

Steel is the magic benchmark, forces strain and sweat into the workers' faces. Böttcher succeeds in capturing unforgettable portraits.

Laundresses

Jürgen Böttcher, 1972, 23min, b&w

This film documents the lives of 180 women who work as trainees at the Rewatex laundry plant in Berlin-Spindlersfeld. In interviews, the colorful and spirited, young women discuss their feelings about men, the life of a worker, and rock n' roll.

Shunters

Jürgen Böttcher, 1984, 22min, b&w

A GDR version of cinéma vérité (filmed with Thomas Plenert 35mm hand camera), this film offers viewers a glimpse into the physically-demanding and dangerous precision work of experienced shunters. Day and night, in all kinds of weather, they hook and unhook railway cars in the largest goods-and-shunting station in the former GDR: Dresden-Friedrichstadt. Impressive images of the dignity of the working man.

This short film is available for purchase or streaming as part of the DVD collection ArtWork: Six Shorts.

She

Gitta Nickel, 1970, 30min, b&w

A young doctor speaks with women at the Treff Modella Textile plant in Berlin.

Of all different ages, positions and social backgrounds, they discuss family planning and women's emancipation. This documentary deals with the complexity of the issue of improving women's rights and offers a forum for discussion and some possible solutions.

Who's afraid of the Bogeyman

Helke Misselwitz, 1989, 52min, b&w

A close-up of Berlin coal carriers from Prenzlauer Berg. No Portrayal of heroic workers or progress here. Instead, bright, deeply-felt sketches of rough men and their resolute female boss.

Les filles de Wittstock

The fourth first parts of DER WITTSTOCK ZYKLUS by Volker Koepp

I. Mädchen in Wittstock

1974-1975, 20min

This is the first of a masterly chronicle of seven documentaries made over a twenty-three year period. Koepp not only investigates how young women in an agricultural region become workers at a knitting factory, but also how industry changes their lives and thoughts. It features three funny and sensitive young women: Renate, Edith and Stupsi, in a small town just north of Berlin, who relate their personal dreams and their troubles at work.

II. Wieder in Wittstock

1976, 22min

The second installment in the Wittstock series follows Wittstock Girls and its protagonists, three young women who work together at a textile plant. In this installment, Edith and Elspeth discuss their accomplishments of the past year, their dreams and goals for the future and the challenges of life in their small rural hometown. Volker Koepp filmed in Wittstock for almost a quarter of a century, from 1974 to 1997. His documentaries capture the changing spirit of the times and depict the effect of historical events on the everyday lives of ordinary citizens.

III. Wittstock

1978, 32min

The third installment in the Wittstock documentary series centers primarily on Edith Rupp and her role as an assembly line supervisor at the Ernst Lück textile plant in the small town of Wittstock. In comparison to the previous two films in the series, Wittstock III is notable for its close, compact presentation which already hints at the director's future style.

IV. Leben und Weben

1981, 28 min

Summary of the 10 years of existence of the knit work factory "Ernst Lueck". Edith Rupp was elected mayor and got engaged but still, her future is not entirely carefree.

MARTHA

Jürgen Böttcher, 1978, 48 min, color

Martha Bieder, born in 1910 in Berlin, is the last rubble-woman in Rummelsburg. Every day, rain or shine, she stands at the conveyor belt of an excavation plant as she has for decades, sorting through rubble. After a retirement party thrown for her by her male colleagues, she tells stories from her difficult but fulfilling life in post-war Germany.

Barefoot and without a hat

Jürgen Böttcher, 1964, 26min

Summertime in Prerow at the Baltic Sea. A cheerful film with the spirit of the sixties.

Being 18 is not enough

Kurt Tetzlaff, 1964, 22min, b&w

In matters of H. and others

Richard Cohn-Vossen, 1972, 29min, b&w

The camera follows the trial in March 1972 of nine young people. Statements by both the accused and the witnesses reveal the family and social background which led to the robbery.

Yell once a week

Günter Jordan, 1982, 17 min, color

The film's title is taken from a song, used here as a leitmotif, written by Günter Jordan and the East German rock group Pankow. This sensitive report about rebellious teenagers in Berlin's "wild East" was banned before its first screening.

Paule in Concert

Lew Hohmann, 1983, 33 min, color

Berlin apprentices attend a rock concert by the popular band Pankow held at their workplace. The songs describe the life of apprentice Paule Panke: getting up early, long hours, freetime at night, until the weekend finally comes. In addition, the film team spent a day with a group of seven mechanical engineering trainees, one woman and six men. They describe their goals in relation to careers, army service, starting a family, and the changes they want to see in society.

First Love

Konrad Weiss, 1984, 62 min, color

For over a year, the film team accompanied an eighth grade class and interviewed the students about their first romantic relationships as well as their relationships to parents and teachers. The young people's comments are accompanied by scenes of their daily lives and songs written by director Konrad Weiß. The resulting documentary is a sensitive, emotional, and humorous portrait of early adolescence that also provides information and advice for teenagers.

Snack bar special

Thomas Heise, 1989-1990, 27min b&w and color

October 1989 from the point of view of East Berlin workers at the Imbiß-Spezial, a subway snack bar in Berlin-Lichtenberg. While running between the kitchen and the bar, the employees talk about their experiences, which often differ from media reports.

Whisper & SHOUT

Dieter Schumann, 1988, 117 min, color

This film documents important parts of the East German rock music scene of the late 1980s, from well-established bands like Silly to underground rock bands like Feeling B. It includes clips from concerts and interviews with fans and members of André + Die Firma, Chicorée, Die Zöllner, Feeling B, Sandow, Silly and This Pop Generation. It features young people using music to express their take on life, opposition to their parents' generation, and opinions on the political and social climate in East Germany. Rammstein fans will be particularly interested in interviews with Feeling B's Christian Lorenz and Paul Landers. whisper & SHOUT, shot in 35mm, played to over one million viewers in sold-out theaters in East Germany. Audience were drawn not only to see their favorite bands on the screen; they were also surprised that this film made it past the censors.

WINTER ADE

1988, Helke Misselwitz, 116 min, b&w

Shortly before GDR's collapse, Helke Misselwitz traveled by train from one end of the country to the other interviewing East German women of different ages and backgrounds. In This documentary masterpiece, women reveal their personal and professional frustrations, hopes and aspirations and, in doing so, paint a portrait of a changing society. The landscape and architecture of East Germany, filmed in B&W on 35mm by Thomas Plenert, form the background to the stories.

The March Brandenburg Trilogy, parts 1 and 2

March Brandenburg Bricks

Volker Koepp, 1988, 33 min, b&w

Spring 1988: the brick-making industry has determined the rhythms of life in the small Brandenburg town of Zehdenick For exactly 100 years. Long-time brickmakers and young employees speak openly and critically about their working and living conditions. This film is the first part of Volker Koepp's March Brandenburg trilogy.

Markische Heide, Markischer Sand

Volker Koepp, 1990, 52 min, b&w

Part 2 of Volker Koepp's March Brandenburg trilogy captures the conversations that took place in the small town of Zehdenick in the weeks leading up to the first free elections in spring 1990. This document of the times reflects the hopes and concerns of the business community, working class women and youth people during the Wende period. Returning To the milieu portrayed in March Brandenburg Bricks, the film illustrates the attitudes which emerged when power began to change hands in the GDR.

March Brandenburg / The March Brandenburg Trilogy: Part 3

Volker Koepp, 1991, 73 min, b&w

The final installment of Volker Koepp's *March Brandenburg* trilogy moves away from the town of Zehdenick in order to focus on rural areas north of Berlin. Made in the period between the currency union in the GDR and the official reunification in October 1990, the film shows how the lives of the residents have changed: Crippling unemployment has taken the place of hard work.

Sweep it up

Gerd Kroske, 1990, 28min, b&w

Leipzig is in a period of change. The uproar of Fall 1989 is followed by the hectic electoral campaign in Spring 1990. Nightly conversations with street sweepers are dominated by hopelessness and broken self-confidence, but one can also recognize a keen sense for the change in social climate following the political unification in the GDR. Despite their lack of illusions, they have an acute view of their surroundings and for these street sweepers only one certainty prevails: there will always be dirt.

Leipzig in the Fall

Andreas Voigt, Gerd Kroske, Sebastian Richter, 1989, 52min

The most comprehensive documentation of events surrounding the 1989 Monday demonstrations in Leipzig, the centerpiece of the citizens' movement that led to the fall of the Wall on November 9. The film includes interviews with demonstrators, members of the citizens' rights movement, officials and bystanders in East Germany's peaceful revolution.

Last Year Titanic

Andreas Voigt, 1990, 101 min

Director Andreas Voigt interviewed people of different ages and social backgrounds about their experiences after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. He paints an important picture of this historic period in German history, filled with radical social and economic change and insecurity. Since 1986, Voigt has documented life in the city of Leipzig. His long-term observation project, spanning almost thirty years, includes six films. It starts with a portrait of a Leipzig worker (Alfred, 1987), followed by *Leipzig in the Fall* (1989) about the Monday Demonstrations. *Last Year Titanic* is the third film in the series and was shot from December 1989 through December 1990—the last months of the GDR and the first months in united Germany.

Construction Site X

Gerhard Klein, 1950, 12min, b&w

This short documentary calls for compliance with labor protection laws during rubble clearance and reconstruction work. A construction site on Wernerstraße in Berlin is used concretely to illustrate the positive effects of these laws.

Berlin–Schönhauser

Corner Gerhard Klein, 1957, 79 min, b&w

They are East Berlin teenagers. They want to be free to dance to rock'n'roll, trade forbidden western goods and get away from the constraints of their parents and the state. This Classic 1950's teen cult film became a box-office hit and was greeted with suspicion by East German officials.

Berlin Today

Joaquim Hadaschik, 1966, 28 min, color

East Berlin is presented as an international city with modern possibilities for work and family life. In addition to tourist attractions and daily life, the film depicts the military parades for Labor Day on May 1 as well as the SED 20th anniversary celebration.

Berlin um Die Ecke

Gerhard Klein, 1965, 83 min, b&w

Berlin in the 1960s. Olaf (Dieter Mann) and Horst (Kaspar Eichel) are two young metalworkers, who provoke their older colleagues with critiques of antiquated equipment and lack of materials... not to mention their love of leather jackets and motorbikes. Olaf and Horst begin to be targeted in the house newsletter, and the generational conflict escalates. This film is the fourth in the Berlin Film series by the Klein/Kohlhaase team. In 1966, officials banned the rough cut in the aftermath of the SED Party's 11th Plenum, condemning the film as "dishonest and anti-socialist." As of 1987, through-cut version was shown in arthouse screenings. Scriptwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase and film editor Evelyn Carow revisited the available material after the fall of the Berlin Wall and produced an abridged version that premiered in 1990. This DVD presents the new digitally restored transfer of the 1990 version of the film.

Death Camp Sachsenhausen

Richard Brandt, 1946, 40min

The first DEFA documentary on the topic of concentration camps and the Holocaust, this film was commissioned by the Soviet military administration in Berlin in connection with the preparations for the Sachsenhausen trial. Sachsenhausen Death Camp Explains the role of terror in Hitler's rise to power and the terrible machinery of murder used at this camp near Berlin. The film also includes historical commentary by a former camp official who is interrogated by Soviet officers.

NACHT UND NEBEL/ Night and Fog

Alain Resnais, 1955, 31min, color and b&w

Ten years after the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, Resnais documented the abandoned grounds of Auschwitz. One of the first cinematic reflections on the horrors of the Holocaust, *Nuit et Brouillard* contrasts the stillness of the quiet, empty buildings with haunting wartime footage, and presents the suggestion that such horrors could come again.

MEMENTO

Karlheinz Mund, 1966, 16min, b&w

The Jewish Cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee is the second largest in Europe and reflects the long history of the Jewish community in Berlin, including their suffering under the Nazis. The documentary was based on the book *And the Light was not Extinguished* By Dr. Martin Riesenburger, a Jewish rabbi from East Berlin.

EISENZEIT

Thomas Heise, 1991, 86 min, color

Ten years later, director Heise returns to Stalinstadt, now called Eisenhüttenstadt, the site where his never-completed documentary. The protagonists, born around the time the Wall was built, have mostly left: Mario, Tilo, Karsten and Frank, friends since early childhood, had all moved to Berlin, where Mario and Tilo hanged themselves in the final days of the DDR. Frank became involved in the West Berlin drug scene and only Karsten leads a good life. Anka, who had formerly loved each of the four men, remained behind with her daughter in Eisenhüttenstadt.

STILLS [HERE](#).



Casa do Cinema | Rua da Rosa 277, 2º
1200-385 Lisbon, Portugal
+ 351 96 91 65 978

In October, the whole world fits in Lisbon
www.doclisboa.org