

# REBELS WITH A CAUSE

## THE CINEMA OF EAST GERMANY



PRESENTED BY

*The Museum of Modern Art, Department of Film and Media,  
and the Goethe-Institut New York, in collaboration  
with the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*



**SCREENED AT  
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**OCTOBER 7-23, 2005**

**ALL FILMS IN GERMAN WITH NEW ENGLISH SUBTITLES  
EXHIBITED IN NEWLY STRUCK 35MM PRINTS**

The Museum of Modern Art and the Goethe-Institut New York, in collaboration with the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, present the most comprehensive retrospective of East German cinema ever screened in the U.S. It brings together scholars, directors and actors of the DEFA period (1946–92) to present the films and reflect on the political complexities of artistic production in the East German state-owned DEFA studios. DEFA produced over 7,500 films—many of them at the famous Babelsberg Studio outside of Berlin—more than a dozen have been voted among the 100 best German films ever made in recent surveys. Still, these and other original and creative documentaries and fiction films from East Germany are largely unknown to film enthusiasts, both in Germany and around the world.

*Rebels with a Cause* presents a selection of significant works, rich in theme, structure, and style, and deserving of (re)discovery. These films were crafted by inventive filmmakers who dared to test the limits of censorship, and whose films' political engagement and depth add to their creative merit in the context of film history. In selecting films for this series we viewed over 200 titles in Berlin and New York, and were impressed by the depth and variety we found in this "other" German cinema. For this series of 21 films, we looked for a range of voices and styles from five decades of filmmaking, placing an emphasis on creative energy, artistic innovation and challenges to authority – hence the title, *Rebels with a Cause*.

We are extremely grateful to the Max Kade Foundation, Inc., and the other supporters and sponsors that have made it possible to screen these films in new 35mm prints with new English subtitles. I would also like to express my special thanks to my co-curator Juliane Wanckel (Program Manager, Goethe-Institute New York) and to Hiltrud Schulz (Sales and Outreach Manager, DEFA Film Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst), who have made this project an especially gratifying and joyful collaborative experience.

I hope you will enjoy the screenings and seek out more of these groundbreaking films.

**Jytte Jensen**

*Curator*

*Department of Film and Media  
The Museum of Modern Art*

## THE ARCHITECTS (*Die Architekten*)

1990, 97 min., color

DIRECTOR: Peter Kahane

CAST: Kurt Naumann, Rita Feldmeier, Uta Eisold, Jürgen Watzke, Ute Lubosch



CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Andreas Köfer

SCREENPLAY: Thomas Knauf,  
Peter Kahane

Filmed as the GDR crumbled, this somber and nuanced portrait of life in East Berlin depicts a young architect who feels his life and goals are being strangled by communist dogma, represented in part by the older generation. The film team had to rebuild part of the Wall to depict scenes from 1989, as it had been removed so fast.

"Telling, finely drawn, superbly acted!"

— *The New York Times*

**Peter Kahane**, born in Prague in 1949, studied at the Film and Television Academy in Potsdam-Babelsberg. His debut film, *Women's Work*, premiered in 1988.

*Prepared for Love* and the prizewinning *Ete and Ali*; (a coming-of-age story featuring two friends who have just completed their mandatory military service), exemplify Kahane's superb depictions of everyday life. *The Architects* was Kahane's most critical and politically engaged film. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, he took a short break from filmmaking before releasing *Cosima's Lexicon* (1992) and *To the Horizon and Beyond* (1999). Since the mid-1990s, he has also been directing and writing screenplays for TV movies and crime series. Kahane is currently working on a feature film for release in 2006.

# FEATURE FILMS

## BERLIN–SCHÖNHAUSER CORNER

(*Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser...*), 1957, 82 min., b/w

DIRECTOR: Gerhard Klein

CAST: Ekkehard Schall, Ilse Pagé, Ernst-Georg Schwill,  
Helga Göring



CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Wolf Göthe

SCREENPLAY:

Wolfgang Kohlhaase

Rebels *with* a cause. This classic 1950s teen cult film is a perceptive social portrayal of a city in which political and economic division have affected the entire population. Although the film became a box-office hit, it was greeted with suspicion by GDR cultural officials. Gerhard Klein and screenwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase were reproached for emphasizing “negative problematic images of our [East German] life.” Despite the negative reception from GDR officials, this film was loved by the public precisely for its truthful portrayal of everyday life. Ranked by film critics among Germany’s 100 most important films, this and other “Berlin films” by director Klein and screenwriter Kohlhaase made an important contribution to the international youth film genre.

“...told in a neo-realistic style”

– *The Oxford History of World Cinema*

**Gerhard Klein** (1920 –1970) was born in Berlin. He joined the resistance against the Nazis and was arrested twice. Klein was self-educated and after the war worked as a cartoonist and documentary filmmaker. He began working for DEFA as a screenwriter for short and documentary films in 1946, and for feature films in 1952. All his films express the poetry of daily life and his fascination with his beloved Berlin. Along with screenwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase, Klein produced a series of what are called the “Berlin Films.” *Berlin Around the Corner* was banned by East German officials in 1966 and the style of his film *The Gleiwitz Case* was interpreted as converging too closely with a fascistic aesthetic. [See also, *The Gleiwitz Case*]

# FEATURE FILMS

## THE BICYCLE (*Das Fahrrad*)

1981, 89 min., color

**DIRECTOR:** Evelyn Schmidt

**CAST:** Heidemarie Schneider, Roman Kaminski, Anke Friedrich, Heidrun Bartholomäus



**CINEMATOGRAPHY:**

Roland Dressel

**SCREENPLAY:** Ernst Wenig

Susanne is a single mother living a somewhat carefree lifestyle. After quitting her job, she finds herself in deep financial trouble and attempts a minor fraud to make ends meet. Despite its rare view of everyday socialism from a woman's perspective, GDR officials were critical of this frank portrayal of a less-than-ideal socialist citizen and turned down all invitations for the film to be screened abroad. In West Germany, however, Schmidt's film received much praise for its critical view and feminist approach.

*"The Bicycle is a little story packed with tremendous hope ... it raises important and essential questions of personal responsibility and what we can expect from life."*

– *Norddeutsche Zeitung*

*"A sensitive portrait of a woman by DEFA director Evelyn Schmidt .... Remarkable are the sympathetic portrayal of a work-rejecting outsider and the realistic description of East German daily life."*

– *Lexikon des Internationalen Films*

**Evelyn Schmidt** was born in Görlitz in 1949 and moved to Berlin in 1963. She spent a year as an apprentice with East German television and graduated with a degree in directing from the Film and Television Academy in Potsdam-Babelsberg in 1973. Schmidt participated in Konrad Wolf's master class at the Academy of the Arts in Berlin and began directing in the 1970s. From 1977 to 1990 she worked as an assistant director and later as a director at the DEFA Studio for Feature Films, debuting with *Infidelity* (1979). Since 1990 she has directed documentaries for television and produced 13 plays at an experimental theater. Schmidt has also taught film and acting, and is currently working on a children's movie.

# FEATURE FILMS

## BORN IN '45 (*Jahrgang 45*)

1966/1990, 94 min., b/w

**DIRECTOR:** Jürgen Böttcher

**CAST:** Monika Hildebrand, Rolf Römer, Paul Eichbaum,  
Holger Mahlich



**CINEMATOGRAPHY:**

Roland Gräf

**SCREENPLAY:** Klaus Poche,  
Jürgen Böttcher

*Born in '45* is the only narrative film by painter and documentary filmmaker Jürgen Böttcher. Inspired by Italian neo-realism, he developed a sensitive style characterized by detailed social observation and poetic verve. Newlyweds Alfred and Lisa decide to divorce. Alfred takes a few days off to clear his head, wandering through Berlin and meeting strangers. Though he ultimately returns to Lisa, the plot remains open-ended. This film can be considered East Germany's closest counterpart to early Godard. Officials banned the film in 1966, describing it as "indifferent and insignificant." It wasn't seen by audiences until 1990 and Böttcher never returned to narrative filmmaking.

"This film is like a kind of ballet, expressing what cannot be said with words. There are the most beautiful arrangements. The naive nature of the performance and the beauty of the camera movements and angles are stunning ...."

– Rolf Richter, *Filmspiegel*

**Jürgen Böttcher**, also known as the painter "Strawalde," was born in 1931 in Frankenberg. He studied at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts from 1949 to 1953, during which time he worked as an independent artist and taught night school, where he met the now famous painter A.R. Penck. From 1955 to 1960, Böttcher studied directing at the Film Academy in Potsdam-Babelsberg and worked as a director in the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films until 1991. Having made more than 30 artistically provocative films, he has attained cult status among cineastes. Jürgen Böttcher has been working as an independent artist since 1991 and currently lives in Berlin. [See also, *Shunters*]

# FEATURE FILMS

## **CARBIDE AND SORREL** (*Karbid und Sauerampfer*)

1963, 80 min., b/w

**DIRECTOR:** Frank Beyer

**CAST:** Erwin Geschonneck, Kurt Rackelmann, Rudolf Asmus, Marita Böhme, Margot Busse



**CINEMATOGRAPHY:**

Günter Marczinkowsky

**SCREENPLAY:** Hans Oliva

At the end of World War II, workers in Dresden send their colleague Kalle hundreds of miles north to pick up welding supplies for

their factory. Kalle's attempts to move the supplies through the Soviet occupation zone become a hilarious odyssey full of high jinks and misadventures. The screenplay was a lucky find for the director, as was the leading actor Erwin Geschonneck, a man whose self-confidence and laconic wit had gotten him through many ups and downs. The film's comic high point is a boat trip down the Elbe, when Kalle raises the suspicion of both Soviet and American patrols. Director Frank Beyer first took his film to Moscow, since GDR officials often questioned humor which flouted political authority. The hearty laughter of the Soviet functionaries there gave the green light for a German premiere.

"One of the best German film comedies."

— *The Oxford History of World Cinema*

**Frank Beyer** is known for having directed some of the most powerful and historically significant films at DEFA. Born in Nobitz in 1932 he studied theater in Berlin, and then directing at the renowned Prague Film School (FAMU). From 1958 to 1966 Beyer directed films such as *Naked Among Wolves* and *Five Cartridges*, as well as *Carbid and Sorrel*. In 1966 *Trace of Stones* was banned and Beyer was expelled from the studio. He then directed for the stage and began a prolific career in television, which continues today. In 1974 he re-emerged at DEFA with *Jacob the Liar*, which was nominated for an Oscar for best foreign film. Since German unification, Beyer has primarily worked in television, creating feature films such as *St. Nicholas Church* (1995), an account of the collapse of the GDR. In 1990 Beyer became a member of the Academy of Arts and in 1991 he was awarded the State Film Prize in Gold for lifetime achievement. The Film Museum Potsdam has recently purchased the Frank Beyer collection, including materials that provide an in-depth view of his life and work.

# FEATURE FILMS



## THE GLEIWITZ CASE (*Der Fall Gleiwitz*)

1961, 69 min., b/w

DIRECTOR: Gerhard Klein

CAST: Hannjo Hasse, Herwart Grosse, Hilmar Thate, Georg Leopold, Wolfgang Kalweit



CINEMATOGRAPHY: Jan Čuřík  
SCREENPLAY: Wolfgang Kohlhaase, Günther Rücker

*The Gleiwitz Case* is a detailed reconstruction of the 1939 surprise attack by a Nazi unit on the radio station

in Gleiwitz, which was blamed on Polish forces and served as Hitler's justification for marching into Poland – thus starting WWII. Cool and distanced, the film reflects on the possibilities and techniques of provocation, and how facts and opinions can be manipulated to make people accept lies, murder, and war.

Director Gerhard Klein and his Czech cameraman Jan Čuřík create an impressive visual language to describe fascism. This enlightening perspective on the underpinnings of totalitarian power and violence was met with resistance among GDR officials. The film was accused of aestheticizing fascism and, although it narrowly escaped censorship, it disappeared after only a few weeks in theaters. Today, the film is considered one of the most modern and experimental films in DEFA history.

"... a clever story ... an eccentric reenactment of an event from history. *The Gleiwitz Case* suggests a more starched, controlled *Dr. Strangelove* crossed with the formal austerity of *Triumph of the Will*, and its tone falls just short of loco."

– Felicia Feaster, *Creative Loafing*

**Gerhard Klein** (1920–1970) was born in Berlin. He joined the resistance against the Nazis and was arrested twice. Klein was self-educated and after the war worked as a cartoonist and documentary filmmaker. He began working for DEFA as a screenwriter for short and documentary films in 1946, and for feature films in 1952. All his films express the poetry of daily life and his fascination with his beloved Berlin. Along with screenwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase, Klein produced a series of what are called the "Berlin Films." *Berlin Around the Corner* was banned by East German officials in 1966 and the style of his film *The Gleiwitz Case* was interpreted as converging too closely with a fascistic aesthetic. [See also, *Berlin–Schönhauser Corner*]

# FEATURE FILMS



## HER THIRD (*Der Dritte*)

1971, 111 min., color

DIRECTOR: Egon Günther

CAST: Jutta Hoffmann, Barbara Dittus, Rolf Ludwig,  
Armin Mueller-Stahl



CINEMATOGRAPHY: Erich Gusko  
SCREENPLAY: Günther Rücker

*Her Third* recounts eighteen years in the life of Margit through a series of flash-backs. After two failed relationships, each of which

produced a child, a newly liberated Margit discovers herself. Her amorous pursuit of a colleague provides not only an entertaining love story, but also a testament to the evolving self-confidence and independence of East German women. Jutta Hoffmann was named Best Actress at the 1972 Venice Film Festival for her performance in this film, playing opposite Oscar-nominated actor Armin Mueller-Stahl.

"Jutta Hoffmann [is] a small person with enormous charisma, who establishes such a direct connection with her viewers that they experience each emotion and laugh and cry with her."

– Heinz Kersten, *film critic*

**Egon Günther** was born in Schneeberg in 1927. In 1958 he began working as a dramaturg and screenwriter at the DEFA studios and by 1964 was directing his own screenplays. His works are about contemporary life but he also directed literary film adaptations. With *Lotte in Weimar* (1975) he started a series of films about Goethe – which continued with *The Mask of Desire* (1999). Critics describe Günther as an avant-gardist of East German cinema, known for his stylistically sophisticated and internationally competitive films. Günther was increasingly beset with political difficulties, leading to the censorship of several of his films. He finally decided to leave for West Germany in 1978 after his television film *Ursula* was snubbed by the regime. In West Germany he worked mainly in television and returned to DEFA at the end of 1989 to make his film *Stein*.

# FEATURE FILMS



# THE LEGEND OF PAUL AND PAULA

(*Die Legende von Paul und Paula*), 1972, 106 min., color

DIRECTOR: Heiner Carow

CAST: Angelica Domröse, Winfried Glatzeder, Heidemarie Wenzel, Fred Delmare



CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Jürgen Brauer

SCREENPLAY: Ulrich Plenzdorf,  
Heiner Carow

Author Ulrich Plenzdorf and  
director Heiner Carow

winningly portray this story of undefeatable, passionate love between a single mother and a married bureaucrat in East Berlin. Featuring the music of the East German cult rock band, the Puhdys, the film proved enormously popular, despite limited media coverage. *The Legend of Paul and Paula* remains a cult favorite today.

"[This film] shows that the 70s all over the world, even in the GDR, were the 70s."

– Jennie Livingston, *filmmaker (Paris Is Burning)*

"I knew that the film would be good. It was going to be explosive and maybe it wouldn't make it through, but it was going to be good."

– Ulrich Plenzdorf, *screenwriter*

**Heiner Carow** (1929–1997) was born in Rostock. Directors Gerhard Klein and Slatan Dudow were his mentors in the DEFA studio class for young directors from 1950 to 1952. In 1956 Carow made his first feature, *Sheriff Teddy*, with many similarities to Klein's "Berlin Films." His film, *The Russians Are Coming* (1968), was banned and labeled as "contaminated with modernism." *The Legend of Paul and Paula* became an unparalleled success, however, and is said to have been the longest playing film in German cinemas. Carow's penchant for creating films that candidly reflected everyday life in socialism often put him into conflict with officials, but his professionalism and artistic acuity gained him the position of Vice President of the Academy of Arts of the GDR (1982–1993). He was awarded many film prizes, including a Silver Bear at the 1990 Berlin International Film Festival for *Coming Out*, the only East German feature film about homosexuality.

FEATURE FILMS



## **MOTHER** (*Die Mutter*)

1958, 147 min., b/w, screening in 16mm

**DIRECTOR:** Manfred Wekwerth

**CAST:** Helene Weigel, Fred Düren, Erich Franz, Fritz Hollenbeck, Günter Naumann, Helga Raumer, Norbert Christian



**CINEMATOGRAPHY:**

Harry Bremer

**SCREENPLAY:** Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler, Manfred Wekwerth, Harry Bremer, Isot Kilian

Produced by the DEFA Studio for Newsreels and Documentary Films, on behalf of the Berliner Ensemble.

Bertolt Brecht's grand epic of political theater, written in 1931, is an adaptation of Maxim Gorki's novel by the same title. It tells the moving story of an oppressed Russian woman who is transformed into a militant revolutionary. The original production, written for the Berliner Ensemble, was condemned by Stalinist critics as "formalist" and "politically harmful," although it was hugely popular. Filmed by DEFA, this production – directed after Brecht's death by Manfred Wekwerth – retains much of Brecht's original cast, with a landmark performance by Helene Weigel in the title role.

**Manfred Wekwerth**, acclaimed Brecht disciple and director of Brecht's plays, was born in Köthen in 1929. He belonged to an amateur theater group when Bertolt Brecht discovered him and offered him a position as an assistant director at the famous Berliner Ensemble in 1951. Only two years later he directed his first production there. After Brecht's death, Wekwerth became the senior director of the Berliner Ensemble. He first began filming in order to document some of the Brecht productions at the Berliner Ensemble. Wekwerth left the Berliner Ensemble from 1969 to 1977 over disagreements with Brecht's widow, Helene Weigel, but then returned to manage the theater until 1991. He was also the president of the East German Academy of Arts for almost a decade and the director of the Institute for Directing in Berlin. Since German unification he has continued to direct at various German theaters.

# FEATURE FILMS



# REBELS WITH A CAUSE

## THE CINEMA OF EAST GERMANY

Presented by The Museum of Modern Art, Department of Film and Media  
and the Goethe-Institut New York, in collaboration  
with the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

**Screenings and Special Events, New York, October 7-23, 2005**

### **Locations**

**The Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters 1 & 2**

11 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street—\$10.00 general admission, \$8.00 seniors, \$6.00 students

**Deutsches Haus at NYU, 42 Washington Mews**

**Goethe-Institut New York, 1014 Fifth Ave.**—\$10.00 general admission;  
\$8.00 students, seniors

### SPECIAL EVENTS

#### **FACES OF DEFA — A PHOTO EXHIBIT**

**October 6-31, 2005**

Portraits by Sandra Bergemann and interviews by Christoph Lemke

Deutsches Haus at NYU, 42 Washington Mews

*Supported by the DEFA-Stiftung Berlin and the Filmmuseum Potsdam.*

Meet ten East German actors in this intimate black and white photography exhibit. Each artist appears in close up, as well as in the setting in which he or she feels most at home. Accompanying the images are texts from interviews with the artists, who speak candidly about their personal and professional lives.

#### **DEFA FILM POSTERS AT MoMA**

**October 7-23, 2005**

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Titus 1 Lobby

*Supported by PROGRESS Film-Verleih GmbH.*

Reprints of the original posters for several banned films give a taste of East German poster design.

#### **DVD PREMIERE**

**October 14, 2005, 7:30 PM**

#### **SCREENING NAKED AMONG WOLVES**

Goethe-Institut New York, 1014 Fifth Avenue

*Presented by ICESTORM Entertainment GmbH, the DEFA Film Library, First Run Features and the Goethe-Institut New York.*

***Naked Among Wolves (Nackt unter Wölfen), 1963, 124 min., b/w***

**DIRECTOR:** Frank Beyer · **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Günter Marczinkowsky

**SCREENPLAY:** Bruno Apitz, Frank Beyer · **CAST:** Erwin Geschonneck,  
Gerry Wolff, Herbert Köfer, Armin Mueller-Stahl

Adapted from the novel by Bruno Apitz and filmed on location at Buchenwald concentration camp, this film features actor Armin Mueller-Stahl.

Based on a true story of inmates who risked their lives to hide a small Jewish boy shortly before the liberation of the camp.

"... [so] understated and surrealistic in its portrayal of telling details that it sometimes resembles a documentary."

- *The Canadian Jewish News*



# REBELS WITH A CAUSE

## THE CINEMA OF EAST GERMANY

All films in German with new English subtitles,  
exhibited in newly struck 35mm prints.



World Premiere of 35mm print with  
new English subtitles.

### THU, OCTOBER 6

9:00 pm

**OPENING Faces of DEFA – A Photo Exhibit**

*(Deutsches Haus at NYU; until October 31, 2005)*

### FRI, OCTOBER 7

**DEFA Film Posters at MoMA**

*(Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 Lobby; until October 31, 2005)*

8:00 (MoMA T1)

**Her Third** *(See also Sun, October 9)*

*Presented by starring actor Jutta Hoffmann*

### SAT, OCTOBER 8

2:00 (MoMA T2)

**The Monument**

+ **The Architects** *(See also Sun, October 16)*

*Presented by director Peter Kahane.*

4:00 (MoMA T2)

**The Bicycle** *(See also Thu, October 13)*

*Presented by director Evelyn Schmidt*

6:00 (MoMA T2)

**A Love Story** *US Premiere*

+ **The Legend of Paul and Paula** *(See also Sun, October 23)*

*Presented by Prof. Barton Byg.*

8:30 (MoMA T2)

**The Second Track** *US Premiere* *(See also Thu, October 13),*

### SUN, OCTOBER 9

2:00 (MoMA T1)

**Her Third** *(See also Fri, October 7)*

*Presented by starring actors Jutta Hoffmann*

5:00 (MoMA T2)

**News from the West** *US Premiere*

+ **Carbide and Sorrel** *(See also Sat, October 22)*

*Presented by director Frank Beyer.*

### MON, OCTOBER 10

4:00 (MoMA T2)

**The Rabbit Is Me** *(See also Sat, October 22)*

6:30 (MoMA T2)

**Mother** *(16mm screening), (See also Fri, October 21)*

### WED, OCTOBER 12

6:00 (MoMA T2)

**WORKING LIFE: FIVE DOCUMENTS** *(See also Sat, October 15)*

**Shunters**

**Who's Afraid of the Bogeyman** *US Premiere*

**Wittstock Girls** *US Premiere*

**Consequence** *US Premiere*

**The Full Circle**

8:00 (MoMA T2)

**Your Unknown Brother** *(See also Sat, October 22)*

### THU, OCTOBER 13

6:00 (MoMA T1)

**The Second Track** *(See also Sat, October 8)*

*Presented by film historian Ralf Schenk.*

8:00 (MoMA T1)

**The Bicycle** *(See also Sat, October 8)*

*Presented by film critic Heinz Kersten.*



## FRI, OCTOBER 14

- 6:00** (MoMA T1) **Born in '45** 🍿 (See also Sun, October 16)  
*Presented by director Jürgen Böttcher.*
- 7:30** (Goethe) **Naked Among Wolves** DVD Premiere
- 8:00** (MoMA T1) **The Gleiwitz Case** 🍿 (See also Mon, October 17)  
*Presented by screenwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase.*

## SAT, OCTOBER 15

- 1:00** (Goethe) **ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION: Lost in Unification – Placing East German Film in World Cinema**
- 6:15** (MoMA T1) **WORKING LIFE: FIVE DOCUMENTS** (See also Wed, October 12)  
**Shunters • Who's Afraid of the Bogeyman**  
**Wittstock Girls • Consequence**  
**The Full Circle** (See also Wed, October 12)  
*Presented by directors Jürgen Böttcher, Helke Misselwitz, and Klaus Georgi.*
- 8:15** (MoMA T1) **Yell Once a Week** US Premiere 🍿  
+ **Berlin-Schönhauser Corner** 🍿 (See also Sun, October 23)  
*Presented by screenwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase and director Günter Jordan.*

## SUN, OCTOBER 16

- 2:00** (MoMA T2) **The Monument**  
+ **The Architects** (See also Sun, October 8)  
*Presented by director Klaus Georgi.*
- 5:30** (MoMA T1) **Born in '45** 🍿 (See also Fri, October 14)  
*Presented by director Jürgen Böttcher.*

## MON, OCTOBER 17

- 6:00** (MoMA T2) **The Gleiwitz Case** (See also Fri, October 14)

## FRI, OCTOBER 21

- 8:00** (MoMA T2) **Mother** (16mm screening), (See also Mon, October 10)

## SAT, OCTOBER 22

- 2:00** (MoMA T2) **Your Unknown Brother** (See also Wed, October 12)
- 8:45** (MoMA T2) **The Rabbit Is Me** (See also Mon, October 10)

## SUN, OCTOBER 23

- 1:30** (MoMA T2) **A Love Story**  
+ **The Legend of Paul and Paula** (See also Sat, October 8)
- 3:45** (MoMA T2) **News from the West**  
+ **Carbide and Sorrel** (See also Sun, October 9)
- 5:45** (MoMA T2) **Yell Once a Week**  
+ **Berlin-Schönhauser Corner** (See also Sat, October 15)



## **LOST IN UNIFICATION**

### **PLACING EAST GERMAN FILM IN WORLD CINEMA.**

Goethe-Institut New York, 1014 Fifth Avenue

Reflections on the East German films shown at The Museum of Modern Art and on their place in German film history in an international context. Participants include screenwriter **Wolfgang Kohlhaase**, film critic **Heinz Kersten**, film historian **Ralf Schenk**, US filmmaker **Jennie Livingston**, director **Helke Misselwitz**, and professor **Katie Trumpener** (Yale University). Moderated by professor **Barton Byg**, Director of the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

**Barton Byg** teaches German and film studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he is founding director of the DEFA Film Library. He also is a faculty member of the Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies and directs the German studies graduate program at UMass Amherst. His recent teaching and research, in addition to German cinema, focus on history and film, non-fiction film (especially long-term documentary), and adaptations. He is author of the book *Landscapes of Resistance: The German Films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet*.

**Heinz Kersten** was born in Dresden and studied journalism, German literature, and theater theory in Berlin, before becoming a freelance film and theater critic. He was one of the few West German critics who wrote about East German films from the beginning of the 1960s. A volume of his reviews of East German films was published in 1998, and a collection of his theater reviews will be published soon. Kersten lives in Berlin and is a frequent radio and print commentator on national and international film festivals.

**Wolfgang Kohlhaase**, born in 1931, is a screenwriter and author known for his brilliant storytelling and also his prodigious collaborations with some of Germany's foremost directors Gerhard Klein, Konrad Wolf, Frank Beyer, and Volker Schlöndorff. He just finished the film *Summer Balcony* in collaboration with Andreas Dresen, one of the most successful young German directors today.

**Jennie Livingston** is a director/writer/producer known for both nonfiction work (*Paris Is Burning*, out on DVD September 2005 for the first time, from Disney, and *Through the Ice*, commissioned and broadcast in 2005 for WNET's show *Reel New York*) and for fiction work (*Who's the Top?* which had its premiere in 2005 at the Berlinale). Livingston is currently creating a personal documentary, *Earth Camp One*. One of her long-term projects is a dramatic script set in New York and East Berlin in 1989.

**Helke Misselwitz** (See *Who's Afraid of the Bogeyman*)

**Ralf Schenk** an internationally acknowledged authority on East German film, was born in 1956. He is a film historian and film journalist and has written and edited a variety of books about East German film. He also works in various capacities on documentaries about the history of Eastern European cinema after WWII and about the history of DEFA. Schenk has curated many film series and recently worked on the reconstruction of two East German films, *The Beauty* (1957) and *Miss Butterfly* (1965).

**Katie Trumpener**, Professor of Comparative Literature and English at Yale University, has published widely on German (including East German) cinema. Her forthcoming book *The Divided Screen: The Cinemas of Postwar Germany*, compares the Cold War films and cinema cultures of East and West Germany. She also works on the European novel, modernism and twentieth-century German culture.



## THE RABBIT IS ME (*Das Kaninchen bin ich*)

1965/1990, 109 min., b/w

DIRECTOR: Kurt Maetzig

CAST: Angelika Waller, Alfred Müller, Ilse Voigt, Wolfgang Winkler



CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Erich Gusko

SCREENPLAY: Manfred Bieler

*The Rabbit Is Me* was made in 1965 to encourage discussion of the democratization of East German society. Soon afterwards,

the film was banned by officials as an anti-socialist, pessimistic and revisionist attack on the state. It henceforth lent its name to all the banned films of 1965, which became known as the "Rabbit Films." After 1989, *The Rabbit Is Me* earned critical praise as one of the most important and courageous works ever produced at DEFA. The film portrays a young student who has an affair with a hypocritical judge, who once sentenced her brother for his political activities. She eventually confronts him with his opportunism and injustice.

"[*The Rabbit Is Me*] merits attention not least of all for its unvarnished search for truth. As for form, Maetzig treads new paths. No-one in [East Germany] had ever dealt with stylistic extravagances such as flashbacks and inner monologues with such ease."

— Peter Claus, *Junge Welt*

**Kurt Maetzig** was born in Berlin-Charlottenburg in 1911. In 1932 he began a film internship, but in 1934 was denied work by the Nazis because his mother was Jewish. He made some of the first films in Germany after WWII. Among others, *Marriage in the Shadows* (1947), the first German film to address Nazi anti-Semitism. Maetzig was one of the founders of DEFA. DEFA's artistic director as of 1946, he later became the first president of the newly founded Film Academy in Potsdam-Babelsberg, where he served as a professor of directing. Before retiring in 1975, Maetzig directed more than 20 feature films. While some described his films as propaganda, GDR officials banned other productions for being too critical. Maetzig's career spans decades across the entire history of DEFA.



## THE SECOND TRACK *(Das zweite Gleis)*

1962, 80 min., b/w

DIRECTOR: Joachim Kunert

CAST: Albert Hetterle, Annekathrin Bürger, Horst Jonischkan, Walter Richter-Reinick

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CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Rolf Sohre

SCREENPLAY: Günter Kunert,  
Joachim Kunert

Station Inspector Brock is witness to a robbery. When he fails to report one of the culprits, he experiences

flashbacks of his earlier failure to take a stand against Nazi persecutions years ago. *The Second Track* is the only East German feature which explores the theme of former Nazis leading normal lives in the GDR. This sensitive subject matter was one reason why the film was rarely shown in theaters. Remarkably expressive images and black and white photography intensify a story about guilt, repression and oblivion, making this film a true discovery.

"An idiosyncratic film [in which] the cinematographic narrative mode engenders an immense and ultimately unsettling impact."

– Erika Richter, *Film und Fernsehen*

**Joachim Kunert** was born in Berlin in 1929. He worked as a director of DEFA newsreels and documentaries from 1954-1955 and of feature films until 1970. Kunert moved to television then where he worked until his retirement in 1990. He belonged to the so-called "second generation" of DEFA filmmakers, characterized by a worldview primarily shaped by the East German experience. Kunert tried to address taboo topics in his films. He succeeded with the film *The Adventures of Werner Holt* (1964), which focused on WWII and the unspoken past of his father's generation. *The Second Track*, dealing with traces of the Nazi era present in 1960s East Germany, gained no recognition until its recent critical rediscovery. This film was his second collaboration with the author Günter Kunert, president of the German P.E.N.

FEATURE FILMS



## YOUR UNKNOWN BROTHER *(Dein unbekannter Bruder)*

1981, 108 min., color

**DIRECTOR:** Ulrich Weiß

**CAST:** Uwe Kockisch, Michael Gwisdek, Jenny Gröllmann, Bohumil Vavra, Arno Wyzniewski



**CINEMATOGRAPHY:**

Claus Neumann

**SCREENPLAY:** Wolfgang Trampe

Returning from a Nazi camp for political prisoners in 1935, Arnold Clasen is ambivalent about re-establishing contact with his

resistance group, afraid he is being watched. Isolation, fear, the need for friendship, and betrayal are the themes of this film. This rare psychological take on antifascism represents a milestone in East German filmmaking, as it both sustains and breaks with the antifascist tradition. Invited to compete at the Cannes Film Festival, *Your Unknown Brother* was withdrawn by East German officials, despite the filmmakers' feverish preparations. Ulrich Weiß, a talented director for whom this film represented great strides in creative development, emerged embittered from this experience and, from this point on, all his artistic activities were undercut. It appears that those in power didn't want to take any more risks with this independent, untamable and unpredictable talent.

"For me, film is the discovery of the sensual world."

– Ulrich Weiß, *director*

"Ulrich Weiß was the greatest talent to emerge from the Babelsberg film school in the 1970s."

– *The Oxford History of World Cinema*

**Ulrich Weiß** was born in Wernigerode in 1942. From 1965 to 1970, he studied cinematography and directing at the German Film Academy in Potsdam-Babelsberg and did camera work for GDR television. He started directing at the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films in 1971 and moved to the DEFA Studio for Feature Films ten years later. After making the children's film *Tambari*, he made his feature film debut with *Dance in the Community House*, a story about East Germany in the 1950s. Studio management rejected this script, however, as well as many others in the years that followed. Even the films Weiß was able to produce – such as *Your Unknown Brother* (1981) and *Good Old Henry* (1983), which received international praise – were met with indignation by East German officials.

# SHUNTERS *(Rangierer)*

1984, 21 min., b/w

DIRECTOR: Jürgen Böttcher

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CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Thomas Plenert

SCREENPLAY:

Jürgen Böttcher

A GDR version of *cinéma vérité*, 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.

"*Shunters* is a symbolic film which manages without symbols. Watching the everyday routine in a shunting yard opens up a view of the entire world."

— Rolf Richter, *Film und Fernsehen*

**Jürgen Böttcher**, also known as the painter "Strawalde," was born in 1931 in Frankenberg. He studied at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts from 1949 to 1953, during which time he worked as an independent artist and taught night school, where he met the now famous painter A.R. Penck. From 1955 to 1960, Böttcher studied directing at the Film Academy in Potsdam-Babelsberg and worked as a director in the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films until 1991. Having made more than 30 artistically provocative films, he has attained cult status among cineastes. Jürgen Böttcher has been working as an independent artist since 1991 and currently lives in Berlin.  
[See also, *Born in '45*]

DOCUMENTARIES



# WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BOGEYMAN

*(Wer fürchtet sich vorm schwarzen Mann)*

1989, 50 min., b/w

DIRECTOR: Helke Misselwitz



CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Thomas Plenert

SCREENPLAY:

Helke Misselwitz

A close-up of Berlin coal carriers from Prenzlauer Berg. No portrayal of worker heroes or progress here. Instead, bright, deeply-felt sketches of rough men and their resolute woman boss.

"Refreshing and new. . . . A beautiful, sometimes whimsical documentation of Berlin workers. A cinematic correction of what, in general, was valued in an East German documentary."

- Elke Schieber, *film historian*

**Helke Misselwitz** was born in 1947 in Planitz and spent nine years working for GDR television in youth programming. She studied directing at the Academy for Film and Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg from 1978 to 1982. Her request to enter the DEFA Studio for Feature Films was refused, so she took other jobs while making short essayistic films for the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films. When Heiner Carow accepted her as a master pupil at the GDR Academy of the Arts in 1985, she created a key documentary film about women in the final years of the GDR, *Winter Adé* (1988). Misselwitz was a director at the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films from 1988 to 1991. She directed her first feature film, *Herzsprung*, in 1992, followed by *Little Angel* in 1996. She is professor of directing at the Academy of Film and Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg.

## WITTSTOCK GIRLS (*Mädchen in Wittstock*)

1974, 20 min., b/w

DIRECTOR: Volker Koepp

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CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Michael Zausch

SCREENPLAY: Volker Koepp,  
Richard Ritterbusch

This is the first of a masterly chronicle of seven documentaries,

made over a 23-year period. Features snapshots of three funny and sensitive young women in a small town just north of Berlin, their personal dreams and wishes, and their troubled work at the knitting factory. The latest installment of the long-term project is *Wittstock, Wittstock* (1997).

"An exceptional record of passing time."

– *Variety*

"...Koepp understands how to make his figures – quite ordinary people – shine."

– freedom film festival (*American Cinema Foundation*)

**Volker Koepp** was born in Stettin (now Szczecin, Poland) in 1944 and studied at the Technical University of Dresden from 1963 to 1965. In 1966, he entered the German Academy of Film in Potsdam-Babelsberg and obtained his diploma as a writer and director in 1969. He was a director at the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films from 1970–1991 and has been a freelance director since then. In 1974, Koepp began long-term filming in Wittstock, focusing on the women workers in a textile factory. By 1997, he had made a total of seven films about Wittstock. *The Wide Field* (1976) was Koepp's first film in a decades-long series of portraits showing people in historical areas. This series also includes *Cold Homeland* (1995), *Herr Zwilling and Frau Zuckermann* (1999), *Uckermark* (2002), and *This Year in Czernowitz* (2004). Koepp has directed over 50 documentaries and is one of Germany's most internationally celebrated documentary filmmakers.

# DOCUMENTARIES



## YELL ONCE A WEEK (*Einmal in der Woche schrein*)

1982/89, 15 min., color

DIRECTOR: Günter Jordan



CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Michael Lösche

SCREENPLAY: Günter Jordan

The film's title is taken from a song, used here as a leit-motif, 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.

"The rock music in this film was very political, a slap in the face of the communist system. Young people went to both the disco and the barricades. For this reason, this honest, unvarnished and rough film was banned for six years."

- Ralf Schenk, *film historian*

**Günter Jordan** was born in Leipzig in 1941. He studied Slavic literature, history and pedagogy at the University of Jena and then worked as a teacher. He studied at the Film Academy in Potsdam-Babelsberg from 1966 to 1969 and joined the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films as an assistant cinematographer. In 1974 he wrote and directed his first documentary, specializing in children's documentaries from 1976 to 1986. Jordan has directed over 40 films, and is a film curator and published film historian.

SHORT NARRATIVE FILMS

DOCUMENTARIES

These two short films represent a series of almost 300 productions of the *Stacheltiere* series (literally, “porcupines”) made between 1953 and 1964 and are an example of the lively cabaret-style tradition of social and political satire that existed in East Germany.

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“The series of *Stacheltiere* shows the modest glory and tragedy of domestic political satire in a public sphere under party control.”

- Sylvia Klötzer, *cultural historian*



### **A LOVE STORY (*Eine Liebesgeschichte*)**

1953, 7 min., b/w

**DIRECTOR:** Richard Groschopp

**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Erwin Anders

**SCREENPLAY:** Günter Kunert

**CAST:** Rudolf Wessely, Herwart Grosse, Ulrich Thein

A writer tries to get a love story published. Two bureaucratic editors ask for more and more changes. But even his spiced-up version, with smoking chimneys and steel production, gets rejected.

**Richard Groschopp** (1906–1996) was born in Kölleda. He began to direct short films at the age of 25, joined the Amateur Filmmaker Association and later made documentaries and commercials for an advertising studio in Dresden. During WWII, he worked on educational films for the navy. Groschopp joined the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films in 1946, as a cinematographer and editor, and directed more than 100 documentaries, mainly newsreels. He started his feature film career in the early 1950s and was a member of the *Stacheltiere* team, directing the short satirical film series about daily life in East Germany. He later became well known for his crime stories, spy films, and Westerns.



### **NEWS FROM THE WEST**

**(*Es geht um die Wurst*)**, 1955, 8 min., s/w

**DIRECTOR:** Harald Röbbeling

**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Walter Fehdmer

**SCREENPLAY:** Harald Röbbeling

**CAST:** Erwin Geschonneck, Hannelore Wüst, Horst Kube, Marianne Wünscher

“Poisoned sausages in East Germany!” Karl gets scared when he hears this news on the West Berlin radio station RIAS (Radio in the American Sector). What a surprise to see his supposedly dead friends a few days later – sitting happily in the pub.

**Harald Röbbeling** (1905–1989) was the son of Hermann Röbbeling, the actor and later director of the Burgtheater Vienna. Harald Röbbeling took acting lessons and had his debut at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg at the age of 20. In the 1930s, he worked as a film editor, writer and assistant director. After WWII Röbbeling founded his own film company in Austria and directed his first film *Potassium Cyanide* (1948). Röbbeling's film *Asphalt* (1951), in which he used neo-realist elements, was a financial fiasco and after two subsequent flops he returned to the theater. From 1954 to 1955 he worked at DEFA as a guest director, including on 17 short films for the satirical series *Stacheltiere*. *A Heart Needs Love* (1959), for which he also wrote the screenplay, was his last feature film.

SHORT NARRATIVE FILMS





## CONSEQUENCE (*Konsequenz*)

1987, 2 min., color

**DIRECTOR:** Klaus Georgi

**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Werner Baensch

**SCREENPLAY:** Klaus Georgi, Hedda Gehm

**ANIMATION:** Peter Mißbach, Lutz Stützner, Ellen Herrmann, Stefan Kerda

The cars stop, smoking with exhaust. A driver coughs and then the driver behind him also coughs. The animal in the forest coughs. The earth coughs . . . end of film. The viewers applaud and rush outside – into their cars.



## THE FULL CIRCLE (*Der Kreis*)

1989, 4 min., color

**DIRECTOR:** Klaus Georgi

**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Brigitte Schönberner, Steffen Nielitz

**SCREENPLAY:** Klaus Georgi

**ANIMATION:** Barbara Atanassow, Ralf Kukula

Black clouds of smoke billow unendingly out of a huge industrial plant. All the people outside are wearing gas masks. The giant factory works on and on without stopping. Inside are row upon row of machines, producing . . . gas masks!



## THE MONUMENT (*Monument*)

1990, 4 min., color

**DIRECTORS:** Klaus Georgi, Lutz Stützner

**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Helmut Krahnert

**SCREENPLAY:** Klaus Georgi, Lutz Stützner

**ANIMATION:** Barbara Atanassow, Holger Havlicek

A statue, with outstretched arm pointing "forward," is unveiled to thunderous applause. Then one day it turns around to point the other way. Thunderous applause.

**Klaus Georgi** was born in Halle/Saale in 1925. From 1946 to 1952, he studied at the Institute for Artistic Design at Burg Giebichenstein and became a freelance graphic designer. He belongs to the founding generation of the DEFA Studio for Animation Films in Dresden and was one of their major animators from 1954 until 1989. Georgi has primarily directed animated cartoons, except for an occasional foray into puppet animation. His oeuvre includes almost 70 films.

**Lutz Stützner** was born in Königsbrück in 1957. From 1979 to 1982, he studied graphic art in Berlin and worked as an animator, designer and writer. His debut as a director was the cartoon *Queen of Hearts* (1987). In 1988 he joined the DEFA Studio for Animation Films, where he directed the series *Mausi and Kilo* and co-directed films with Klaus Georgi until 1990. Stützner currently works with the Studio 88 cartoon company in Dresden and is the co-director of the cinema version of the children's cartoon series *The Little King Maciusk*, based on stories by Janusz Korczak.

# REBELS WITH A CAUSE

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*REBELS WITH A CAUSE*

THE CINEMA OF EAST GERMANY

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