

German Film Office

Press Release: GERMAN FILM OFFICE AND ARSENAL BERLIN TO PRESENT “COMES THE REVOLUTION: THE BERLINALE FORUM AT 50”



December 14-20, 2020

**germanfilmoffice.us
arsenal-berlin.de**

New York, 12/04/2020: The German Film Office, an initiative of the Goethe-Institut and German Films, and Berlin-based Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art to present a virtual showcase of the Berlinale Forum’s 50th anniversary program with curated film selections by The Museum of Modern Art. The films will be available on demand December 14-20 and will be accompanied by a panel discussion December 18, 2:00pm EST.

One of the world’s premiere showcases of radical cinema both in form and content, the International Forum of Young Film (later: Berlinale Forum) celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2020. The selection of six programs, drawn by The Museum of Modern Art from a more extensive series that took place at Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art in Berlin earlier this year, presents work made between 1969 and 1971 that premiered in the first edition of the Forum. Filmmakers as subversive as Chris Marker, Sarah Maldoror, Rosa von Praunheim, and Helke Sander did not shy from confronting the social, political and economic upheavals that were then giving rise to revolutionary movements around the world, whether Black Power or African independence, second-generation feminism, gay liberation, or workers’ rights. Now, a half century

later, we can contemplate their successes and failures in finding a filmic language to express these seismic shifts on the ground – in streets, factories, universities, and bedrooms – and perhaps find a renewed urgency and inspiration in their collective ongoing struggle.

Rajendra Roy, The Celeste Bartos Chief Curator of Film at The Museum of Modern Art, says: “For fifty years, the Berlinale Forum has been synonymous with the most daring and urgent cinema of its time. Our selection is a testament to this: to visionary filmmakers who through the most subversive of means confronted the exploitation and subjugation of society’s dispossessed.”

The Berlinale Forum’s section head, Cristina Nord, adds: “The political and aesthetic energy on display in many of the films that belong to the anniversary programme is clearly a result of the late-1960s zeitgeist. The mixture of avant-garde techniques and agitprop found, for instance, in William Klein’s film on Eldridge Cleaver is characteristic of that specific historical moment, and it’s hard to find something akin to that in contemporary cinema. At the same time, my impression is that we are living in very turbulent times once again precisely because the political, social and cultural progress we witnessed in past decades – think of the role of women in society or the unacceptability of racist and anti-Semitic attitudes – is currently under attack. There is a backlash, and it is palpable in many places around the globe. So with the Forum’s anniversary program comes a hypothesis: watching these films, we might be able to rediscover strategies that worked back then and adjust them accordingly to help us face new challenges.”

FILM PROGRAM

Programs 1 and 2: BLACK LIBERATION

Yolande du Luart, *Angela: Portrait of a Revolutionary* (1971, USA/France, 1971, 60 min.)

William Klein, *Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther* (1970, Algeria/France, 75 min.)

Program 3: AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE (95 min.)

Med Hondo, *Mes voisins (My Neighbors)* (1971, France, 35 min.)

Sarah Maldoror, *Monangambee* (1969, Algeria, 16 min.)

Members of the Pan Africanist Congress, *Phela-ndaba (End of the Dialogue)* (1970, South Africa, 45 min.)

Program 4: WOMEN’S LIBERATION

Helke Sander, *Eine Prämie für Irene (A Bonus for Irene)* (1971, West Germany, 50 min.)

Program 5: GAY LIBERATION

Rosa von Praunheim, *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt (It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society In Which He Lives)* (1971, West Germany, 67 min.)

Program 6: WORKERS’ RIGHTS (102 min.)

Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki, *Eine Sache, die sich versteht (15x) (Something Self Explanatory (15x))* (1971, West Germany, 64 min.)

Chris Marker, *On vous parle de Paris: Maspero, les mots ont un sens (Calling from Paris: Maspero. Words Have a Meaning)* (1970, France, 20 min.)

Groupe Medvedkine Sochaux, *Les trois-quarts de la vie (Three Quarters of a Life)* (1971, France, 18 min.)

PANEL DISCUSSION

RADICAL CINEMA, THEN AND NOW

With *Comes the Revolution* showcase curator Josh Siegel, Berlinale Forum section head Cristina Nord, director Rosa von Praunheim, and more to be announced
Friday, December 18, 2:00pm EST

To receive access to the films and panel discussion, please register at:
comestherevolution.eventbrite.com

Please note that the films will be available on demand to US audiences only (December 14–20). The panel discussion will be accessible worldwide (December 18, 2:00pm EST).

Yolande du Luart, *Angela: Portrait of a Revolutionary* (1971, USA/France, 1971, 60 min.)

On August 18, 1970, Angela Davis was named to the FBI's Top 10 Most Wanted Fugitives list for her alleged involvement in the armed takeover of a federal courthouse in which 4 people were killed. Filmed during a period of high tension by Davis's philosophy students at UCLA, this documentary portrait captures the radical thinker and activist at her most "dangerously subversive," a woman who through her words and deeds sowed deep hostility toward American imperialist interests in Vietnam, Africa, and Latin America, and who battled rampant sexism within the Black Power movement even as she fought – and continues to fight – systemic racism, sexism, and class exploitation both at home and abroad.

William Klein, *Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther* (1970, Algeria/France, 75 min.)

An American expatriate in Paris, William Klein collaborated with the journalist Robert Scheer on this measured profile of Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther leader who in 1968 fled murder charges in the U.S. by taking asylum in more-than-obliging Cuba, Mexico, France, and Algeria. As Cleaver meets with Pan African nationalists and Vietnamese freedom fighters, and reflects on the future of the black liberation movement and his own exiled role within it, he becomes a study in complexity and contradiction.

Med Hondo, *Mes voisins (My Neighbors)* (1971, France, 35 min.)

The fiercely independent Mauritanian filmmaker Med Hondo, who died last year, made this short film in 1971 as a prelude to his revolutionary debut feature *Soleil Ô*, interviewing African migrants in Paris about the racial hardships they face in finding jobs, homes, and acceptance.

Sarah Maldoror, *Monangambee* (1969, Algeria, 16 min.)

A French filmmaker of West Indian descent, Sarah Maldoror dedicated herself to a radical mode of anticolonial cinema – much like Med Hondo – before her death from COVID-19 earlier this year. Maldoror cast amateur actors in Algeria in this adaptation of a novella by the dissident Angolan writer José Luandino Vieira, assuming the feminist perspective of a poor black woman who attempts to visit her husband, a political prisoner, in a miserable jail on the outskirts of the capital Luanda.

Members of the Pan Africanist Congress, *Phela-ndaba (End of the Dialogue)* (1970, South Africa, 45 min.)

Bearing witness to the crimes of Apartheid from a distinctly personal viewpoint, expatriate black South African members of the Pan-African Congress (Antonia Caccia, Chris Curling, Simon Louvish, Nelson 'Nana' Mahomo, Vus Make, and Rakhetha Tsehlena) shot this film clandestinely in South Africa and smuggled it to Great Britain for international release. To shocked audiences worldwide, they made visible and incontrovertible a brutal and totalizing system of racial oppression and persecution, their film culminating in a harrowing roll call of victims of state-led imprisonment, torture, and murder.

Helke Sander, *Eine Prämie für Irene (Bonus for Irene)* (1971, West Germany, 50 min.)

Helke Sander staked her claim within the New German Cinema and second generation feminism with this devilishly brilliant satire of rampant and unrepentant sexism at home and work. In addition to writing and directing she stars as Irene, the defiant single mother who galvanizes her female assembly-line colleagues at a washing-machine factory into standing up against all forms of harassment and surveillance.

Rosa von Praunheim, *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt (It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives)* (1971, West Germany, 67 min.)

"Two years after the Stonewall riots, Rosa von Praunheim nearly ignited another queer intifada with his first feature, *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives* (1971). A Brechtian soap opera with endlessly quotable narration, *It Is Not* savages gay-male self-destruction and the pathological need to fit into bourgeois culture: 'Faggots don't want to be faggots. They don't want to be different. They live in a dream world of glossy magazines and Hollywood movies,' intones the first of several increasingly hysterical, thickly Teutonic voices, before this utopian call-to-arms is sounded: 'Let's work together with the blacks and women's liberation. Get involved politically. Being gay is not a career'" (Melissa Anderson, *The Village Voice*).

Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki. *Eine Sache, die sich versteht (15x) (Something Self Explanatory (15x))* (1971, West Germany, 64 min.)

While filmmakers like Godard and Gorin in France and Bertolucci and Pasolini in Italy were reveling in their own brands of Marxist cinema, Bitomsky and Farocki in West Germany set out to define the very *form* and *meaning* of Marxist cinema with this crash course in 15 clever and deceptively simple lessons, playing out ideas of commodity, labor, and exchange and use value in humorously staged vignettes.

Chris Marker, *On vous parle de Paris: Maspero, les mots ont un sens (Calling from Paris: Maspero. Words Have a Meaning)* (1970, France, 20 min.)

The role of the public intellectual in society, free press, and revolutionary politics has long vexed the great thinkers of France, from Voltaire and Rousseau to Camus and Beauvoir. In this episode of his series *On vous parle de Paris*, Chris Marker limns the fragile line between leftist journalism and radical activism, creating a compelling portrait of François Maspero, the controversial reporter and publisher of Fritz Fanon's censored *The Wretched of the Earth*, the writings of Che Guevara, and other indictments of colonialism and Western democracy.

Groupe Medvedkine Sochaux, *Les trois-quarts de la vie (Three Quarters of a Life)* (1971, France, 18 min.)

The fantasy of a true Workers' Cinema, the realization of a Soviet ideal of putting cameras directly into the hands of honest, untutored, and unfettered proletariats, took on renewed currency amid the violent economic, political, and social upheavals of late 1960s France. Taking its name from one of Chris Marker's favorite Soviet filmmakers, Aleksandr Medvedkin, who brought *Film Truth* to the masses with his locomotive cinema, the Groupe Medvedkine Sochaux united documentarians and militant unionists from a local Peugeot factory in a collective cri de coeur against capitalist exploitation.

MORE ABOUT THE PANELISTS

Cristina Nord has been section head of the Berlinale Forum since August 2019. Born in 1968 in Korbach, Germany, she studied general and comparative literature in Berlin and Latin American studies in San José, Costa Rica. After graduating with a Master of Arts, she worked as a journalist and editor. Between 2002 and 2015, she was film editor for the culture section of the German *taz. die tageszeitung* newspaper. In parallel, she taught film criticism at the Freie Universität Berlin, was a member of the selection panel for the German-language documentary film festival Duisburger Filmwoche, contributed to the *Filmtip* program for the German broadcaster WDR, and wrote numerous essays as well as the book *True Blood* (Diaphanes, 2015). In 2015, she began working at the Goethe-Institut and took over as head of programming for the South West European region in Brussels.

Rosa von Praunheim was born in 1942 as Holger Mischwitzky in Riga, Latvia. His artist name Rosa refers to the pink triangle ("rosa Winkel") that homosexuals were forced to wear in the Nazi concentration camps. He has made more than 70 films, many of which deal with his favorite subjects: homosexuality, older women, New York City. In 1971 he achieved notoriety with his feature debut *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Situation In Which He Lives*. This self-critical film was crucial to the founding of a new gay movement in Germany; over 50 political gay groups sprang up in the wake of its presentation throughout the country.

rosavonpraunheim.de

Josh Siegel, a curator at The Museum of Modern Art, has organized more than 100 film, media and gallery exhibitions, many of which have appeared on Best of the Year lists in The New York Times, Artforum, Film Comment, and The New Yorker. He serves on the selection committees of the annual festivals New Directors/New Films and Doc Fortnight, and he is the founding director of To Save and Project: The MoMA International Festival of Film Preservation. Siegel is the co-editor and author of *Frederick Wiseman* (MoMA/Gallimard) as well as *Modern Contemporary: Art at MoMA Since 1980* and the monographs *Baby, It's Cold Outside: A History of Finnish Cinema* and *The Łódź Film School of Poland: 50 Years*. He serves on the executive boards of MacDowell, Light Industry, Cinema Tropical, and The Maurice Sendak Foundation.

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The German Film Office is an initiative of the Goethe-Institut and German Films. Its mission is to promote films from Germany to New York and US audiences and to strengthen their presence in art house cinemas, cultural and educational institutions, and digital platforms. In collaboration with local partners, its programs give viewers the opportunity to engage with the entire history of German cinema in a variety of formats.
germanfilmoffice.us



ABOUT ARSENAL – INSTITUTE FOR FILM AND VIDEO ART

Communicating international film culture in a lively manner is both the aim and mission of Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art. Working at the point where practice and theory come together, the institute comprises a space for thinking outside the box in (film) cultural terms, a cinema whose attention is focused on independent and experimental film, and a communication platform for promoting dynamic exchange between film, academia and art linked to a whole network of different organizations. Arsenal's work encompasses the running of the two-screen arsenal cinema, putting on the Berlinale Forum and Forum Expanded, distributing films as arsenal distribution, and collecting and communicating works of independent and experimental cinema as well as avant-garde film history.
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