

THE DEFA FILM LIBRARY AT UMASS AMHERST PRESENTS
an abridged version of our recent Summer Film Festival
for the 2021 GSA conference

AUTHORITY & ALTERITY IN EAST GERMANY

Political Experiments, Rebel Youth and Civil Unrest

Free Virtual GSA Film Festival | Sept 29 - Oct 17, 2021

Stream 17 films & more!
6 feature films | 7 documentaries | 4 animation films
3 director's talks | 6 film introductions

All films in German with English subtitles

This year's GSA Film Festival explores the topic of Authority & Alterity in East Germany. Showcasing 17 feature, documentary and animation films from our recent Summer Film Institute, the festival displays the wide range of different lifestyles and subcultures, environmental issues and rebellion that existed in the former GDR. They also show how filmmakers, both in the GDR and since, have addressed state values and proscriptions, as well as differences among East Germans.

FEATURE FILMS



The Airship (*Das Luftschiff*, GDR, 1982, dir. Rainer Simon, 116 min., color)
Franz Xaver Stannebein seeks to invent airships to benefit humanity, but his work is appropriated by the Nazis. Director Rainer Simon worked with modernist composer Friedrich Goldmann and experimental media artist Lutz Dambeck in creating this nonconformist film, in which flying is a metaphor for freedom and self-determination. **Video intro by Mariana Ivanova (UMass Amherst)**



The Baldheaded Gang (*Die Glatzkopfbande*, GDR, 1962, dir. Richard Groschopp, 77 min., b&w)
August 1961. Former Foreign Legionnaire King and his gang of guys are rabble-rousers. After doing shoddy work at a construction site, they create a threatening nuisance at a Baltic Sea campground. Contrary to claims that this was a true story, the events were exaggerated to serve propaganda claims that GDR youth were being subverted by the West. **Video intro by Seth Howes (U. of Missouri)**



Biology! (*Biologie!*, GDR, 1990, dir. Jörg Foth, 89 min., color)
Ulla, a sensitive and principled 10th-grader, meets Winne, son of a chemical plant manager. Ulla finds illegal construction in a local nature reserve and passionately agitates to stop it; but things are complicated because Winne's parents are responsible. Though environmental issues were taboo in the GDR, a strong movement developed in the early 1980s. **See Director's Talk 3 below.**



The Dove on the Roof (*Die Taube auf dem Dach*, GDR, 1973/2010, dir. Iris Gusner, 82 min., b&w)
The young engineer Linda falls in love with two very different men on her construction team. Critics praise this film, which raises questions about the importance of work, love and happiness in 1970s socialist East Germany, as an example of GDR Nouvelle Vague. Directed by one of very few women directors in the GDR, the film was banned, lost, found and restored for its 2010 release. **Video intro by S.J. Arndt-Briggs (UMass Amherst)**



Isabel on the Stairs (*Isabel auf der Treppe*, GDR, 1983, dir. Hannelore Unterberg, 67 min., color)
After Pinochet's 1973 military coup, 12-year-old Isabel and her mother, a famous political singer in Chile, escape to East Berlin, but her father stays behind to fight. Isabel worries about her parents, and not even her friendship with the East German boy Philipp can overcome it. This film reflects on the experience of over 2000 Chileans who took refuge in the GDR. **Video intro by Victoria I. Rizo Lenshyn (Amherst College)**



The Mistake (*Verfehlung*, Germany, 1991, dir. Heiner Carow, 100 min., color)
It is 1988. Elisabeth and the West German Jacob fall in love in the GDR. When she introduces Jacob to her sons, a deep conflict is exposed. While one son supports the party line, her other son is active in the citizens' movement and gets arrested by the Stasi. When Jacob is deported, Elisabeth knows who begrudges her this love and takes her revenge. **Video intro by Kyle Frackman (U. of British Columbia)**

DOCUMENTARIES



And Fridays at the Green Hell
(... und freitags in die "Grüne Hölle", 1989, dir. Ernst Cantzler, 49 min., color)
The rowdy behavior of soccer fans, which sometimes breaks into violence, can shock and frighten the public. Through interviews with members of the 1. FC Union Berlin fan club, director Cantzler gives us a closer look at the world of soccer fandom, what motivates fans and how they understand the place of soccer in their lives.



Beauty & Decay (*Schönheit & Vergänglichkeit*, Germany, 2019, dir. Annetkatrin Hendel, 79 min., color)
Three artists who shared their youth in East Berlin's rebellious and creative 1980s subculture have led unorthodox, multifaceted lives. The film follows photographer Sven Marquardt, the model Dome and the 'pretty' punk, photographer Robert Paris. Photos from the 1980s: Marquardt's are portraits, while Paris's show the wasteland of East Berlin's built environment. **See Director's Talk 2 below.**



Blue Bandanas in the Summer Wind
(*Blaue Wimpel im Sommerwind*, GDR, 1952, dir. Herbert Ballmann, 56 min., color)
A picture of GDR youth, as party and state would have it. After summer 1952, selected Young Pioneers gather for their first national convention. During the convention, the children tell each other stories about their organized vacation activities. At the end, the presiding officials celebrate the Young Pioneers as their political successors and the future builders of socialism.



Memory of a Landscape - for Manuela
(*Erinnerung an eine Landschaft - für Manuela*, GDR, 1983, dir. Kurt Tetzlaff, 84 min., color)
This documentary tackles a difficult and politically sensitive East German social, and ultimately environmental issue in the early 1980s. South of Leipzig, villages are being demolished to make way for open-cast coal mining. Over the course of 4 years, the film documents how the landscape and lives of older and younger generations change. **Video intro by Henning Wrage (Gettysburg College)**



Operation Auditor (*Operation Revisor*, GDR, 1984, 9 min., b&w)
A Stasi-produced instructional film used to train new officers and informants how to conduct surveillance, bug homes and gather evidence against "enemies of the state." The film gives a detailed description of a Stasi operation, based on the case of a young author who has tried to publish his poems in West Germany.



Our Children (*Unsere Kinder*, GDR, 1989, dir. Roland Steiner, 88 min., color)
The topic of subcultures was taboo in the GDR. The existence of goths, skinheads, anti-skis, punks and neo-Nazis was often denied; alternatively, they were dismissed as social deviants influenced by western countries. Young people speak before the camera, exploring what draws them to these groups and their precarious relationship to the state. **See Director's Talk 1 below.**



Yell Once a Week (*Einmal in der Woche schreien*, GDR, 1982/89, dir. Günter Jordan, 14 min., color)
This film follows young teens, from hanging out on the streets to a dance party. This short was banned before its release, in part because of the lyrics of the East German rock group Pankow. Those in the title song, for example, call for self-determination and freedom.

Festival login :
<https://vimeopro.com/defafilmlibrary/summer-film-institute-20-1>
Password: GSA2021

ANIMATION FILMS



Consequence (*Konsequenz*, GDR, 1986-87, dir. Klaus Georgi, 2 min., color)
The cars stop, smoking with exhaust. A driver coughs and then the next driver also coughs. The animal in the forest coughs. The earth coughs. The end. The viewers applaud and rush outside... into their cars.



The Full Circle (*Der Kreis*, GDR, 1988-89, dir. Klaus Georgi, 4 min., color)
Black clouds of smoke billow from a huge industrial plant. Everyone outside is wearing gas masks. The giant factory works on and on. Inside are row upon row of machines producing... gas masks.



The Monument (*Monument*, GDR, 1989, dirs. Klaus Georgi & Lutz Stützner, 4 min., color)
A statue, with outstretched arm pointing "forward," is unveiled to thunderous applause. One day it points the other way—again, thunderous applause! A simple but incisive metaphor for opportunists who change their positions based on changing party lines.



Sunday (*Sonntag*, GDR, 1989-90, dirs. Klaus Georgi & Lutz Stützner, 3 min., color)
The globe is barren; there is no green left. A long line of people waits to get into the museum, where they can see... a tree. A wake-up call to protect and save the environment in the GDR, where environmental problems were denied.

DIRECTOR'S TALKS

Discussions in German with live English translation.

TALK 1 - on *Our Children*

A discussion with director **Roland Steiner** about his film *Our Children*. Moderated by Seth Howes (Univ. of Missouri) and Mariana Ivanova (UMass Amherst).



Roland Steiner directed films for the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films until 1990 and has since worked as a freelance director. Many of his early films explored the world of young East Germans. His later work is known for a series of portraits, including: undercover journalist Günter Wallraff; poet Erich Fried; and defense lawyer Heinrich Hannover. Steiner has lectured on filmmaking and media at various German universities.



Seth Howes, co-director of the 2021 Summer Film Institute, is an Associate Professor of German Studies at the Univ. of Missouri. His research deals with 20th-century literature and culture during the Cold War. He has published on music, culture, experimental film and social history. He is the author of *Moving Images on the Margins: Experimental Film in Late Socialist East Germany* (2019).



Mariana Ivanova, co-director of the 2021 Summer Film Institute, is an Associate Professor of German Film and Media and the Academic Director of the DEFA Film Library at UMass Amherst. Her scholarship focuses on German and European cinemas and coproductions. She is the author of *Cinema of Collaboration: DEFA Coproductions and International Exchange in Cold War Europe* (2019).

TALK 2 - on *Beauty & Decay*

Director **Annetkatrin Hendel** discusses her 2019 documentary *Beauty & Decay* with art historian Sara Blaylock (UMN Duluth).



Annetkatrin Hendel has produced, directed and written several important documentaries that explore the lives of exceptional artists, current affairs topics and important social issues, often related to East German history. She is the director of the *Betrayal Trilogy*, which includes the award-winning documentaries *Traitor of the Fatherland* (2011), *Anderson* (2014) and *The Brasch Family* (2018).



Sara Blaylock is an art historian at the Univ. of Minnesota-Duluth. Her research focuses on East German experimental art, film and visual culture in the 1980s. Her interests include cultural policy in state socialism, the art and visual culture of the Cold War and cinemas of the Eastern Bloc. Her forthcoming book is *Parallel Public: Experimental Art in Late East Germany*.

TALK 3 - on *Biology!*

Director **Jörg Foth** discusses his feature film *Biology!* and the East German environmental movement with Reinhold Steingröver (Univ. of Rochester).



Jörg Foth directed films at the DEFA Studio for Feature Films. As of the early 1980s, he advocated for the youngest generation of DEFA directors at the studio. Only after the Wall fell was the DaDaeR Production Group founded; his musical cabaret revue *Latest from the Da-Da-R* (1990) was one of four films the group produced before DEFA was closed. Since 1991, Foth has worked in television, film and theater. Foth's papers are archived at UMass Amherst.



Reinhold Steingröver is a Professor of German at the Eastman School of Music and an affiliate Professor of Film Studies at the Univ. of Rochester. Her research focuses on contemporary German film and literature. She is the author of a monograph on Thomas Bernhard (2000) and *Last Features: East German Cinema's Lost Generation* (2014). She is working on a book titled *Cinematic Miniatures: DEFA Short Films*.

These Director's Talks are also in our FILMBOX.

FILMBOX is a free Digital Teaching Archive that is perfect for teachers, students and programmers! It includes a growing number of educational resources, including director's talks, film introductions, Zoom discussions from our 2020-21 series on Black Lives in Germany and more.

See the updated list of offerings [HERE](#).

For more information about the festival, go to our [WEBSITE](#).

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