

# 14<sup>th</sup> Arsenal Summer School

August 23–25, 2023, at Arsenal cinema and silent green

## ARSENAL 60 ff. – WHAT CAN CINEMA DO?

Once again this August the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art is putting on its Summer School. Over the course of three days, 30 participants, Arsenal staff, and invited guests will tackle themes at the intersections of theory and practice

Under the title **ARSENAL 60 ff. – What can cinema do?** the Arsenal is taking its 60th anniversary and the approaching move of the institution to silent green Kulturquartier as an opportunity to look back, to all sides and above all to the future. During this year's Arsenal Summer School, participants will spend three days discussing the tasks of a film institution in contributions and workshops. In particular, the question will be asked as to how cinema relates to the world today, and what spaces for thought and action it can offer. How can the Arsenal contribute to shaping social change together with filmmakers, viewers and other communities of solidarity?

With contributions by: Birgit Kohler, Angelika Ramlow, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus, Barbara Wurm, Uli Ziemons.

The events will be held in German.

## PROGRAM

### Wednesday, August 23

10–11 a.m., silent green

#### Arrival and welcome

Note: Formation of workshop groups to collect their reflections on the topic and the presentations over the 3 days.

11:30 a.m.–1 p.m., silent green

#### What can cinema do? First considerations

Stefanie Schulte Strathaus

In the anniversary year, we want to discuss the tasks of a film institution. In particular, we want to ask the question of how cinema relates to the world today, and what spaces for thought and action it can offer. The starting point will be individual films from history and the present: each film arises from a concern, which in most cases is located somewhere in the world. How can this concern penetrate the festival/cinema system in such a way that something returns from there to its starting place? Or to put it another way: can films, can cinema change the world? And what is the role of institutions that create public spheres? What do filmmakers need in order for their films to have an impact? What kind of cinema would they build? What can cinema do today and in the future?

1:00 p.m., silent green

#### Lunch in Mars restaurant

2:30–4 p.m., silent green

#### Rethinking the relationship between cinema and archive / transhistorical curating

Stefanie Schulte Strathaus

Over the decades, the institution has become the archive of a transnational culture of critique, solidarity and resistance, of media change and aesthetic richness. But what does this mean for a present in which the concept

of crisis manifests itself in a completely new way, making old privileges visible as rarely before? Pandemics, climate catastrophe, global injustice, and wars have never had such a direct impact on our own practice. How can history be told from this perspective? We take a look at how cinema and archives are used in a political, social and historical context. What tasks do we face today? What is the relationship of cinema to the world and who is the audience?

**5:30–7 p.m.**, silent green

### **Archive as a Resource**

Angelika Ramlow

Many films in the Arsenal archive address issues of ecology and sustainability, like nuclear power, land grabbing, indigenous rights, resource conflicts, the destruction of the biosphere, alternative forms of living together and doing business. They emerged from and with social and ecological movements, and in turn had an impact on them. Since many questions from back then remain unanswered and the struggles continue, we will explore what the reasons are and what can make them relevant today.

Filmscreening and discussion: **WE ARE THE GUINEA PIGS** (Joan Harvey, USA 1980, original version, 90 mins.)

On March 28, 1979, a major nuclear accident occurred at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. An account of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, filmed by a group of independent filmmakers who spent nine days in Harrisburg interviewing residents and their children, farmers, union leaders, doctors, and government representatives. Official policy and guidelines are examined in comparison to the medical evidence, the facts about "clean air" and "acceptable limits," and the nightmare of death and disease faced by the residents of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

**7 p.m.**, silent green

**Dinner together in Mars restaurant** (included in price)

## **Thursday, August 24**

**10:00–12 a.m.**, Arsenal cinema

### **An Atypical Orbit – Berlinale Forum Expanded**

Uli Ziemons

Already in its 18th year, the Forum Expanded presents films, installations, performances and discussions in the framework of the Berlin International Film Festival. Situated on the fringes and interstices of cinema, the program brings together works made for the cinema and the gallery space and is defined by the interest in testing and facilitating unusual approaches to the moving image, both inside and beyond the standard cinema dispositif. However, this probing of cinema's boundaries – be they spatial, technical, formal or social – has been a central concern of the Arsenal already since well before the inaugural edition of Forum Expanded in 2006. Using examples from the institution's and section's histories, selected atypical cinematic constellations tested and made possible by Arsenal and Forum Expanded will be presented and discussed.

### **Move to silent green**

**1:30–3:00 p.m.**, silent green

### **What Now?**

Birgit Kohler

At a time when supposedly secure realities and values seem to be dissolving and uncertainty is spreading, questions such as "What now? What do we do (and where do we stand) now?" ever more urgently. This also affects curatorial work in cinema - at least if one understands cinema as a social space with a social function and as a discursive cultural practice. After the second lockdown caused by the pandemic, the Arsenal resumed screenings in the summer of 2021 with the film series "What Now? - On Dealing with Caesuras in Current Films from Portugal," curated by Birgit Kohler. A programmatic prelude that, after an eight-month closure, sought to

re-establish the cinema as a place of encounter where society is collectively negotiated on the basis of aesthetic experiences. Based on this case study, an exchange will take place on the following questions: How does cinema respond to the crises of the present? How do films deal with caesuras? What place do social relations have in cinema? How do current discourses affect programming?

**3:30–5 p.m.**, silent green

**Making Two Out of One: Curating in Wartime or: " Ukrainian dreams" & "Tarkovsky revisited"**

Barbara Wurm

For decades, the Arsenal has been showing Tarkovsky's seven finalized feature-length films during the summer months, and film fans have been planning their trips to Berlin according to the cinema's calendar. Tarkovsky is considered by many to be a cult figure; he stands for the dissident nature of cinematic art vis-à-vis a brutalized world. In 2022, the year of the historical rupture of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the series was suspended. The reconceptualization of the Tarkovsky series marks a rethinking of how to deal with untouched canons, untouchable heroes, and what passes for the Russian spirit. In 2023, according to the curatorial brief, Tarkovsky's oeuvre was to be re-contextualized. A hijacking project under decolonizing auspices was the idea: capitalizing on the world fame of perhaps the only real star of Eastern European cinema, his work and the history of its reception will be subjected to a historical-political revision and the focus will be shifted to the Ukrainian film landscape, which is largely unknown in this country. These are role models, precursors, contemporaries, and critics who span the central eras, genres, and poetics of Ukrainian cinema and who, in the Soviet studio and value system, were always in a subordinate position to the hegemonic Russian culture. Re-establishing them in the context of world cinema is not the least dimension of the concept that will be discussed in the workshop. However, the difficulties of this curatorial project of re-evaluation and re-shifting will also become transparent, as the questioning of the past within and beyond national concerns poses a challenge, as does the (impossible/unwanted) coexistence of Ukrainian and Russian films. We are in the midst of a war whose ideological breeding ground became tangible and visible for Ukraine and its filmmakers not only in 2022.

**Move to Arsenal cinema**

**8 p.m.**, Arsenal cinema

Filmscreening: **ANDREI RUBLEV** (R. Andrej Tarkovskij, USSR 1964–66, original version with German subtitles, 185 mins.) Followed by a conversation with Ulrich Gregor about power, violence and culture.

Eight chapters, one cinematic monument: the "re-vision" of this key biopic and period piece invites the viewer to reflect on the relationship between art and politics, between power and war, between abstention and drive. And also, on how the struggle against the "yoke of the Tatars" is connected with the emergence of the Grand Duchy of Moscow and Russia's claims to sovereignty. In the context of the war that today's Russia is waging against Ukraine, Rublev's Trinity icon has become a contested object. The angels are currently being packed in black body bags.

**Friday, August 25**

**10–11 a.m.**, silent green

**Discussion on the lecture, film screening and talk: ANDREI RUBLEV. "Tarkovsky revisited"**

Barbara Wurm

**11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.**, silent green

**"Projection Screen: Forum"**

Barbara Wurm

The Forum is legendary - which doesn't exactly make the task of (re)designing it easy. Expectations are in the room, mostly divergent. Demarcation is in demand, profile sharpening is required, everyone has an opinion, some even have ideas. *Just bring back Tsui Hark and everything will be fine.* Just as a (wonderful) example. The Forum has a life of its own within the Berlinale, sometimes anti-, sometimes counter-festival, sometimes

intellectually sharpened and pronouncedly discursive, sometimes thoroughly popular and gladly not just *l'art pour l'art*, endowed with autonomy and the mission to be courageous, innovative, transgressive and generally: different (not a unique selling point, however - who wants to be non-original?). At the same time, the film world is firmly in the grip of an all-encompassing illumination and professionalization, no talent that has not long since completed all the labs and workshops. What to do? Take the "projection surface: forum" seriously in its duality, use it: as a physical-material-real place of a history-conscious *film community* on the one hand, as a space of imagination on the other, open to the world and cinematic existences on the fringes and sideshows, in the under- and background, in the political and social, in external reality as well as in the free fall of experimentation.

**1 p.m.**, silent green

**Lunch in Mars restaurant**

**2:30–3:30 p.m.**, silent green

**Workshop: Cinema of the future**

At the end of the Arsenal Summer School, the participants will develop curatorial or artistic concepts of their vision of a cinema of the future in order to reflect and specify the discussed topics and to incorporate them into their ideas.

**3:30–4:30 p.m.**, silent green

**Presentation and discussion of the results in the plenum**

**5–6 p.m.**, silent green

**Closing discussion**

**6 p.m.**, silent green

**Drinks**

**Move to Arsenal cinema**

**8:30 p.m.**, Arsenal cinema

**Archive as a Resource**

Screening: **NATURENS HÄMND** (Nature's Revenge, Stefan Jarl, Sweden 1983, 83 mins., original version with English subtitles)

NATURENS HÄMND describes the consequences that our treatment of our natural environment has on us humans and other living creatures. Director Stefan Jarl travels through Sweden and with his camera witnesses human hubris with its belief in the controllability of nature. The consequences of the widespread use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers in agriculture are drastic: a destroyed and poisoned environment that leads to diseases in humans and animals, cancer in children and deformed animals. Jarl's experts are the farmers he visits, who tell us about their observations and conclusions in long conversations and persistently reflect back to us the insanity of the prevailing order and the question of responsibility. A thought-provoking documentary that uses its deliberately "beautiful", but bluntly honest images to advocate increased ecological awareness. Jarl has prefaced the film with a quote from Friedrich Engels: "For each human victory over nature, nature takes its revenge on us."

## Contributors:

**Birgit Kohler** is Co-Head of Programming at Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art. From 2002 to 2019 she was also a member of the selection committee for the Berlinale Forum, and as interim director she was responsible for the section's main program in 2019. As a curator and as an author she focuses primarily on the diversity of forms in current documentary filmmaking as well as on a large range of artistic approaches in international contemporary cinema. Her curatorial work also concentrates on the aesthetic exploration of socio-political phenomena in independent cinema from countries like Algeria, Greece, Lebanon, Morocco or Portugal for instance. Furthermore she teaches at universities and in film academies, including on the theory and practice of curation.

**Angelika Ramlow** is a project manager of Arsenal Distribution with a focus on experimental film, video art and installations since 2004. She is part of the Forum Expanded team. She has worked for Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art in various roles and projects since 2001. She has coordinated curatorial programs and lectures at Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, IFF Rotterdam, Kansk Filmfestival, The 4-VIDEOFORMA Festival in St. Petersburg, Dokfest Kassel, (S8) Mostra de Cinema Periférico, A Coruña, Beldocs.

**Stefanie Schulte Strathaus** is the artistic director of Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art in Berlin. From 2001-2019 she was a member of the selection committee of the Berlinale Forum. From 2006-2020 she was the founding director of the Berlinale section Forum Expanded. She curated film exhibitions, such as "LIVE FILM! JACK SMITH! Five Flaming Days in A Rented World" (2009, with Susanne Sachsse and Marc Siegel), „A Paradise Built in Hell" (2014, with Bettina Steinbrügge), and "From Behind the Screen" (2018), as well as research and exhibition projects such as "Living Archive – Archive Work as a Contemporary Artistic and Curatorial Practice" (2010-2013) and "Archive außer sich" (2017-2022). In 2021 she launched the biennial festival "Archival Assembly".

Her work is dealing with the intersections of film restoration, exhibition and distribution, focussing on collaborative and decolonial thinking and practice. Schulte Strathaus is serving on the boards of the Harun Farocki Institut and the Master program Film Culture at the University in Jos/Nigeria.

**Barbara Wurm** will take over as director of the Berlinale Forum in autumn 2023. She was a member of the selection committee of the Berlinale (2019-2023), the Short Film Festival Oberhausen (2019), goEast - Festival of Central and Eastern European Film (2012-2023) and Dok Leipzig (2004-2007) and worked as a curator, program advisor, moderator and writer for various international festivals and cinematheques. Her academic teaching and research focus is on Eastern European culture, documentary film and media theory. She received her PhD from Humboldt University in 2017 on Soviet cultural film of the 1920s, edited books on Dziga Vertov, among others, and wrote many texts on cinema as a freelance critic and author.

**Uli Ziemons** has been the co-head of Berlinale Forum Expanded since 2022 (together with Ala Younis). He has worked for Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art in various roles and projects since 2006. From 2014 to 2021 he was a member of the short film selection committee of Kassel Dokfest. He has curated film programs for, among others, Kunstverein Leipzig, Bucharest International Experimental Film Festival, KW – Institute for Contemporary Art, and the Berlin Biennial. He is the author of the book "Aufzeichnungen eines Storm Squatters" on the Weather Diary video series by US-american experimental filmmaker George Kuchar.

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