

## Document Citation

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Love Is Colder Than Death (1969)  
(*Liebe Ist Kälter Als Der Tod*)

For Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, Jean-Marie Straub, Lino und Cunchio.

Screenplay	Rainer Werner Fassbinder
Camera Operator	Dietrich Lohmann
Editor	Franz Walsch
Music	Peer Raben, Holger Munzer
Set Design	Ulli Lommel, Rainer Werner Fassbinder
Assistant Director	(for several days) Martin Muller
Production	Anti-teater-X-Film

Cast: Ulli Lommel (Bruno), Hanna Schygulla (Joanna), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Franz), Hans Hirschmuller (Peter), Katrin Schaake (woman in

march), Peter Berling (arms dealer), Hannes Gromball (Joanna's customer), Gisela Otto (first prostitute), Ingrid Caven (second prostitute), Ursula Stratz (fat prostitute), Irm Herman (salesgirl), Les Olvides (Georges), Wil Rabenbauer (Jurgen), Peter Moland (judge at Syndicate trial), Anastassios Karalas (Turk), Rudolf Waldemar Brem (motorcycle cop), Yaak Karsunke (Commissioner of Police), Monika Stadler (young girl), Kurt Raab (department store detective).

Filmed in 24 days on location in Munich and surroundings in April, 1969.  
Running time, 88 mins.; 35 mm, B&W.  
Cost: 95,000 DM.

*Love Is Colder than Death (1969)*

Franz (Fassbinder), a small-time pimp, refuses to cooperate with a crime syndicate. The syndicate seems to give in, but sends the handsome Bruno (Ulli Lommel) to work on him. Franz loves Bruno. Bruno, whom the police don't know, commits a murder for which Franz becomes a suspect. However, the Commissioner (Yaak Karsunke) has no evidence against Franz. Eventually, Bruno and Franz decide to rob a bank. Joanna (Hanna Schygulla), Franz's girlfriend, betrays them to the police. Bruno has ordered a hit man from the syndicate to shoot Joanna during the confusion of the robbery. All plans fail. Bruno is shot by the police, but Franz and Joanna manage to flee.

Fassbinder's first feature film is obviously influenced by models, not all of which were introduced into the film by



*Love Is Colder than Death*

Fassbinder: Ulli Lommel chose a hat that was identical to one worn by Alain Delon in Melville's *Ice-Cold Angel*. Fassbinder was not familiar with Melville's films at the time. The general predilection for gangster films, the suburban backdrop, the insistent peering of the camera, which recalls Straub, all reflect influences and ideas which were important to Fassbinder and the anti-teater team at the time. The travelling shot along Landsberger Strasse in Munich, in which we see solitary prostitutes standing around, is a variation on a shot from Straub's *The Bridegroom, the Actress and the Pimp*.

Despite all these influences and quotes, this is still a personal film which differs from two other Munich gangster films made at the time, Lemke's *48 Hours to Acapulco* and Thome's *Detective*; it is much shabbier, more desolate, farther removed from Hollywood. Fassbinder himself said in 1969, "What remains, when you have seen this film, is not that somebody killed six people, that a few murders happened, but that here are poor people, who can't get started, who have been put down, and for whom nothing is possible—who

go farther than we would ever want to go—who have nothing, absolutely no opportunities.” (*Film 8/1969*, p. 20) Franz, Bruno and Joanna are people who want affection and love, but who can only articulate this in helpless ways (as when Joanna informs the police about the robbery). They use gestures from gangster films because they have no language of their own.

In *Love Is Colder than Death*, there occur, almost like interludes, moments of comedy. In a supermarket Bruno and Joanna rip off delicacies in single shot of balletic elegance that goes on for a good four minutes: two movements (that of the two with the shopping cart and that of the camera) interweave, approach each other, separate again, to the accompaniment of a continually repeated, electronically distanced passage from Richard Straus’ *Der Rosenkavalier*. In another scene (with obviously terroristic undertones), Bruno, Franz and Joanna, acting as if they didn’t know one another, confuse a woman selling eyeglasses in a department store with so many questions, complaints and insults that they ultimately succeed in stealing three pairs of sunglasses. This type of comedy sequence can be found occasionally in other Fassbinder films: when Herr R wants to buy a phonograph record, he can’t remember the title, so he tries to sing the melody, totally off-key, of course; especially in *Rio das Mortes* when Michel and Gunther expound their crazy ideas about growing cotton and raising sheep in Peru. Basically, though, Fassbinder’s films are humorless. This has to do with the fact that they are so hermetically complete in themselves. Even if they are sometimes comic, they provoke a laughter that is more pained than liberating.