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Ein bild (An image), Farocki, Harun, 1983

Zwischen zwei kriegten (Between two wars), Farocki, Harun, 1979

Leben--BRD (How to live in the FRG), Farocki, Harun, 1990

Jean-Marie Straub und Daniele Huillet drehen einen film nach Franz Kafkas 'Amerik' (Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet at work on Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'),

Wie man sieht (As you see), Farocki, Harun, 1986

Nicht lösches feuer (Inextinguishable fires), Farocki, Harun, 1969

Was ist los? (What's going on?), Farocki, Harun, 1992

Etwas wird sichtbar (Before your eyes - Vietnam), Farocki, Harun, 1982

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
January 2001

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO PRESENT RETROSPECTIVE OF GERMAN FILMMAKER HARUN FAROCKI

Harun Farocki
February 9-15, 2001
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2

One of the most innovative filmmakers working in Europe today, Harun Farocki challenges the way we perceive images through his dramatic and nonfiction films and videos. Starting with his 1969 analysis of modern warfare, *Inextinguishable Fire*, Farocki's distinctive style joins image and text in a manner that elicits different levels of sociopolitical consciousness. The Farocki retrospective, organized by Sally Berger, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Video, comprises eleven films and five videos, all in German with English subtitles. The Museum of Modern Art holds the largest collection of work by Farocki in the United States, all of which are available through The Museum's Circulating Film and Video Library. The filmmaker will be present to introduce and answer questions following select screenings. *Harun Farocki* at The Museum of Modern Art runs from February 9 through February 15 at the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2.

Avoiding traditional forms of representation, Harun Farocki (German, b.1944) assembles news and industrial reels, historic film footage, and his own dramatic and nonfiction work into narratives that examine the way we perceive and understand an image. His early, groundbreaking film, *Inextinguishable Fire*, looks at the impact and manufacture of the deadly chemical weapon napalm during the Vietnam war and brings to the surface the hidden relationships between labor, industry, and destruction.

Following the theme of employees and the workplace, *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995) considers the implications of an image that has been depicted throughout cinematic history, starting with a historic clip from the Lumière brothers' film of the same title. With *Workers*, Farocki shows several variations of this scene from different films to examine its meaning as a historic and filmic trope.

Images of the World and the Inscription of War (1988), one of Farocki's most renowned works, is a film essay that explores the "blind spot" of the evaluators of aerial footage taken by American bombers over Poland in 1944. The photographs reveal that this "blind spot" of the Allied Forces was the Auschwitz concentration camp, situated next to their intended industrial bombing target. The CIA did not notice this proximity until decades later. The circumstances surrounding the image provoked Farocki's investigation into the obfuscation of this horrific reality.

"Farocki's films consistently dissolve our perceived boundaries by looking more deeply at what is beneath the surface of the making of a film—an object of beauty, an advertising message, or the production of a deadly weapon," remarks Berger, who organized the exhibition.

Regarding his work, Farocki states, "one must work with existing images in such a way that they become new. There are many ways to do this. Mine is to look for buried meanings and to clear away the debris lying on top of the pictures. In so doing, I try not to add ideas to the film; I try to think in film so that the ideas come out of filmic articulation."

Although in keeping with similarly analytic filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, and Alain Resnais, Farocki has had far less exposure in the United States

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than in Europe, where he is renowned. The *Harun Farocki* series coincides with the recent addition of Farocki's films and videos into the Museum's Circulating Film and Video Library, which is the North American distributor of his work.

Harun Farocki is presented in collaboration with the Goethe Institut New York and Deutsches Haus, New York University.

Harun Farocki Screening Schedule:

Friday, February 9, 6:00 p.m.

Wie man sieht (As You See).† 1986. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. Farocki observes, "My film *As You See* is an action-filled feature film. It reflects upon girls in porn magazines to whom names are ascribed and about the nameless dead in mass graves, upon machines that are so ugly that coverings have to be used to protect the workers' eyes, upon engines that are too beautiful to be hidden under the hoods of cars, upon labor techniques that either cling to the notion of the hand and the brain working together or want to do away with it." 72 min.

Friday, February 9, 8:00 p.m.

Thomas Elsaesser, author and professor of film and television at the University of Amsterdam, will introduce the screening and discuss Farocki's work.

Nicht lösches Feuer (Inextinguishable Fire).† 1969. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. The filmmaker has noted, "When we show you pictures of napalm victims, you'll shut your eyes. You will close your eyes to the pictures; then you'll close them to the memory; and then you'll close your eyes to the facts." According to critic Hans Stempel, "Farocki refrains from making any emotional appeal. His point of departure is the following: 'When napalm is burning, it is too late to extinguish it. You have to fight napalm where it is produced: in the factories.' Resolutely, Farocki names names: the producer is Dow Chemical, located in Midland, Michigan, in the United States." 25 min.

Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik (Workers Leaving the Factory).† 1995. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. According to the writer Klaus Gronenborn, the film takes its title from "the first cinema film ever shown in public. For forty-five seconds, this still-surviving sequence depicts workers at the photographic products factory in Lyon owned by the brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière, hurrying, closely packed, out of the shadow of the factory gates and into the afternoon sun. Only here, in departing, are the workers visible as a social group. But where are they going? To a meeting? To the barricades? Or simply home? These questions have preoccupied generations of documentary filmmakers. The space before the factory gates has always been the scene of social conflicts." 36 min.

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Saturday, February 10, 2:00 p.m.

Nicht lösches Feuer (Inextinguishable Fire).† 1969. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. See description above. 25 min.

Etwas wird sichtbar (Before Your Eyes: Vietnam).† 1981. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. Asked why he made war films, Farocki responded in the words of a character in his own film, *Between Two Wars*: “I tried to learn something for the living from the lives of the dying.” In the film, a voiceover suggests that war is basically an experiment, perhaps not unlike film itself. 114 min.

Saturday, February 10, 4:30 p.m.

Ein Bild (An Image).† 1983. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. The director writes, “Four days spent in a studio working on a centerfold photo for *Playboy* magazine provided the subject matter for my film.... The magazine itself deals with culture, cars, a certain lifestyle. Maybe all those trappings are only there to cover up the naked woman. Maybe it’s like with a paper doll. The naked woman in the middle is a sun around which a system revolves: of culture, of business, of living! (It’s impossible to either look or film into the sun.) One can well imagine that the people creating such a picture, the gravity of which is supposed to hold all that, perform their task with as much care, seriousness, and responsibility as if they were splitting uranium.” 25 min.

Jean-Marie Straub und Daniele Huillet bei der Arbeit an einem Film nach Franz Kafkas “Amerika” (Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet at Work on Franz Kafka’s “Amerika”).† 1983. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. The directing technique of Straub and Huillet is so repetitive and detail-obsessed that the performers are made to rehearse the scenes to the point of exhaustion. The unusual nature of this working method makes it well worth documenting. Farocki’s account of these short scenes is unforgettable. In documenting Straub and Huillet’s method, Farocki reveals their resistance to traditional cinema, against which his own films rebel. 26 min.

Saturday, February 10, 5:30p.m.

Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges (Images of the World and the Inscription of War).† 1988. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. Christa Blümlinger, a professor of film in Berlin, has written, “The vanishing point of *Images of the World* is the conceptual image of the ‘blind spot’ of the evaluators of aerial footage of the IG Farben industrial plant taken by the Americans in 1944.... Commentaries and notes on the photographs show that it was only decades later that the CIA noticed what the Allies hadn’t wanted to see: that the Auschwitz concentration camp is depicted next to the industrial bombing target.” 75 min.

Sunday, February 11, 2:00 p.m.

Videogramme einer Revolution (Videograms of a Revolution).† 1992. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki and Andrej Ujica. The Romanian revolution of December 1989 provided Farocki and Ujica an opportunity to found a new media-based form of historiography. As Ujica noted, “Demonstrators occupied the television

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station (in Bucharest) and broadcast continuously for 120 hours, thereby establishing a new historical site: the television studio.... The twentieth century is filmic. But only the video camera, with its heightened possibilities in terms of recording time and mobility, can bring the process of filmifying history to completion. Provided that there is history.” 106 min.

Sunday, February 11, 4:00 p.m.

Was ist los? (What's Up?). † 1991. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki.

The critic Jörg Becker has written, “How a look can be turned toward its goal by grasping and measuring its covetousness is shown in an exemplary fashion in *What's Up?* in a motif depicting a postcard of a painting by Titian in an eye-mark recorder (which tracks the movement of a viewer's eye). Elsewhere, topographical test images of the human brain record stimulus-response patterns during visual trials by measuring brainwaves.... The film binds its subjects into conceptual pairs of various jargons which appear to be laid out side-by-side in a domino-like fashion (‘test/money—money/credit—middle class/beauty...’); an authorial text, condensed into intertitles with the character of pauses, breaks and cuts.” 60 min.

Sunday, February 11, 5:30 p.m.

Der Auftritt (The Appearance). † 1996. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. The head of a Berlin advertising agency proposes a strategy to his potential client, a Danish optical company: “The communication strategy that we ultimately came up with as a basis for any creative act or means of communication has three headings. The first is ‘relevant, not arrogant,’ the second, ‘varied, not uniform,’ and the third is, ‘creative, not pushy.’ These are essentially translations, strategic translations of your basic requirements and your analysis of the market, as well.” 40 min.

Die Bewerbung (The Interview). † 1996. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. The director notes, “In the summer of 1996, we filmed application training courses in which one learns how to apply for a job. School-leavers, university graduates, people who have been retrained, the long-term unemployed, recovered drug addicts, and mid-level managers—all of them are supposed to learn how to market and sell themselves, a skill to which the term “self-management” is applied. The self is perhaps nothing more than a metaphysical hook from which to hang a social identity.” 60 min.

Monday, February 12, 3:00 p.m.

Zwischen zwei Kriegen (Between Two Wars). † 1978. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. The conceptual images in this work revolve around the analysis of the interrelationships among technology, work, the economy, and politics developed by the Marxist economist Alfred Sohn-Rethel on the eve of Hitler's seizure of power. This analysis explains German fascism's war of aggression as a consequence of marketing and overproduction problems in the steel industry. 83 min.

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Monday, February 12, 6:00 p.m.

Schnittstelle (Interface). † 1995. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. The director was commissioned by the Lille Museum of Modern Art to produce a video about his own work. His response was a 1995 installation for two screens; the film developed from the installation. Reflecting on Farocki's documentaries, it examines what it means to work with existing images rather than producing new images. The title plays on the double meaning of Schnitt, which refers both to Farocki's workplace, the editing table, as well as the "human-machine interface," where a person operates a computer using a keyboard and a mouse. 25 min.

Bilder der Welt und Inschrift des Krieges (Images of the World and the Inscription of War). † 1988. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. See description above. 75 min.

Ich glaubte, Gefangene zu sehen (I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts). † 2000. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. Images from the maximum-security prison in Corcoran, California. A surveillance camera shows a pie-shaped segment of the concrete yard where the prisoners, dressed in shorts and mostly shirtless, are allowed to spend half an hour a day. When one convict attacks another, those not involved lay flat on the ground, arms over their heads. They know that when a fight breaks out, the guard calls out a warning and then fires rubber bullets. If the fight continues, the guard shoots real bullets. The pictures are silent, the trail of gun smoke drifts across the picture. The camera and the gun are right next to each other. 25 min. Total running time 125 min.

Tuesday, February 13, 3:00 p.m.

Der Auftritt (The Appearance). † 1996. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. See description above. 40 min.

Stilleben (Still Life). † 1997. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. Just as in the seventeenth century, when the objects of everyday life—food, drink, table decorations—were depicted in still-life paintings, so today the advertising industry produces photographs of goods at great expense and with a high degree of specialization. In this film, Farocki connects these two worlds of pictures. He visited photographers' studios in France, the United States, and Germany and for days observed them at their work. Three documentary sequences resulted, on the arrangement of a cheese platter, of beer mugs, and of a valuable watch. In juxtaposition, Farocki presents an essay in four segments on classical Dutch and Flemish still-life painting. The film suggests the idea of projecting ideas from art history onto advertising and, conversely, that our view of still-life painting may be altered by the ritualistic efforts Farocki discovers in the studios. 56 min.

Tuesday, February 13, 6:00 p.m.

Ein Bild (An Image). † 1983. West Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. See description above. 25 min.

Leben—BRD (How to Live in the FRG). † 1990. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. From a wealth of observations on life in Germany, the commentator Dietrich Leder observes, Farocki assembles "a picture of a society in which childbearing and dying,

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crying and taking care of people, crossing streets and killing are taught and learned in state or private institutions. The real mechanical ballet is not danced by machines but by people, who move to a music that feeds on bombastic phrases from the realms of social work, bureaucracy and therapy.... And yet *How to Live in the FRG* goes beyond such an interpretation. The participants in the games, tests, and therapy sessions are not degraded into pieces of evidence for some theory or other. They retain, to varying degrees, something of their dignity." 83 min.

Thursday, February 15, 3:00 p.m.

Schnittstelle (Interface).† 1995. Germany. Directed by Harun Farocki. 25 min.

Videogramme einer Revolution (Videograms of a Revolution).† 1992. Germany.

Directed by Harun Farocki and Andrej Ujica. 106 min. See descriptions above.

Thursday, February 15, 6:00 p.m.

Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik (Workers Leaving the Factory).† 1995. Germany.

Directed by Harun Farocki. 36 min.

Zwischen zwei Kriegen (Between Two Wars).† 1978. West Germany. Directed by Harun

Farocki. 83 min. See descriptions above.

† Film is available for rental from the Circulating Film and Video Library of The Museum of Modern Art.

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The public may call 212/708-9400 for detailed Museum information

Hours: 10:30 a.m.–5:45 p.m. daily; 10:30 a.m.–8:15 p.m. Friday; Closed Wednesday

Admission: \$10; \$6.50 students with ID and people 65 and over; free for members and children under 16 accompanied by an adult. Friday, 4:30 p.m.–8:15 p.m. pay-what-you-wish

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