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Der starke Ferdinand (Strongman Ferdinand), Kluge, Alexander, 1976

Gelegenheitsarbeit einer sklavin (Part-time work of a domestic slave), Kluge, Alexander, 1973

# ALEXANDER KLUGE

*a Retrospective*

The Goethe Institutes in the United States and Canada





Alexander Kluge, born in 1932 in what is now part of East Germany, is one of the major figures in the renaissance of German cinema during the last twenty-five years. Since the declaration of the Oberhausen Manifesto in early 1962, Kluge has been perhaps the most tireless and effective exponent of the interests of Germany's independent film producers. Kluge may indeed be described as the principal architect of the institutions sustaining "Das Neue Kino" in Germany. In addition, Kluge has been astonishingly productive in a wide variety of other fields. He is a lawyer by training, a teacher and researcher at the Institute for Film Creation in Ulm, an acclaimed writer (the "City of Bremen," the "Fontane" and the "Kleist" prizes, among many others), and a provocative social philosopher in the theoretical tradition of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin.

He is also, of course, an original film stylist whose complexly structured works explore some of the most vital and important themes of post-war German thought: the sharp ruptures and elusive continuities between the German past and present, between individual and institutionalized experience, and between the aesthetic and political domains. To date, he has produced more than three dozen feature-length and short films for the cinema and television. Several have been awarded Germany's highest cinema prizes, and his stature as a filmmaker has been acknowledged with the Silver as well as the Golden Lion awards at the Venice film festival and the Critic's prize at Cannes. Moreover, in dozens of articles and books, he has developed a unique and highly innovative film theory in support of his cinematic practice.

This retrospective exhibition, co-sponsored by Anthology Film Archives and Goethe House New York, is the largest and most comprehensive review of Kluge's filmmaking career to date. The exhibition has been curated by Stuart Liebman, Queens College C.U.N.Y.

#### *For Further Reading:*

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*In my own films I follow the lead of silent movies not for reasons of style, but because it is appropriate to keep the elementary roots of film "radically" in view, so long as the entire structure of the cinema is only a program. The demand for stylistic vigor derives from this. Not because it is a question of vigor for its own sake, but because such vitality responds to elementary spectator interests that in themselves have the vital and unfinished quality of active construction sites. Therefore method: yes, but anti-professional, with every sort of imperfection: a cinéma impur.*

*Alexander Kluge*



**Die Ewigkeit von gestern** (***The Eternity of Yesterday***), 1960/63, b/w, 12 minutes; Script, Direction and Editing: *Peter Schamoni and Alexander Kluge*.

**Lehrer im Wandel** (***Teachers through Change***), 1962/63, b/w, 11 minutes; Script: *Alexander and Karen Kluge*; Cinematography: *Alfred Tichawsky*; Editing and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*.

**Protokoll einer Revolution** (***Protocol of a Revolution***), 1963, b/w, 12 minutes; Script: *Alexander Kluge, Peter Berling*; Cinematography: *Günter Lemmer, Peter A. Wortmann*; Editing: the filmmakers as a collective; Direction: *Günter Lemmer*.

**Porträt einer Bewährung** (***Proven Competence Portrayed***), 1964, b/w, 13 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Wilfried E. Reinke, Günter Hörmann*; Editing: *Beate Mainka*.

**Frau Blackburn, geb. 5 Jan. 1972, wird gefilmt** (***Frau Blackburn, born January 5, 1872 is filmed***), 1967, b/w, 14 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Thomas Mauch*; Editing: *Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus*.

**Feuerlöscher E. A. Winterstein** (***Fireman E. A. Winterstein***), 1968, b/w, 11 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch*; Editing: *Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus*.

**Nachrichten von den Stauffern** (***News from the Hobenstauffens***), 1977, b/w and Eastmancolor; First part: 13 minutes; second part: 11 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge, Maximiliane Mainka*; Cinematography: *Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, Alfred Tichawsky*; Editing: *Maximiliane Mainka*.

These rarely seen shorts, all but the first American premieres, sample Kluge's work in this format over more than fifteen years. They range from an award-winning poetic study of Nazi architecture through a number of film portraits, one of Kluge's favorite genres, to an imaginative reconstruction of twelfth-century life using pictures of daily activities drawn from the imagery of the time. Each is a complex work of art that develops formal strategies characteristic of Kluge's later work. None are based on a story in the conventional sense. Rather, each relies in different ways on an interweaving of fictional and documentary elements, sound and image. *The Eternity of Yesterday*, for example, is a meditation on Germany's Nazi past. Fragments of now-ruined monumental buildings and stadia constructed or imagined by the Nazis are conveyed in soberly composed shots in a mixture of representational modes: still photos, sketches, drawings, building plans. Camera movements, freed from all narrative motivation, range across and through the now-silent spaces. Suspended over the mute stones, part of the rubble of history, is a disjunctive sound collage—piano music in a chromatic idiom, snatches of martial music, citations from the Auschwitz Commandant Höss's diaries and Hitler's speeches, etc.—and the “friction” between the elements aims to shock spectators into remembering events they would rather forget. *Teachers through Change* is a suite of four short portraits of teachers whose lives are profoundly affected by historical events. Each laconic life story is told through a series of old photographs separated by titles. Some are progressive educators victimized by the Nazis; one is a vicious opportunist who benefits from the fascist takeover. Their lives are implicitly contrasted with those of the ordinary educational bureaucrats today whom we see in cinema-verité footage taken at a teacher's convention and school meetings. The interruptions in the biographies figure the larger interruptions history makes in the lives of human beings, also a theme of the book of stories, *Lebensläufe [Curricula Vitae]* Kluge published the same year. *Proven*

*Competence Portrayed* recounts the fictionalized life of a police officer who loyally served no less than five very different German political regimes during his years of active duty. *Frau Blackburn* is a gently comic study of Kluge's grandmother. Kluge is only credited with the script of *Protocol of a Revolution*, a simulated television documentary on a revolution in a South American country, but the film is clearly consistent with his emerging aesthetic. Prefaced by and concluding with a distancing tracking shot into and away from a television set, Kluge mimics the T.V. journalism genre's freedom to move from apparently objective shots of crowds at rallies, tanks in action, and so forth to interviews and “behind the scenes” accounts of torture and the dictator's private life, often illustrated with an exaggerated pictorial verve and luridly narrated by a reporter's off-screen voice. Since the documentary shots are often staged (although “authentic” footage from actual documentaries is also used) and the fictionalized sections portray types of events that actually do occur in such circumstances, the rigid categories of fiction and documentary, reality and fantasy, public and private begin to blur. The dissolution of these categories would later become a key point in Kluge's creative and theoretical agenda.

*Making films is strictly anti-academic, an insolent occupation, historically grounded but inconsistent. In the present situation there is plenty of refined entertainment and well-groomed problems too, as if the cinema was a stroll along the garden paths in a park. It is known that observing the prohibition about leaving the garden paths has caused German revolutions to fail. One must not duplicate something so refined. Actually, children would rather go into the bushes and prefer to play in the sand or in a junkyard. Happiness, says Freud, is the fulfillment of childhood wishes. I am convinced that film has something to do with happiness. Film = movie = something constantly moving forward despite all those who would stop it.*

A.K





**Abschied von gestern (Anita G.)** (*Yesterday Girl*), 1965/66, b/w, 88 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch*; Editing: *Beate Mainka*.

Kluge's prize-winning first feature is based on a legal case he encountered as an attorney and which he initially fictionalized in his book, *Curricula Vitae*. It concerns Anita G. (splendidly played by the filmmaker's sister Alexandra in her screen debut), a young Jewish refugee from the East, who wanders around the Germany of the *Wirtschaftswunder* in search of work, a home and love. Her plight is directly connected to the ethos of the 1950s when legitimate pride in the country's material reconstruction suppressed the sad fact that Germany's moral reconstruction had failed to keep pace. A judge rejects the obvious possibility that Anita's experiences under the Nazis and later under the Communists might have played a role in her delinquency and sentences her to jail for petty theft. Well-meaning but uncomprehending social workers compound her sense of alienation and provoke her to flee. Affairs with several lovers leave her alone, pregnant and in prison, once again a victim of the Germans' indifference. That the past, especially Germany's recent terrible history, continues to burden the Federal Republic's present becomes the film's major theme, strikingly represented by the meandering narrative as well as by a series of montage digressions figuring Anita's fearful dreams and memories of a happier childhood.

**Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: Ratlos** (*Artists under the Big Top: Perplexed*), 1967, b/w and color, 103 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Günter Hörmann, Thomas Mauch*; Editing: *Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus*.

*Artists under the Big Top* has sometimes been criticized as a disordered and despairing film. There is little truth to this assessment. The film *was* improvised without any preconceived script during a time of considerable political turmoil in Germany; its narrative *is* disconcertingly elusive; and few of the conventional rules of cinematic construction are observed. But these "amateurish" features are deliberate strategies designed to articulate the film's unusual subject: an allegory of the perplexing situation artists, especially filmmakers, face in the era of late capitalism. Like the young German filmmakers, Leni Peickert, the heroine, wishes to "reform" her art, the circus, to make it portray its subjects more authentically and abandon its celebration of man's omnipotence. Despite an "inheritance" from a "socialist research institute in Frankfurt" and some rather sinister pointers from a marketing specialist, she fails and ends up studying television techniques (a career trajectory remarkably similar to Kluge's own). The circus's series of self-contained acts becomes a model for *Artists's* structure. Each unit is only tenuously tied to the others by a shared concern with spectacle, which the "critical theory" of Kluge's mentors in the Frankfurt School branded as a typically modern and particularly insidious method of social control. The absence of a unified, homogenizing narrative forces spectators to reflect on these issues. Its variety-show format becomes the basis for a counter-spectacle that stretches the spectator's imagination and creative reasoning powers to their limits.

*At every point, (1) during the shooting, (2) during processing at the editing table, and (3) during the presentation to an audience, film is a different mechanical construction for the generation of temporality which otherwise would never occur naturally in society. It is a machine for the production of time.*

A.K







*A documentary film is shot with three cameras: 1) the camera in the technical sense; 2) the filmmaker's mind; and 3) the generic patterns of the documentary film, which are founded on the expectations of the audience that patronizes it. For this reason one cannot simply say that the documentary film portrays facts. It photographs isolated facts and assembles from them a coherent set of facts according to three divergent schemata. All remaining possible facts and factual contexts are excluded. The naïve treatment of documentation therefore provides a unique opportunity to concoct fables. In and of itself, the documentary is no more realistic than the feature film . . .*

A.K.

**Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin (*Part-Time Work of a Domestic Slave*)**, 1973, b/w, 91 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Thomas Mauch*; Editing: *Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus*.

Roswitha Bronski runs an illegal abortion practice so that she can afford to have more children. For Kluge, her actions epitomize the contradictions and selfishness of contemporary society and especially of its basic unit, the family. The film recounts Roswitha's commendable, if often misguided, efforts to change her life and the society in which she lives. When her practice is closed by the police, she becomes a political activist. Her attempts to raise the consciousness of local newspapers fails as do her efforts to encourage militancy among the workers at the factory where her husband works as a chemist. He is fired, but Roswitha continues her campaign by selling sausages wrapped in political pamphlets. Like Anita G. and Leni Peickert, Roswitha must navigate a difficult path through existing conditions in the Federal Republic. Unlike them, she is neither a victim nor a utopian reformer, but a dreamer committed to practical action. As such, she is in many respects the most resourceful and sympathetic of Kluge's heroines, a kind of "Mother Courage" played out in a minor key. She has not been perceived this way, however, by feminist critics of the film. They objected—with considerable justice—to what they regarded as Kluge's condescending treatment of Roswitha (once again played by his sister Alexandra), particularly to his frequent mocking voiceovers. The controversy provoked Kluge to develop his theory of "antagonistic realism" in discursive terms as a response to their objections.



**In Gefahr und grösster Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod (*In Danger and Dire Distress the Middle of the Road Leads to Death*)**, 1974, b/w, 90 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*, *Edgar Reitz*; Cinematography: *Edgar Reitz*, *Alfred Hürmer*, *Günter Hörmann*; Editing: *Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus*.

Kluge has often acknowledged the many ways his films are stylistically indebted to the silent cinema. With *In Danger* he revives the tradition of the "city symphony" from the 1920s to construct a disquieting portrait of contemporary Frankfurt as an ominous anticipation of Germany's urban future. Kluge and his co-director Edgar Reitz won the *Bundesfilmpreis* for this extraordinary feature which interweaves fictional and documentary sequences to create a unique hybrid. The "real" events are mediated by Rita Müller-Eisert, a lyrical spy in the service of the DDR, and Inge Maier, a prostitute and thief. Like many Kluge characters, they are not rounded and three-dimensional but allegorical figures for the practice of watching, stealing and compilation that animate the film. They promenade through a series of unstaged events—the Fasching carnival, a meeting of young entrepreneurs, a convention of astrophysicists, and, most spectacularly, the demonstrations and street fights following the evictions of squatters from Frankfurt's old West End homes to make way for commercial skyscrapers—and thereby subvert the established boundary between the feature and documentary film genre. An astonishing sound and music montage, always a distinctive feature of Kluge's films, mixes portentous Wagner orchestral interludes, bouncy tangos, *La Traviata* excerpts, sentimental "evergreen" melodies, several different voiceovers and live sound to create a polyphonic contrast to the grainy, "authentic," black and white images of everyday life in the Federal Republic's most modern big city.

**Der Starke Ferdinand (*Strong Man Ferdinand*)**, 1975/76, Eastmancolor, 97 minutes; Script and direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Thomas Mauch*, *Martin Schäfer*; Editing: *Heidi Genée*, *Agape von Dorstewitz*.

Since 1973, Kluge's theoretical writing about contemporary society has stressed the emergence of potentially dangerous new social spheres controlled by business and industry which exist outside public scrutiny. In *Strong Man Ferdinand*, he explores one such space through the tragicomic story of Ferdinand Rieche, an ex-policeman who dreams of becoming a CIA operative. Rieche is hired as the security director of an industrial plant. Fanatically devoted to order, if not to the law, he zealously constructs a command post inside the factory, organizes a paramilitary force, conducts combat exercises, stages raids on his own facility, and detains employees suspected of contacts with competitors. Dogged surveillance of company officers eventually leads him to uncover a plan to sell the business and to arrest a director for "treason." Fired, Rieche attempts to assassinate a government minister to demonstrate how necessary security officers are. Perhaps



more than any other of Kluge's films, *Strong Man Ferdinand* tries to reconcile theoretical observations with mass appeal. The film is Kluge's most accessible. The narrative is handled far more conventionally than is customary in Kluge's work, and no radical formal innovations are attempted. But the character of Rieche, as performed by the popular television star Heinz Schubert, is both poignant and chilling. He is a notable addition to the portrait gallery of utopian dreamers who populate Kluge's cinema.





**Deutschland im Herbst** (*Germany in Autumn*), 1978, b/w and Eastmancolor, 123 minutes; (a collective film) Script: *Heinrich Böll, Peter Steinbach and the directors*; Direction: *Alf Brustellin, Bernhard Sinkel, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Maximiliane Mainka, Peter Schubert, Edgar Reitz, Katja Rupé, Hans Peter Cloos, Volker Schlöndorff*; Cinematography: *Michael Ballhaus, Günter Hörmann, Jürgen Jürges, Bodo Kessler, Dietrich Lohmann, Werner Lüring, Colin Mounier, Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein*; Editing: *Heidi Genée, Mülle Götz-Dickopp, Juliane Lorenz, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Tanja Schmidbauer, Christine Warnck*.

The kidnapping of prominent ex-Nazi and Mercedes-Benz executive Hans-Martin Schleyer, the hijacking and rescue of a Lufthansa airliner, the suspicious deaths of the leaders of the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany's highest-security prison, and the threat of government crackdowns against left-wing intellectuals during the Fall of 1977 are the political background to this important collective work. Many politically concerned filmmakers, including Kluge, Fassbinder and Schlöndorff, resolved to make a film, necessarily without government subsidy, exploring many of the ramifications of the events excluded from government- and right-wing-controlled news coverage. Quickly shot by several teams working independently without a comprehensive plan, the film's final form was primarily determined by Kluge and his long-time editor, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. They synthesized newsreels from Germany's Nazi past, quotations from a television production of *Antigone*, popular illustrations, mock 1920s agit-prop films, and fictional sketches reflecting the pervasive mood of paranoia with documentary footage from Schleyer's and the terrorists' funerals to create a collage unified by many subtle thematic and visual echoes. Their purpose is not to provide a propagandistic political analysis, but to open striking historical as well as emotional perspectives on current events to help German spectators work through an exceptionally difficult national crisis.

**Die Patriotin** (*The Female Patriot*), 1979, color and b/w, 121 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, Thomas Mauch, Werner Lüring, Günter Hörmann*; Editing: *Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus*.

Gabi Teichert, a history teacher in Hessen as well as an amateur archaeologist and alchemist, has a problem. German history, is not "positive enough" and cannot be taught in a patriotic version. Germany's history has also caused difficulties for the surviving knee of the late Corporal Wieland whose shattered remains now lie in a bunker near Stalingrad. As a result of the war, it tells us, it is now only a vestigial part of a much smaller country. By introducing these eccentric mediating figures at the very beginning of his film, Kluge signals its theme: a meditation about the possibility of a history of Germany "from the bottom up," one that records the singularity of events and avoids the idealizing, falsely totalizing perspective of histories written "from above." Gabi Teichert's investigations transform contemporary Germany into an archaeological site whose ruins are sifted for the marginal, the idiosyncratic, the forgotten and the repressed. Familiar continuities—fairytale, educational policies, political conventions—are gradually dissolved as less familiar constellations from the past, marked by faults and hetero-

geneous layers, come into view. The fissured text of *Die Patriotin* itself becomes a construction site—one of Kluge's favorite metaphors—on which spectators are provocatively invited to build their own counter-histories.

*We are frequently asked in discussions why in our films we cast women in the roles of exceptionally simplified or down-trodden people; whether we aren't afraid of accusations that, because we are male directors, we are making fun of women. But we have a clear rationale. In addition to the alienation underlying all labor power in society, women are even more suppressed, and it is perfectly legitimate to begin by investigating the point in society where suppression is greatest. Also, these roles are often not feminine in the sense of sexual difference, rather they are ciphers for suppressed qualities that also occur in non-females. . . . The actual problem is therefore not a question of legitimacy: who shall be permitted to deal with feminine themes. Or is there really some sort of private ownership of this theme by particular groups because they themselves are fighting and are compelled to suffer this suppression on their own bodies? Rather, the problem is to what extent the experience of suppression can be comprehended by those who are not being suppressed in the same way. The ability, not the legitimacy, is what is in question.*

A.K

**Der Kandidat** (*The Candidate*), 1979/80, Eastmancolor and b/w, 129 minutes; (a collective film) Script: *Stefan Aust, Alexander von Eschwege, Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff*; Direction: *Stefan Aust, Alexander von Eschwege, Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff*; Cinematography: *Igor Luther, Werner Lüring, Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, Thomas Mauch, Bodo Kessler*; Editing: *Inge Behrens, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Jane Sperr, Mülle Goetz-Dickopp*.

The concept of the "Autoren-film," of films produced and directed by an individual to express his or her vision of the world, dominated thinking about cinema during the first fifteen years of New German Cinema. The political crises of the late sixties and early seventies, however, revealed what Kluge called the "infantile disorders" of this idea: the filmmaker's isolation both from a mass public and his colleagues. As a remedy, Kluge expounded the notion of "the cooperative film," a pooling of resources and ideas which would enable filmmakers, relatively powerless when working alone, to communicate more promptly and effectively about political and social issues. *Germany in Autumn* became the first successful venture of this sort. *Der Kandidat*, a group effort by some of the contributors to the earlier film, was explicitly conceived as a political exposé of Franz Joseph Strauss, ex-Defense Minister, ex-Interior Minister, and reigning Minister-President of Bavaria who was running for the Federal Chancellorship in 1980. Stefan Aust uses old newsreels to underscore the many follies of Strauss's career, including the notorious "Spiegel Affair" of 1962 in which Strauss illegally authorized a raid of the liberal weekly's editorial offices. Home movies, contemporary interviews and sophisticated journalistic reports on Strauss's political rallies are synthesized to create a multifaceted assessment of a candidate the filmmakers regard with considerable anxiety. No firm conclusions are drawn, but acute questions about Strauss's fitness to lead the nation are raised and may have contributed to his electoral defeat.





**Krieg und Frieden (War and Peace)**, 1982/83, color, 120 minutes; (a collective film); Script: *Heinrich Böll and the directors*; Direction: *Stefan Aust, Axel Engstfeld, Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff*; Cinematography: *Igor Luther, Werner Lüring, Thomas Mauch, Bernd Mosblech, Franz Rath*; Editing: *Dagmar Hirtz, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Carola Mai, Barbara von Weitershausen*.

The German government's decision to install American Pershing II and Cruise missiles in 1982 provoked widespread protests in the Federal Republic. Kluge again joined with several colleagues to make a third collective film charting the course of the demonstrations and exploring the implications of living on the edge of total annihilation. As in his other films, Kluge mixes cinematic modes to assemble an extraordinarily diverse, often incisive, at times heavy handed, sometimes maddeningly oblique range of perspectives on the issues. Schlöndorff contributes a sequence in which President Reagan and other Western leaders fly to Versailles for a summit meeting. A red carpet is ceremoniously rolled out as each arrives. Fountains are turned on as the helicopters touch down, and turned off immediately after they depart. No words are needed to underscore the disturbing point that such meetings are spectacles for public consumption, not occasions for serious deliberations. The inventor of the neutron bomb tells an interviewer that his children regard his invention "with tremendous indifference." Excerpts from a CBS documentary on Hattenbach, a small West German border town, which also happens to be ground zero in NATO's strategic planning, are accompanied by the Jello and beer commercials that lend a sense of normalcy to the lunatic prospect of nuclear war. To these chilling documents Kluge adds sequences from old films and paintings that underscore the delusions of military conquest and highlight the primeval aggressive drives that will continue to fuel them.



**Die Macht der Gefühle (The Power of Emotion)**, 1983, b/w and color, 115 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Werner Lüring, Thomas Mauch*; Editing: *Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Carola Mai*.

For Kluge, Hollywood cinema, like nineteenth-century opera, is a "power-house of emotions" that produces tragic results. According to Kluge, our feelings, which are infallible and "always believe in a happy end," are deceived by Hollywood's illusory images and the streamlined logic of its plots and seduced into the service of technocratic (un)reason. *Die Macht der Gefühle* ruminates on these notions and on ways the undeniable power of emotions can be redeemed through and for cinema. In more than two dozen episodes and sequences, the perceptual and conceptual underpinnings of opera and the movies are subverted. Technical devices such as fast-motion or colorization contest the authority of "realistic" images of the world. Impossible stories—a murdered Yugoslav factory manager is miraculously brought back to life by two petty criminals—defy all ordinary dramatic logic. Stage tricks are unmasked and one of the most poignant moments in opera—the mistaken killing of Rigoletto's daughter—is coolly analyzed by a wardrobe mistress. On the other hand, the film develops a web of references and allusions even

more mysterious and hard to grasp than is usually the case in Kluge's films. The radical openness of its structure stimulates spectators to discriminate between feelings, make intuitive distinctions, and trace emotional as well as rational connections in order to compose "the films in their heads" which Kluge regards as the necessary path to cinematic enlightenment.

**Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit (The Blind Director)**, 1985, color, 113 minutes; Script and Direction: *Alexander Kluge*; Cinematography: *Thomas Mauch, Werner Lüring, Hermann Fabr, Judith Kaufmann*; Editing: *Jane Seitz*.

Completely translated, the title of Kluge's twenty-eighth film—"The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time"—summarizes a concern animating his artistic practice since the beginning. Kluge fears that our experience of time, our ability to remember and to imagine the future, is being liquidated—or scrapped, to use one of his favorite metaphors—by a society fixated on the immediate demands and gratifications established by the mass media, "the consciousness industry." The dispersed narrative focus and atomized imagery of Kluge's literature and cinema are attempts to counter this flattening of temporal experience by providing audiences with complex, multifaceted time constructions that

simultaneously offer therapy and training. *The Blind Director* explicitly thematizes this issue. An anthology of vignettes portrays emblematic contemporary characters entirely consumed by their present work: rushing business executives, calculating foster mothers, and obsessive computer programmers. The last story, about a director who goes blind during the filming of his sixty-third feature but continues to shoot his film anyway, ironically poses an alternative. The director can only "see" things that either were or have never been, but these memories or imaginings are so vivid and satisfying that he happily survives his loss of the perceptible world. The figure of the director is itself a sly composite portrait: of Kluge himself superimposed on that of his friend and mentor, the philosopher Theodor Adorno, who used to mock the cinema by saying that he loved to go to the movies, the only thing that bothered him were the images on the screen.

*It must be possible to represent reality as the historical fiction it is. Reality is a paper-tiger. The individual does encounter it, as fate. It is not fate, however, but a creation of the labor of generations of human beings, who all the time wanted and still want something entirely different. In more than one respect, reality is simultaneously real and unreal.*

A.K.





SPONSORS	PARTNERS	DATES	INFORMATION	
Goethe House New York	Anthology Firm Archives	October 18–30, 1988	(212) 744-8310	Founded in 1971, <b>Anthology Film Archives</b> is an international center for the preservation, study and exhibition of independent, avant-garde, and classic film and video. In addition to its film preservation program and daily screenings, it offers seminars and lectures on the theory and history of film and video; publishes works of scholarly research; and maintains an extensive reference library to serve film students, scholars, universities and museums across the country and abroad.
Goethe Institute Ann Arbor	Cleveland Cinematheque	November 14–19	(313) 996-8600	
Goethe Institute Chicago	Film Center of the Art Institute of Chicago and Walker Art Center Minneapolis	November 11–December 17 November 9–30	(312) 329-0915	
Goethe Institute Atlanta	in house	January 4–26, 1989	(404) 892-2388	The Goethe Institutes of North America are branches of Goethe-Institut, Munich. Since its founding in 1951, the Institute, through its 135 centers across the world, has promoted German language study abroad and the advancement of international cultural cooperation. The exhibition of both classic and particularly contemporary German films has been a vital feature of its programs for more than a decade.
Goethe Institute Toronto	Art Gallery of Ontario	January 30–February 18	(416) 924-3327	
Goethe Institute Montreal	Cinematheque Quebecoise	February 20–March 6	(514) 499-0159	
Goethe Institute Boston	Museum of Fine Arts, Harvard University Amherst College	March 9–23	(617) 262-6050	<i>In the human mind, facts and desires are never separated. To a certain degree, desire is the form in which realities are assimilated. Desires are no less real than facts. They are mainly rooted in the fact that the sum total of libidinal experience is learned in association with persons and archetypes during childhood. Desire wishes to reestablish these personal relationships in the form of play-acting or plots and divides the world up into human relationships.</i>
Goethe Institute Houston	Rice Media Center	March 27–April 8	(713) 528-2787	
Goethe Institute San Francisco	Pacific Film Archive and UC Berkeley	April 4–May 26 (joint dates with Los Angeles)	(415) 391-0370	
Goethe Institute Los Angeles	U. of California Film Archive		(213) 854-0993	
Goethe Institute Vancouver	Pacific Cinematheque	May 29–June 8	(604) 732-3966	

Alexander Kluge