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STRONG-MAN FERDINAND
(Der Starke Ferdinand)

Director/Producer: Alexander Kluge
Screenplay: Alexander Kluge
Photography: (colour) Thomas Mauch
Editor: Heidi Genée
Music: Emil Waldteufel

Cast:

Ferdinand Rieche,
plant security chief.....Heinz Schubert
Gertie Kahlmann,
Waitress.....Verena Rudolph
Kniebeling,
Rieche's friend.....Joachim Hackethal
Ganter,
chairman of the board of a
major industrial corporation...Heinz Schimmelpfennig
Wilutzki,
vice-chairman.....Gert Günther Hoffmann
Kobras,
captain of detectives.....Siegfried Wischnewski
Rosotschke,
Rieche's deputy.....Erich Kleiber
Engineer Haferkamp.....Daphne Wagner
Cabinet minister.....Hans Faber
Reporter.....Klaus Altmann
and
Police detectives,
Criminals,
Plant security guards,
Neo-Nazi-Bouncers at political meetings.
Unauthorized persons.

1975

West Germany

Kairos Film Produktion

Bio-filmography of Alexander KLUGE:

KLUGE was born in Halberstadt, 14 February 1932. Trained as a lawyer; still practises law, and is a Professor of Law at the University of Frankfurt. Began making short films in 1960. Has published prolifically: books include the 'documentary' novels The Battle and Attendance List for a Funeral, and a study of the organisational structures of bourgeois and proletarian experience, Public Life and Experience, co-authored with Oskar Negt.

Films:

1960 BRUTALITÄT IN STEIN (co-director: Peter Schamoni)
1961 AMORE (short)
RENNEN (short)
RENNFAHRER (short)
1963 LEHRER IM WANDEL (short)
1965 PORTRAT EINER BEWAHRUNG (short)
1966 ABSCHIED VON GESTERN/YESTERDAY GIRL
1967 FRAU BLACKBURN WIRD GEFILMT (short)
1968 ARTISTEN IN DER ZIRKUSKUPPEL: RATLOS/ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE
BIG TOP: DISORIENTATED

P.T.O.

Films cont:

1971 DER GROSSE VERHAU/THE BIG MESS
1973 GELEGENHEITSARBEIT EINER SKLAVIN/OCCASIONAL WORK OF A FEMALE SLAVE
1974 IN GEFAHR UND GROSSTER NOT BRINGT DER MITTELWEG DEN TOD/ THE
MIDDLE OF THE ROAD IS A VERY DEAD END (co-director: Edgar Reitz)
1975 DER STARKE FERDINAND/STRONG-MAN FERDINAND

Extracts from an interview with Alexander Kluge:

You use the phrase "materialistic aesthetics", and you also talk about your films as attempts to describe something which doesn't exist. And in order to make this description, you have at your disposal the materialist aesthetic...

That's not a contradiction. Materialist aesthetics means, in the first place, a way of organising collective social experience. This collective social experience exists with films or without them. It has existed for about three hundred thousand years, and been "actualised" for only about three hundred of them, because social development grew faster. The invention of film, of the cinema, is only an industrial answer to the film which has its basis in the film in people's minds. The stream of associations which is the basis of thinking and feeling - logic or geometry or whatever, are not the basis - this stream of associations has all the qualities of cinema. And everything you can do with your mind and your senses, you can do in the cinema.

You could understand film history as merely the collected ideas of different auteurs or entrepreneurs. But it's not the basis, it's an abstraction, it's the median. Whereas the real mass medium is the people themselves, not the derivatives like cinema or television. And if you have a conception of film which means that it's the spectators who produce their films, and not the authors who produce the screen-play for the spectators, then you have a materialistic theory.

For example, there's a street in Frankfurt where I can observe a very high concentration of porno cinemas. And the immigrant workers who watch the very bad and anti-erotic pornography there see quite different films from the ones I see. Because they produce them as tender, erotic films, even though the films are hostile to eroticism. They change the films through the production of their own minds.

Another example. Dovzhenko made films in which the spectators could contribute their own experience; the films are enriched by the spectators' experience. And we call this position materialist because it thinks from the bottom up, from the spectator and the cinema in his mind, to the cinema on the screen. The cinema on the screen is only a way of organising experience that already exists before the film is made. The question of whether or not you consider the film as "good" depends on whether you believe in art, with all the consequences of the dis-oriented artists under the big top; or whether you're concerned with the development of minds. And minds are rather flexible, not very fragile, and they always try to find exits.

The obvious question is how you reconcile your theory with the inescapable fact that as a film-maker you're working as an individual. You may be organising existing material, you may be making a collage; but you are also making a selection.

Of course "I know that I know nothing." Brecht's Socrates said that. I think one can only be cautious, even passive to some extent. If the film is active, the spectator becomes passive; that's a very general rule. Hollywood films try to persuade the audience to give up their own experience and follow the more organised experience of the film. In my opinion, the opposite is right.

.....from an interview by Jan Dawson, published in Film Comment

Supporting Programme:

SYMBIOSIS - approx. 3 mins. An animation film
by David Cox with the assistance of Ken Stephenson
and David Campbell. Canada 1976.

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