

Document Citation

Title	Berlin exiles: Frau im mond
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Pacific Film Archive</i>
Date	1984 Sep 30
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	Wangenheim, Gustav von Fischinger, Oskar Courant, Curt Lang, Fritz (1890-1976), Vienna, Austria Vallentin, Hermann Zilzer, Max
Film Subjects	Frau im mond (Woman in the moon), Lang, Fritz, 1929

BERLIN EXILES
Presented in Cooperation
with The Goethe Institute,
San Francisco

PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE
University Art Museum
Berkeley

September 30, 1984

BERLIN EXILES:
Frau im Mond (1929)

Woman in The Moon

FRITZ LANG (1890-1976)
Director

Lang studied architecture and painting in Vienna, which came to have a decisive influence on his motion picture work. An encounter with Joe May in 1917 brought Lang his first screenwriting assignments and work as an actor. In 1919 he directed for the first time, in Halbblut. He was also supposed to stage Das Kabinett Des Dr. Caligari (for producer Erich Pommer) but the success of the first part of Die Spinnen forced him to take up finishing the second part, and he handed Caligari to Robert Wiene. In 1920 he started working with screenwriter Thea von Harbou, and they soon married.

Lang himself confirmed the topical references of the two-part film Dr. Mabuse, Der Spieler (1922), which he called 'a document of its time.' In Metropolis (1926) he brought an urgent, oppressive futuristic vision to the movies. Lang's cities were oppressive before actual metropolises frightened us, as one critic notes. M was Lang's first sound picture and an immediate masterpiece in his independent use of this new technique. In Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse (1933), he laid the beginning terror of the rapidly growing Nazi movement in Germany almost completely bare. This film was banned after 1933.

When the Nazis nevertheless offered him the leading position in German films--Hitler admired Die Nibelungen and Metropolis--Lang fled overnight to Paris. There Lilium was created. But by the following year he had received a contract with MGM.

For a long time, Fritz Lang's American pictures had to fight a prejudice that considered them artistically inferior to his German production. The decisive new evaluation did not happen in the U.S. or in Germany but in France, where Lang's American films (Fury, You Only Live Once, The Woman in the Window, et al) were the ones taken as models by the directors of the New Wave. Godard said laconically, "Fritz Lang is cinema."

After his last Hollywood film, Beyond a Reasonable Doubt (1956), Lang returned to Germany where he made Der Tiger von Eschnapur et al.

--Adapted from German Film Directors in Hollywood, The Goethe Institute

CURT COURANT (1895?-)
Cinematographer

One of the finest European cinematographers of the 1920s and 1930s, Courant began his career during World War I on Italian as well as German films. He left Germany in 1933 and worked in France, England and the U.S. A key figure in the French poetic realism movement of the 1930s (e.g. Le Jour se lève, directed by Carne, and La Bête humaine, directed by Renoir), he also is known for his work on Hitchcock's The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934) and Chaplin's Monsieur Verdoux (1947).

OSKAR FISCHINGER (1900-1967)
Special Effects

An avant-garde painter and a pioneer in abstract cinema, Oskar Fischinger began creating visual interpretations of music and poetry as early as 1920 with the help of a wax-cutting machine of his own design. In the late twenties, his studies gained impact when they could be presented with a jazz or classical score. Lang's Frau im Mond was one of Fischinger's few commercial ventures of this period. In 1933, he began exploring the use of color with a process he helped to develop, and in 1935 he won a prize at the Venice Film Festival for Composition in Blue. Invited by Paramount to Hollywood, Fischinger emigrated to the U.S. in 1936. There he continued his abstract experiments and worked on a few commercial projects (including The Big Broadcast of 1937 and Disney's Fantasia, though his designs for the Bach "Toccatina and Fugue" segment were ultimately rejected as too abstract). He won the Grand Prix at the Brussels Exhibition of 1949 for the film Motion Painting No. 1, a geometric design interpretation of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3.

GUSTAV VON WANGENHEIM (1895-1975)
In the role of the engineer Hans Windegger

A student of Max Reinhardt, von Wangenheim wrote and staged a number of politically outspoken pieces. He began to act in films in the 1920s, working for Lubitsch, Murnau, Lang and other key German directors. In 1933 he emigrated, via France, to the USSR. There, he was the director and artistic consultant for the Deutschen Theaters Kolonne Links. In 1945, he returned to Germany, where he was director and actor in the Berlin Deutsches Theater (East Berlin).

HERMANN VALLENTIN (1873-1945)

A stage and screen actor in Berlin, Vallentin embodied the role of the "established gentleman"--managers and fathers-in-law--and tended to caricature this type with a pointed wit. The brother of well known actress Rosa Valetti, Vallentin died in exile in Tel Aviv.

MAX ZILZER (1868-1943)

Born in Budapest, Zilzer was a stage actor and was engaged with the Deutsches Theater in the U.S. in the early 1900s. A screen actor since 1913, he worked with such directors as Lubitsch, Dupont, Lang and Hochbaum. He was arrested by the Nazis in 1943 and placed in the Jewish hospital in Berlin, where, according to the official pronouncement, he died of a heart attack. He was the father of the actor Wolfgang Zilzer (in America, Paul Andor).

Notes by Judy Bloch (Pacific Film Archive) and Deborah Griggs (Goethe Institute)
Research and Translation (PFA): Maria McVarish and Diane Gysbers