

Press Release



“After Winter Comes Spring - Films Presaging the Fall of the Wall” A Special Series on the End of the Cold War at the Berlinale 2009

In autumn 2009, the peaceful revolution and the fall of the Wall will celebrate their 20th anniversary. To mark the occasion, the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Deutsche Kinemathek have initiated a special series entitled “After Winter Comes Spring - Films Presaging the Fall of the Wall”. The project will be launched at the 59th Berlin International Film Festival.

In fifteen feature-length blocks, “After Winter Comes Spring” will present films made in both Germanys and Eastern Europe during the last decade of the Cold War - films that convey a sense of the radical changes to come. Some of these works were made in the official studios of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union. Others were realized more at the fringes, e.g., by underground artists. Curated by Claus Löser, this selection of feature and documentary works, as well as animated, short and experimental films includes big names from film history - e.g., Krzysztof Kieślowski and Jan Švankmajer - and lesser-known filmmakers. Their works formulate the hope of a political or economic opening and, above all, artistic freedom. They pushed boundaries in both form and content, while boldly articulating the need for reform.

Some of these films will be screening in Germany for the first time: for instance, Piotr Szulkin's initially banned fatalistic science-fiction parable about daily life under a dictatorship, *Wojna światów - następne stulecie* (*The War of the Worlds - Next Century*, Poland 1981/83); or András Jeles' surreal portrait of manners from Budapest, *A kis Valentinó* (*Little Valentino*, Hungary 1979). Petar Popzlatev's *Az, Grafinyata* (*The Countess*, Bulgaria 1989) tells of a young woman's life, caught between drugs and the psychiatric ward, and in doing so focuses on areas marginalized by socialism. Alongside these films, audiences will be able to rediscover Helke Misselwitz' award-winning DEFA documentary *Winter adé* (*After Winter Comes Spring*, GDR 1988); Michael Klier's farewell to the “Golden West”, *Überall ist es besser, wo wir nicht sind* (*The Grass Is Greener Everywhere Else*, FRG 1988); and the Soviet cult film made a year before the Wall fell, Rashid Nugmanov's wild mix of genres, *Igla* (*The Needle*, USSR 1988). One of the most famous names in the series is Krzysztof Kieślowski. His disturbing interpretation of the Fifth Commandment, *Krótki film o zabijaniu* (*A Short Film About Killing*, Poland 1987), will be showing; as will Gábor Bódy's last film, *Kutya éji dala* (*The Dog's Night Song*, Hungary 1983), a post-modern vivisection of Hungarian society. In *Panelstory aneb Jak se rodí sídliště* (*Prefab Story*, ČSSR 1979/81), on the other hand, Věra Chytilová takes an

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Press Release

amusing look at a prefab housing development that is under construction and its residents.

Three sets of short, animated and experimental films (14 titles in all) explore diverse artistic and political possibilities under totalitarian rule: for instance, Thomas Heise's *Wozu denn über diese Leute einen Film?* (*Why Make a Film About People Like Them?* GDR 1980) gives a daring portrait of the petty-criminal milieu in East Berlin. Honoured with many awards, Yuri Norstein's animated film *Skazka skazok* (*Tale of Tales*, USSR 1979) ponders world history and individual experience. In Jan Švankmajer's *Možnosti dialogu* (*Dimensions of Dialogue*, ČSSR 1982), communication breaks down and violence escalates. And János Vető's *Trabantómánia* (Hungary 1982) documents a boisterous phenomenon of the 1980s that also plays a role in other films of the series: punk rock.

"After Winter Comes Spring - Films Presaging the Fall of the Wall" will screen at the CinemaxX 8 at Potsdamer Platz and the Zeughauskino, Unter den Linden. Audiences will be able to participate in discussions with the directors, and a special event is planned to accompany the series. New prints are being made of all the films in the "After Winter Comes Spring" series. A complete list of the titles will be presented in January 2009. This selection of visionary cinematic works will be preserved for the public by the Film Distribution department of the Deutsche Kinemathek. Following the Berlinale 2009, the films will be shown in communal non-commercial movie theatres and other venues across Germany. Vision Kino will include four titles in its SchulKinoWochen (an educational programme for school children).

"After Winter Comes Spring - Films Presaging the Fall of the Wall" is an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Deutsche Kinemathek.



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