

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
December 1996

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FIRST COMPLETE RETROSPECTIVE IN THE UNITED STATES OF THE FILMS OF RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER

All Forty-Three Film and Television Works,
Many in New 35mm Prints, Including Several N.Y. Premieres
and the Complete Screening of the Fifteen-hour Epic *Berlin Alexanderplatz*

Gala Opening Night with Tributes and Performances
By Actresses, Actors, and Crew from Fassbinder's Films

Series to Tour Thirteen North American Cities through March 1998

Rainer Werner Fassbinder
January 23–March 20, 1997
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters 1 and 2

Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the genius of the New German Cinema, made forty-three remarkable film and television works between 1966 and his death in 1982 at age thirty-seven. The full depth and scope of this astonishing career—unparalleled in postwar world cinema—will be on display for the first time in the United States beginning January 23, 1997, when The Museum of Modern Art presents *Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, a complete retrospective of the director's work.

Using a potent mix of impassioned melodrama and biting satire, working independently with a loyal, likeminded cast and crew, and wedding intense personal and political issues, Fassbinder produced an entirely original oeuvre that remains as imaginative and incisive today as when he was alive. Practically hurled in the face of bourgeois culture, these films include acknowledged treasures such as *The Marriage of Maria Braun*

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(1978), *Lola* (1981), *Fox and His Friends* (1974), *Veronika Voss* (1981), *Effi Briest* (1972/74), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972), *Katzelmacher* (1969), *In a Year of 13 Moons* (1978), *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973), and *Lili Marleen* (1980).

“Prolific and ever able to astonish, Fassbinder emerged as one of the major artists of the late twentieth century,” says Glenn D. Lowry, Director, The Museum of Modern Art. “We are pleased and honored to have worked with the Fassbinder Foundation in Berlin to present a complete retrospective of this superb filmmaker.”

The series will feature nineteen new 35mm subtitled prints, many of them with new or rewritten subtitles and with color restored to the quality of the original 16mm prints. It will also feature the world theatrical premiere of *World on a Wire* (1973), the U.S. premieres of the television films *Bolwieser* (1976/77) and *Women in New York* (1977), and the New York premieres of several other films, including the Western *Whity* (1970).

Rare versions of Fassbinder classics will also grace the program, such as the original English language versions of *Despair* (1977) and *Lili Marleen* (1980); an unusual print of *Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven* (1975) that includes both the “tougher” German and the “softer” American endings; and the only extant English subtitled copy of *Jail Bait* (1972), from the Museum’s own archive.

“Prodigiously talented and productive, Fassbinder was an astonishing filmmaker whose acute psychological insight, empathy, and sense of space, rhythm, and dramaturgy constantly refreshes the viewer’s notion of cinema,” says Laurence Kardish, Curator and Coordinator of Film Exhibitions, Department of Film and Video, who co-organized the series with Juliane Lorenz, Director, Fassbinder Foundation, Berlin. “He was a social

cartographer, illuminating the ways society influenced and circumscribed choice, and an ironic chronicler of German culture. There has been no one like him in contemporary film.”

Through March 1998, films from the Museum's complete retrospective will screen at thirteen venues in North America. This tour, organized by Goethe-Institut New York/German Cultural Center in collaboration with the Fassbinder Foundation, Berlin, and in cooperation with The Museum of Modern Art, will visit Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Toronto, Washington, and San Francisco, among other cities. In addition, the Sundance Film Festival will present several Fassbinder films in a special sidebar in mid-January and the Walter Reade Theater in New York will present approximately fourteen films from May through early June.

The prolific director, who often wrote and acted in his own films, was introduced to New York audiences in the fall of 1971 by the New York Film Festival and *The New York Times* critic Vincent Canby, who spoke of the young brash German as the most original talent since Jean-Luc Godard. The city's appetite for Fassbinder, and the filmmaker's appetite for New York, was whetted. Fassbinder returned annually for the next six Festival screenings and grew so enamored of New York that he considered moving here.

“Rainer always had a very strong connection to New York,” says Juliane Lorenz, Fassbinder's film editor and companion for the last six years of his life. “This series is the fulfillment of a filmmaker's career. Even if he is not alive, for someone who felt the strong support of New York City and whose success here opened the way for German directors to show their work in America, this is the fulfillment of a dream.”

On Thursday, January 23, the opening night event, *A Celebration of Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, features an evening of live performances and tributes by many of Fassbinder's

closest collaborators, including actresses Hanna Schygulla and Margit Carstensen and cinematographer Michael Ballhaus, and the world premiere of the 1977 documentary *Rainer Werner Fassbinder*.

Another highlight of the series is the complete screening of Fassbinder's fifteen-hour masterpiece, the television film *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1979/80), which will take place from March 2 to 9. Adapted from Alfred Döblin's seminal novel of the same name, it encompasses the range of human experience—critic Andrew Sarris called it “a Mount Everest of modern cinema”—and is a remarkable portrait of Germany between the wars. This will be the work's first public screening in New York since 1983, the year after the director's death.

With the notable exception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Fassbinder's television productions, which number some fourteen works, are almost unknown in this country. As well as the world premiere of the science-fiction film *World on a Wire*, the program will present new prints of *Recruits in Ingolstadt* (1970/71), *The Niklashausen Journey* (1970), and *Fear of Fear* (1975), among other films. The majority of Fassbinder's television work will screen at the end of the series, from March 9 to 20. Some of these films will be projected on video, without English subtitles.

From February 1 to 21, The Museum of Modern Art will screen an adjunct series, *Fassbinder's Favorites: From the Archives*, a wide variety of works from world cinema that, by his own admission, particularly enchanted Fassbinder. These films, chosen from the Museum's own collection, include Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Accatone* (1961), Douglas Sirk's *The First Legion* (1951), and the rare 1929 Weimar social drama, *Mutter Krausens fahrt ins Glück* (*Mother Krausens Goes to Heaven*), as well as films by Raoul Walsh, Jean Genet, Luis Buñuel, Jean Vigo, and others.

In conjunction with the series, The Museum of Modern Art will publish an authoritative 120-page catalogue edited by Laurence Kardish, in collaboration with Juliane Lorenz. This lavishly illustrated book combines essays by Kardish, Fassbinder scholars Thomas Elsaesser and Wolfram Schütte, and critic Georgia Brown with selections from Fassbinder's own writings; personal recollections by Lorenz, Harry Baer, Jeanne Moreau, Wim Wenders, Hanna Schygulla, and Volker Schlöndorff; and an annotated filmography.

Lorenz's own book, *Chaos as Usual: Conversations about Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, will also be published in January 1997, by Applause Books. A comprehensive set of interviews with Fassbinder's closest collaborators and friends, it constitutes a living history of the director's life and working habits.

Besides his work in film, Fassbinder was active throughout his career in the theater, acting in and directing numerous productions and writing fourteen plays. From January to April, several of these works will be produced at different venues in the city, including The Theatre-Studio, the Jewish Repertory Theater, the Work House Theater, and The Patricia Brooks Theater Lab/Circle in the Square Downtown. (For more information, please contact these organizations directly.)

Rainer Werner Fassbinder is a collaboration between The Museum of Modern Art and the Fassbinder Foundation, and is presented with the assistance of Goethe-Institut New York/German Cultural Center. The program is presented with the support of New Yorker Films, New York; Leisure Time Features, New York; InterNationes, Bonn; and Lufthansa, Germany.

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