

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
May 1987

BERLINART: 20 FILMS

June 11 - September 5, 1987

BERLINART: 20 FILMS, the film component of The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition BERLINART: 1961-1987, reflects the integral role of film in the Berlin art community. Organized by Laurence Kardish, curator in the Department of Film, the thirteen programs include fiction and nonfiction works by more than twenty filmmakers. These films, made between 1971 and 1987, relate to various aspects of Berlin life.

The filmmakers represented here have responded in a variety of ways to the cultural, political, and economic conditions resulting from Berlin's unique geographic position. They explore the psychological, spiritual, and social issues of contemporary life in Berlin, working in an environment supported by a progressive film and television academy, as well as alternative distributors and exhibitors. Federal and municipal grants and production money from German television have also attracted German and American filmmakers to West Berlin.

BERLINART: 20 FILMS, beginning June 11 and continuing through September 5, 1987, opens with Helma Sanders-Brahms's romantic drama Laputa (1986), starring Sami Frey and Krystyna Janda. The film, in which Berlin is compared to the floating island Laputa in Swift's Gulliver's Travels, depicts the city as a transit station for the brief encounters of two foreign lovers.

The peculiar geography, topography, and architecture of Berlin also figure strongly in Alfred Behrens's Images of Berlin's City Railway (1982), a poetic exploration of the vast, largely unused public transit that connects East and

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West Berlin; and Elfi Mikesch's Macumba (1982), a mystery in which the city's haunting interior spaces seem to determine the actions and moods of the characters.

The films's wide range of unconventional narratives and styles expresses numerous ideological concerns. For example, Berlin has been a center of feminist filmmaking, and the eight films in the program directed by women include Ulrike Ottinger's highly theatrical Portrait of a Woman Drinker (1979), Helga Reidemeister's candid Who Says It's Fate! (1979), and Helke Sander's ironic The All-Round Reduced Personality--Redupers (1977).

The subject of alternative lifestyles informs the works of Rosa von Praunheim and Lothar Lambert, both known for their provocative depictions of Berlin's gay subculture. Uprooted American performers living in Berlin form the cast of von Praunheim's City of Lost Souls--Berlin Blues (1983). Lambert's low-budget 1 Berlin Harlem (1974) tells of a black American soldier who chooses to remain in Berlin after his discharge.

Social problems specific to Berlin underlie Jeanine Meerapfel's Melek Leaves (1985), a film revealing the complex personality of a Turkish woman, one of Berlin's large population of foreign workers; Manfred Stelzer's Tales from Twelve and One Years (1985), a documentary examining the lives of former squatters who had occupied an abandoned hospital more than a decade before; and Christian Ziewer's Dear Mother, I Am Well (1971), a docudrama investigating conflicts between labor and management in a factory where a worker has organized his reluctant colleagues.

Berlin has also influenced the subjects and techniques of resident American filmmakers. Steve Dwoskin focuses on consumerism in his short, Just Waiting (1975). Establishing the city as an international arena, Ernie Gehr

interprets the question of collective guilt in Signal--Germany on the Air (1985). And while Yvonne Rainer does not photograph the city itself in Working Title: Journeys from Berlin/1971 (1979), she uses her experiences there to examine the contradictions between social and personal concerns.

BERLINART: 20 FILMS includes a program of super-8mm works directed by filmmakers, painters, and performance artists. Berlin is one of the few cities where this format is widely used and exhibited. Among these artists is Michael Brinntrup, who is also presenting several short films in the Museum's CINEPROBE series on Monday, June 22, at 6:30 p.m.

A symposium entitled "Berlin and Films" takes place on Thursday, June 26, at 8:30 p.m., in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1, following the 6:30 p.m. screening of The All-Round Reduced Personality--Redupers. For more details, see the attached Special Events release.

BERLINART 1961-1987, on view from June 4 to September 8, is the first museum exhibition in the United States to present and assess Berlin's contribution to contemporary art. Fifty-five artists from ten countries are represented.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact Howard Feinstein, film press representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.