

Seeking Transformation

The Films of Siegfried Kühn

October 20 – 30, 2014



In the first retrospective of director Siegfried Kühn's work ever screened in the U.S., five films tell stories about the process and experience of transformation. "The heroes of my most important films are people who want to break out." This statement runs like a thread through the oeuvre of Kühn, in which his main characters—often women—take huge risks in their desire to transform their lives.



Siegfried Kühn was born in 1935. In 1958 he began his studies at the Academy for Film and Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg, and then transferred to the Moscow Film Academy (VGIK) a year later. There he studied with the renowned Russian film director Sergei Gerasimov, among others. After graduating, Kühn directed at the Mosfilm Studio and the Satirikon Theater in Moscow. He worked at the East German DEFA Studios from the mid-1960s until he retired from filmmaking in 1991.

All films are in German with English subtitles. Free and open to the public, except where noted.

All screenings followed by Q&A with the director!

Mon, Oct. 20, 7:00pm, UMass, SOM 137

The Second Life of Friedrich Wilhelm Georg Platow (*Das zweite Leben des Friedrich Wilhelm Georg Platow*, GDR, 1973, 90 min., color/b&w)

Refusing to accept that he has become redundant when his job is automated, Platow, a 57-year-old railway crossing guard, embarks on a new life. Criticized by East German officials for showing a “distorted image of the working class,” this satirical comedy became a cult classic and one of the most important films of the period. Introduced by Skyler Arndt-Briggs, UMass.

Tues, Oct. 21, 7:00pm, UMass, 227 Herter Hall

Time of the Storks (*Zeit der Störche*, GDR, 1970, 89 min., color)

Susanne and Wolfgang have a harmonious relationship. But when Susanne meets Christian, she is attracted by his restlessness and they fall for each other. This love story became an East German box-office hit. Introduced by Victoria Riso Lenshyn, UMass.

Mon, Oct. 27, 7:30pm, Amherst Cinema

Free and open to the public!

Childhood (*Kindheit*, GDR, 1986, 87 min., color, 35mm)

Alfons lives with his grandparents on a Silesian village farm at the end of WWII. He adores his grandmother, who runs everything after her husband dies. Then, a traveling showman appears in the xenophobic village and everything changes in his grandmother's life. This autobiographical film is based on the director's wartime experiences. Introduced by Barton Byg, UMass

Wed, Oct 29, 7:00pm, 227 Herter Hall

Elective Affinities (*Wahlverwandtschaften*, GDR, 1974, 102 min., color)

Eduard and Charlotte live an isolated and idyllic life together. But soon Eduard feels that something is missing and he invites his friend Otto to come stay. Charlotte, meanwhile, decides that her foster daughter, Ottilie, should come live with them. Based on Goethe's classic novel. Introduced by Jason Doerre, Trinity College.

Thurs, Oct 30, 7:00pm, Yiddish Book Center

General Admission; Five College Students Free

Two films featuring the Jewish Kulturbund Theater in Berlin

Traces (*Spuren*, GDR, dir. Eduard Schreiber, 1989, 21 min., color, doc.)

Martin Brandt (Judgment at Nuremberg)—an unforgettable actor and former member of the Jewish Kulturbund Theater—tells his story. He recites from Nathan the Wise, the play that opened the theater in October 1933. Brandt's final film role was in The Actress.

The Actress (*Die Schauspielerin*, GDR, 1988, 86 min., color)

Maria, a rising theater star in Nazi Germany, is in love with the Jewish actor Mark. While she accepts a dream job at a theater in Munich, he is banned from performing and joins the Jewish Kulturbund Theater in Berlin. Maria discovers she is unable to live without Mark, but the Nazi Nuremberg Laws strictly forbid their relationship. Maria has a plan.... Based on Hedda Zinner's novel An Arrangement with Death. Introduced by Jonathan Skolnik, UMass.

Siegfried Kühn on Tour!

Oct 23 George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

Oct 28 Trinity College, Hartford, CT

Nov 1 Free Public Library, New Haven, CT

Nov 3 Goethe-Institut Boston, MA

For more information, please contact:
DEFA Film Library at UMass Amherst
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www.umass.edu/defa

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