**Kluge, Alexander (b. 14 February 1932)**

Alexander Kluge is a German author, film director, and television producer who has also worked as a lawyer, teacher, and political lobbyist.  A founding figure of the New German Cinema, he has continued to publish numerous works of fiction and social criticism and to make experimental films and “film essays” for television.

Kluge was born in Halberstadt in 1932. After studying at the University of Marburg, he earned a doctorate in law at the Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main in 1956. During this time, Kluge began writing short stories. He also befriended the philosopher Theodor Adorno, who was then teaching at the Institute for Social Research. The encounter with critical theory would profoundly shape Kluge’s work. Adorno also introduced the young writer to director Fritz Lang.

In 1960, Kluge made his first film, *Brutalität im Stein* (*Brutality in Stone*), a twelve-minute, black-and-white montage of Nazi architecture, intended to open discussion of Germany’s recent past that public discourse had suppressed. It premiered at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1961. The following year, Kluge signed the Oberhausen Manifesto with twenty-five other filmmakers. This document, usually identified as the beginning of the New German Cinema, declared that “Daddy’s cinema is dead.”  Celebrating the innovative potential of experimental shorts, it called for greater political and creative freedom for, and a better system for financing and distributing, independent films. Lutze argues that Kluge belongs in a distinctly modernist tradition of figures who have opposed what they see to be the dominant culture of capitalist society, taking adversarial stances on mainstream aesthetics and politics alike.

To help achieve these ends, in 1963, Kluge co-founded the Ulm Institut für Filmgestaltung (The Ulm Institute for Filmmaking) with Edgar Reitz and Detlev Schleiermacher. He also helped establish the Kuratorium junger deutscher Film (Young German Film Committee), which helped first-time directors get subsidies. In addition to his institution-building activities, Kluge directed several fiction features including *Abschied von Gestern* (*Yesterday Girl*, 1966) and *Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: Ratlos* (*Artists Under the Big Top*: *Perplexed*, 1968), which incorporate collage elements, inserting newsreels and quoted texts. He also contributed a segment to the 1977 omnibus film, *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*)*.*

Kluge has written four volumes of fiction and multiple essays, praising the vigour and robustness of what he calls “utopian cinema”—by which he means cinema that is both formally experimental and has politically liberating effects. He has also co-authored two major works of theory with the philosopher Oskar Negt. *The Public Sphere and Experience* (1972) returns to the ideas that Frankfurt School philosopher Jürgen Habermas articulated in his seminal work, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,*” exploring what possibilities popular culture might offer for creating an authentic proletarian public sphere. *Geschichte und Eigensinn* [“History and Stubbornness”] (1981) extends this project, attempting to provide a more detailed description of proletarian experience.

In 2008, Kluge released a nine-hour film based on Karl Marx’s *Kapital*. He declared it an homage to the legendary Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein, who began making such a film in the 1920s, but never finished it.

**Further Reading**

Lutze, P. (1998) *Alexander Kluge: Cinema Impure: an Eclectic Modernist Style*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

List of works:

[films]

*Brutalität im Stein* (*Brutality in Stone*) (1960)

*Abschied von Gestern* (*Yesterday Girl*) (1966)

*Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel*: *Ratlos* (*Artists Under the Big Top: Perplexed*) (1968)

[books]

*Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (*The Public Sphere and Experience*) (1972)

*Geschichte und Eigensinn* (1981)

Paratextual materials:

Brutality in Stone is available on YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NY8AKOI9qWA]

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