



## Retrospective – Prospective Odyssee of the cinema Alexandre Kluge

It is difficult to sum up this event in a few pages. A tribute to an artist who has played a substantial role in creating the New German Cinema, as well as in German cultural politics. For further information, go to the official website of the author.

<http://www.kluge-alexander.de/>

I would like to present the two shows I attended within the framework of this cultural event:

- At *Goethe Institut Paris*: reading and talk with the author: **What is modern in the poetics?**
- At the *cinémathèque française*: **Kluge teaches us cinema through his filmography**

"[...] The work of Alexander Kluge, a great German film-maker and intellectual deals with the conditions in which people live in the after-war period of the German economic wonder in the 60 and 70ies as well as in the today's time of world capitalism.

(Pierre Gras)

The New German Cinema which is represented by the **Oberhausen Group** serves as an essential guideline to speak about Alexander Kluge's cinematographic work.

I would like to quote the translated version of the **Oberhausern manifesto** as an introduction .



The decline of conventional German cinema has taken away the economic incentive that imposed a method that, to us, goes against the ideology of film.

A new style of film gets the chance to come alive.

Short movies by young German screenwriters, directors, and producers have achieved a number of international festival awards in the last few years and have earned respect from the international critics.

Their accomplishment and success has shown that the future of German films are in the hands of people who speak a new language of film. In Germany, as already in other countries, short film has become an educational and experimental field for feature films. We're announcing our aspiration to create this new style of film.

Film needs to be more independent. Free from all usual conventions by the industry. Free from control of commercial partners. Free from the dictation of stakeholders. We have detailed spiritual, structural, and economic ideas about the production of new German cinema. Together we're willing to take any risk. Conventional film is dead.

We believe in the new film.

Oberhausen, 28.2.1962

(Translated by Manja Paschek)

As well as Alexander Kluge's words I have freely translated into English

I regard this new cinema as immortal and older than film art. It is indeed based on what people feel inside and what they experience in public.

Meeting with the author at the *Goethe Institut* - Paris

**Alexander Kluge** as a story-teller

- about his maternal grand mother who jumped from a moving carriage and was rescued by officers . The question is: considering the bearing of the forewheels, on which side is it better to fall?

From his book, "**the fifth book – New case histories. 402 stories**" he read a passage, in which he has played tribute to his paternal grandmother.

"In August 1914 the first impulse of Hedwig Kluge, my paternal grandmother, on receiving the news that Otto, her firstborn son, had been killed in action, was to travel to Belgium and make sure that he was given a proper burial. When she heard that there was no transport available to take parents to the front she wept bitterly" excerpted from **Martin Chalmers'** translation.

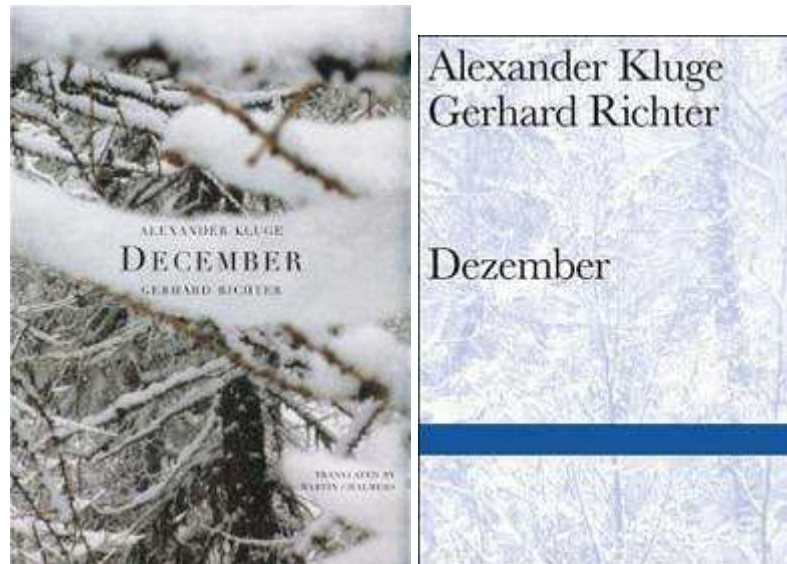
- about **John Cage**, his friend and a famous avant-garde composer who witnessed a fire at Frankfurt opera house when he was in Frankfurt for the premiere of his opera "Europas" next Sunday.

➤ *Multiple Images for 5 Projectors* (2007)



- Reading some stories excerpted from his book « December »

In the historic tradition of calendar stories and calendar illustrations, author and film director Alexander Kluge and celebrated visual artist Gerhard Richter have composed *December*, a collection of thirty-nine stories and thirty-nine snow-swept photographs for the darkest month of the year.



a philosophical dialogue between **Alexander Kluge** and **Helge Schneider** :

*Salto Mortale der Philosophie. Igor Crantz, Clown 1. Klasse (Helge Schneider), über das NIX und das GAR NICHTS.*

(Sommersault of the philosophy. Igor Crantz, a first class clown about the Nothing and the nothing at all)



An example of "circus philosophy" Somersault!

We see Helge Schneider and Alexander Kluge dealing with fundamental issues of thought :

Martin Heidegger's philosophical question : "Why *there* is something *rather* than *nothing*?" . The discussion between the clown as a philosophy teacher and the film maker is also guided by one of Heinrich Boll's statements "The evening of the non-artist is the work of the clown." A sort of interview of the absurd which at the same asks instructive and humorous questions.

**Cinémathèque Française : cinema lesson with Alexander Kluge**

Batch of minute films previously presented at Venice Film Festival



- ***Reading news in music*** : Hannelore Hoger sits in a chair in the studio as the lighting is arranged around her and the camera eases its way in.
- ***The Gentle Cosmetics of Light***: the same thing with different music and no newspaper
- ***Toplight, Backlight, Keylight*** replaces Hoger with Berling, to the strains of Ligeti. These shorts are studies in colour and texture as much as in light, and Berling wears a brilliant scarlet shirt and panama hat and is smoking.
- ***Debut*** presents a third model, Sophie Kluge.
- ***The Star with a Cold*** brings back a histrionically ailing Hoger, ending up with a close-up on her blocked head.
- ***The Living Monument*** features a posing Berling in military drag to the accompaniment of music from Zimmermann's modern opera.
- ***Computer and Candle Light*** presents a succession of close-ups of the different models, starting with one lit by an iBook screen (a reference all the way back to the sequence from *Miscellaneous News* in which a family gathered round their computer screen for warmth is a sequence resurrected for the contemporaneous *Magic of the Darkened Soul* (2007)), progressing on to candlelit shots, with Berling blowing out the candles one by one at the end of the film.
- ***Three pieces for two pianos***
- ***The Studio Lights Dream of Their Real Life at Night*** and it consists primarily of a series of tracking shots looking up at the studio's lighting grid, which is seething with movement. You get a brief glimpse of Hannelore Hoger in a wild foil costume, but mostly it is just a manifestation of machine intelligence, arriving in the studio like an alien mothership.

**Yesterday girl** A 88 minute's black and white film



To quote the article **Richard Brody** wrote for the **New Yorker Digital** :

“Kluge’s title character, Anita Grün (Alexandra Kluge, the director’s sister), Jewish, a survivor of wartime persecution and an émigré from East Germany, gets little sympathy from the court when, at the age of twenty-two, she is arrested for petty theft. On probation, she finds herself stuck in a series of dead-end jobs and subject to dictatorial and intrusive supervisors until she figures out how to live off her looks—and finds that German law is as narrow and rigid as the country’s pious mores. For Kluge, Anita’s story is a microcosm of modern Germany, and, as such, gives rise to a movie of many genres; he fills his film with a dazzling panoply of inventive devices—such as animation, sped-up motion, still-photo montages, fantasy sequences, and jolting musical counterpoint—that look past her image to her psyche even as they promote her as an alternative mass-media heroine.”

➤ **The patriot**

Gabi Teichert (Hannelore Hoger) is both a history teacher and a patriot. She has to solve a problem: the history of Germany will never be as glorious as what she would have liked to teach. She goes to a convention of the Social Democrat Party and tries to find information.

➤ **Other minute films to come to an end**

- **Der Kuss** : wildeste Kuss der Operngeschichte (the Kiss : the shiest kiss in the story of the opera) , der Kuss der Carmen (Carmen's kiss), the PferdKuss
- **Eine Verführungslektion (lesson of seduction)**: **Helge Schneider** starring as a teacher of the art of giving kisses.
- **Electrocuting an elephant**
- **Femmes soldats nord-coréennes défilant au pas de l'oie**. **Peter Berling**, starring as a medical officer of the Russian Imperial army, who explains how the goose-step is harmful to the body and mind.

**Ballet dancers on pointe shoes**

Military parades can be compared to a kind of a dance of the power while classical dance expresses seduction.