

Yours

I have been invited to tell you a story. It won't be told on this very page but with films, on the screen of Kinoteka. It will be a story of the modern age: a montage of disparate works, conflicting narratives and types of film that won't always seem to connect. It will be a mercurial novel of intimate gestures and the most terrible beauty; a tone poem of color (as a way of freeing the work and the spectator just a tiny bit from the throes of rationality); a book of exile (of the clear-headedness and the swathes of nostalgia that come with it); an epic of humans in motion – towards a state of bliss (on a truck, in the desert, under the richly painted skies of Kazakhstan) or towards nothingness (in a yellow Pontiac GTO, in the desert, along the blue-greyish horizons of the American Southwest).

Nevertheless, as an attempt to do justice to the rich medium of film (in 10 programs only!), this story will be a ridiculous failure. As an indication of the ideas that are at work in the Austrian Film Museum, it will fall short as well. While assembling this small extract from our collection, I mainly counted the losses (all the layers of our work that can't be shown; all the stuff that didn't make the list) and I could hardly rejoice in the titles I kept. But this will change once the films take charge, once they take over the story. At least I hope it will, because the selection represents my only shot at fulfilling the wishes of my "commissioning editors": to give in, with heart and soul, to the spirit of celebration.

Any movie theatre or film festival in the world will subscribe to the notion that it exists to *celebrate cinema* (according to the principles of showmanship). Any film studies department at any university in the world will portray itself as a keeper and transmitter of what can be *known about cinema* (according to the principles of science or academia). But there is often a proviso against both, because neither of them can integrate the other in a very satisfying manner – showmen usually abhor the principles of science and academia, and vice versa. We do have several hybrids today (the mediatized populist scholar or the university-trained purveyor of entertainment), but these types are not going to bridge the gap either. As in most other fields of culture, the gap – or abyss – will only be bridged by a kind of bastard behavior vis-à-vis one's chosen passion that can integrate the facts of love with the love of facts. For lack of a better word, this behavior shall be called *curatorship*. In the realm of film, its credo could be something like this: Celebrating cinema by not only showing it, but showing *at the same time* how it is living knowledge and thought; and knowing about cinema not from a philological distance, as "text" or as dead (media) history, but by participating in its thought which only appears during the performance, when all our machines go live. This – something like this – will be your Kinoteka.

In "my" Kinoteka in Vienna it is as hard as anywhere to put such noble thoughts into honest curatorial practice. It's relatively easy to set an agenda, but to keep it alive in the everyday thick of things is another matter entirely. To integrate, as intensely as possible, three levels of work: the preservation, expansion and interpretation of a collection; the giving of pleasure, irritation and information when constructing and presenting a program; and the research, education and publication activities based on the program and the collection. I have tried to communicate some small fragments of this approach in my selection of films. Almost all of them have been acquired or preserved at the Austrian Film Museum during the last eight years. They will all be shown in new or almost new prints, but in projection each work keeps its unique material texture and speaks of its own individual history. That the latter should remain visible in order to understand the work at all is one of the major differences between

curatorship and the “celestial cinematheque” that the digital domain seems to offer. Most programs – or individual selections – relate in subtle or less subtle ways to the specific research projects and book or DVD publications of the Austrian Film Museum, and/or to our Special Collections and the areas that we focus on when enriching the holdings, and/or to some larger programming efforts we have recently undertaken. Ideally, these things are connected with each other as often as possible. Some of our “topics”, projects or interests represented here are: the colors of film (dominating the program on Thursday); the history and presence of avant-garde cinema; the work of Dziga Vertov and modernist Soviet cinema; amateur film and urban life; the “Autokino” of machine-based movement in postwar society and the so-called “New Hollywood” of 1960 to 1980; the extra-territorial cinema of Central European émigrés which dominates the program on Friday.

The two “strangest” programs (Saturday, 5 and 7 p.m.) are probably also the most personal ones. They speak about the unique historiographical capacities of cinema, something that neither film studies nor the scientific community of historians seem to have fully processed so far. For Siegfried Kracauer, a rare scholar in both disciplines, cinema and history form a “shared interspace” which overrides the strict relays of meaning prevalent in both science and art. My own non-scholarly mind has also led me towards that open space: I may not be able to express it in words, but I can try to evoke it “curatorially”. The second of these two programs relates to “spare time” in the face of a historical break; an alternate life-world that resists the “cut” which, to this day, marks our perception of the 20th century. The previous group of five films is another, more wide-ranging version of “my twentieth century”. As in the other case, the grouping should not be misunderstood as an “illustration” of some underlying, pre-existing theory or idea; quite the opposite: the idea results entirely from the discourse proposed by these five works – all of which I consider masterpieces, no matter how over-exposed this term may be today. And as in the other case, the program is addressed to cinephiles and historians alike, based on my firm belief that the movie theater provides an unequalled space of engaging in new ways with the presence of the past: “The posture of the scientist or historian gives way to the gesture of being moved by other life.” (Heide Schlüpmann)

Don’t even begin to think that this is everything a cinematheque can offer. There’s so much more. And this is also why my three-day “story” belongs to the half-full, half-empty kind. The kind which depends a lot on how you look at it. The kind that carries you from what you already have to all the things you can imagine as alternatives, between the states of fulfillment and expectancy. Like the middle of a feature film, with three reels having run their course and three more to come; like the famous glass of water; or like the attendance figures in a cinematheque which, as any experienced curator can tell you, is always both: half-full and half-empty. It doesn’t matter if there are only a few guests or if the show is sold to capacity. The guests are *never too few*, because each one counts, and it is for him or her that the work is being performed. In the case of a packed house, each guest counts just the same – and they are *never enough*, because outside there are still all these people who have yet to discover what you will start to share in a second.

Alexander Horwath

Thursday 16 December

18:00

Jeff Scher **Yours** (USA 1997) 35mm color 6 min
Boris Barnet **Aljonka** (SU 1961) 35mm color 87 min

20:00

Segundo de Chomón / Pathé **Sculpteur moderne** (F 1908) 35mm color 5 min
Gaumont **Meissner Porzellan! Lebende Skulpturen der Diodattis im Berliner Wintergarten**
(F/D 1910?) 35mm sepia 2 min (Fragment)
Howard Hawks **Gentlemen Prefer Blondes** (USA 1953) 35mm color 91 min

22:00

Malcolm LeGrice **Berlin Horse** (GB 1970) 16mm color 9 min
Dario Argento **Suspiria** (I 1977) 35mm color 98 min

Friday 17 December

18:00 (Introduction)

Erich von Stroheim **Blind Husbands** (USA 1919) 35mm tinted 99 min

20:15 (Introduction)

Josef von Sternberg **The Case of Lena Smith** (USA 1929) 35mm b/w 5 min (Fragment)
Preserved by the Theatre Museum of Waseda University, Tokyo
Josef von Sternberg **Crime and Punishment** (USA 1935) 35mm b/w 88 min

22:15 (Introduction)

Robert Florey **The Face Behind the Mask** (USA 1941) 35mm b/w 68 min

Saturday 18 December

15:00 (Introduction)

Barbara Loden **Wanda** (USA 1970) 35mm color 102 min

17:00 (Introduction)

Dziga Vertov **Entuziazm** Reel 1 (1930) 35mm b/w 22 min
Bruce Conner **Crossroads** Part 1 (1976) 35mm b/w 13 min
Vittorio De Seta **Un giorno in Barbagia** (I 1958) 35mm color 11 min
Restored by the Cineteca di Bologna
Forugh Farrokhzad **Khaneh Siah Ast** (Iran 1963) 35mm b/w 21 min
Robert Frank **The Present** (CAN/CH 1996) 35mm color 24 min

19:00 (Introduction)

Anonymous **HA.WEI. 14. März 38** (A 1938) 16mm b/w 13 min
Humphrey Jennings **Spare Time** (UK 1939) 35mm b/w 15 min
Ernst Lubitsch **Cluny Brown** (USA 1946) 35mm b/w 100 min

21:30 (Moderated discussion, followed by:)

Monte Hellman **Two-Lane Blacktop** (USA 1971) 35mm color 102 min