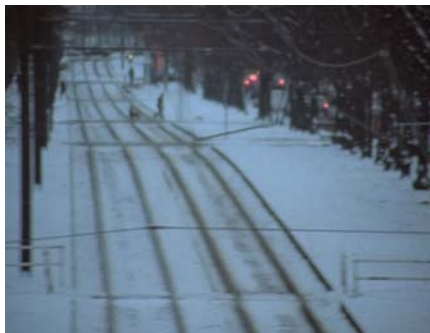


One might conceive of history as being of oblong shape,
in reality, however, it is a dense cluster.



MATERIAL

A film by Thomas Heise

Germany 1988-2009

164 min., HD-Cam, b/w and color

ma.ja.de. filmproduktion in co-production with Thomas Heise
and ZDF in collaboration with ARTE

funded by



Contact World Sales:

Deckert Distribution

Marienplatz 1

04103 Leipzig, Germany

Phone: +49. 341. 215 66 38

Fax: +49. 341. 215 66 39

e-mail: info@deckert-distribution.com

www.deckert-distribution.com

MATERIAL

A film by Thomas Heise

Country of production: Germany
Year of production: 1988 – 2009
Length: 164 min
Format of shooting: 8mm, 16mm, 35mm, VHS, Beta SP
Format of screening: HD-Cam (4:3 pillarbox, 2 tapes), Digi Beta Pal (4:3, stereo, 1 tape)
Language: German
Subtitles: English
Color: b/w and color
Production: ma.ja.de. filmproduktion in co-production with Thomas Heise and ZDF in collaboration with ARTE

Credits

Author and Director: Thomas Heise
Camera: Sebastian Richter
Peter Badel
Thomas Heise
Jutta Tränkle
Börres Weiffenbach
Sound: Uve Haussig
Jürgen Schönhoff
Robert Nickolaus
Maxim Wolfram
Editor: René Frölke
Mix: Robert Jäger
Music: Charles Ives: Orchestral Set. No.2 (1919)
From Hannover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose
Malmö Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Chorus
Conducted by James Sinclair
Commissioning Editor: Doris Hepp (ZDF/Arte)
Producer: Heino Deckert
World Sales: Deckert Distribution
Festivals: Berlinale 2009 (Int. Forum of New Cinema)
Visions du Réel Nyon 2009

Oneliner: One might conceive of history as being of oblong shape, in reality, however, it is a dense cluster.

Synopsis: It starts with the laughter of children. Images from the late 80ies in the GDR to the immediate present of the year 2008 in Germany. Those residual images have besieged my head, constantly reassembling themselves into new shapes that are further and further removed from their original meaning and function. They remain in motion. They become history. The material remains incomplete. It consists of what I held on to, what remained important to me. It is my picture.

Synopsis long: It starts with the laughter of children in the desolate landscape of the city Halle an der Saale in the early 90ies. An unused shot from a film. MATERIAL consists of such leftover images from the last twenty years. Some are images I shot myself: 1988 during Fritz Marquardt's production of Heiner Müller's "Germania Death in Berlin". What drew my intention was not what happened on stage. What interested me was reality, the inbetween, the discussions between the stage designer and the director in front of the stage model about the relationship between audience and stage, between up there and down here. I was interested in the struggle, the seriousness. Then a million people took to the streets and congregated on Alexanderplatz. I had tied myself to the lectern with a banner in order to film. The faces of the people. And the nervous faces of the TV camera crews and the photographers on their raised platforms above the crowd, the trembling hands of the speakers in front of me. Four days later I watched the demonstration of the Socialist Party's grassroots members in front of their leadership, who the day after saved themselves from immediate removal by opening the Berlin Wall. Observations, scenes, fragments, stories, processes, notes. One night, a few weeks later, in December, the same camera recorded first guards, then inmates – elected spokesmen from among the long-term prisoners – of the Brandenburg State Prison, saying what they felt needed to be said. They saw the outside pass them by. A moment of respite during the revolt inside the prison. On the outskirts of Berlin old and new times clash and coincide, ministers are accused, and the same old sagas are retold as if nothing had changed.

Soon after, in the newly elected People's Assembly, during the last days of the GDR, delegates confessed their collaboration with the Ministry of State Security – until the public was barred from the meetings.

Then my camera broke. Other cameras sporadically took its place. A Super 8, a 16 mm and a 35 mm camera, a DigiBetacam, and a DV camera. The images from these cameras were produced to the left and to the right of the films I made with different camera men. Some of these excursions became part of these films, while others remained unused.

These cameras were rolling in the time immediately after the incorporation of the GDR into the Federal Republic of Germany, when order was being established during the eviction of squatters in Mainzer Straße; they witnessed the desperate attempts to talk to each other, saw the machine roll into action, saw a different kind of despair. They saw the illuminated windows of wintry Berlin from a passing train and the attack on the premiere of a film about the new times that had begun.

Some of the audience threw stones back at the assailants, others stayed in a corner and watched attack and defence. Inside, the film continued to play. When all was over some of the audience, that had stood by and watched, struck out at the camera.

In the Brandenburg prison, seventeen years on, inmates celebrate the New Year; a ruin stands in the middle of Berlin, and in it a child dreams and the now eight-year-old Fritz sings the song of the little doe and the cuckoo and of times past.

Images from the late 80ies in the GDR to the immediate present of the year 2008 in Germany.

Those residual images have besieged my head, constantly reassembling themselves into new shapes that are further and further removed from their original meaning and function. They remain in motion. They become history.

The material remains incomplete. It consists of what I held on to, what remained important to me. It is my picture.

Biography Thomas Heise

Thomas Heise was born in Berlin, capital of the German Democratic Republic, in 1955. After school he trained as a printer – 'in the GDR printer was the profession of choice of social failures'. (Heise in a talk with Erika Richter). After his military service in the East German armed forces he began to work as an assistant director at the DEFA - Studio for Feature Films in Potsdam Babelsberg in 1975. Parallel to his work at the studio he resumed his studies and completed his secondary education. Between 1978 and 1983 Heise studied at the Academy of Film & Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg (HFF/B). His first film, the documentary *'Wozu denn über diese Leute einen Film'* (*'Why a Film About These People'*) - produced entirely with materials bought on the black market - was banned from public screening. Heise broke off his studies. Since 1983 he has worked as a free-lance writer and director in the areas of theatre, audio drama and documentary. Until the end of the GDR all his documentary efforts were however either blocked by what was – in official jargon – called 'operative means' or destroyed or confiscated. He started conducting preliminary research for his later films, such as *Eisenzeit* (*'Iron Age'*) or *Vaterland* (*'Fatherland'*) around the same time. Heise found an artistic home at the theatre, where he cooperated closely with author and director Heiner Müller. Between 1987 and 1990 Heise acquired his MA at the Berlin Academy of Fine Art. He was a member of the Berlin Ensemble until 1997, where acted as contributing director for a number of productions. Since the beginning of the 1990s Heise's documentaries have attracted national and international attention. Since 2007 he is teaching as a Professor for Film and Media Art at Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe.

Thomas Heise's earlier films dealt with social phenomena in the GDR and the country's bureaucratic apparatus. From the late 80s his focus has moved to the changes individuals, families and regional communities have had to undergo in the aftermath of the German reunification. The works of the filmmaker encompass a wide range of contemporary socially relevant topics such as privatisation, the re-organisation of the formerly industrial sphere, unemployment and rightwing radicalism to name but a few.

Heise's documentary works are characterised by his precise and insistent way of looking at things. Rather than exploiting or misrepresenting his characters, he takes the time necessary to build up a relationship with them, but stops short of over-identification. *'Wozu denn über diese Leute einen Film'* (*'Why a Film About These People'*) the title of his first completed short documentary has also become a guiding principle of his work.

Heise's films show people that have been marginalized by society, yet their lives are the site where historical developments converge - the East German neo-Nazis out of the *Stau* (*Jammed*) films, the spy out of *Barluschke*, the rebellious East German teenagers out of *Eisenzeit* or the little village, marked by traces of German history in *Vaterland*. Heise brings the multiple social, political and historical undercurrents of life in today's Germany to light.

Filmography Thomas Heise (selected works)

Wozu denn über diese Leute einen Film (Why a Film About These People)

1980, 16mm, s/w, 30'; from 1980-1989 banned for screening, Premiere October 1989

Erfinder 82 (Inventor)

1982, 35mm, colour, 15'; Part of diploma studies. Deemed as politically unacceptable by DEFA Studio for Documentary Films, and destroyed. Terminated studies at Institute for Film and Television Studies.

Das Haus/1984 (The House)

1984, 16mm, s/w, 60', banned until 1990

Volkspolizei/1985 (People's Police)

1985, 16mm, s/w, 60'; banned until 1990

Heiner Müller 1

Video-documentation, 1987, 55'

Imbiß Spezial

1989, 35mm, s/w & Farbe, 27'

4. November 1989

Video-documentation, 1989, 240'

Zuchthaus Brandenburg, Dezember 1989 (Brandenburg Prison, December 1989)

Video, 1989/90, 120', together with Hans Wintgen

Eisenzeit (Iron Age)

1991, 35mm, colour, 87'; Festivals: Berlinale 1992; Awards: Förderpreis des Leipziger Dokumentar- und Animationsfilmfestivals Leipzig, Förderpreis des DokumentArt Festivals Neubrandenburg 1992

Stau – Jetzt geht's los (Jammed – Let's Get Moving)

1992, 16mm, colour, 83'; Festivals: IDFA 1992, Berlinale 1993, Lyon 1993, Paris 1993, Los Angeles 1993; Awards: Preis der Deutschen Filmkritik Duisburg 1992, Preis des Dänischen Filminstituts 1993, Preis der Niederländischen Fernsehakademie 1994

Barluschke

1997, 16mm, colour, 90'; Festivals: Int. Festival für Dokumentar- und Animationsfilm Leipzig 1997, Berlinale 1998; Awards: Silberne Taube Leipzig 1997, 2. Preis des Balticum Film- und TV-Festivals 1998

Neustadt (Stau – Der Stand der Dinge)

Neustadt (Jammed – The State of Things)

1999/2000, Beta digital, cinema version 35mm, 87'; Festivals: Berlinale 2000, Visions du Réel Nyon, Bornholm, Wolograd, Duisburg, Leipzig, Vilnius, Riga, St. Petersburg

Meine Kneipe (My Local)

2000, Beta digital, colour, 60'

Vaterland (Fatherland)

2002, 35mm/Beta digital, 98'; Festivals: Int. Festival für Dokumentar- und Animationsfilm Leipzig 2002, Duisburg, Visions du Réel Nyon, München; Awards: Silberne Taube Leipzig 2002, Prix SRG SSR idée suisse 2003

Der Ausländer (The Foreigner)

2004, Beta digital/DVD, s/w, 37'; Festivals: Int. Festival für Dokumentar- und Animationsfilm Leipzig

Mein Bruder. We'll Meet Again

2005, 35mm, 57'; Festivals: Berlinale 2005, Visions du Réel Nyon 2005, Duisburger Filmwoche 2005 (Dokumentarfilmpreis des Goethe-Instituts)

Im Glück (Neger)

Lucky (Niggers)

2006, 35mm & DV-Cam, 87'; Festivals: Visions du Réel Nyon 2006, Crossing Europe Linz 2006, Rencontre Culturelle Lausanne 2006, Filmkunstfest Schwerin 2006

Kinder. Wie die Zeit vergeht. (Children. As Time Flies.)

2007, 35mm, 86'; Festivals: DOK Leipzig 2007 (Silver Dove Int. Competition), Duisburger Filmwoche 2007, Visions du Réel Nyon 2008, Crossing Europe IFF Linz 2008, Planete Doc Review Warsaw 2008, Cinéma Vérité Iran IDF 2008, DocBsAs Buenos Aires 2008, DokumentART Neubrandenburg 2008 (opening film), L'Alternativa Barcelona 2008, Torino IFF 2008;

Nominated for European Film Award 2008 in the category Documentary Film – Prix Arte