

UFA FILM NIGHTS



BERTELSMANN

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INTRODUCTION



Usually, the UFA Film Nights are dedicated to masterpieces of Weimar cinema and take the audience on a journey into the exciting and multifaceted 1920s, aka the “Roaring Twenties.” This year, however, the program features a film from an entirely different era:

Back in 1913, director Max Mack created *WO IST COLETTI?* (*WHERE IS COLETTI?*), one of the world’s very first feature-length comedies. In this amusing and charming movie, he takes us back to imperial-era Berlin, before two world wars permanently changed the face of not only the city, but the whole world.

Ten years later, Berlin had already undergone a fundamental transformation – in the Weimar Republic, completely new influences appeared in politics, society, art and fashion, and were also reflected in the experimental forms of film. *SCHATTEN* (*WARNING SHADOWS*), the third film by Arthur Robison, an American who grew up in Germany, is an expressionist masterpiece that relies only on the language of images and does entirely without intertitles. The *Encyclopedia of International Film* writes about the film, which was released in 1923: “A profound self-portrait of the medium of film that plays virtuously with eroticism as well as with psychoanalysis. Successful in all aspects of film technique and design.”

A year earlier, a cinematic mammoth work had appeared in two parts released one shortly after the other, presenting the world with one of the prototypical supervillains of cinematic history, not only holding up a mirror to his own time, but also building bridges to our own. The second part of Fritz Lang’s epic *DR. MABUSE – THE GAMBLER*, subtitled “Inferno, a Game for the People of our Age,” was released in 1922 just one month after the first. *DR. MABUSE*, with which Fritz Lang somberly reflected the depravity of the Weimar Republic, immediately advanced to sensational success, which also helped the director to his international breakthrough and still fascinates today.

The UFA Film Nights 2023 will start with the expressionist film *SCHATTEN* (*WARNING SHADOWS*), followed by *WO IST COLETTI?* (*WHERE IS COLETTI?*), which will be shown for the first time in the version recently restored by the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation, and on the last night the gripping second part of *DR. MABUSE – DER SPIELER* (*DR. MABUSE – THE GAMBLER*) will be shown on Museum Island – perhaps the most beautiful pop-up open-air cinema, right in the heart of Berlin. All films will feature live accompaniment with specially composed music. We hope you enjoy the



SCHATTEN

WARNING SHADOWS



SCHATTEN

(D 1923)

Directed by Arthur Robison

Producer Pan-Film

Camera Fritz Arno Wagner

Starring Fritz Kortner, Ruth Weyher, Gustav von Wangenheim, Alexander Granach, Fritz Rasp u.a.

Length 75 min.

At a 19th century dinner soirée, an incurably jealous husband believes he finally has proof of the infidelity of his wife, who is surrounded by admirers. How else is he to interpret the silhouettes of greedy male hands grasping for his beloved behind the sheer curtains of a glass door?

Arthur Robison's SCHATTEN is considered one of the masterpieces of expressionist cinematography of the Weimar Republic. His film, made a hundred years ago, takes us back to the beginnings of cinema, whose predecessor was the shadow play.

Film critic Lotte H. Eisner wrote about the film in her 1955 book *“Die dämonische Leinwand”* (The Haunted Screen):

“The ambiguity of the shadows has a Freudian meaning in this film: a small sleight of hand makes the shadows of the actors disappear, opening the floodgates of all their most secret desires. That phantasma-

goria becomes pregnant with meaning: the shadows take the place of the living, who during the play become lifelessly frozen spectators of their own fate.”

Music

The internationally renowned organ virtuoso Cameron Carpenter, who also performed at the 2021 UFA Film Nights, will accompany SCHATTEN with a new composition.





FILM STILL FROM SCHATTEN

Archaic Magic in a Modern Medium: Arthur Robison's SCHATTEN – WARNING SHADOWS

Arthur Robison's *SCHATTEN* is considered one of the masterpieces of expressionist film art of the Weimar Republic. The film, made in 1923, takes us back to the beginnings of cinema, a descendant of shadow plays and magic lanterns.

The art of shadow puppetry originated around 3,000 years ago in China and came to Europe via India and Asia Minor in the 17th century, where it became a popular staple of fairs and traveling theaters. Shadow plays with their fairytale-like, magical content were particularly popular during the German Romantic period, the early 19th century, in which the plot of Arthur Robison's film is set – just like F.W. Murnau's *NOSFERATU*. This is no coincidence, since both films were made by the same producers. The idea for *SCHATTEN* came from *NOSFERATU* producer Albin Grau (1884–1971). His company

Prana-Film had suffered financial shipwreck in the wake of *NOSFERATU* and had to be liquidated. The film's financier Enrico Dieckmann stepped in and organized funds from a dubious "German-American Film Union," who commissioned *SCHATTEN* from a newly formed production company called Pan-Film. The money came from investors who had discovered a profitable form of investment in the production of films, similar to today's new media. But this was also money from obscure sources that simply had to be spent without any profit motive, i.e. laundered.

Albin Grau – in addition to being a producer, he also worked as a graphic designer, poster painter and set designer – was a member of an occultist lodge in Berlin and designed the buildings and costumes for *SCHATTEN*, as he had for Murnau's Vampire film. Fritz Arno Wagner, the cameraman for *NOSFERATU*, worked in the same capacity for *SCHATTEN*. Also on board again: the two *NOSFERATU* cast members Alexander Granach as a juggler (he had played the real-estate broker Knock in *NOSFERATU*) and Gustav von Wangenheim as the wife's admirer (seen in *NOSFERATU* as the protagonist Hutter).

Filming began in May 1923 in a small film studio in the north of Berlin. Here, the interiors of the Biedermeier palace were created: the setting for a



FILM STILL FROM SCHATTEN

dinner soirée, at which a chronically jealous husband (Fritz Kortner) believes he finally has proof of his wife's (Ruth Weyher) infidelity. How else should he interpret the silhouettes of men's hands reaching for his sweetheart behind the curtains of a glass door? But the shadows are deceptive. In fact, they are meaningless gestures; the hands never even touch his wife. A juggler present at the soiree notices the husband's misapprehension. He performs a Chinese shadow play for the guests, revealing their hidden erotic desires and fears. What follows is what the film's subtitle calls "a nocturnal hallucination." Afterwards, everyone is much the wiser: the husband realizes that he has been deceived by an optical illusion. Perhaps he will look more closely next time and won't misinterpret the shadows.

Orchestrating these shadows, which essentially play a leading role in the film, was a challenge for the light-setting cinematographer Fritz Arno Wagner. Normally, cameramen do everything they can to eliminate shadows from the picture, as they are something like a natural enemy. Unless shadows are deliberately used as a stylistic device to create an eerie atmosphere. As was the case in Murnau's *NOSFERATU*, where the vampire last gropes his way up the wall of a stairwell only as a large, dark shadow. Perhaps Fritz Arno Wagner was inspired by this

and placed the spotlights in such a way that the shadows of the protagonists at times appear more present than their physical bodies.

Unsurprisingly, the shadow play forms the dramaturgical center of the film. It was designed and executed by Ernst Moritz Engert (1892–1986). Engert, born as a merchant's son in Yokohama, Japan, came to Germany as a child. Here, he began to draw and developed a passion for silhouettes and shadow play. After studying art in Munich, he moved to Berlin in 1910 and socialized in Expressionist artistic circles, such as with the poet Georg Heym and the painters August Macke and Max Ernst. In the years before World War I, Engert enjoyed early successes with his shadow play performances, drawing the attention of Albin Grau, who then conceived the idea of a film centering around this archaic art form based on light and shadow.

On October 16, 1923, Arthur Robison's film celebrated its Berlin premiere at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz. The press wrote: "This peculiar, fantastic capriccio proved highly captivating. The audience followed the original plot with intense attention and bestowed sincere applause at the end."¹

Apart from the impressive acting performances and the skillful integration of shadow play into the plot, *SCHATTEN* can be seen as an early self-portrait of the medium of film. A



reflection on the ambiguity of moving images and their chimerical nature. Every depiction of reality creates its own reality, which, depending on viewer's perspective and disposition, can give rise to a wide range of interpretations and misinterpretations. Moreover, it can become a vehicle for targeted deceptions. A very topical subject given the possibilities of artificial intelligence.

Robison tells the story of the jealous husband's enlightenment exclusively by visual means, i.e. he completely dispenses with intertitles. In doing so, he fulfilled a decided aspiration of artistically ambitious directors of the 1920s. They understood silent film as a groundbreaking new art form that told stories exclusively with the power of moving images and thus

offered a way out of the criticism of language voiced by Modernist writers and philosophers – for example, Hugo von Hofmannsthal in his well-known “Letter of Lord Chandos.”

The young Alfred Hitchcock is said to have seen *SCHATTEN* and been impressed by the film, which refers back to the two basic elements of the medium: light and shadow, and which he praised as one of the most innovative achievements of Germany's emerging cinematography.

*Friedemann Beyer,
Film historian, author, and curator
of the UFA Film Nights*



WO IST COLETTI?

WHERE IS COLETTI?



WO IST COLETTI? (1913)

Director Max Mack

Producer Deutsche Vitascope

Script Franz von Schönthan

Starring Hans Junkermann,
Magde Lessing, Heinrich Peer,

Anna Müller-Linke

Length 79 min.

Jean Coletti, famed detective, has managed to catch a bank robber in just 48 hours. But a Berlin newspaper claims that the crook would have been caught even faster if the public had been involved in the manhunt. Coletti promptly announces that he will hide in Berlin for 48 hours and pay a reward of 100,000 marks to anyone who tracks him down during this time. In addition, he has a “wanted” poster with his photo posted everywhere. While the detective disguises himself as a street sweeper, his hairdresser Anton disguises himself as Coletti and strolls through the city, visiting pubs and cinemas and having many adventures.

Finally, he is recognized and apprehended by a female passenger on a bus. But it quickly turns out that he is not in fact the wanted man. Even a sniffer dog that is set on Coletti is

no help. Time is running out and the deadline looms ever closer...

WO IST COLETTI? – WHERE IS COLETTI? (1913) is the first feature-length German movie to document urban Berlin during the imperial era, from its streets and means of transport to the cinemas and vaudevilles: a remarkable pioneering achievement for the time, when films were mainly produced in the studio due to the cumbersome equipment required. The comedy was a hit with the public.

On April 5, 1913 the film magazine *Lichtbild Bühne* wrote about the film’s director Max Mack, a co-founder of popular cinema in Germany: “In our dreary, gray, theory-ridden times, when every day brings us new tax burdens, increases in the price of food, declarations of political bankruptcy, bank failures, manifestations, and other such lovely things, there is this divinely blessed artist who knows how to shoo the worry lines from our foreheads.”

Musik

Richard Siedhoff is one of Germany’s most talented young silent film composers. His new composition for WO IST COLETTI? celebrates its world premiere with the Metropolis Orchestra under Burkhard Götze at this year’s UFA Film Nights.

Das
Publikum
jagt
hinter
dem
vermeintlichen
Coletti her



ON THE TRAIL OF COLETTI

In 1913, a comedy by director Max Mack opened in German cinemas, delighting both critics and audiences. Weeks before, innovative advertising campaigns and posters had announced the film in a big way, so that when it premiered, everyone was talking about the film's title. "Berlin now has its own personal touch, its buzzword of the day," declared one *Lichtbild-Bühne* reviewer, "because everywhere, we will now hear: 'Where is Coletti?'"²

WO IST COLETTI? is one of the first feature films to include Berlin in the plot and shows – now very rare – city views of the metropolis before the First World War. In addition to landmarks of the city that are still visible today, one sees the then newspaper editorial office of the *B.Z. am Mittag*, the Potsdam airship harbor, zeppelins and autobuses, as well as a lively cinema screening of the early 1910s. COLETTI is thus a true "eyewitness," and Mack was known among his contemporaries as the director who "discovered Berlin for film."³

Max Mack was an extremely popular and prolific Jewish-German film pioneer who was active in Germany from 1910–1932, directing 133

films. He began his career at a time when German film was in a state of transition – from short films to feature films – and over the course of his creative period he would participate in numerous other film developments, culminating in early talkies. Mack himself helped shape some of these developments, while many others were reflected in his numerous films. Mack consistently claimed that entertaining the audience was his ultimate goal;⁴ so it is not surprising that he was always at the forefront of many popular genre waves of the 1910s, 1920s and early 1930s. To name just a few examples, he made auteur films, comedy films, educational films, socially critical "Zille"⁵ films, exotic films, and operettas.

WO IST COLETTI? is one of the first detective films, a genre that enjoyed great popularity in Germany from 1913. Like other detective films of the time, the film is full of wild chases, modern means of transport, disguises, as well as foreign names that – because of Sherlock Holmes – were associated with detective characters at the time. At the same time, COLETTI is also a comedy and an auteur film (its screenwriter Franz von Schönthan was an author) – a kind of genre hybrid that Mack preferred. The film is about a detective who makes a bet with the Berlin public that he can stay undetected



SCENE FROM COLETTI IN FRONT OF THE BRANDENBURGER TOR

in the metropolis for 48 hours. Mack and his team put up large missing persons posters around the city before shooting began and placed ads about the bet in the political section of *B.Z. am Mittag*. In this way, Mack expanded his extras to include many Berlin citizens who had seen the posters and wanted to participate in the search for Coletti (and in the reward). A fictitious, staged film chase thus became a real chase – at least for many of those involved – which Mack then filmed in turn and integrated into his film.

Berlin as shown in *COLETTI* is a city full of energy and confusion, media and modernity. Here aristocrats go to the movies and not to the opera, and extraordinary happenings

are immediately filmed, to appear in the newsreels the very next day. It's not surprising that the film was such a hit in Berlin in 1913. And how fitting that the digital screening of the restoration is now taking place at the UFA Film Nights in Berlin, exactly 110 years after the premiere.

For a long time, the film and its director were forgotten. Although Mack, who had to emigrate to England in 1933 because of his Jewish origins, remained very well-known during his lifetime, his fame quickly faded after his death in 1973. This is mainly due to the fact that he mainly made entertainment films: in its early days, the nascent discipline of film studies in Germany justified itself by focusing on art films such as



BEFORE AND AFTER COMPARISON OF THE FILM

the Expressionist films, and neglecting the popular genres of the early years, something that only gradually changed in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, Mack's oeuvre is very incomplete: of his more than 130 films, only 20 survive today; of these, some have survived only in very fragmentary form. This makes it all the more important to make Mack's surviving films accessible to the public again.

For the digital restoration of the film, in 2022 the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation was able to

draw on the original negative from 1913, which was held first in the Reichsfilmarchiv, then the GDR's Staatliches Filmarchiv. Today it is kept in the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv. In the German Reich, films were often deliberately destroyed after their theatrical circulation; often because of their silver content or to protect their creators. None of the numerous contemporary distribution copies of the then-popular film have survived – making it all the more remarkable that the original picture negative

Der berühmte
Detektiv Coletti in
seinem Arbeits-
zimmer.



13



2



TINTED FILM STILL FROM THE RESTORED VERSION

survived the 1910s (not to mention the two world wars).

The negative is archived today in a chronologically cut version – although in the 1910s the settings of original negatives were preserved according to their tint colors. So the editing was done after the fact, which would normally raise concerns regarding the authenticity of the cutting sequence. However, a surviving contemporary permission card from the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen, which documents all titles and intertitles verbatim and chronologically, confirmed the

existing cut. A material comparison of the negative with all discoverable surviving strands further confirmed this: the original negative in its present form apparently corresponded (very nearly) to the premiere version; only an incorrectly placed intertitle and an insert needed to be digitally recut. The permission card also served as a template for the correct positioning and reconstruction of the missing act plates – only the act plate of the 2nd act had survived in the negative (in the wrong place). Reconstructed titles have been marked with “FWMS” in the lower right corner.

The 4K scan of the film and the digital processing – which included image retouching and digital color grading – were done at L'Immagine Ritrovata in Bologna.

Since contemporary distribution prints of *WO IST COLETTI?* no longer survive, fragments of other Max Mack films were viewed at the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv⁶ and at the Eye Filmmuseum, which provided guidance for the color planning and colors in the digital color grading process. Fragments of *DIE BLAUE MAUS*, a film released in the same year as *COLETTI*, also directed by Max Mack and produced by the same film company, Vitascope, served as the main reference. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that both the colors and color plan remain speculative in the restoration. But at least we are back on the trail of the missing *COLETTI*.

110 years after his first appearance, the detective will once again be seen in Berlin, disappear in Berlin, and be rediscovered in Berlin.

Miranda Reason

Film scholar and restorer, Friedrich

Wilhelm Murnau Foundation



DR. MABUSE, DER SPIELER II

DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER II



DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER II – INFERNO. A GAME FOR THE PEOPLE OF OUR DAYS (D 1922)

Director Fritz Lang

Producer Uco-Film (Ufa)

Script Fritz Lang.

Thea von Harbou

Starring Rudolf Klein-Rogge,
Aud Egede Nissen, Alfred Abel u.a.

Length 118 min.

The sequel to Fritz Lang's classic silent film begins with a – failed – assassination attempt on prosecutor von Wenk. Carozza, a dancer, is arrested because she is suspected of complicity in the crime. When Mabuse learns that Carozza is willing to testify, he has poison brought to her, with which she kills herself.

Another assassination attempt on von Wenk again fails, for which Mabuse's servant Pesch is held responsible. But before he can testify, he too is murdered. After Mabuse has also killed Count Told in order to seize his wife, he disguises

himself and seeks out the public prosecutor to accuse Told's psychiatrist Weltmann of having driven his patient to suicide. To verify this claim, von Wenk attends one of Weltmann's group sessions, but Weltmann is none other than Mabuse in disguise. Mabuse hypnotizes von Wenk and orders him on a suicidal car ride. At the last minute, the prosecutor is saved – and now he knows who is behind all the atrocities. Mabuse takes refuge in a forgery workshop. There, the souls of his victims haunt him. When von Wenk enters the workshop, he finds a deranged Mabuse who has finally gone completely insane.

The dramatic finale of Fritz Lang's two-part epic about a megalomaniac criminal striving for world domination is a parable about the fantasies of omnipotence of an omnipresent, invisible adversary. Even a hundred years after it was written, it has lost none of its relevance in a present threatened by autocrats.

Music

For DR. MABUSE II, the musician, music producer, DJ and pioneer of electronic music Moritz von Oswald has created a new composition that will be heard for the first time at the UFA Film Nights.



FRITZ LANG ON THE SET OF DR. MABUSE

A Classic with Topical Relevance: Fritz Lang's DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER II

**“I will become a giant,
a titan who scatters the
gods and the laws into a
swirl like withered leaves!”**

On May 26, 1922, one month after the world premiere of DR. MABUSE, DER SPIELER. EIN BILD DER ZEIT (DR. MABUSE, THE GREAT GAMBLER. A PICTURE OF THE TIME), its sequel entitled INFERNO. EIN SPIEL VON MENSCHEN UNSERER ZEIT (A GAME FOR THE PEOPLE OF OUR AGE) premiered at Berlin's Ufa-Palast am Zoo.

The press had already celebrated the first part of the MABUSE two-parter, calling its technical finesse, *mise en scène* by Fritz Lang, “ingenious” and explaining its popularity, among other things, with the fact that Dr. Mabuse embodied the

“epitome of today's zeitgeist, born from the post-war period.”⁷ However, critics also pointed out “errors, lengths, impossibilities.”⁸ This did not detract from the success of the first part. Everyone agreed that Fritz Lang had captured the spirit of the age with his film. A crisis-ridden time fraught with upheavals and uncertainties.

At the time of DR. MABUSE I's release in April 1922, British Prime Minister Lloyd George had warned of the danger of a “global conflagration” in view of many unresolved issues in Europe. The foreign exchange market reported “wild fluctuations,” inflation soared to unimagined heights, and the exchange rate for one dollar was 277 Reichsmarks.⁹

On the surface, Fritz Lang's film is an action thriller about a ‘genius’ criminal who outwits the police by constantly changing disguises and systematically enriching himself through forgeries and stock market manipulations. What drives him is nothing less than a quest for world domination. He is assisted in this by submissive assistants who fear him as much as they revere him. Like a chameleon, Mabuse adapts to his surroundings, landing one spectacular coup after another. Mabuse's omnipresence and his continual disguises make him appear as threatening as he is unassailable. At the end of Part 1,



SÉANCE IN DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER II

he hypnotizes Count Told, who is cooperating with the executive branch, and turns him into a hapless medium for his manipulations. Then he kidnaps the Count's wife. The police seem powerless. All the greater the expectations for the second and final part of the film.

In MABUSE II, the staging density, change of settings and pace change completely. Whereas Lang took a lot of time with the exposition of the characters and plot in the first part and performed many a dramaturgical pirouette, the second part offers plenty of action: kidnappings, assassination attempts, car chases, shootouts.

INFERNO, too, is set almost exclusively at night, and the scenery is shaped by the gloomy atmosphere of the first part, THE GREAT GAMBLER. Even the upper-middle-class salons that Mabuse frequents, as well as the backyard speakeasies, gentlemen's clubs or erotic cabarets, exude the atmosphere of rooms into which sunlight never penetrates. The people who populate them seem like nightshade plants: mentally damaged, driven by their own obsessions, enslaved by alien powers. Their conversations revolve around nervous disorders, cocaine use, hypnosis.



IMPRESSIONS FROM DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER II

And yet the second part is dominated not so much by dialogues, but by a series of crimes that develop an ever greater dynamic and put prosecutor Wenk under increasing pressure: as if the criminal mastermind Mabuse had lost all inhibition.

Even more than the first part of the film, *INFERNO* deals with the abuse of power and its fatal consequences. In his *MABUSE* two-parter, Fritz Lang reflects a society deeply unsettled by the First World War, in which familiar certainties have been destroyed, a society that is just as susceptible to manipulation as to submission to a totalitarian will. The mechanisms of this phenomenon have lost none of their validity today. Where Mabuse

escapes the grasp of the state executive through constantly changing masks, today this is done by overpowering, globally networked tech corporations whose behavior eludes state control just as much as it gives the individual a feeling of powerlessness. And the figures in Mabuse's counterfeiting workshop might today be members of an international hacker gang who use constantly changing digital identities to hijack accounts or paralyze entire networks in order to extort a ransom.

In *DR. MABUSE, THE GAMBLER*, Fritz Lang shows the panorama of a time gone off the rails, in which crime reigns supreme. Today, the ruthlessness and striving for world power of a single, at least human protagonist is



replaced by the specter of anonymous machines empowered by artificial intelligence, which no prosecutor can bring to justice. This gives Fritz Lang's MABUSE epic its unbroken relevance.

Friedemann Beyer

Bertelsmann und UFA präsentieren

UFA FILM NÄCHTE



Logo of the German Film Commission (DFK) and other sponsors.



About the UFA Film Nights



Historical Paths

Ufa, Bertelsmann and the establishment of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation

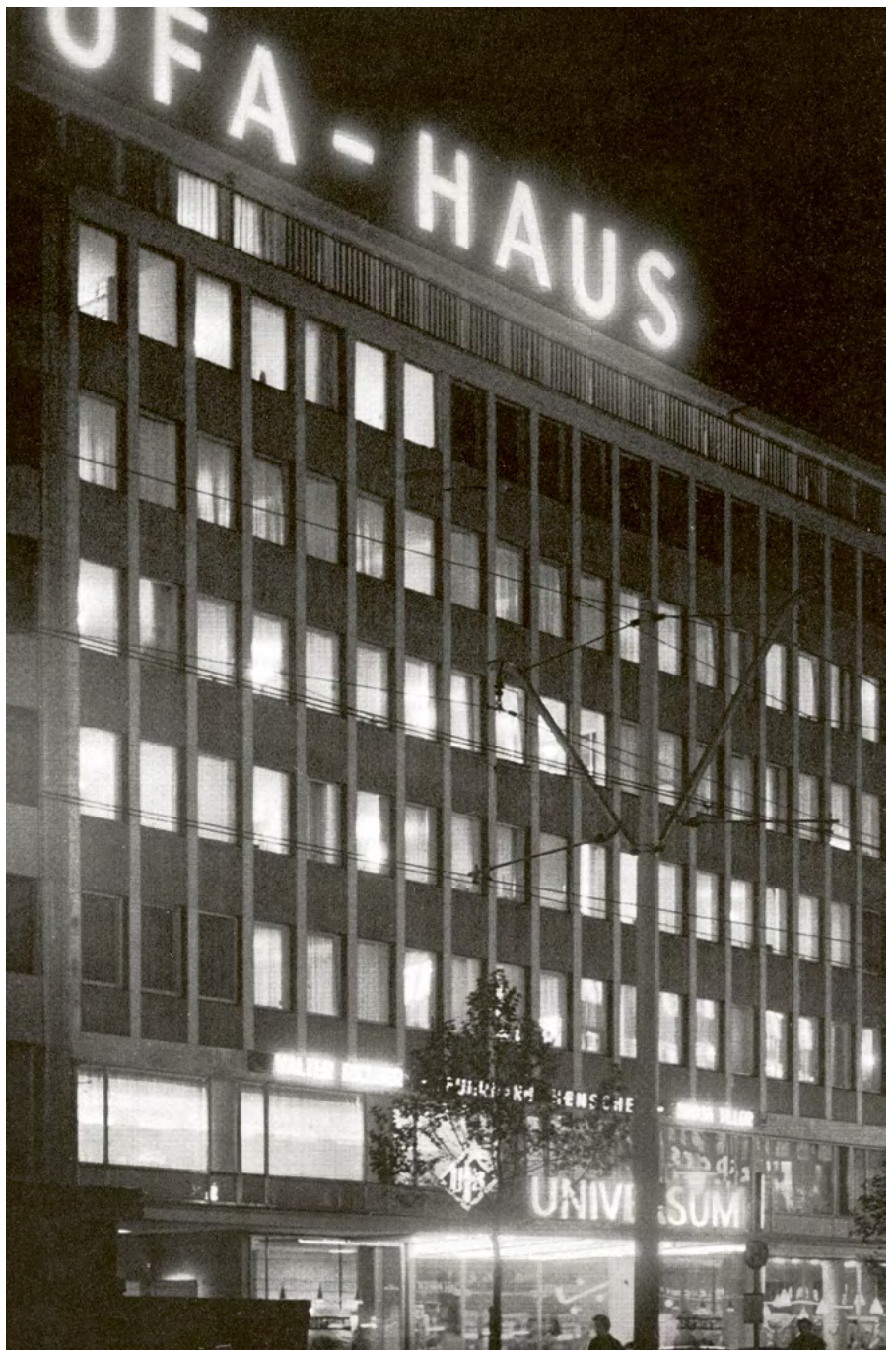
For several years now, Bertelsmann has been working to preserve Germany's silent-film heritage, at various levels and in pan-European context: The UFA Film Nights, a festival originally established in Berlin, went on to achieve great popularity in other European countries as well; and nine years ago Bertelsmann became the main sponsor of the digital restoration of the classic *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*. The world premiere of this version of the Expressionist masterpiece at the Berlinale 2014 became a major media event. Since then, Bertelsmann has organized further screenings in Berlin, Brussels, Madrid and New York.

In this connection, it also provided the financial support for the digital restoration of Fritz Lang's *DESTINY* (2016), Paul Czinner's *THE FIDDLER OF FLORENCE* (2018), and most lately Ernst Lubitsch's *CARMEN*, which was presented for the first time in its largely reconstructed version at the UFA Film Nights 2021. Ultimately, however, the efforts of Europe's largest media house tie in to a

historical connection that began almost 60 years ago.

Effective January 1, 1964, Bertelsmann acquired Universum-Film AG (Ufa), which had gone bankrupt after the reprivatization, and in so doing achieved its long-desired entry into the television production business¹⁰. At that time, expansion was the order of the day in Gütersloh. Founded in 1835, the publishing house had taken its first step out of pure-play (printing and) publishing in 1950 with the establishment of the Bertelsmann Lesering, and had enjoyed rapid growth ever since. In the early 1960s, the first Lesering offshoots in other European countries were founded. Above and beyond this, Reinhard Mohn (1921–2009), the “post-war founder,” CEO and owner of Bertelsmann, was determined to expand into new lines of business, a process that had begun with the founding of the Ariola record label in 1958. And while the next step – the path to commercial television, which had moved within reach at the end of the 1950s (“Adenauer-Fernsehen”) – was still a long way off, content production for public-service TV appeared to be a worthwhile business for the future.

With the purchase of Ufa, Bertelsmann had not only acquired the brand but also Ufa's stake in *Deutsche Wochenschau GmbH*, *Ufa Tonverlag*



THE UFA BUILDING IN DÜSSELDORF, 1964

including Vienna-based Bohème Verlag, Ufa Industrie- und Werbefilmproduktion, Ufa Fernsehproduktion, and exploitation rights to Ufa's inventory of films. Initially, Mohn had little interest in cinema productions or even the legendary silent film heritage that is so inseparably linked to the name Ufa, because after the purchase of Ufa, the focus was clearly on the television business. Bertelsmann Fernsehfilmproduktionsgesellschaft and Playhouse Studio Reinhard Mohn, which had only been founded a few years earlier, were integrated into the newly acquired Ufa in 1964. However, the Bertelsmann credo, that media such as books, films, television and records should not compete, but should complement each other as a chain of creative content, inexorably led the company in the direction of film in the following years. In April 1965 the newly acquired Ufa cinema chain was expanded by the acquisition of Pallas Filmverleih GmbH and Merkur Filmtheater. With the 15 Merkur theaters, Ufa-Theater AG now had a total of 44 movie theaters. Just three months later, on July 1, 1965, Bertelsmann acquired a 60-percent stake in the successful Constantin Film GmbH. The focus was on a common feature film production. These investments, coupled with the relatively good 1964 financials

of Ufa-Theater AG, seem to have given the film industry, which was definitely ailing at the time, a glimmer of hope. "There can be no doubt," wrote the trade magazine *Filmblätter* in March 1966, "that the secret high command of German film expansion is currently based in Gütersloh."

But the company was looking forward, not back; and at first it remained unclear how one would go about exploiting Ufa's legendary film inventory, which after all represented a major asset of the newly acquired company. As early as spring 1964, an outcry was heard in the (trade) press: A sale of the films to the US-American company Seven Arts, as was apparently planned, was unthinkable... and was then promptly prohibited by the German government, via the "Ufi liquidation committee." A directory published in 1966 in the magazine *Filmecho* shows just how extensive the collection was: it comprised "film rights from around 1,000 silent films and 900 sound films, 1,200 cultural films and 106 post-war films, as well as some 200 unfiled material rights."

After intensive discussions between the German government, Bertelsmann and Germany's leading cinematographic organization SPIO, it was finally agreed at the beginning of 1966 to establish a

non-profit foundation under civil law, which took over both Bertelsmann's and Bavaria's film holdings for a total of DEM 13.8 million, for which it received a loan from the UFI liquidation proceeds, that it was expected to repay in the following years. The Wiesbaden-based foundation was named after the renowned German silent film director Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. For Bertelsmann, this closed the chapter of Ufa's silent film legacy.

Meanwhile, the potential of the large Ufa brand has been exploited further, particularly after the advent of private television in the 1980s. Today, UFA is a powerful program creator within the Bertelsmann Group, which has continuously consolidated its leadership of Germany's film and television production market. And yet: To this day, its historical legacy forms an essential part of the brand's charisma. A few years after the 100th anniversary of the "old" Ufa, today's UFA still successfully invokes an artistic tradition that once began with Fritz Lang, F. W. Murnau and many others.

As a media company that places creativity at the center of its value creation and corporate culture, Bertelsmann is also committed to safeguarding and preserving important creations of the past. Today's diversity and the Group's large, multi-digital media offering worldwide have

historical roots. This is one of the reasons why Bertelsmann feels its commitment to Europe's cultural heritage is so important.

Helen Müller

Head of Cultural Affairs and Corporate History, Bertelsmann

About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the entertainment group RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato Group, Bertelsmann Marketing Services, the Bertelsmann Education Group, and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has 165,000 employees and generated revenues of €20.2 billion in the 2022 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world. Bertelsmann aspires to achieve climate neutrality by 2030.

As a creative content company with a history stretching back nearly 190 years, Bertelsmann is engaged in cultural efforts at various levels. Its “Culture@ Bertelsmann” activities are focused on preserving important cultural assets and making them accessible to a broad public, e.g. through digitization or exhibitions and concerts. For many years, Bertelsmann has organized the popular UFA Film Nights, a silent film festival in Berlin, and has repeatedly acted as the main sponsor for the digital restoration

of important silent films. The Group also owns the Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan, which houses a wealth of unique testimonies to 200 years of Italian opera history. Bertelsmann is indexing the archive holdings according to the latest standards and makes thousands of documents, set and costume designs, libretti, and items of business correspondence publicly accessible online. For over 20 years, Bertelsmann has organized the “Blue Sofa” literature format series, which provides authors with a prominent stage for their latest works.

About UFA

UFA has created unforgettable images over the past 100 years. It is the holding company for all the German production activities of Fremantle, the internationally active media and entertainment company that operates the worldwide production business of RTL Group, which is part of Bertelsmann.

In 2017, UFA celebrated its 100th anniversary, making it one of the oldest entertainment brands in the world. With more than 3,500 hours of programming broadcast per year, today's UFA Group is a powerful program creator that has continuously expanded its market leadership as a film and television producer in Germany in recent years. UFA programs inspire and delight millions of viewers every day. UFA has evolved from a program creator and TV producer into a content specialist that offers solutions for digital and multimedia content exploitation – for all major broadcasters as well as for numerous other partners.

The production units UFA Fiction, UFA Serial Drama, UFA Show & Factual, and UFA Documentary all operate under the UFA umbrella. Their wide-ranging product portfolio offers a unique variety of complementary programs. High-quality drama productions including TV movies, series, serials and TV events are realized by UFA Fiction. First-class shows, from talent and game shows to quiz, panel,

and dating shows, comedy and music shows, as well as high-quality factual programs, are produced by UFA Show & Factual. UFA Serial Drama is the leading provider of industrial series productions. UFA Documentary focuses on documentaries, docu-hybrids and serial features.

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Notes

- ¹ *Film-Kurier*, 17 October, 1923
- ² O.A. (1913): Wo ist Coletti?, in: *Lichtbild-Bühne*, No. 14, 1913 (unpaginated).
- ³ Pem (Paul Marcus) (1964): Der Mann, der Berlin für den Film entdeckte, in: *Mannheimer Morgen*, 17 October, 1964 (n.d.).
- ⁴ Cf. Mack, Max (1928): Filmkünstler, quoted in Michael Wedel (1996): *Showman im Glashaus*. *The film director Max Mack*, in: *ibid.*, Ed.: Max Mack. *Showman im Glashaus*, Berlin, p. 33.
- ⁵ Heinrich Zille (10 January 1858–9 August 1929) was a German illustrator, caricaturist, lithographer and photographer, known for humorously portraying the desperate living conditions of poor Berliners' at the time
- ⁶ Deposits of the Deutsche Kinemathek
- ⁷ *Film-Kurier*, 28 Apr 1922
- ⁸ Thus Kurt Pinthus in *Das Tage-Buch*, No. 18, 6 May 1922
- ⁹ *B.Z. am Mittag*, 27 Apr 1922
- ¹⁰ Cf. Jörg Schöning, „Es wurde um ein Butterbrot verkauft“. Das Erbe der Ufa: Entflechtung und Neuausrichtung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg [It was sold for a song. The Ufa legacy: unbundling and realignment after the Second World War], in: Rainer Rother, Vera Thomas (Eds.), *Linientreu und Populär, Das UFA-Imperium 1933–1945* [Loyal to the Party Line and Popular, The UFA Empire 1933–1945], Berlin 2017, pp. 194–206, insb. S. 203ff.; and Klaus Kreimeier, *Die UFA-Story, Geschichte eines Filmkonzerns* [The UFA story, History of a Film Company], Frankfurt a.M. 2002, p. 451ff.



