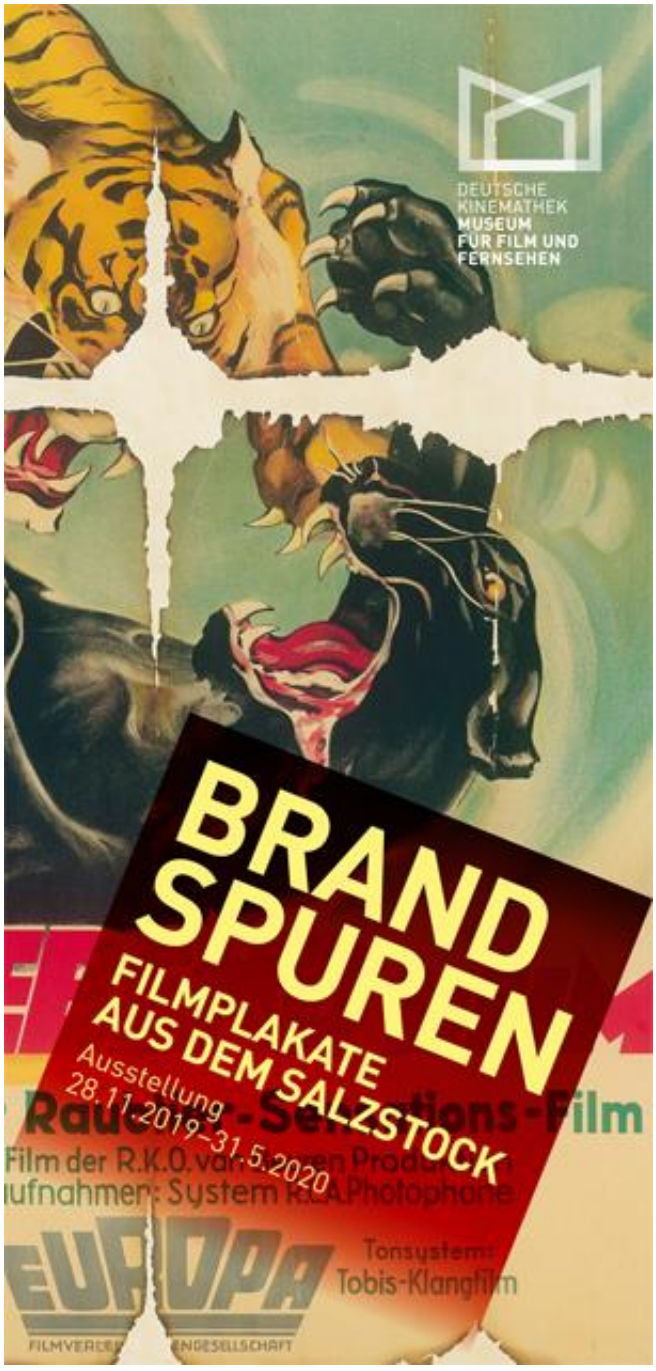


*Bring 'em Back Alive*, USA, 1932, Clyde E. Elliot. Design: Pentagram

*BURN MARKS – FILM POSTERS FROM A SALT MINE*
NOVEMBER 28, 2019 – MAY 31, 2020
DEUTSCHE KINEMATHEK – MUSEUM FÜR FILM UND FERNSEHEN

DEUTSCHE KINEMATHEK MUSEUM FÜR FILM UND FERNSEHEN

## General Information

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title** | *Brandspuren – Filmplakate aus dem Salzstock*<br>*Burn Marks – Film Posters from a Salt Mine* |
| **Duration** | November 28, 2019 – May 31, 2020 |
| **Location** | Museum für Film und Fernsehen<br>at the Filmhaus, Potsdamer Platz<br>Potsdamer Straße 2, 10785 Berlin |
| **Opening hours** | Wednesday – Monday 10 am – 6 pm, Thursday 10 am – 8 pm<br>Closed Tuesdays; for holidays, see: www.deutsche-kinemathek.de |
| **Day ticket** | 8 € regular price, 5 € reduced, 2 € school classes, 8 and 16 € family ticket,<br>5 € group ticket, free admission on Thursdays after 4 pm |
| **Public transportation** | S-/U-Bahn Potsdamer Platz, Bus M48, M85, 200, Varian-Fry-Straße |
| **Information** | T +49 (0)30 300903-0, F +49 (0)30 300903-13<br>email: info@deutsche-kinemathek.de<br>www.deutsche-kinemathek.de/besuch/ausstellungen<br>www.facebook.com/MuseumfuerFilmundFernsehen<br>www.twitter.com/de_kinemathek<br>www.instagram.com/deutsche_kinemathek |
| **Exhibition space** | 4th floor, Filmhaus |
| **Guided tours** | Public tours, tours with the curators, *Guests!* Guest tour, see p. 4 |
| **Exhibition** | Thematic divisions: History of the Reichsfilmarchiv (Film Archive of the Third Reich) / Protecting Cultural Assets / Film Documentation of Rescue Operations in the Grasleben Salt Mine / (Blackbox) / Restored Film Posters and Materials Related to the Official Film Review Process |
| **Exhibits** | Posters: 24 restored film posters from 22 international and German film productions, dating from 1916–1934; part of Reichsfilmarchiv inventory stored for safekeeping in 1944–45; discovery site: a salt mine in Grasleben, Germany, 1986<br>Source: Deutsche Kinemathek<br>Written documentation: including *Zensurkarten* (plot synopses written by the reviewers), film review applications, photos<br>Source: Deutsche Kinemathek, as well as lenders that include archives and private individuals, see p. 3 |
| **Media** | Film documentation and listening stations, including:<br>Documentation on salvaging materials from the Reichsfilmarchiv<br>that had been stored in a salt mine in Grasleben (2017/2019)<br>Documentation on the restoration of a film poster (2019) |
| **Digital Collection** | www.deutsche-kinemathek.de/de/sammlungen-archive/sammlung-digital |

## Credits

Artistic Director: Rainer Rother
Administrative Director: Florian Bolenius
Exhibition concept: Rolf Aurich, Georg Simbeni
Curatorial assistance: Anett Sawall, Alexander Zöller
Project Manager: Peter Mänz
Project coordination: Georg Simbeni
Editing: Rolf Aurich, Julia Schell
English translations: Wendy Wallis, transART
Design of the exhibition graphics: Felder KölnBerlin
Exhibition architecture: jebram-szenografie
Restoration: Christin Frischmuth, Werkstatt Claus Schade
Conservational supervision: Sabina Fernández-Weiß
Digitalization: TU Berlin, Architekturmuseum in der Universitätsbibliothek
Reproductions: Bartneck Print Artists
Exhibition construction and technical services: Frank Köppke, Roberti Siefert
Lighting and AV technology: Stephan Werner
Design of the advertising graphics: Pentagram Design
Media / media editing: Heinrich Adolf and Kilian Dormann, Boris Seewald and Georg Simbeni
Head of Communications: Sandra Hollmann
Marketing: Linda Mann
Website: Julia Pattis, Julia Schell
Press: Heidi Berit Zapke
Educational Services and Outreach Programs: Jurek Sehrt
Guided tours and workshops: Jörg Becker, Jürgen Dünnwald

## Lenders

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Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin
esco – european salt company GmbH & Co. KG, Werk Braunschweig-Lüneburg in Grasleben
Jeanpaul Goergen, Berlin
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Hans-Rainer Quaas, Gröbenzell
Helga Rathsack, Berlin
Bettina and Dirk Seewald, Bad Kreuznach
Ullstein Bild, Berlin
Hans-Gunter Voigt, Potsdam

Our thanks go to esco – european salt company GmbH & Co. KG, Heinrich Lohrengel, as well as to all our colleagues at the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen.

## Tours | Educational Offers
## *Burn Marks – Film Posters from a Salt Mine*

**Public Tours**
Sunday, December 1, 2019, 2 pm
Sunday, December 29, 2019, 2 pm
Sunday, February 2, 2020, 2 pm
Sunday, February 23, 2020, 2 pm (English)
Sunday, March 29, 2020, 2 pm
Sunday, April 26, 2020, 2 pm
Duration: 90 mins., tours are free / with an admission ticket
Meeting point: ticketing area, Museum für Film und Fernsehen

**Public Tours with the Curators**
Thursday, December 12, 2019, 6 pm
Thursday, February 27, 2020, 6 pm (English)
Thursday, April 23, 2020, 6 pm
Thursday: 90 mins., tours are free / with an admission ticket
Meeting point: ticketing area, Museum für Film und Fernsehen

***Guests!* Guest Tour of the Exhibition with Restorer Christin Frischmuth**
Thursday, February 6, 2020, 6 pm
About the restoration history of the film posters in the exhibition
With: Christin Frischmuth, restorer for paper objects, Restaurierungswerkstatt Claus Schade
Accompanied by: Anett Sawall, Graphics Archive, Deutsche Kinemathek
Duration: 75–90 mins., tours are free / with an admission ticket
Meeting point: ticketing area, Museum für Film und Fernsehen

**Inclusion: Tour of the Exhibition with Sign Language**
Sunday, January 26, 2019, 3:30 pm
A tour for the deaf. With interpreters for both spoken and sign language.
Participation is free of charge. Registration: bildung@deutsche-kinemathek.de

**Workshops**
**Winter Break Program** for children and teens: "Graphic Treasures from The Salt Mine!"
Involving detective work and creating one's own works of art, age 10+
Tuesday, February 4, 2020, 11 am – 3 pm
Wednesday, February 5, 2020, 11 am – 4:30 pm
With: Felix Pestemer, illustrator
Participation is free of charge. Registration: museumsdienst@kulturprojekte.berlin
or T +49 (0)30 247 49-888

**Bookable Tours for Groups and School Classes**:
museumsdienst@kulturprojekte.berlin, T +49 (0)30 247 49-888

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**Contacts:**
Heidi B. Zapke, Press Office, T.+49 (0)30 300903-820, email: presse@deutsche-kinemathek.de
Sandra Hollmann, head of Communications, email: shollmann@deutsche-kinemathek.de

DEUTSCHE KINEMATHEK MUSEUM FÜR FILM UND FERNSEHEN

## BURN MARKS — FILM POSTERS FROM A SALT MINE



*Man of Aran,* GB 1934, Robert J. Flaherty, Deutche Kinemathek

### Introduction

Numerous international film posters from the first 40 years of film history were found in a salt mine in Grasleben, Germany in 1986, where part of the National Socialists' Reichsfilmarchiv (Film Archive of the Third Reich) had been stored since World War II. We are presenting two dozen extensively restored posters and telling their history for the first time.

Did a miner's lamp in Grasleben really tip over in June 1945, triggering the destruction of countless film materials? In a salt mine of all places, where these and other cultural assets were supposed to be protected from the effects of war? Or had American agents and special units already evacuated the storage area two months before and then used the fire to cover their tracks?

These questions can presumably never be answered. What does survive are historical film posters into which the traces of time have literally been burned. These works have come into the care of the Deutsche Kinemathek in the meantime, while further materials, documents and objects are still slumbering in the depths of the salt mine.

Why and how did the film archives make their way there in 1944–45, during the last months of the war? And what happened at the mine after the war ended? This exhibition tells these stories. It also addresses the subject of protecting cultural assets and looks into the painstaking efforts that are undertaken to keep historical legacies from being forgotten.

## 1. The Reichsfilmarchiv

When the Reichsfilmarchiv was founded in 1934 and opened a year later in Berlin-Dahlem – nicknamed the "German Oxford" – it was the first successful attempt to create a central, state film archive in Germany. The purpose of the collection, published as one of this institution's statutes at the beginning of 1935, still sounds prosaic: It was to include "films that rouse special interest for whatever reason." Nevertheless, National Socialist interest in archiving films should be understood against the background of a far-reaching strategy involving their own politically-charged immortalization as well as the exclusion of works they deemed politically adverse.

Film was an important component in the contemporary mass media ensemble, and cultural archives – "Reichskulturarchive" – were meant to be established as of 1937, but only the Reichsfilmarchiv actually took up its work. The materials deposited there were not collected systematically; nor were public screenings of the films allowed. The inventory grew considerably during World War II, because looted and confiscated "enemy films" were incorporated in great number. The Reichsfilmarchiv also preserved films not authorized in Germany.

And yet, this institution, led by National Socialists from the beginning, supported international efforts towards film exchange and in 1938 it was among the founding members of the Féderation Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) that still exists. From 1939 further storage sites were set up. The largest was built in Babelsberg (Brandenburg); a second site was located in Harthausen near Munich. In addition to the most diverse films, the wide spectrum of materials preserved at the Reichsfilmarchiv included film stills as well as film review and censorship documents.

### 1.1. Origins of the Reichsfilmarchiv

The Reichsfilmkammer (RFK, Reich Chamber of Film), founded in September 1933, was an effective instrument for both "Gleichschaltung" (enforced conformity) and marginalization in the film industry. Amidst this environment, the Reichsfilmarchiv was founded on January 30, 1934, the anniversary of the "National Socialist Revolution." Briefly led by a senior official of the Federal Foreign Office and employee of the Film Review Office, its direction was quickly taken over by the National Socialists Frank Hensel (1893–1972) and Richard Quaas (1905–1989). The archive opened at the Harnack House in Berlin-Dahlem in February 1935 in the presence of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels but was also attended by prominent film professionals such as Oskar Messter, Gerhard Lamprecht and Marianne Hoppe. Its initial task was the arbitrary collection of films as illustrative material for a later film academy.

### 1.2 The Storehouses of the Reichsfilmarchiv

The archive's storehouses in and around Berlin soon became too small, because the inventory from the Reichsfilmkammer (RFK, Reich Chamber of Film) and Reichsarchiv (German National Archives) grew quickly. This was not least on account of the inclusion of numerous films awarded state distinction by the Film Review Office, and later due to German occupation politics. Joseph Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry took control of the Reichsfilmarchiv at the start of 1938; in March the Deutsche Filmakademie (German Film Academy) was founded. Structured according to the "leader principle," it was part of the project for a film city, the "Filmstadt Babelsberg" – much like the Reichsfilmarchiv was to shape the cultural archives in the planned "Reichskulturarchive". In fall 1939 construction work began on a modern film bunker with the address "Breites Gestell 1," the future main storage area. In summer 1939

a small, but solidly-built storehouse was erected near Harthausen, not far from Munich, which stored what were known as "personality archives" as well as films that had been confiscated in Vienna.

### 1.3 Working Practices of the Reichsfilmarchiv

Although Richard Quaas, the director of the Reichsfilmarchiv appointed in 1938, had lived in Babelsberg since summer 1942, it was operated from Tempelhofer Ufer in Berlin. The department that oversaw the propaganda companies' recordings, shown in *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* weekly newsreels, also resided there. In 1938 Quaas gained an important staff member, Hans Barkhausen (1906–1999), who mostly processed and catalogued foreign film materials. He had joined the NSDAP (Nazi Party) in the 1920s. As of 1958 he was also involved in helping to build up the Film Archives of the German Federal Archives in Koblenz. An important everyday activity of the Reichsfilmarchiv consisted of continuously supplying politicians and the military with films – including film classics in the original language, such as *Casablanca* (USA 1942), which was banned from official screenings in Germany, because numerous German actors who had emigrated were in the cast.

### 1.4 The Reichsfilmarchiv's International Connections and Films as Art Loot

Officially retired from his duties as director, Frank Hensel continued the work for the Reichsfilmarchiv on an international level. Immediately prior to the founding of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) in May 1938, Goebbels' "foreign advisor" met in Paris with future partners from the USA, Great Britain and France – including Henri Langlois and Georges Franju from the Cinémathèque Française. The opening of an exhibition of American Art at the Museum of Modern Art provided the occasion for the meeting. FIAF headquarters were established in Paris; its first president was John Abbott (MoMA); Hensel served as vice president. His role during the German occupation of France is still obscure. World War II brought the work of the FIAF largely to a standstill, while also offering the Reichsfilmarchiv new possibilities of procuring films in both occupied and neutral foreign countries.

### 1.5 Protecting Cultural Assets in War

"Verlagern!" (Relocation!), cameraman Heinz von Jaworsky noted in mid-April 1945 after passing the Reichsfilmarchiv in Babelsberg, where a bomb had struck the year before and just a few days before the devastating air raid on Potsdam. Goebbels turned down an offer of temporary safe custody for the archival materials in neutral Switzerland. While films continued to be loaned to SS personnel and others, an alternative storage solution was sought and found in Grasleben's rock salt mine. Negatives from *Die Wochenschau* newsreels and files from the Film Review Office in Berlin were stored there. Documents are also said to have been kept in a school attic in Grasleben, but no trace of them exists. In parallel actions, the Soviet military seized the Babelsberg site and transported films to Moscow in late April 1945; at the same time Richard Quaas managed to destroy "Geheimsachen" (classified information) and to house *Wochenschau* materials in Constance.

### 1.6 Where are the German Films?

At its first postwar meeting, the FIAF (Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film) attempted to clarify the whereabouts of the Reichsfilmarchiv's films. Work had continued in the bunkers in Babelsberg, despite the Soviet evacuations. Günter Reisch, an assistant of Kurt Maetzig, who worked for the Deutsche Film AG (DEFA) founded in 1946, looked there for *Wochenschau* material for the film *Der Rat der Götter* (*The Council of the Gods*, GDR 1950), a reckoning with National Socialism. Consequently, the 1955 foundation of the Staatliche Filmarchiv der DDR (SFA, State Film Archive of the GDR) was developed with materials from the Reichsfilmarchiv. Lorenz Pronnet, the storehouse

manager, was still in Babelsberg in April 1945. By October, American occupation forces had given him the job of registering confiscated film materials in Geiselgasteig (Munich). The majority was shipped to the USA. Hans Barkhausen later built up his contacts with American colleagues and as of 1964 he was chiefly responsible for the return of confiscated films to the German Federal Archives.

### 1.7 Rescue Operations in Grasleben after World War II

Our knowledge about the Reichsfilmarchiv inventory stored in Grasleben is fragmentary. US agents stormed the salt mine on April 14, 1945 to track down the archives after Albert Neumann, a former employee, had given them the storage location. It remains a mystery what the Americans actually claimed and what was recorded on the inventory lists they took with them. Lists from other institutions that used storage in Grasleben have often survived. They offer assistance in reconstructing what happened, as well as for the return of cultural assets. In June 1945 a pit fire damaged works of art that were stored in the mine and also the objects presented in this exhibition. Along with the restoration work, three rescue missions carried out by staff at the Deutsche Kinemathek in 1986, 2017 and 2019 provide foundations for a better understanding of the Reichsfilmarchiv and approval or censorship of film advertising.

Film store at Harthausen

## 2. Protecting Cultural Assets

Long before WWII was over, those in positions of responsibility in Germany were aware of the threat of destruction that armed conflicts posed to cultural assets. The city of Braunschweig (Brunswick) was in charge of civilian air-raid protection and had prepared for the worst-case scenario since the end of the Weimar Republic. It was always a matter of weighing the tradeoff between the protection of people versus materials. Following the first major bomb attacks on Braunschweig that began in September 1943, various art and cultural assets, including private property, were transported from there to Grasleben, about 30 kilometers away.

Rock salt had been mined in Grasleben since 1925. By the spring of 1943, archivists and museum experts knew that salt mines with their dry and warm air would be both bombproof and sustainable accommodations for written documents, graphics and ceramics – but not for paintings, or works made of wood or metal. It was assumed that files stored underground would not be damaged. By the summer of 1943, when the Allies' air raids on Berlin had significantly increased, rethinking took hold in the state archives and the transfer of files to alternate locations accelerated. Libraries, sound archives, and art museums above all, began housing their inventories in the mines located to the west of the German capital.

In addition to museums and archives, the Reichsversicherungsanstalt für Angestellte (RfA, Reich social insurance office for salaried employees) also found a hideaway in Grasleben and continued its work underground. Unlike the documentation for most museums, however, delivery lists from the Reichsfilmarchiv to Grasleben have not survived. Whether they also included property stolen by the Germans remains uncertain. But, as of summer 1944, large quantities of materials that were sent to Grasleben by train from a temporary storage site in present-day Poland can be traced, including documents from the Filmprüfstelle (Film Review Office).

With the end of the war looming, many sides had their sights on the Reichsfilmarchiv. The Propaganda Ministry turned down a Swiss offer to hold the film materials in trust until the end of the war. The materials stored in Grasleben were earmarked to be destroyed by German agents. However, Hollywood had also long been advancing its postwar plans – and not just in the areas freed by American troops.

## 3. Restoration Work of the Deutsche Kinemathek

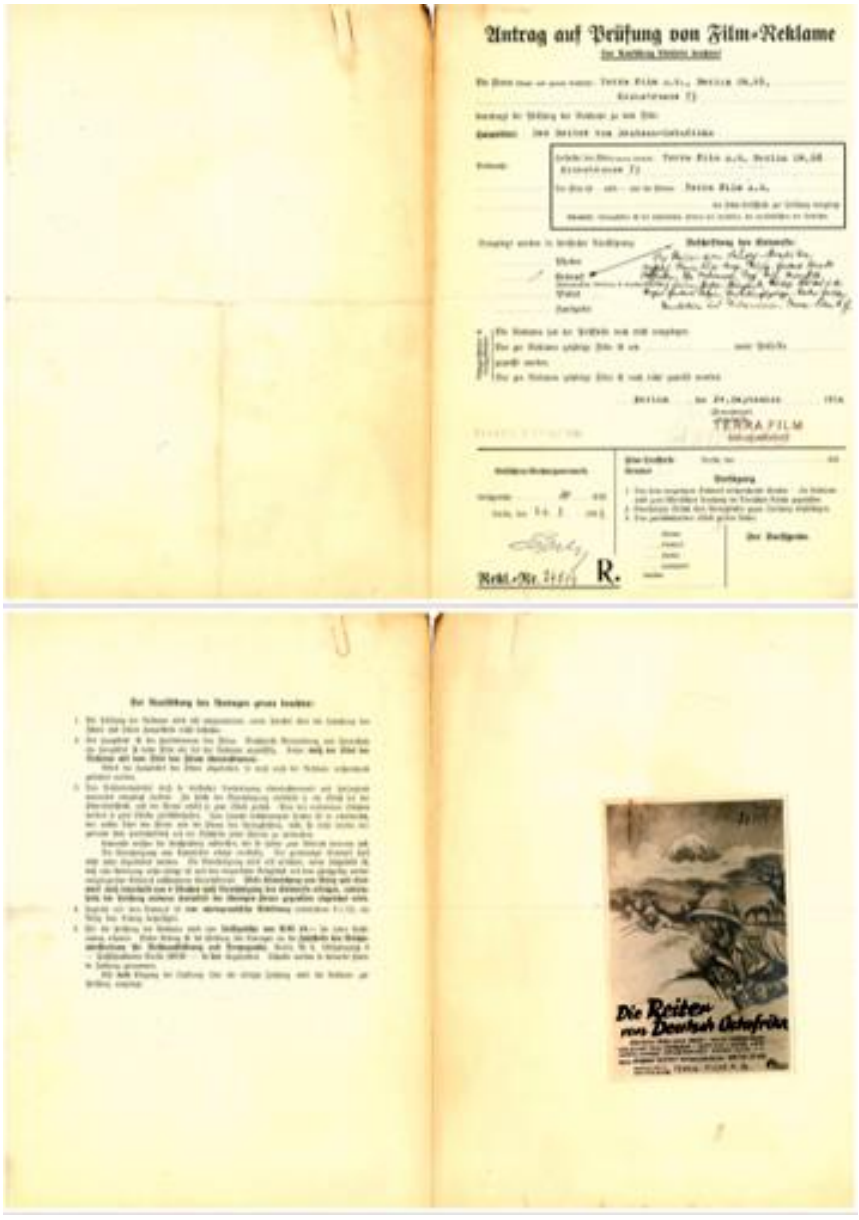
After American troops successfully occupied the region of Braunschweig (Brunswick) and its environs without much resistance by April 23, 1945, British troops took over the command at the beginning of June. In Grasleben, which like Braunschweig was taken on April 12th, the Americans made an inspection of the mine just two days later, presumably with a group from the military Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC). They already had an eye on the Reichsfilmarchiv and evacuated parts of it as well as of the Reich sound archives. It is conceivable that this evacuation served to safeguard material for the planned war criminal trials. A former employee of the Reichsfilmarchiv – Albert Neumann, who was born in Braunschweig and persecuted as a Jewish "half-breed" – had put the Americans on the trail.

Kurt Seeleke, Braunschweig's regional head conservator, was the first German expert to gain access to the mine in Grasleben. After an underground pit fire in June 1945, caused by carelessness, he ensured

that the works of art – some of which had been severely damaged – were salvaged and initially restored. It was first within the context of a tour of the salt mine in 1986, through Klaus Goldmann, a prehistorian who researched the relocation and storage histories of the Berlin museums and collections, that representatives of the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek were able to judge the extent and state of the surviving Reichsfilmarchiv. They brought some extremely damaged materials to Berlin, where initial attention was given to approximately 70 fragile film posters. Careful restoration since 2013 has sharpened our view of them, revealing graphic artists' logos and signed assessor's stamps in the process.

The Kinemathek went down into the mine on further rescue missions in 2017 and 2019, once again removing the most fragile documents. In addition to photographs – many of which are singed and stuck to one another – as well as graphic designs, there are also applications and records related to advertising approvals and censorship. Like reviews of the films themselves, this was the task of the Filmprüfstellen des Deutschen Reiches (Film Review Offices of the German Reich) set up in Berlin and Munich in 1920, which initially were subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior. As of 1933, the film and advertising review became a matter of the Propaganda Ministry and in 1935, the Munich office was closed. Artistic evaluations of the posters were excluded; instead assessments of their potential effects, primarily on adolescents, were considered essential. In some cases both the applications for review of an advertisement as well as the posters still exist. These artifacts bear the signatures of leading staff members at the Film Review Office in Berlin, including Heinrich Zimmermann and Arnold Bacmeister, for example.

The ironic wording of a fight "between the seductive arts of the industry and the censor's art of surveillance", published in 1931, can be traced back to the publicist Wolfgang Petzet. Using what was found at Grasleben, this aspect of state intervention in Germany's film culture – which was inconsistently judged by the lawmakers of the Weimar Republic – can now be described for the first time on the basis of the materials themselves.




Application to *Die Reiter von Deutsch-Ostafrika*

## 3. Film Posters


***The Cohens and Kellys in Atlantic City***

This film was made in 1929, one of several sequels of *The Cohens and Kellys* (1926), a successful film produced at Universal Studios, which the German emigrant Carl Laemmle had founded in Los Angeles in 1912. Directed by William James Craft, the film was screened with sound dialogue sequences in the USA; in Germany it was shown at movie theaters as the silent film *Atlantic City*.

Moviegoers experienced a comedic family story about a Jewish and an Irish family, the former blessed with a daughter and the latter with a son, who had fallen in love with one another and married in an earlier part of the series – much to the chagrin of their parents. In this story, the swimsuit business run by two senior bosses (one of whom is Mr. Cohen) is old-fashioned and doing poorly, so the Cohen's daughter Rosie and the Kelly's son Pat plan to host a beauty contest in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to present a new product line.

The graphic artist Willy Dietrich designed this poster for film distribution by the German branch of Universal. Posed on a stretch of beach before a cloudy blue sky, a young woman in high heels and wearing an elegant blue and yellow swimsuit draws the viewer's attention. In the image she is eyed suspiciously by two potbellied gentlemen dressed in customary contemporary bathing attire, including bold headwear and the indispensable sock holders. The lady shown in the provocative pose is surely Rosie, who (after numerous complications) wins the contest, managing to save both the business and the family circle. The actress portraying her, Nora Lane, was also an accomplished swimmer, who had won many prizes.

DEUTSCHE KINEMATHEK
MUSEUM FÜR FILM UND FERNSEHEN


### *A Question of Honor*

In the salt mine in Grasleben, not only were two posters found for *Bahn frei!* (the German retitling of this 1922 American action film), but also its corresponding "Anträge auf Prüfung der Filmreklame" (applications for review as film advertisements). The individual steps involved and the considerable duration of the review process can be followed through these documents: On August 21, 1924 the distributor submitted nearly two dozen photos to the Film Review Office for release; a poster design followed eight days later. On February 13, 1925 the film distributor asked for an extension of the submission deadline for the printed poster, whose completion had been delayed, although the design's release had already occurred on November 28th of the previous year.

Its horizontal, 70 x 100 cm format, makes this object an exception among the posters salvaged from the salt mine. The DIN standards for paper sizes, which had already been established by 1922, were not applied to posters until 1942. Consequently, many of the exhibits on display here relied on the "Berlin format" in size VI, approximately 142 x 95 cm. *Bahn frei!* deviates from that format.

The motif concentrates on the action-packed plot that takes place in the Sierra Nevadas. The engineer Bill Shannon is responsible for a dam project under threat of having to make way for the railroad line of an unscrupulous millionaire. His fiancé Anne switches allegiance to fight at Shannon's side. The poster's typography, designed by an unknown hand in the style of cracked boulders, also underscores the dynamics of the story and relies strongly on the visual force typical of comic strips.

DEUTSCHE KINEMATHEK MUSEUM FÜR FILM UND FERNSEHEN


*Bring 'em Back Alive*

In addition to a fight between cats of prey, the poster's central motif, the American hunter and animal catcher Frank Buck can be seen in the upper right corner, surrounded by indigenous Malayans. In 1930 Buck scored a bestseller with his book *Bring 'em Back Alive*, in which he reported about his expeditions and forays. A film adaptation of these adventures was made in the USA in 1932, directed by Clyde E. Elliott. Cinemas in Germany also screened this film under the title *Bring sie lebend heim!*
Although the Film Review Office approved the poster on November 19, 1932, the film itself was subjected to a longer assessment process. An application from the Prussian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs to revoke authorization to screen the film to adolescents was negotiated before the Film-Oberprüfstelle (the Film Review Office's highest authority) on December 20, 1932. This authority only intervened in daily assessment procedures in cases of contradictions. As a result, the Film Review Office's initial authorization of the work as an educational film underwent a modification: the sound film had to be shortened. The subsequent ban for adolescents was justified by the film's lack of scientific grounding, unnecessary cruelty in its representations and the obviously contrived fights between wild animals. Dr. Pohle from the zoological museum at the University of Berlin was consulted as an expert. Under the chairmanship of Ministerialrat (Undersecretary) Ernst Seeger, the director of the Städtische Film- und Bildamtes Berlin, Walther Günther, was also one of the assessors.


*Die am Wege sterben*

This poster was presumably designed by Otto Arpke in 1918. The painter and commercial artist, who worked in Berlin, became known for his advertising design for Robert Wiene's film *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920). Printed production photos are included in the poster. Its effect is mainly due to the graphic design in which the color is kept simple, but carries meaning. In combination with the title, green – an obvious reference to the color of the "Devil absinthe" that befogs the protagonist – is used to suggest the film's central motif as well as the outcome of this "Drama in fünf Abschnitten" (five-part drama).

While his wife Helene clings to their son's sickbed, fighting for the life of their boy who is dangerously ill, the merchant Richard Hellmer increasingly surrenders to absinthe-induced drunkenness, nightlife and the beautiful dancer Lulu. He loses himself more and more to narcotic dreams and neglects his wife and child. When Lulu goes, Hellmer fakes his own death and follows her. After his money runs out and Lulu leaves him for good, he returns home an unrecognizable and destitute man. In the interim his wife has started a new life with the doctor who saved the child. Hellmer reveals his identity and remorsefully begs Helene for forgiveness. She forgives him, but his heart stops beating and he dies a broken man.

In the Deutsche Kinemathek collection there is also a distribution brochure for the film, likewise designed by Arpke. However, it was done in red. With the exception of the poster and this accompanying brochure, little is known about the film – not even the name of the director.


*Die Unehelichen*

According to the youth researcher and socialist Siegfried Bernfeld in the weekly magazine *Das Tage-Buch*, the political left understood this silent film by Gerhard Lamprecht as agitation for illusionary "youth welfare education", which did not expose the truth. Nevertheless, in 1926 the director succeeded in making a gripping and realistic "child tragedy" oriented to life in Berlin – using real children acting naturally, as Lamprecht would continue to show them; with official documents to which the camera devoted itself extensively; and with atmosphere contrasts between inside and outside that were typical of him.

Luise Heilborn-Körbitz, who also worked on the manuscript, used official documents from the Verein zum Schutz der Kinder vor Ausnutzung und Misshandlung (the German association for the protection of children from exploitation and abuse), a precursor of today's Deutscher Kinderschutzbund (DKSB). The premiere of the film on September 6, 1926 was dedicated to this association as a charity performance.

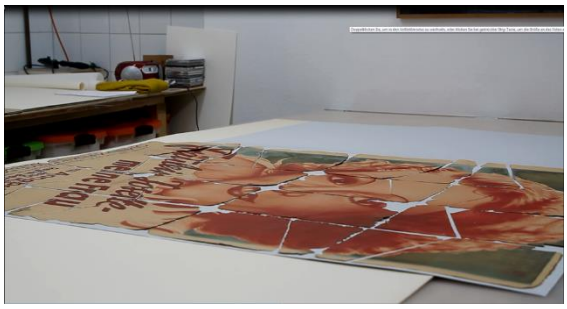
Neither the review of 40 film photographs in late August 1926, nor the assessor's inspection of the film's color print poster raised any problems. The latter, dominated by the dark eyes of children, was created by Theo Matejko, a self-taught illustrator. These administrative proceedings are documented in papers found in Grasleben in 1986 – along with the poster. During its restoration at that time, focus was placed on retouching the missing areas – a stronger intervention in the object than is usual today. Gerhard Lamprecht lost the 35mm material of his film in 1945 during WWII. However, ten years before, he had a finecine film copy produced, which survived the war.


***Mademoiselle Josette, ma femme***

"Today, we are generally only inclined to appreciate and justify the introduction of foreign films," German film critic Fritz Olimsky wrote in 1935 in the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, "if they concern top performances, which means if they enrich our cinema programs through their individuality and artistic quality." He did not consider André Berthomieu's film to be such a top performance, but instead deemed it an "especially typical work showing all the particularly characteristic features of French films, with a shot of *demimonde* ambiance, a good dose of French narrow-mindedness, a bit of a pensioner's psychology thrown in and, of course, all sorts of intrigue and spice."

The 1933 French film was screened in the original language with superimposed German titles. It was based on an eponymous stage play by Paul Gavault and Robert Charvay, telling the story of 17-year-old Josette, who has to marry before she comes of age in order to receive her inheritance. Not unexpectedly, the husband chosen for the sake of appearances turns out to be her great love and the comedy ends with the happy couple.

Popular with audiences in the 1930s, Olimsky praised the leading lady Annabella (Suzanne Georgette Charpentier) as "extraordinarily *delicieux*." The poster for *Fräulein Josette – meine Frau*, designed by Kurt Wendler (who was briefly imprisoned under the Nazi regime), banked on her fame. It shows clear traces of damage caused by the pit fire. A film camera documented its restoration.




*The Great Gabbo*

The Berlin premiere of James Cruze's feature film *The Great Gabbo* (1929) at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo in mid-May 1930 was accompanied by a professional advertising campaign. On May 24th the journal *Der Film* wrote: "The type of advertising display that the three beings in the film require (Stroheim, Otto the talking doll and Betty Compson) is exemplarily resolved by the posters." The adman and journalist Rudi Löwenthal was especially praised for having "carried out some particularly difficult propaganda" in collaboration with the commercial artist Herbert Dassel, an important representative of the *Schriftplakat-Bewegung* (a movement aimed at reforming the style of text posters).

One of the large-scale posters could be recovered from the Grasleben salt mine. It shows lead actor Erich von Stroheim as the ventriloquist Gabbo with his doll. The signature under the stamp of approval, dated May 15, 1930, is that of the Film Review Office's chairman Leo Dillinger, a Social Democratic councilor, who was dismissed in 1933 as "politically unreliable" and was responsible for reviewing film advertisements at the Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (FSK, motion picture rating system) from 1949 to 1958.

By 1930 sound film had become popular in Germany. In parallel to *Der große Gabbo*, Josef von Sternberg's *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*) was screened at the Gloria Palast, not far from the Ufa-Palast. With the new technology, a tradition of dubbing (synchronization) foreign films was also established – and was critically commented on at the time. The critic Herbert Ihering called the subsequent German "*Be-sprechung*" (i.e. the "phony" dubbing/voiceover) a "barbaric solution" and asked: "Why Stroheim, an Austrian, had not just spoken the German text himself?"

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*Das höchste Gesetz der Natur*

What we know about this film is quite sparse. Neither the director nor the cast are known, and even the national production and its year of origin remain uncertain. What is known is that the Berlin police issued a ban on screenings for children. In 1916 the *Lichtbild-Bühne*, no. 20, described the film as a dramatic wild west spectacle in three acts "that even a well-mannered European will enjoy."
The only colored photograph included here, and therefore the most conspicuous, shows a praying child with properly folded hands and eyes cast upwards. The woman next to the child seems to have someone else in view. The smaller photos grouped around the text block lead us through the plot of the film. It is the story of two lovers whose paths have parted. A jovial third party appears, but is spurned. He plots his revenge and in the end is killed by Native Americans, who also suffer losses. The work is advertised with the following words on another poster: "Original Mexican recordings / A cast of over 500 / Daring riding [...] Magnificent scenes from the secluded regions of the Blue Mountains." Some of the scenes described can be found in the photographs on this plate-printed poster.
With their high percentage of photo content, such posters functioned for a time like display case photographs, which until then had not been very widespread. Illustrations complemented by text components were mostly arranged symmetrically and ornamentally framed. Smaller companies, which could not offer any corresponding pictorial material, often used this kind of poster.

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*Horrido*

In Grasleben, in addition to the damaged color poster for this film by Johannes Riemann, a design photo and placard photographs (some of which are singed), documents from the Film Review Office responsible for advertising approval or censorship were also stored. The review process was rather complicated: A processing fee of 10 Reichsmarks was required for every application submitted for examination, which an applicant had to number consecutively and file in full in triplicate (price for the forms: 10 Reichspfennig). In cases of approval a complete set of the materials remained at the Film Review Office; two were required for a veto or ban. The design and documentation had to be identical; only then could provisionally issued approval go into effect. In this case, the film's distribution and the approved submission of four photos was set in motion on September 28, 1934.
The company of Vasgen Badal, a film merchant from Iran, produced this work that premiered on December 20th. Nothing is known about the assessor noted in the record who reviewed the advertising application; "Ulmer" could refer to the actor Friedrich Ulmer. The poster, approved by an assessor named Harlützow and bearing the stamp of a later review on March 21, 1940, is identical with the original motif. It is based on the likeness of Camilla Horn, who became well-known in 1926 through F. W. Murnau's silent film *Faust*. However, it was the singer Louis Graveure (repeatedly engaged by Badal) and the comedian Theo Lingen who fought over the leading roles in what was intended to be a true-to-life tenor film –a fact also recognized by contemporary criticism.


***Hurra – ein Junge!***

*Hurra – ein Junge!* (It's a Boy!) is a three act farce that premiered in 1926, written by Arnold and Bach. It belongs to the comedic repertoire still performed on German stages today. The comedy – about a young, childless married couple, who is suddenly confronted with the husband's considerably older adopted son – has been filmed several times since its premiere. The first adaptation was in 1931. That same year, Georg Jacoby submitted the poster design by the Berlin studio Atelier Bottlik to the Film Review Office in Berlin for an advertising review. The poster graphics, rendered in a cartoon-like drawing style, are dominated by the film's *enfant terrible*, played by Ralph Arthur Roberts. Fritz Pappenstiel, the adopted son, is depicted wearing a christening robe and bib over his pinstriped suit, a monocle in his left eye, and holding a whiskey bottle in one hand and a cigar in the other. Bright question marks hover above the oversized heads of the married couple (Lucie Englisch and Fritz Schulz). They emphasize the farce's most absurd constellation.

Film review documents from 1931 reveal that the four-headed commission for the advertising examination was assembled from members involved with the film industry, art and literature, as well as public welfare. In addition to the poster, 61 placard photographs were submitted for review. Fifteen of these have been preserved in the Deutsche Kinemathek archives. They were found and rescued in Grasleben, and show burn marks on their edges.


*Ich sehne mich nach dir*
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*Inspiration*

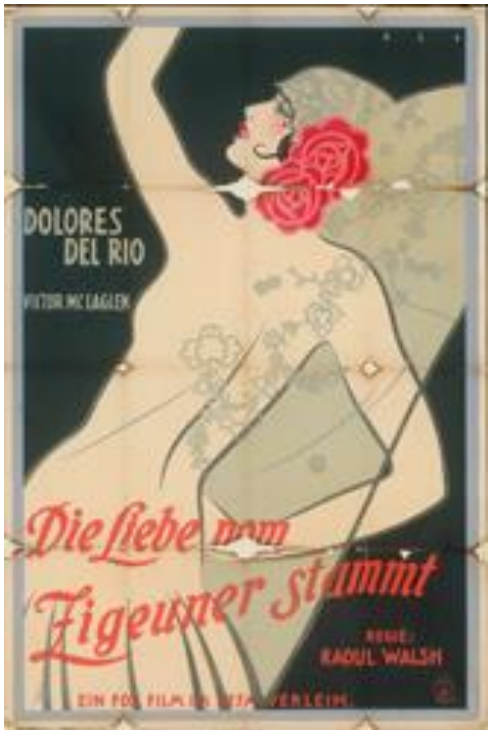
Boris Streimann's poster for Clarence Brown's American film seems rather tame. It was the only Greta Garbo film of the season, which started in Germany in November 1931 under the title *Yvonne*. Did the painter and commercial artist, who signed the poster with the pseudonym "Namir," actually see the film before he rendered Garbo in a chalky, sepia-toned ground color? The sound film, advertised as a "novel about a Parisian model," was adapted from a late 19th century short novel by Alphonse Daudet. Stock footage dappled the film with a bit of Parisian flair. However, this Pre-Code MGM production (produced before the era of Hollywood's Motion Picture Production Codes censorship guidelines) is dominated by a romantic and provocative love story between Yvonne, a beautiful artist's muse, and André Montell (Robert Montgomery), an aspiring foreign diplomat. Depicting the weariness of life on one side of the coin and an ever-rekindling flame of love on the other, the film traces a back and forth melodrama until the final clarifying statement made out of concern for the young man. Film critic Fritz Olimsky, writing about this story in the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* at the end of 1931, identified "scenes that are anything but lifelike." However, in Garbo's portrayal of Yvonne he saw the only person "of flesh and blood" – speaking (undubbed) English in a deep, melodic voice that came across as "utterly un-American." That sounds like an anti-American stance. The Reichsfilmarchiv later preserved the film and commented on it in its card catalogue as a "high-grade Greta Garbo film, which, in its time, was only put to use in the original language in regions of Austria."


*Kyritz – Pyritz*

Kyritz is a small town in present-day Brandenburg; Pyritz (now Pyrzyce, Poland) was a county seat in Pomerania, when the stage play *Kyritz Pyritz* was created in 1881. The "musical farce" from the pens of the writing duo Heinrich Wilken/Oskar Justinus tells the story of three provincials, who decide that they want to run riot while on an excursion to Berlin. However, what the singing pals from Kyritz don't suspect is that their wives are housed at the same hotel where they are staying. Moreover, three gentlemen from Pyritz are also lodging there, leading to all sorts of mix-ups.

The song interludes made the stage work especially suited to become a sound film adaptation. For his poster design, graphic artist Alfred Hermann relied completely on an illustrative, naturalistic style. The Kyritzer singers are animatedly portrayed with Berlin's Brandenburg Gate at their backs, while their counterparts from Pyritz seem to be deeply engaged in conversation in the foreground.

The poster was approved on September 9, 1931 – two days after the first screening of the film Carl Heinz Wolff produced. The stamp bears the signature of Heinrich Zimmermann, who had directed the Filmprüfstelle Berlin (Berlin's Film Review Office) since 1929 and remained in this position as a government official after 1933, although he had been a member of the SPD at the start of the 1920s. Zimmermann, who tried to serve the National Socialist regime through articles on advertising review and censorship, was transferred to the Ministry of Propaganda in 1938. He died in Berlin in 1948.




*Loves of Carmen*

Raoul Walsh directed this 1927 adaptation of Prosper Mérimée's story of *Carmen*, written in the mid-19th century. It tells of the encounter between the proud and passionate gypsy Carmen and Don José, who hopelessly falls for her and eventually kills her. The world-famous subject matter is set in Spain; however this Fox production was not shot at original locations, but in specially built Hollywood stage sets. Contemporary German criticism noted "charming scenery," but did not really warm up to the film. The critics reacted similarly to leading lady Dolores del Rio. Mexican by birth, she was considered an exotic beauty. In late January 1928, in *Film-Kurier* the critic Georg Herzberg went so far as to write: "Her beautiful, graceful body exudes a crackling fire of erotic temptations; her black eyes and coquettishly painted lips are inebriating." And yet, Dolores del Rio was not Carmen, nor was she a gypsy. For this work, Tibor Réz-Diamant, one of the most well-known Hungarian poster artists of the Art Déco period, designed for her persona an alabaster body wrapped in nearly transparent lace, her lips made up in blood-red lipstick. His signet REZ can be found in the upper right-hand corner. A known Berlin company, Lindemann & Lüdecke, printed the approved poster, which was reviewed on January 6, 1928 and provided with a banal German distribution title.


*Man of Aran (Plakat 1)*

With the implementation of the *Reichslichtspielgesetz* (Cinema Act) in 1920 it was no longer just the distribution companies' intended films that had to be submitted for review and approved for the cinema by the newly erected Film Review Offices in Berlin and Munich. Other materials used for advertising, including placard photographs and posters, also accompanied the applications. In cases of approval, the poster design received a stamp in the form of a German eagle, an official approval number, the date of the review and the signature of the official responsible. Later this stamp was also found on the actual film posters, which were printed in larger quantities. Organizationally, little changed in the review practice after the National Socialists took power.

Ufa's film distribution department submitted two versions of the poster design for the British film *Man of Aran* (1934) to the Film Review Office in Berlin. Robert J. Flaherty's semi-documentary film, distributed in Germany under the title *Die Männer von Aran*, portrays the life of a family of fishermen on the inhospitable Aran Islands, located off the west coast of Ireland. The poster design by graphic artist Erich Lüdke, reviewed on September 25, 1934, advertised with the final scene of the film: The protagonist's wife and son are shown watching the return of his fishing boat, in fear for the life of their husband and father, who had sailed into a stormy sea to hunt a giant shark. The review committee was made up of four assessors and a chairman – it pled for "authorization," leading to the poster's distribution release in the German Reich with the approval number 24518.


*Man of Aran (Plakat 2)*

Two days after the first poster design, Ufa submitted another motif that would undergo an "advertising review." This graphic design also portrayed a dramatic scene in the film: It shows the moment of the lead actor's tense and concentrated harpoon throw at the hunted shark from the boat. During the film shoot on Aran, which lasted 18 months, it was reported that harpoon hunting was no longer practiced there. Flaherty had the film's long-sought actor – who had been typecast to best fit the role – specially trained so that he could include this scene in his film.

The five-member review committee was prominently appointed, including artist Erich Feyerabend, actor Hans Brausewetter and Benno von Arent, who Hitler would name the "Reichsbühnenbildner" (Reich stage designer) in 1936. The committee decided to also approve this motif. Together with other film review documents for *Man of Aran*, at the end of World War II both posters from the Reichsfilmarchiv, which had also preserved a copy of the film, were stored at the salt mine in Grasleben. These materials were damaged during a fire there in 1945 and have been preserved in the archives at the Deutsche Kinemathek since 1986 – the posters are now restored.

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*Die närrische Fabrik*

Joe May, one of the central figures of Weimar Cinema, was born Julius Otto Mandl in Vienna in 1880. The oeuvre of the director, author and producer, who also gathered many artistic talents around him, including Fritz Lang and Thea von Harbou, spans several decades of film history. After turning to the popular detective genre in 1913–14, which included prize competitions for solving whodunit films and the Stuart Webbs detective series, May launched his Joe Deebs series in 1915 as author and director through his own production company, the May-Film-GmbH.

His blend of exciting and comedic elements matched the zeitgeist of moviegoing audiences. Austrian stage star Max Landa was engaged to play the detective. Like May, Landa had to leave Germany in 1933. May turned over the directing of the series to Harry Piel in 1918, but retained final say as artistic director. Piel filmed several stories in the series with Heinrich Schroth in the lead, including *Die Närrische Fabrik* (1919) about the artificial production of diamonds. Schroth made a career for himself during the National Socialist period. Later films in the series were produced by the Projektions-AG Union (PAGU), but were unable to build on its earlier successes.

This poster designed by "Anto" is a good illustration of what contemporary audiences experienced – a feeling of speed, tension, dynamism and a pinch of mystery. It was a modern, urban world, elusive and hard to perceive clearly. The eye-catching "May cross" trademark was the design of Paul Leni, a graphic artist, stage and set designer.


*Pro Domo*

The *Film-Kurier* from June 21, 1920 – less than six weeks after the *Lichtspielgesetz* (Cinema Act) had gone into effect – described the plot as follows: "The subject matter verges into the domain of criminal novels and thrillers. A woman mysteriously disappears in a Parisian hotel. In the end it is revealed that she died suddenly of Bubonic plague. But the police have collected and buried the woman's corpse in secret, so as not to affect attendance to the World Expo."

Such events can only be guessed at from the poster – it shows no trace of Paris. Against a deep black background, the graphic artist duo Erich Ludwig Stahl and Otto Arpke have designed a scene with a lady dressed in white. She is depicted with upraised, blood-sprayed hands, which she stares upon in horror, her eyes wide with fright. At the height of her face the skull of a dead man looks in her direction and is perhaps also grinning. A bone hand grips the woman's right arm.

Before it was restored, the poster showed only a strange piece of "jewelry" on this arm, which during restoration turned out to be the hand of Death. The poster's restrained use of text is also unusual. The film title is set prominently on the upper edge in red, followed by a reference to the film's literary source. "Biograph Berlin W.8" appears in a large font in the lower left corner, crowned by the trademark letters "DB" set in a circle. Both refer to the production and distribution company DMB Deutsche Mutoskop- und Biograph GmbH. However, there is no mention of the director, Paul von Woringen – this company's artistic and business head – the cast, or others involved in the film.


*Die Reiter von Deutsch-Ostafrika*

The film *Die Reiter von Deutsch-Ostafrika*, directed by Herbert Selpin, took 1934 moviegoers 20 years back in time to the German Empire and its colonies. It tells the story of a local farmer, who joins the German "Schutztruppen" (protection forces) in World War I in their fight against the British. In the absence of the head of the household, the farm, located in present-day Tanzania, is managed by his wife and a young apprentice. When British soldiers occupy the estate, the young man is shot and killed, and the woman is taken captive. German soldiers eventually free her and continue their fight alongside the troops of Paul Lettow-Vorbeck. The film ends at the grave of the young hero, concluding with the highly emotive words: "… one day, sooner or later, we will come again."

Produced by the Terra-Film AG under the patronage of the Reichskolonialbund (RKB, Reich Colonial League), the film was shot in part at original African locations. Otto Linnekogel's poster design, submitted to the Film Review Office responsible for advertising on September 25, 1934, shows the lead actor Sepp Rist in front of a panorama of the African savanna, with the massive, snowcapped Kilimanjaro seen in the background. Both the film and advertising materials were officially approved. The propagandistic orientation of this feature film asserted itself even more clearly during a renewed advertising review in January 1938. Here, the assessor's stamp was accompanied by an eagle and swastika, and the advertising material for the film revival emphatically proclaims: "Wir wollen unsere Kolonien!" (We want our colonies!).

***Siberia***

In the *Film-Kurier*, dated August 14, 1926, film critic and screenwriter Willy Haas wrote about this American melodrama produced by the Fox Film Corporation: "With this film, Fox continues the influence of its great political and democratic film dramas [...]. Journalistic topics of today are taken up in place of the romantic ones of yesterday. This progression in itself is immeasurable, because propagandistic journalism is one of the strongest potentials of film today." Haas' general approval was followed by critical remarks on the "pompous gesture" of this "genuinely American" film, shown under the German title *Sibirien. Am Vorabend der russischen Revolution*.

The poster, by an unknown designer, places surprisingly little value on its function as an advertisement: The handwritten American film title appears in miniature on the bottom edge; there is no information of any kind about the design or printing; merely the undated assessor's stamp confirms that it was "approved." Imposing not just because of its size, it presumably shows one of the last scenes of the silent film directed by Victor Schertzinger – the flight of the two main characters on the eve of the Russian Revolution, from their persecutors and a pack of wolves. At least, the vivid description of the final scene by Willy Haas strongly suggests this: "In the end there are wolves, which first devour each other, then the villain along with his mistress. In eternal snow and ice. Terrible! It's a boxing match of life and death, where the villain is slowly cornered and boxed to death before he gets eaten as well. A colossal circus attraction!"


*Streik der Diebe (Plakat 1)*

Alfred Abel, one of the most renowned German actors of the silent film era, ventured into directing in 1920. For his first feature film, *Der Streik der Diebe*, in which he functioned as both the lead actor and producer, he engaged the set designer Ernst Stern. Abel undoubtedly knew him from his engagements on Max Reinhardt's stages, where Stern worked as the head stage designer. Stern was listed as a "Raumkünstler" (decorator) in the film credits – an indication for the exceptionally complex production that premiered in late February 1921.

The advertising materials produced by the Artifex-Film production company that Abel founded also reflected this special effort. A contemporaneous brochure promised cinema owners "effective color-printed posters, designed by the artist Riemer," "fascinating printing plate posters," "elegant descriptions," "thrilling accompanying music composed by Felix Hirschberg" as well as "42 matte, glossy, sepia, ivory and hand-colored photos." *Der Streik der Diebe* was the sole production of Artifex-Film, which advertised it with the following words: "Who doesn't laugh when the thieves are on strike, but things get devilishly serious when entire industries, entire professions become paralyzed." Commercial artist Walter Riemer's color lithograph depicts this moment of an economic breakdown, caused by the B.A.G's (Besitz Ausgleich Gesellschaft [Possession Equalization Company]) and its general director Will Tair's (Alfred Abel) walkout and refusal to work, making the humanized skyscrapers sway and collapse.

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*Der Streik der Diebe (Plakat 2)*

In 1986, in addition to Walter Riemer's color lithograph, a monochrome poster that had been produced for this film using the printing-plate process was also found in the salt mine in Grasleben and could later be restored. This type of poster – printed on a stereotype plate, also known as a cliché – combined graphic elements with printed still photographs. It was meant to be viewed close-up and long-distance effects were of lesser concern. The posters served their function on cinema façades, where they provided moviegoers with a visual impression of a film primarily through the help of photos. It's also conceivable that they were produced for smaller movie theaters, which only had a few display cases for still photographs.

Unlike the multicolored graphic version, a stamp from the Film Review Office in Berlin can be recognized on this poster designed by Willy Jeschke. It is an early piece of evidence for the advertising censorship that was introduced with the *Reichslichtspielgesetz* (Cinema Act) in 1920. Individual details from still photographs were selected and applied. The bordering around their edges mimics the perforations of film strips. Alfred Abel, the lead actor and director, is shown several times. In his role as Will Tair, general director of the B.A.G., which is an organization of thieves, he is dressed in top hat and tails – much like in other feature films of the period – sporting the image of the *grand seigneur*.


***Was wissen denn Männer!***

February 1933 saw the Berlin premiere of *Was wissen denn Männer!* at the Ufa-Theater Kurfürstendamm. Adolf Hitler had been Chancellor of the Third Reich for only a few days and the cinemas were still showing Weimar productions. A few years before, Hans Tintner had pleaded for the right to an abortion with the film *Cyankali*. Now, Gerhard Lamprecht delivered a conservative contribution to the debate about the abolition of Germany's § 218 (that outlawed abortion). According to film historian Wolfgang Jacobsen, his work, in which the writer and children's book author Hertha von Gebhardt was involved with the film script, made a "plea that women should bring their children into the world, regardless of the predicament in which they find themselves." The National Socialists would considerably tighten the relevant laws later. This film was part of the inventory of the Reichsfilmarchiv.

Paul Döri's poster design suggests an unhappy married life: In a confined space, it shows Toni van Eyck and Hans Brausewetter playing a couple who love each other, but are crestfallen by their fate. The straightforward simplicity of the graphics does not do justice to the Ufa film, which for all its fussiness still has its charms. Five weeks before the review of the film, the poster had already been approved by the Film Review Office on November 30, 1932. Lamprecht had filmed predominantly in the small town of Zerbst – contributing to the confined spatial and mental atmosphere. While a visitor on the set during production in the Babelsberg Studios, Fritz Olimsky foresaw the "modern reality film" it would become. In his critique of the film, Olimsky credited Lamprecht with a "delicate and empathetic treatment" of the problem – concealing reality once again.

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***Zuchthaus. Nach Sibirien!***

The image design and staging of this second-generation Soviet revolutionary film are formally reminiscent of Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*, just two years older. Rhythmized human movements and precisely balanced effects are determined photographically – above all the central motif of the prison bars – transforming the silent film into a visually powerful monument to political prisoners' angry escape attempts immediately preceding the October Revolution in 1917. The German poster, by the Berlin commercial artist Julius Kupfer-Sachs, symbolically picks up this motif and sets the scene with tangible desperation, using a placard-style close-up and concentrated coloration to focus on the hands. The artist's alternative motif is more restrained in its coloring. It shows exhausted prisoners of the czar tormenting themselves by trudging through a snowy landscape under the scrutiny of armed guards. Both posters found shelter in Grasleben, where they sustained severe damages.

The film was shown at Berlin's Mozartsaal (Metropol) on January 31, 1929, just two months after its Soviet premiere. This Goswojenkino production was by Juli Raisman, a highly regarded, up-and-coming director at that time, although Berlin critics denied he had the proper inner fire and criticized him of being too calculating. Ernst Toller, a leftist socialist writer and politician, was responsible for the German adaptation, even though the posters make no reference to him – possibly an indication that the distributor Derussa (Deutsch-Russische Film-Allianz AG, 1927–1929) was less interested in political propaganda than in the film achieving resonance among a wide audience.