



PRESS INFORMATION



©Ulrike Ottinger, *Aller Jamais Retour*, 1979

Goethe-Institut

Rue Belliard 58
Belliardstraat 58
1040 Brussels, Belgium

Press Contact

Magdalena Rausch
magdalena.rausch@goethe.de
+32 2 5858532

www.goethe.de/brussels

THEATRUM MUNDI AN ULRIKE OTTINGER RETROSPECTIVE

Feminist film icon Ulrike Ottinger left an indelible mark on New German Cinema in the 1980s with her bold, experimental, and subversive works. Her flamboyant and imaginative oeuvre shines brightly, standing apart from the predominantly male filmmakers of that era. The Goethe-Institut Brussels and CINEMATEK proudly present a comprehensive retrospective of her career.

06 December 2024 - 28 February 2025
CINEMATEK, Rue Baron Horta 9, 1000 Brussels
[Theatrum Mundi - Goethe-Institut Belgium](#)

Brussels, 21 November 2024 – Born in 1942 in Konstanz, Ulrike Ottinger is often described as a "collector of worlds." In 2020, she unveiled a major solo exhibition to coincide with the release of her latest film, **Paris Calligrammes**. This cinematic autobiography, which premiered at the Berlinale, reflects on Ottinger's early artistic journey, drawing inspiration from the vibrant cityscape of Paris – its architecture, museums, public spaces, and its people. It evokes the Paris of the Surrealists and Dadaists, but also as the setting for the political upheavals of the 1960s, including the Algerian War and the protests of May '68, which laid bare Europe's colonial legacy. The process of decolonisation profoundly shaped Ottinger's later work, along with the influence of figures such as French playwright Jean Genet and ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch, a pioneer of Cinéma Vérité.

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The 'world theatre' of Ulrike Ottinger

From Paris and London to New York, Stockholm, Warsaw and Toronto, the Goethe-Institut has brought Ulrike Ottinger's work to audiences around the world, playing a key role in building her international reputation. Now 82, Ottinger remains deeply engaged in filmmaking, even as retrospectives of her groundbreaking career continue to gain momentum. Beginning on 6 December 2024, the Goethe-Institut Brussels and CINEMATEK will host Belgium's first full cinematic retrospective of her legacy.

Ulrike Ottinger's artistic output extends far beyond film, encompassing theatre and opera productions, exhibitions, photography, painting, and artist book publications. As a filmmaker and camera woman, she has crafted both fictional films and sprawling documentaries, some lasting up to twelve hours, such as **Chamisso's Shadow** (2016). Her work spans diverse geographies, including Asia, with films like **Taiga** (1991/92) and **Exile Shanghai** (1997), and Eastern Europe, with **Southeast Passage** (2002). She has also documented key moments in Berlin's history, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall in **Countdown** (1990).

The concept of *Theatrum Mundi*, or world theatre, serves as a playful metaphor for global spectacle. Ulrike Ottinger explored this idea in her 1981 film **Freak Orlando**, part of her Berlin Trilogy and now recognised as a classic of German avant-garde cinema. The creative period of this Berlin era exemplifies Ottinger's close collaborations with feminist icons such as Tabea Blumenschein, a punk legend of Berlin's underground, and the feminist cultural icon Delphine Seyrig. Through films like **Madame X - Eine absolute Herrscherin** (1977), **Bildnis einer Trinkerin** (1979), and **Dorian Gray im Spiegel der Boulevardpresse** (1984), Ottinger and her "defiant muses" forged a bold, subversive path in the experimental German cinema of the 1980s. Her flamboyant and audacious oeuvre shines especially brightly today, standing apart from the male-dominated field of New German Cinema, shaped by directors like Werner Schroeter, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Volker Schlöndorff.

Ulrike Ottinger in Belgium

The Belgian retrospective *Theatrum Mundi* showcases more than just screenings of Ulrike Ottinger's films. An accompanying exhibition explores select projects and creative processes from her career. On this occasion, CINEMATEK has invited Ulrike Ottinger to curate a *Carte Blanche* - more than 10 films that are important to her work will be shown in parallel. In addition, Belgian filmmakers and artists, including students from the Brussels Film and Theatre Academy RITCS and the La Cambre Art Academy, will engage with her work. The programme also features Zine publications by emerging queer artists and an experimental cabaret evening inspired by Ottinger's unique vision. The retrospective will launch with an opening weekend attended by the artist herself, followed by a three-month run of her films at CINEMATEK.

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Find more information and the full programme here:
[Theatrum Mundi - Goethe-Institut Belgium](#)

For press enquiries please contact:

Magdalena Rausch
 Press and Public Relations
 E-mail: magdalena.rausch@goethe.de
 Telephone: +32 2 5858532
<http://www.goethe.de/belgium/media>

PROGRAMME

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| 06.12.24, 18h00
CINEMATEK | Opening
Compilation of shorts (<i>Usinimage, Ester, Superbia, Berlin Fieber</i>
– <i>Wolf Vostell</i>)
Artist talk with Marie Vermeiren (Elles Tournent – Dames
Draaien) |
| 07.12.24, 18h00
CINEMATEK | Screening: <i>Bildnis einer Trinkerin</i> (Aller Jamais Retour)
With introduction by Ulrike Ottinger |
| 08.12.24, 16h00
Les Ateliers Claus | Cabaret Show: <i>Gold! Liebe! Abenteuer!</i>
Starring TRANSPORT (Lucile Desamory and Carola Caggiano)
and HERMINE (Hermine Demoriane) |
| 10.12.24, 19h00
RITCS | Screening: <i>Freak Orlando</i>
With introduction by Wouter Hessel (RITCS and INSAS) and
Ernest Mathijs (University of British Columbia in Vancouver
and RITCS) |
| February 2025 | Zine launch and dyke bar by queer collective <i>Office x Sexy</i>
<i>Kesser Vater</i> |

The Goethe-Institut Brussels

The Goethe-Institut Brussels is the regional institute for the south-western region of Europe which features 14 locations. From its head office in Brussels, it contributes to strengthening the European integration process and convey European cultural diversity at a political and strategic level. Its cultural, educational and information programmes in Belgium promote exchange and cultural engagement, as well as interest in the German language, Belgium's third national language.

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