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A dream palace with films without film

Performances, experiments: Oberhausen celebrates his 60th birthday with a big program on the Expanded Cinema. And reminiscent of the time Physical pronounced as film something had

Even connoisseurs of the Oberhausen Short Film Festival were unaware of its existence. Tucked away and sleepy, almost invisibly, behind skyscrapers in the middle of the Oberhausen city center: the long disused, unrestored Europa Palace Theatre, which served 1954-1962 as festival cinema and is now used by the Oberhausen Theatre as an exercise stage. This wonderful, fallen from the time movie palace was the scene of some great work in the special program, Oberhausen Film Festival on its 60th birthday brought under the title "Memories Can't Wait: film without film".

»Film without film", by which is meant mainly works, installations and performances, in which no film is projected on the screen, but a cinema room with its own equipment and the viewers of the cinematic event. In the 1960s, the cinema experienced without film as Expanded Cinema - a climax with infamous works of Hans Scheugl or Valie Export, which were shown in Oberhausen. Valie Export herself participated in Europe Palace Abstract Film No. 2, her real projection from 1967, in which she pours liquid on the mirror surface, which is then projected by the light source onto a screen, where it constantly entails changing abstract patterns. In Exports cine-performance the old dream palace of the workshop was present, the space for reflection about magic and deconstruction of cinema.

These historical works are now again particularly topical, in a very different context. Movies are increasingly seen on the big screen, more and more on TV, on the laptop, cell phones do. And the celluloid has long been banished from the screening rooms in favor of a digital projection. The cinema of today is already a cinema without film. A secret criticism of the illusion machinery of an often soulless digital cinema presented the recent work in the "film without film" series: handmade works like the grandiose OHP Looking for Love in the Hall of Mirrors of the Canadian Daniel Barrow, who at the magic lantern performances recalled the time before cinema. Or the amazing work Demi-Pas Frenchman Julien Maire, projected by a violent modified slide projector with real materials boxes on a canvas, creating an incredible 3D effect. With the performances of export, Barrow or Maire one could rediscover the wonder of cinema.

Sadness and pain marked many films of this year's German competition. Perhaps the finest example in: L'amour sauvage by Lior Shamriz. In a dreary Berlin, a man meets a woman again. Once they have played in a band together. She has become a star, he is forgotten - an eternal, sad rebel. In the middle of the night the man is picked up, kidnapped. A nightmare, or are we not in Berlin of the present, but in Berlin of the mid-30s? Memories Can't Wait: Shamriz creates a thriller of memories committing to succeeding Chris Marker.

To Maria Lassnig-student Mara Mattuschka an extensive retro was devoted. Mattuschka dirty glamorous films created over the last 30 years, to celebrate the physical and especially the erotic imperfection of the body. Oberhausen 60th was an amazing festival of amazement, of physicality, of pain and shock. All this comes together in the work of the South African Aryan Kaganof (formerly Ian Kerkhof). His physically noticeable films about the gruesome history of Africa, but also about the human condition, hunts the viewer, making his mind the work platform, to project the ruins of his dream.

Text by Hans Schifferle