Alexander Kluge (Halberstadt, 1932) has had an astonishingly multifaceted career. With fifty-five short and feature films, almost three thousand television programmes, a vast literary oeuvre and highly influential essays on political theory and film history under his belt, Kluge has outgrown the epithet of cult creator to become a kind of multi-limbed institution.

05.11.2016 – 05.02.2017
Gardens of Cooperation is the first exhibition on Alexander Kluge in Spain and the only museum retrospective to date to cover his entire oeuvre in an international context.

Alexander Kluge has overseen the show himself and provided a large amount of previously unseen materials, from both his personal archives and the documentary resources of his production company, Kairos-Film. All the audiovisual compilations on display have been specifically created by Alexander Kluge for La Virreina Centre de la Imatge.

Along with this, in the context of Gardens of Cooperation, nine new short films are being premiered. These include Herbert Hausdorf: Brother of my Mother, The Opera Principle, Digital Night Sky over Paris on November 13, 2015: Dark and Mute, Time to Live Against Money, Ingeborg Bachmann: Homage to Maria Callas, Anatomy of a Centaur (According to Leonardo da Vinci), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Triptychon and The Intestine Thinks.

Alexander Kluge (Halberstadt, 1932) has had an astonishingly multifaceted career. With fifty-five short and feature films, almost three thousand television programmes, a vast literary oeuvre and highly influential essays on political theory and film history under his belt, he has outgrown the epithet of cult creator to become a kind of multi-limbed institution. Be it championing the filmmaking industry, influencing parliamentary debates, giving controversial interviews or writing polemical articles, Kluge has been shaking up public life in Germany for over half a century.

Heir to the enlightened Marxism of the Frankfurt School yet also a staunch supporter of the collectivist spirit of the 1960s and 1970s, he creates projects that seek to open up sustainable shared spaces—“gardens of cooperation in the thick of the information jungle”, in his own words. Rather than taking on the Robinsonian mantle of the totemic artist, Kluge espouses the transforming power of social experience. His rejoinder to the uncritical consumption of cultural goods
is to use writing, images and music as the means of production of emotions—the practical wing of ideas.

Somewhere between Dadaist symphony and opera, between Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk and audiovisual atlas, his projects eschew any division of labour and even reject the notion of the finished piece. He indistinctly and simultaneously re-explorers the same issues from the fields of literature, film and television, and overhauls his own films, stories and television programmes by shifting the perspective from one sphere to another and reusing clips to create never-ending friezes or the briefest of narratives and film essays.

Kluge lies as far away from the sacramental notion of self-sufficient work as he is from glorifying rhetoric on processes and methodologies, crossovers of different disciplines and exchanges of artistic grammar. His entire professional career personifies his agile and implacable commitment to a substantially useful practice, freed from special interests and inbreeding, while his work unfolds like an infinite score, a fabulous diatribe against human obstinacy in the face of the vicissitudes of history.

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After studying law, history and sacred music, in 1956 Alexander Kluge earned a PhD in law with a thesis on the institutional organisation of universities, Die Universitäts-Selbstverwaltung: Ihre Geschichte und gegenwärtige Rechtsform [University Self-Management: Its History and Current Reforms]. Shortly afterwards he began working as a legal adviser to the Institut für Sozialforschung [IfS, Institute for Social Research], then home to many members of the Frankfurt School. There he met Jürgen Habermas and, most importantly, his mentor and teacher Theodor W. Adorno.

The young Kluge combined his legal work with writing literature, an unworthy discipline in the eyes of the Frankfurt School sociologists. In an effort to entice him away from literature, Adorno found him work as an intern to director

1 Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1958.
Fritz Lang, who was shooting *Der Tiger von Eschnapur* [The Tiger of Eschnapur, 1958].

The early 1960s were years of frenetic public and creative activity. In 1960 he teamed up with Peter Schamoni to film his first short, *Brutalität in Stein* [Brutality in Stone], an analysis of the Nazis’ architectural legacy. In 1961 he and Hellmuth Becker published *Kulturpolitik und Ausgabenkontrolle* [Cultural Politics and Financial Control], a report on contemporary cultural policies and control of social spending. He had also joined Gruppe 47, a literary movement that brought together Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Paul Celan, among others. And in 1962 he was heavily involved in writing the famous Oberhausen Manifesto, which led to a system of film subsidies centred on *Autorenfilm* or auteur cinema, a concept inspired by the ideas of the Nouvelle Vague. He also published his first literary work, *Lebensläufe* [Attendance List for a Funeral], a collection of stories featuring characters like Anita G. who would later appear in his films. And that same year, Alexander Kluge, Detten Schleiermacher and Edgar Reitz founded the Institut für Filmgestaltung [Institute for Film Design], the first film school in West Germany, housed in the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm [Ulm School of Design]. Finally, in 1963 he set up his own production company, Kairos-Film.

As the policy shaper and legal brain behind the New German Cinema, Kluge spent the early years of his career—and even some later ones as well—performing a balancing act between advocating the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and pushing for reform of the filmmaking industry in Germany. From this perspective, and given his age, he could also be said to be both the last disciple of the earlier great tradition of modern Central European thought symbolised by Adorno and Horkheimer, among others, and

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2 Produced, directed and written by Alexander Kluge and Peter Schamoni. 35 mm, b/w, 12 min, 1960.

3 Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1961.

the trailblazer for a specifically German film aesthetic that would see cinema as the public arena for counterculture.

The second half of the 1960s was shaped by the impact of his films overseas. In 1966, two years after publishing the novel Schlachtbeschreibung [The Battle, 1964], he released his debut feature, Abschied von gestern – Anita G. [Yesterday Girl], making him the first German director to win a Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival since the war. And two years later he won a Golden Lion for Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos [Artists Under the Big Top: Perplexed], which reawakened European interest in German cinema.

Following these awards, far from tempering his political activism, Kluge led parliamentary pressure against the 1967 Film Subsidies Act, which favoured the interests of the entertainment industry. As the representative of the New German Feature Film Producers Collective, he managed to introduce a compromise measure that would lay the foundations for the 1973–1974 reform of the Act, which set out a new legal framework that required the television networks to invest more in film production by setting up a development fund and encouraging film and television coproductions.


5 Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 1964.
7 Produced by Kairos-Film. Directed and written by Alexander Kluge. 35 mm, b/w and colour, 103 min, 1967.
8 Produced by Kairos-Film. Directed and written by Alexander Kluge. 35 mm, b/w and colour, 86 min, 1969–1970.
9 Produced by Kairos-Film. Directed and written by Alexander Kluge. 35 mm, b/w and colour, 96 min, 1971.
Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere],\textsuperscript{10} an essay that would become required reading for the May 1968 generation of students and which set out to be a radical replica of Jürgen Habermas’s well-known \textit{Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit} [The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 1962].

In the 1970s, when the Federal Film Subsidies Committee was awarding large budgets to literary adaptations, Kluge withdrew and focused his attention on contemporary issues and controversial causes such as abortion legislation, in \textit{Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin} [Part-Time Work of a Domestic Slave, 1973];\textsuperscript{11} property speculation, in \textit{In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod} [In Danger and Deep Distress, the Middleway Spells Certain Death, 1974];\textsuperscript{12} urban terrorism, in the omnibus film \textit{Deutschland im Herbst} [Germany in Autumn, 1978],\textsuperscript{13} made together with R.W. Fassbinder, Edgar Reitz, Volker Schlöndorff and Katja Rupé, among others; and regional policies towards history teaching, in \textit{Die Patriotin} [The Patriot, 1979].\textsuperscript{14}

In 1974 he released \textit{In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod}, made together with Edgar Reitz, and, in 1975, \textit{Der starke Ferdinand} [Strongman Ferdinand],\textsuperscript{15} his only foray into narrative cinema, which tells the story of security chief Ferdinand Rieche, a character from one of his books of short stories. In the meantime, he wrote the books \textit{Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang} [Learning Processes with a

\textsuperscript{10} Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972.
\textsuperscript{11} Produced by Kairos-Film. Directed and written by Alexander Kluge. 35 mm, b/w, 91 min, 1973.
\textsuperscript{12} Produced by RK-Film (Reitz-Film, Kairos-Film). Directed and written by Alexander Kluge and Edgar Reitz. 35 mm, b/w, 90 min, 1974.
\textsuperscript{13} Produced by Pro-ject Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren, Kairos-Film and Hallelujah-Film. Directed by Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alf Brustellin, Bernhard Sinkel, Katja Rupe, Hans Peter Cloos, Edgar Reitz, Maximiliane Mainka and Peter Schubert. Screenplay by Heinrich Böll, Peter Steinbach and the directors. 35 mm, b/w and colour, 123 min, 1978.
\textsuperscript{14} Produced by Kairos-Film. Directed and written by Alexander Kluge. 35 mm, b/w and colour, 121 min, 1979.

Alexander Kluge branched out into different areas in the 1980s. In 1980 and 1983 he released two major omnibus films, Der Kandidat [The Candidate], with Alexander von Eschwege, Volker Schlöndorff and Stefan Aust—about the controversial German politician Franz Josef Strauß, who was at the heart of the Spiegel Affair, which saw government officials take action against the free press—and Krieg und Frieden [War and Peace], with Axel Engstfeld, Stefan Aust and Volker Schlöndorff, about the Euromissile Crisis.

In 1983 he shot another of his canonical films, Die Macht der Gefühle [The Power of Feelings], and published the book of the same name, beginning a long-running series

17 Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975.
18 Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.
21 Produced by Pro-ject Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren, Bioskop-Film and Kairos-Film. Directed and written by Stefan Aust, Alexander von Eschwege, Alexander Kluge and Volker Schlöndorff. 35 mm, b/w and colour, 129 min, 1980.
22 Produced by Pro-ject Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren, Bioskop-Film and Kairos-Film. Directed by Alexander Kluge, Stefan Aust, Axel Engstfeld and Volker Schlöndorff. Screenplay by Heinrich Böll and the directors. 35 mm, colour, 120 min, 1982–1983.
23 Produced by Kairos-Film. Directed and written by Alexander Kluge. 35 mm, b/w and colour, 115 min, 1983.
Oberhausen Short Film Festival, 1962. © Archiv der Internationalen Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen

Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin, 1973. © Kairos Film Archiv
La Domenica del Corriere, 1956. © Alexander Kluge Archiv
on the same subject, with subsequent literary follow-ups to his magnum opus, *Chronik der Gefühle* [Chronicle of Feelings, 2000 and 2009]. Two years later, he released *Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit* [The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time, aka The Blind Director], which likewise used a mosaic of fictional and documentary pieces to spark associations and interpretations in spectators’ minds. This “trilogy” of historical stories and their blind spots was rounded off by the film *Vermischte Nachrichten* [Miscellaneous News, 1986], a true miscellany of news and filmic excursions.

Kluge’s working method was reaffirmed with the above three films, although it had already reached its peak in another key essay, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* [History and Obstinance, 1981], written together with Oskar Negt and expanded in 1993. Throughout these works we see his preference for compilations of alternating snippets of literature and history, and the idea of a work in progress or *Verbund*—to use Harun Farocki’s term—where the objective is to enunciate the historical character of ideas rather than take possession of the way they unfold. Another feature is the concept of the case study, which weaves together Kluge’s fiction books and cinema, setting both in the territory of the “parable told out loud”, without any specific medium in mind or achieved through any kind of medium.

In 1984 his career took a drastic turn: he set up the Development Company for Television Programmes (dctp) and, in collaboration with Der Spiegel and the Japanese advertising agency Dentsu, starting making cultural programmes for television stations such as SAT1, RTL plus and later VOX. In 1988 dctp acquired its own licence and began broadcasting numerous cultural magazine programmes made by Kluge—*Prime Time/Spätausgabe, 10 vor 11/Ten to Eleven*,
News & Stories and SPIEGEL TV REPORTAGE—as well as Spiegel TV Magazine and Stern TV productions.

These magazine programmes included 1-minute films (film essays and conversations on utterly unclassifiable subjects) by the likes of Heiner Müller, Joseph E. Stiglitz, Peter Sloterdijk, Mikhail Gorbachev, Jean-Luc Godard, Michael Haneke and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, among many others. Of particular note were the series of dialogues with fictional historical characters, almost always played by comedians Helge Schneider and Peter Berling, as well as actress Hannelore Hoger, who also starred in several of Kluge’s key films.


In the eyes of purist film historians, Alexander Kluge’s move into television was nothing short of a pact with the devil: supping with major media corporations at the opposite end of the intellectual spectrum to where the first voices of cinéma d’auteur had first been raised. Similarly, for those who

27 Film screenplay. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat/EVA, 1985.
28 Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1983.
saw his films as revolutionary proclamations, Kluge’s dabblings with television were nothing more than an anomalous footnote to his vast dissident career. Finally, for those who had been actively involved in some of his central concepts—the notions of the public sphere, productive experience and emancipatory film practice—by leaping into the primetime schedules Kluge paid a (high) price out of his enthusiasm, irrepressible curiosity and vocation for collective service, after more than fifty years on the frontline.

However, it is less troubling to compare, as Kluge himself has, this change of terrain with, for example, Jean Renoir’s idea of direct television or with Kluge’s icon Roberto Rossellini’s project for a television encyclopaedia. Comparisons could even be drawn with Basilio Martín Patino’s productions for RTVE in Spain and with colleague Edgar Reitz’s TV series in Germany.

A brief browse through http://www.dctp.tv/—the digital platform that houses, rearranges and compiles Kluge’s cultural programmes—gives a fair idea of Kluge’s opinion of the status of this medium and the extent to which it feeds his long-haul projects, such as the much-trumpeted Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike. Marx, Eisenstein, Das Kapital [News from Ideological Antiquity: Marx/Eisenstein/Das Kapital, 2008].

At the end of the day, his journey from Autorenfilm to television editor, from his cutting-edge 1970s shorts to the panoptic of his current films, is essentially part and parcel of the process of adapting to the metamorphoses that cultural knowledge has undergone over the last half-century, a way of building spaces for discrepancy and cooperation in the face of cacophonies of information and industrial manipulations of slavish sentiments.

* In the 1990s Kluge published two books together with playwright, poet and essayist Heiner Müller, fellow traveller and

32 Produced by Filmedition Suhrkamp and Kairos-Film. B/w and colour, 570 min, with an essay by Alexander Kluge, 2008.
one of his major icons: *Ich schulde der Welt einen Toten. Gespräche* [I Owe the World a Fatality: Conversations, 1995] and *Ich bin ein Landvermesser. Gespräche und Bilder* [I Am a Surveyor: Conversations and Pictures, 1998]. He also wrote *Die Wächter des Sarkophags. 10 Jahre Tschernobyl* [The Watchmen of the Sarcophagus: Ten Years after Chernobyl, 1996], on the tenth anniversary of the tragedy in the Soviet nuclear power station, rounding off the series of television programmes he made on this subject under the same title.

Over the last two decades, Alexander Kluge has experienced growing public recognition, especially in Germany, although compared with his German “younger brothers” —R.W. Fassbinder, Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders—and even with some of his own peers—such as Edgar Reitz and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg—his career still lacks a comprehensive critical analysis of his different fields of expression and the interconnections between them.

Added to this is the fact that Kluge’s work has an anomalous impersonality: Kluge the creator has passed on the chance to present himself as a visionary invested with a glorious, ineffable mission. Furthermore, it appears that Kluge has used his online television platform, his endlessly revised and expanded literary work and the joint projects he has progressively worked on with different creators and collectives to set up a circuit outside the dichotomy between market and independent practice, in an updated version of the 1920s Weimar Republic’s filmmaking culture—later reclaimed in the 1960s—whereby debate in cultural centres, film clubs and university associations not only underpinned filmmaking practice, but also blurred the borders between amateur and professional filmmakers by exposing both to public self-representation.

Moreover, throughout this period, Kluge has maintained his disdain for the image seen as an autonomous reality, with the result that in the new digital contexts his work

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34 Hamburg: Rotbuch, 1996.
has shifted towards other forms of commitment, rather than taking on a cinephile melancholy or acritical fascination with the means of reproduction. Evidence of this is the book *Die Entsprechung einer Oase. Essay für die digitale Generation* [The Analogy of an Oasis: An Essay for the Digital Generation, 2013], which in which he sets out a kind of manifesto on online creative independence, the restrictions imposed by economic power and the free distribution of social and cultural experiences.

Paraphrasing the title of his film on Marx’s *Das Kapital* and Eisenstein’s attempt to translate it to celluloid, perhaps we could say that, in our own time, Alexander Kluge’s career is best expressed as an attempt to prospect the ideological present rather than antiquity, more of a prospective sounding than a bloated diagnosis of himself.

Few authors over the last sixty years have experienced, preceded and lived through so many great highs and so many generational lows, so many blazes of glory and so many recurring events. In this sense, Kluge remains a perfect advocate of cooperation, albeit somewhat fraught with tensions: someone difficult to pin any orthodoxy on, despite having been a lifebuoy to several of them.

Seen through a historical prism, his work has formed part of the numerous cultural epiphanies that have arisen in Europe: the critical German thought of the 1950s, the ideology that formed around the events of May 1968 in France, the art and political essay films of the 1970s, the historicist literature of the 1980s and 1990s, and the audiovisual melting pot of the digital age. However, throughout all these periods Kluge has always shifted his interests to the least equidistant corner, which explains why, as a witness and participant in the successive transvestitisms of history, he has never succumbed to cynicism or paternalistic indifference. In contrast to his admired Jean-Luc Godard, Kluge persevered in appearing critically and systematically in the

36 Mikrotextr, digital publication, 27 August 2013.
public sphere, accepting that it had no inside or outside, just different ways of making or destroying it.

Finally, Kluge’s work contains a means for producing images that does not rob them of their social and critical uses, although neither does it deliver them into the justificatory hands of mere discourse. From this perspective, his books illustrated with photographs, military plans and old prints, and his films interrupted by literary descriptions, documents from popular culture and materials from the field of science, economics and the mass media, appear to blur the boundaries between image and imagination, between visual experience and story.

On many occasions, Kluge has defined himself as a worker in the public sphere and, more specifically, as someone who tells stories in words or moving images as applicable. Thanks to, and not in spite of, this obstinate persistence in writing and his use of the functionality afforded by collective language, Alexander Kluge’s work reveals itself to be even more enigmatic and indefinable, while no less politically decisive.

*Kluge’s tireless activity makes it hard to establish a definitive timeline for his career. This endeavour is further hampered by the fact that only some of his work has been translated into other languages, particularly in the case of his essays and works of literature.

The above text draws on a number of different sources, including international Kluge specialist Carla Imbrogno’s foreword and afterword to 120 historias del cine [120 Cinema Stories, 2010] and El contexto de un jardín. Discursos sobre las artes, la esfera pública y la tarea del autor [The Context of a Garden: Discourses on the Arts, the Public Sphere and the Task of an Author, 2014], both published by Buenos Aires publishing house Caja Negra; Devin Fore’s introductory essay to History and Obstinacy [2014], the English edition of Geschichte und Eigensinn, published by Zone Books, New York; Thomas Elsaesser’s article “Mélancolie et mimétism: les énigmes d’Alexander Kluge [Melancholy and Mimicry:
The Enigmas of Alexander Kluge] in *Trafic* 31 (autumn 1999), translated into Spanish and Catalan and republished by the Filmoteca de Catalunya in March 2004 for the film programme *Alexander Kluge. L'atac del present a la resta dels temps* [Alexander Kluge. The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time], produced by the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona [MACBA] in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut in Barcelona and the Filmoteca de Catalunya, as well as the accompanying text by Marcelo Expósito; the website [https://kluge.library.cornell.edu/](https://kluge.library.cornell.edu/), a joint project by Cornell University, Universität Bremen and Princeton University; Kluge’s own website, [http://www.kluge-alexander.de/](http://www.kluge-alexander.de/); and the articles on Kluge in *October* 149 (summer 2014, [http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/octo/-/149](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/octo/-/149)), as well as a range of other sources.
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