


**Deutsche
Kinemathek**

Press Kit

Frame by Frame



**Exhibition:
Restoring
Films**

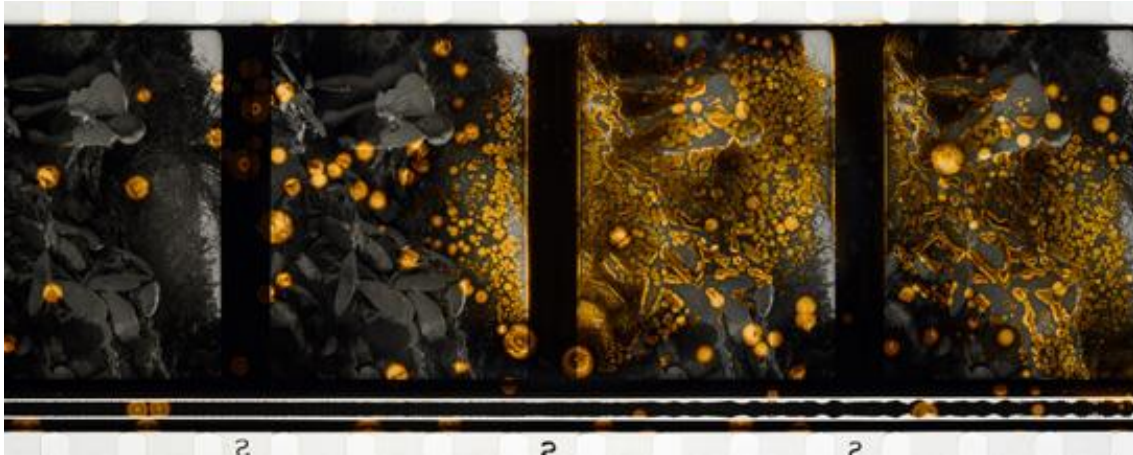
**28 Oct 21–
2 May 22** → **Deutsche
Kinemathek**

Design: Fuenfzehn

Frame by Frame. Restoring Films

An Exhibition at the Deutsche Kinemathek

28.10.21-2.5.22



Restoring films – but why?

From the beginning, the history of film has been a history of loss.

In the early days, films were considered ephemeral seasonal products that needed to be moved quickly to make room for new wares. Films that were no longer needed were treated like waste: The silver they contained was recycled, and the base material was used to make buttons or even shoe polish.

But films can also be lost because the base material is fragile and deteriorates quickly when improperly stored. Film stock made from nitrocellulose is highly flammable and many movies were lost to fires in cinemas and storage facilities. And films on cellulose triacetate stock, meanwhile, become chemically unstable after a few years and begin to decompose.

But even films that have survived intact might be in need of restoration. For instance, many were modified to conform to censorship rules, often against the wishes and intent of the filmmakers. Others have only survived in a heavily damaged form – grimy, scratched, and defective in spots.

If a film is no longer available in its original version, and with good quality picture and sound, speed is of the essence in acting to prevent further deterioration and, ideally, to re-construct the original version.

This exhibition takes visitors through all the stages in the process of restoring vintage films. After taking stock of a film's condition, the next stop is the workshop, where the necessary aesthetic steps, and their ethical limits, are discussed. Finally, you can see the results of the process, with commentary, in the exhibition cinema.

Which version is the right one and which version do we restore?

There are often many versions of a single film. Films thought lost often turn out to have survived in other countries, where they might have been edited differently to satisfy the censors or prevailing tastes.

And films that survive are also often incomplete because individual scenes, or even entire reels have gone missing. Sometimes restorers must take pieces from various sources in order to re-construct the complete film. So the first decision is which version should be considered the right one – meaning the one that was shown on the big screen when the film premiered.

One peculiarity of silent movies is that they were often released with different tinting – there would be a “popular version” with just a few colours and another, more expensive “full colour” version. Sound films, on the other hand, often come down to us in a variety of languages or cuts.

From that diversity of versions that have survived, and using external sources such as, for example, production materials, the restorers attempt to establish what the original version looked like so they can re-construct it.



The restoration process

The first requirement for a successful restoration is good research into what materials are available.

Ideally, a restoration would be done from the original camera negative but often, it is no longer available. In those cases, other materials have to be found and checked for usability – for instance, a duplicate negative or positive, sometimes even worn distribution prints.

All the versions and materials that have been found are compared to each other in order to decide which can serve as the basis for the restoration. To make sure that the film material is not damaged during the restoration process, the sprocket holes may have to be repaired, and places where the film has previously been spliced checked and possibly re-done.

If passages, or even single frames, are missing, they are – if possible – taken from other materials and edited back in in order to re-construct the uninterrupted flow of images. Because damaged spots might mean a misalignment of picture and sound, they are then synchronised. Retouching is used to repair or attenuate defects in the image. Lastly, the film is colour corrected, using one of the vintage versions as a guide to re-create as far as possible the overall look of the movie.

The final product is not intended to be “better” than when the film was first made, but rather to re-create, as accurately as possible, the film that was shown at its premiere.

What is ultimately important to a good restoration?

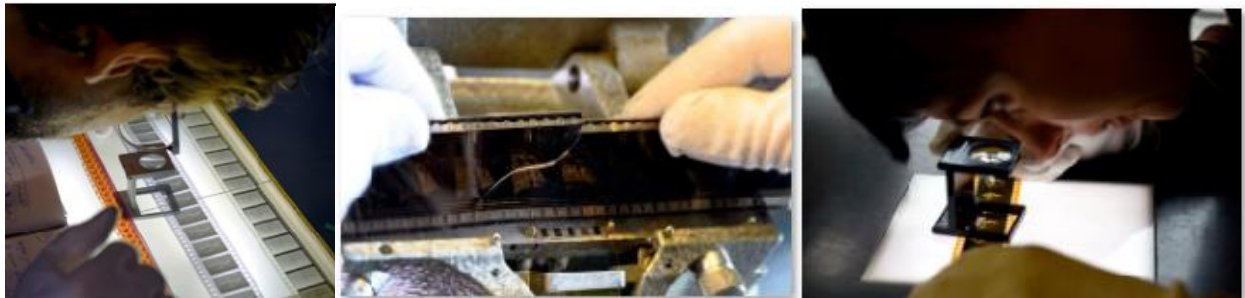
A good film restoration is based on successful research to find the best-preserved film material – and on accurate knowledge of the historical production techniques used for that film. The idea is to make what those techniques once created visible again, as faithfully as possible.

But no matter how exacting the preparations, at the end of the mechanical, photochemical or digital processing, aesthetic decisions must be made to define the authentic “look” of a film.

That requires resolving a host of questions. How can the colours of obsolete colour systems be accurately reproduced with modern materials and on modern projection systems? How should a film “sound” when the systems used for recording and playback at the time are no longer available? What should we hear when watching a silent film if the original musical compositions can’t be found or re-constructed? And to what extent can we rely on the memories of people who worked on the original production?

So in addition to knowledge and experience, intuition and sensitivity play a role, alongside, if possible, the involvement of participants in the original production.

A restoration is not a new creation, but it is most certainly a new version of any given film.



Why do we restore films?

Is the fact that film stock is subject to decay enough to justify the work of restoration? Hardly.

We restore films that move us, because they tell stories that involve us. They might be about war and peace, or about social struggles and the relationships of the sexes. Those are timeless subjects, even if the costumes of an earlier age look nothing like what we wear today, or the rhythms of the camerawork and editing seem unusual to us now.

The films depict people, places, rituals, lifestyles, while simultaneously revealing the idiocies or ingeniousness of past eras. It is easy to become addicted to filmic time travel. Old movies give us a chance to once again see and hear the faces, voices, and verbal mannerisms of long-deceased actors. And to fall in love with them – which is exactly why we can’t let go of them.

In one of his films, Godard said that film “is truth twenty-four times a second”. So restoring films means re-creating that truth - frame by frame. Listen to what contemporary filmmakers have to say about the topicality of some of the films covered in our exhibition.

Exhibition Media – films and film clips



'This Ancient Law' (GER, 1923, dir: Edwald André Dupont)

'This Ancient Law' is an important film, made by a Jewish filmmaker during the Weimar Republic. It tells the story of Baruch, son of a rabbi, who leaves his traditional shtetl in Galicia to pursue a career as an actor. He goes out into the world and eventually even manages to make it to the stage of the renowned Burgtheater in Vienna. But first Baruch must resolve his inner conflict between assimilation and emancipation.

After the war, 'This Ancient Law' was considered lost to posterity. Neither the original negative nor any prints of the German-language version had survived in the archives. But international research in the 1980s uncovered five foreign-language versions in archives abroad. They had survived thanks to international marketing of the film. But the foreign distributors had re-edited the film to conform to censorship regulations in their respective countries, or the taste and movie-going habits of their audiences. The film was shortened, or changes were made and even the sequence of the scenes was altered. The way they dealt with one scene key to the film's intent – when Baruch cuts off his payot – is clear evidence of how those kinds of alterations can change the content of a film.

Commentary on the film: Adriana Altaras, actor, Daniel Meiller, restorer

'New Year's Eve' (GER, 1924, dir: Lupu Pick)

'New Year's Eve' now counts as a classic of what were called chamber play films. After an unsuccessful first release, the film was edited down to less than half of its original running time and was never again shown in Germany in the version its makers intended. Even the print held by the Deutsche Kinemathek was of that truncated version. However an almost complete print survived in the National Film Archive of Japan. Unfortunately, the scene order in that version had gotten mixed up at many places.

Clues to reconstructing the original version were gleaned from the script and, above all, the music played at the premiere; composed by Klaus Pringsheim, it had not been heard since 1924 since it did not fit the shortened version of the film. The handwritten score was found in the archives of McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. Among the notes were numerous references to the action onscreen, which the conductor used to synchronise the music with the picture. The musical cues also provided information about the length of individual scenes, making it easier to establish the sequence of the takes.

Commentary on the film: Timothy Brock, film composer and conductor, Julia Wallmüller, restorer

'Regina, or the Sins of the Father' (GER, 1927, dir: Gerhard Lamprecht)

Against the background of the Napoleonic Wars, 'Regina' is about a moral conflict between familial ties and political convictions. Director Gerhard Lamprecht wrapped those issues in period melodrama that challenged notions of nationalism and allegiance.

To reconstruct the film 'Regina, or the Sins of the Father', restorers had to resort to film materials that were badly damaged by either heavy use or simply age. A lot of correction was needed to even come close to the picture quality of the film when it was shown. Digitised frames can be processed with software developed specifically for the restoration of common film defects. For instance, an unstable frame (image jitter) can be corrected, and unwanted brightness variations (flicker) can be balanced out. The software can also now be used to re-touch damages such as striations, scratches, blotches, and dirt on individual frames, a process that in some cases can even be automated.

Commentary on the film: Andres Veiel, director, Julia Wallmüller, Restorer

'Metropolis' (GER, 1927, dir: Fritz Lang)

'Metropolis' is a lavishly-produced film about a city of the future; when it was made, it was the most expensive film ever shot in Germany. But its theatrical release was a disappointment due to the unrealistic expectations of critics and audiences fueled in advance by reports of the grandiose production. In the USA, the film was actually shortened by one-third.

The production company Ufa then decided that in Germany too, the film should be shown "in the American version and eliminating the titles showing communist tendencies". So the content of the film was drastically modified against the will of its creators.

Beginning in the 1960s, there were efforts by the film archives in Moscow and particularly in East Berlin to reconstruct the original version of the film. In the 1980s, using the script and the musical score as aids, the Munich film museum and archives managed to put the surviving pieces of the film in the right editing sequence. After an incomplete original negative was found, that version was re-worked and in 2001, shown at a festive screening at the Berlin International Film Festival.

But it was not until 2008 that a print was found in Argentina with scenes that had been cut from the film in 1927. A new restoration led finally to 'The Complete Metropolis', a re-construction that celebrated its premiere at the 2010 Berlinale and was honoured with an exhibition at the Deutsche Kinemathek.

Commentary on the film: Anna Bohn, film expert, Martin Koerber and Anke Wilkening, Restorers, Frank Strobel, conductor and director of the European Film Philharmonic

'People on Sunday' (GER, 1930, dir: Robert Siodmak)

The silent film 'People on Sunday' was shot in the summer of 1929 and completed over the following winter. By the time the film reached cinemas in 1930, sound film was already on the rise. Despite its surprising success when it first played, the film soon disappeared from theatres, outpaced by a technological advance. It was not re-discovered until after World War II.

The music written by bandleader and composer Otto Stenzel for the film's premiere has not survived. It reportedly drew on repertory pieces such as Smetana's "The Moldau". Shown again often since its 1997 restoration, the film is screened with a variety of new music, which occasionally underlays it with entirely different interpretations of the film's visual mood. Here we compare three versions of the many available.

A piano score by the renowned silent film accompanist Donald Sosin (b. 1951), commissioned by the Deutsche Kinemathek and used on its digital distribution print.

A version for solo percussion, played by Steven Garling (1968 – 2008), who for many years accompanied silent film screenings as a percussionist.

And finally, a version accompanied by the Dutch ensemble Het Alliage Orkest, based on electronic loops and grooves, as well as distorted everyday sounds, which was published in 2005 with the support of the Eye Film Museum.

'Wajan – Son of a Witch' (GER, 1933, dir: Friedrich Dalsheim)

With his film 'People in the Bush' (GER, 1930), shot in Africa, ethnologist Friedrich Dalsheim had already proven himself to be a filmmaker who wanted to go beyond the "colonialist point of view". He strove to record the environment of the people he put on film from a perspective that was not completely European. For 'Wajan' he travelled to Indonesia, still a Dutch colony at the time, to explore the myths and, above all, the music of the people of Bali. He collaborated with researcher Victor von Plessen and was advised by painter Walter Spies, who had lived in Bali since the mid-1920s. For the first time, sound was recorded on location, and the Indonesian language reached the ears of audiences without direct translation "as part of the music". In 1930, the dawn of the sound film era, the combination of original recordings, post-dubbed segments, and film music added in Berlin after the fact was technically challenging in a variety of ways – not only during the recording, but also in post-production, working with a different optical sound tracks that had to be linked with edits or over dubbing. Processing the sound was equally complex during the 2021 restoration; the film survived only as well-used duplicate prints and the intent was to re-create a version in which the sound would credibly simulate the original tonal impression of the film, but using modern playback equipment.

Commentary on the film: Anna Catharina Gebbers, curator, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, SMB, Maxi Zimmermann, restorer, Thomas Orthofer, sound engineer

'Tobby' (FRG, 1961, dir: Hans-Jürgen Pohland)

Pohland's film is a response to the French Nouvelle Vague – made in Berlin. Using a moving camera, a lot of music, and shot at real locations, the film portrays the unsettled life of a jazz musician in West Berlin. He is faced with a choice between continuing his life of freedom, and going on a lucrative tour singing pop hits. The lead is played by jazz musician Tobias Fichelscher, who was well known in the city's jazz scene. After the film passed the ratings board, Pohland decided to shorten it for dramatic reasons. But the edits were made only in the prints that had already been struck. The omitted footage was still in the original negative, albeit with notes on possible cuts; that raised the question of whether the cuts should be retained in the restored version. In the end, the decision was to preserve the longer version, but only to publicise the "final" version.

The FSK ratings board had nixed some of the promotional photos because they showed "intimate scenes" that might "violate the moral sensibilities of wider circles and have a sexually stimulating effect on young people". Ironically, that ban was mostly applicable to the long night-time scene, which was among those that Pohland himself had substantially shortened.

Commentary on the film: Britta Braun-Pohland, Modern Art Film Archiv

'Alaska' (FRG, 1968, dir: Dore O.)

Restoring and digitising experimental films brings with it special challenges and requires a customised approach, which is dictated by the film. The digital version must do justice to the aesthetic of the exposed material and the artistic techniques, which deviate from the industry standards.

Countless experimental films can barely be shown, if at all, because of their dire condition. The rare existing versions, often the original camera negatives, display alterations in their colours, due to age or changes caused by the way they were produced.

That applies to the ground-breaking early work by the highest-profile German experimental filmmaker, Dore O., one of the few women in West Germany who began making avant-garde movies as early as the 1960s. Digital colour correction is a key and difficult process while reconstructing the original impression those films made. A reference print that reflects the original is necessary for this process; in its absence – as was the case with the 1968 short film "Alaska" – restorers can consult with the director. Only after viewing five different prints with fundamentally different colour casts could the original colours be authentically reproduced digitally, as can be

seen here in segments projected in the original 16mm format.

Commentary on the film: Dore O., filmmaker, Maria Matzke, restorer

‘The Cat has Nine Lives’ (FRG, 1968, dir: Ula Stöckl)

The Technicolour film system offered a colour spectrum that could not, and can’t be achieved by traditional colour film stock or digital systems. Technicolor used a complicated process whereby the light hitting the lens was first split into three basic colours, each exposed on a separate strip of negative, which were then, in the lab, printed on blank stock. It allowed for astounding colour effects, from the most delicate pastels to highly saturated colours. Director Ula Stöckl’s 1968 theatrical debut “The Cat has Nine Lives” (log line: how women love these days) self-confidently used Technicolor, which allowed the depiction of everything – from a blue night sky to a riotously colourful field of flowers – that might be conducive to finding the truth when investigating the relationship between the sexes. The film’s distributor went bankrupt after the premiere. Only a few Technicolor prints survived and with the demise of the costly Technicolor printing process it was impossible to strike a print that was faithful to the original. So for many years, the film was rarely seen.

But in 1996, the Deutsche Kinemathek had a traditional duplicate made of one of the surviving prints so that the film would be accessible again. However, the distribution print that resulted was only a weak echo of the original visual gestalt, and also unforgivingly reproduced all the damage on the print used for the copy. It was only with the digital restoration of 2015 that the film regained its nuanced and provocative colour vocabulary.

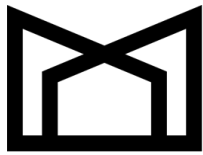
Commentary on the film: Henrika Kull, director

‘Germany, Pale Mother’ (FRG, 1980, dir: Helma Sanders-Brahms)

Containing strong autobiographical elements, the original version of the film was almost never seen; at its premiere in Competition at the 1980 Berlin International Film Festival, the reaction was decidedly hostile. The director’s empathy for the world of her “utterly normal” parents and their travails during the fascist era, the war, and post-war Germany shocked above all the German film critics, culminating in reproaches such as: “Claptrap plays the lead”, “strained beyond all bounds”, “not without awkwardness, like all self-revelations”. It was criticised for “zones of heavy-handed directing” and “depths of banality”. The badly rattled director and distributor re-worked the film, re-editing numerous scenes to cut a total of almost 30 minutes from it. That version became a hit world-wide. In Paris alone, it ran for months in sold-out cinemas.

Yet the abridgement of her magnum opus remained an open wound for most of Helma Sanders-Brahms’ life, that was not closed up until shortly before her death. In 2013, the Deutsche Kinemathek, in cooperation with the German federal archives, digitised the original version of the film. Just weeks before the director’s death in 2014, it was shown as part of the Berlin film festival’s “Berlinale Classics” section and has been available for screening since then.

Commentary on the film: Eva Mattes, actor, Jürgen Jürges, cameraman, Steffen Paul, colourist



General information

Title	Frame by Frame – Restoring Films
Duration	Oct. 28, 2021 – May 2, 2022
Preview	Oct. 27, 2021, 3 pm – 8 pm, admission free
Location	Deutsche Kinemathek Museum für Film und Fernsehen Potsdamer Strasse 2, 10785 Berlin
Museum hours	Weds – Mon 10 am – 6 pm, Thu 10 am – 8 pm closed Tuesdays
Prices	9 € day ticket 5 € reduced 0 € children under 18 and students 2 € Mediathek Television Admission is free on the first Sunday of each month
Public transport	S-/U-Bahn Potsdamer Platz, Bus M48, M85, 200, 300 Varian-Fry-Strasse
Information	Tel: +49 (0)30 300903-0, Fax: +49 (0)30 300903-13 e-mail: info@deutsche-kinemathek.de https://www.deutsche-kinemathek.de/en/visit/exhibitions www.facebook.com/deutschekinemathek/ www.twitter.com/de_kinemathek www.instagram.com/deutsche_kinemathek
Guided tours	museumsdienst@kulturprojekte.berlin , Tel: +49 (0)30 247 49-888 www.deutsche-kinemathek.de

Credits

Artistic director: Rainer Rother

Administrative director: Florian Bolenius

Exhibition team: Inga Degenhard, Martin Koerber, Maria Matzke, Daniel Meiller,
Georg Simbeni, Julia Wallmüller, Nils Warnecke

Editor: Julia Schell

Exhibition design: Franke | Steinert GmbH, Berlin

Exhibition construction: Camillo Kuschel Ausstellungsdesign, Berlin

Graphic production: Fotoreklame Gesellschaft für Werbung FR GmbH, Berlin

Audio-visual editing: Stanislaw Milkowski

Translation: Rebecca M. Stuart

Conservation supervision: Katharina Siedler

Technical services: Frank Köppke, Roberti Siefert

Lighting an AV equipment: Stephan Werner

Advertising design: Fünfzehn

Press: Heidi Berit Zapke

Marketing / Social Media: Jonas Malte Scheler

Website: Julia Pattis, Theresa Spreckelsen

Outreach: Jurek Sehrt

Guided tours: Jörg Becker, Thomas Zandegiacomo

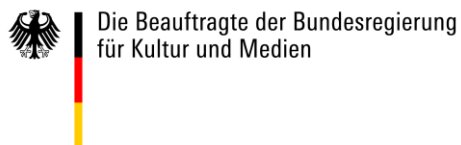
Administration: Sybille Büttner, Frank Namyslik & Team

Thanks to

Arri Media, Basis Berlin Postproduktion, L'Immagine Ritrovata, Deutsches Filminstitut &
Filmmuseum, Filmportal, Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung and
all our colleagues at the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen.

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