

Alexander Kluge

Opera: The Temple of Seriousness

March 14 - June 14, 2020 (extended)

Kunstgebäude Stuttgart, Kuppelsaal



An exhibition by
Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

in cooperation with
Museum Ulm and Staatsoper Stuttgart

Curators
Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler

Supported by
Kulturstiftung des Bundes
Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst des Landes Baden-Württemberg
Kulturamt der Stadt Stuttgart
Prolab Stuttgart

INTRODUCTION

The Temple of Seriousness / The Thin Ice of Civilization

*There are only a few places in cities
where SHARED AND PUBLIC GRIEF is possible.*
Alexander Kluge

The exhibition *Alexander Kluge. Opera: The Temple of Seriousness*, which had to be closed due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on March 13, the day of its planned opening was opened for the public for the first time since May 8, 2020.

During the closure a number of virtual encounters with the phantom exhibition have already taken place: Like the tour on the website of dtcp, a video documentation by Martin Mannweiler and Elisabeth Kuon and the video conversation between Hans D. Christ and Alexander Kluge (see: www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/program/2020/shutdown-program/program-1-3/).

In 2017, the Württembergischer Kunstverein dedicated an extensive solo exhibition to the author, filmmaker, and theorist Alexander Kluge. *Gardens of Cooperation* was a continuation of the same-titled exhibition at the La Virreina art center in Barcelona. Music already played a central role at the time, an aspect that is deepened in the new project, a series of exhibitions that is taking place in parallel at three different venues—Stuttgart, Ulm, and Halberstadt. The project interrogates the role of opera, which emerged (at the latest) in the seventeenth century, as a contemporary “temple of seriousness” (Kluge): as a place where the serious, grief, and joy can be expressed and losses mourned in a suitable way.

The exhibition in the domed hall of the Kunstgebäude in Stuttgart is an overall staging that combines a nine-part video installation with fragments of a stage set by Anna Viebrock and other elements. In addition, Katharina Grosse is presenting a “cinema” (*atopic cinema*) developed for the exhibition which is part of a collage by Alexander Kluge. A detail from Laszlo Moholy-Nagy’s life as a gunner in the First World War is accompanied by a drawing by Ivan Syrov, a young artist from Stuttgart.

There are numerous content-related intersections, particularly with respect to the forms of grieving, between this and the exhibition *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead*, which is taking place in parallel in the same building. Various events take up this dialogue and also link the exhibition with the Staatsoper (State Opera), which is located directly nearby.

On the Exhibition

The exhibition is divided up into nine stations, which are, in turn, structured into nine subsections. The stations are arranged in the space as a montage of constellations and overlap one another both architecturally and visually. On the one hand, the stations reflect "opera" as a subject with a direct relationship to the forms of performance that are characteristic of it: the sky in the dome of opera houses, the temple and its bedrock, and the larynx, in which the voice is formed. On the other, the historical narratives of opera are combined with a new and/or further narration of its material with a temporal reference to the interwar and postwar modernism until our present. Alexander Kluge comments on these processes as follows: "In Stuttgart, the focus is on INTELLIGENCE, MODERNITY, and COGNITION. All three categories are innately somewhat alien to opera. At the same time, as is known from the business of matchmaking: 'Opposites attract.'"

Scenically, the stations are structured by "stage sets" that link the history and/or stories of the military, love, technology, architecture, and opera with respect to motif. The connection to the history of the development of opera is produced by means of the stage set designed by Anna Viebrock for the performance of *Berenice, Queen of Armenia (Il Vologeso)* at the Staatsoper in Stuttgart in 2015. The overall look of the exhibition is also borrowed from the Baroque. It takes up allegorical backdrops, the emblematic interleaving of very diverse levels of meaning, and their event-like character in large- as well as miniature format. The fact that László Moholy-Nagy, a later protagonist of the Bauhaus, worked on the development of ordnance maps for howitzers during the First World War is astonishing. As many people are not aware, a rebellion of "specialists in destruction," a rebellion of young, intelligent artillery officers, took place in the middle of

this war. Thus, the basis for the architectural constructivism of interwar modernism arises from the constraints and crises of the battlefield.

The overall staging that overlays the eras and spaces positions opera pieces like the Futurist opera *Night Flight (Volo di notte)* by Luigi dalla Piccola next to the modernism of a new *Medea* composition that, connected with a post-revolutionary staging of shortly after 1800, focuses on the valid version from the twenty-first century of Hans Thomalla (*Fremd*, 2011, Staatsoper Stuttgart). As a master of twelve-tone music, Michael Gielen–Kluge’s patron, on whom he relies as far as opera is concerned—comments that it is a constellation of intervals with a regressive, totalitarian nature that simultaneously necessitates such a serial quality, without which the power relations in Alban Berg’s *Lulu* could not be manifested with all their “logic” and “hopelessly muddled quality.” “In the third act, Jack the Ripper murders the soprano.” When Kluge describes Gielen as an “equivalent of ‘Frankfurt Critical Theory’ in music,” what is meant with this claim is a fractured dialectical relationship that is no longer entitled to simple synthesis. The attraction of opposites would then be successful and the opera would be a place for “INTELLIGENCE, MODERNITY, and COGNITION.”

INFORMATION

Press conference

Friday, March 13, 2020, 11 am

Opening

Friday, May 8, 2020, 11 am (previously planned on March 13, 2020)

Closing Weekend

Friday, June 12, 2020, 11 am - 5 pm

Exhibition tour with Alexander Kluge

Sunday, June 14, 2020

1 pm

Introduction to the exhibition with Iris Dressler

Kick-off of the *Premiere Series*:

Cats in Space Banda by Alexander Kluge and Sarah Morris, 2020

Video, 5:31'

3:30 pm and 4:30 pm

Introductions to the exhibition

Alexander Kluge. Opera: The Temple of Seriousness

30'

3 pm and 4 pm

Introductions to the exhibition

Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead: Politics of Life

30'

1:1 Concerts at Württembergischer Kunstverein

May 11 to June 8, Every Monday, 11:30 am - 2:30 pm

A project by: Stuttgart State Orchestra and SWR Symphony Orchestra

The Württembergischer Kunstverein is host of the *1:1 Concerts series*, which was initiated by the Stuttgart State Orchestra and the SWR Symphony Orchestra. *1:1 Concerts* enable real concert experiences that are adapted to the current limitations of social encounter and proximity. For ten minutes, one listener and one musician sit opposite each other at the required safe distance - intensive eye contact results in an individual concert without words. Further information and registration via: www.staatsoper-stuttgart.de and www.1to1concerts.de

Virtual program

VIDEO TALK

Between Hans D. Christ and Alexander Kluge

VIDEO DOCUMENTATION

by Martin Mannweiler and Elisabeth Kuon

DTCP: VIRTUAL TOUR through nine stations of the exhibition

www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/program/2020/shutdown-program/program-1-3/

Alexander Kluge. Opera: The Temple of Seriousness

March 14 – June 14, 2020 (extended)

An exhibition by

Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

in cooperation with

Museum Ulm and Staatsoper Stuttgart

Curators

Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler

Supported by

Ministry of Science, Research and Art of the State of Baden-Württemberg
Cultural Office of the City of Stuttgart
German Federal Cultural Foundation
Prolab photo laboratory GmbH

Further events

Museum Ulm and kunsthalle weishaupt, Ulm
October 20, 2019 – April 19, 2020
www.museumulm.de / www.kunsthalle-weishaupt.de

Gleimhaus Halberstadt, Moses Mendelssohn Akademie and further exhibition venues
November 10, 2019 – April 9, 2020
www.gleimhaus.de

Press contact

Veronika Rühl
Fon: +49 (0)711 - 22 33 713
Mail: ruehl@wkv-stuttgart.de

Press images and press dossier

www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/press/2020/

Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart
Schlossplatz 2
DE - 70173 Stuttgart
Fon: +49 (0)711 - 22 33 70
Fax: +49 (0)711 - 22 33 791
zentrale@wkv-stuttgart.de
www.wkv-stuttgart.de
www.facebook.com/wuerttembergischer.kunstverein
www.instagram.com/wuerttembergischerkunstverein

Hours

Tue, Thue – Sun: 11 am – 6 pm
Wed: 11 am – 8 pm

Entrance fees

5 Euro, 3 Euro (reduced) / Members of WKV: free