



Retrospective . Exhibition . Publication

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## Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau

### Special Exhibition

Special Exhibition at the Filmmuseum Berlin  
from 23rd January to 4th May 2003



Szenenfoto FAUST, 1925/1926

Place: Filmmuseum Berlin  
Filmhaus (Sony Center)  
1st floor

Potsdamer Straße 2  
10785 Berlin

Opening hours: Tue – Sun 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Thu 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Additional: during the Berlinale  
6th to 16th February 2003  
daily 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Admission: 3 €  
Reduced: 2 €  
Combined: 7 € (incl. permanent and special  
exhibition „television makes  
happy)

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The exhibition is presented in cooperation with  
Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung, Wiesbaden  
and Transit Film GmbH Munich.

## **Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau**

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### **Exhibition Team**

Conception:  
Peter Mänz, Kristina Jaspers

Media:  
Nils Warnecke

Design:  
Ingrid Jebram

Construction:  
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Graphic:  
Reschke, Steffens & Kruse, Berlin

Exhibition office:  
Christina Ohlrogge

Conceptual assistance:  
Vera Thomas

Editing studio:  
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Model constructions:  
Gerald Narr

Costumes:  
Barbara Schröter

Photos:  
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Translation  
Allison Brown

Preservation:  
Carmen Ziegenbalg, Sabina Fernandez

Technical cooperation:  
Roberti Siefert, Stephan Werner

Press and Public relations:  
Heidi Berit Zapke, Christa Schahbaz

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### **The Exhibition**

The special exhibition is composed of six chronological chapters.

The first chapter picks out as a central theme the years from 1888 to 1919. the following five chapters focus on Murnau's works as director from 1919 to 1931. Scenes from his films are in the focus: NOSFERATU (1919 to 1922), THE LAST LAUGH (1922 to 1924), FAUST (1924 bis 1927), SUNRISE (1926 bis 1929) and TABU (1929 bis 931).

An epilogue presents various examples from Murnau's films and shows his influence on the genre of vampire.



Photo TABU, US 1929 - 1931

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### **Exhibits**

- 1 Costume design
- 15 Scene sketches
- 4 Visual aids
- 1 Paintings
- 7 Film poster
- 2 Film costumes
- 6 Excerpts from scripts
- 50 Letters, documents, prints
- 182 Photos
- 1 Camera

### **Media**

1 hour 3 minutes with examples from the films by  
F. W. Murnau

16 minutes with film documents

13 minutes with examples from other films

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Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung,  
Wiesbaden  
Transit Film GmbH, Munich

### **Gratitude**

20th Century-Fox, Los Angeles  
Schawn Belston, Los Angeles  
Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin  
Columbia Tristar Film GmbH, Berlin  
Eva Diekmann, Esslingen  
Highlight Film GmbH, Stockdorf/Munich  
Kirch Media, Unterföhring  
NDR, Hamburg  
Hans Sachs and Hedda Rinneberg /  
Hans Sachs Filmproduktion, Neukeferloh  
/Munich  
Splendid Film GmbH, Köln  
Universal Pictures Germany, Hamburg  
Völker hört die Tonträger, Schulz and  
Vetter GbR, Berlin  
Warner Home Video, Hamburg  
Werner Herzog Film, Munich  
ZDF/ARTE, Mainz

Cine Impuls, Berlin  
Concept AV, Berlin  
FIPRA, Berlin

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## Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau.



### Ein Melancholiker des Films

#### Book

Published by Hans Helmut Prinzler  
Berlin: Bertz 2003

In cooperation with International Film festival  
Berlin and Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-  
Stiftung, Wiesbaden.

304 Pages  
230 Pictures

Language: german

Contributions by: Janet Bergstrom, Camille Blot, Luciano Berriatúa, Kristina Jaspers, Thomas Koebner, Peter Mänz, Enno Patalas, Michael Pogorzelski, Daniela Sannwald and Luc Bondy, Jutta Brückner, Jörg Buttgereit, Vadim Glowna, Dominik Graf, Egon Günther, Fred Kelemen, Horst Königstein, Stefan Lukschy, Gordian Maugg, Ulrike Ottinger, Rosa von Praunheim, Oskar Roehler, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Thomas Schadt, Niklaus Schilling, Volker Schlöndorff, Rudolf Thome, Tom Tykwer, Wim Wenders, Kai Wessel, Hanns Zischler.

Shop price: 25 €  
Museum price: 20 €  
[info@filmmuseum-berlin.de](mailto:info@filmmuseum-berlin.de)

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## **Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau**

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January 23 – May 4, 2003

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was one of the greatest directors of the silent film era. Influenced by painting, literature, and theater, he was recognized early on for his contribution toward developing a language specific to film. Murnau worked with the best cinematographers of his time: Fritz Arno Wagner, Karl Freund, Carl Hoffmann, Charles Rosher, Floyd Crosby. The most renowned actors all wanted to appear in his films. For many later European filmmakers, such as François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, and Jean-Luc Godard, as well as Werner Herzog, Volker Schlöndorff, and Wim Wenders, Murnau was the embodiment of German film history.

The Filmmuseum Berlin opened an exhibition in January 2003 on the life and oeuvre of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. Various items from the estate of the director can be seen there for the first time. The Berlin Film Festival in February 2003 is presenting a retrospective of restored copies of the twelve extant films along with a varied supporting program. A highlight will be the showing of the film DER LETZTE MANN (THE LAST LAUGH) at the Volksbühne at Rosa Luxemburg Platz with the music by Giuseppe Becce in an arrangement by Detlev Glanert. ZDF–Arte German–French television and the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation are co-sponsoring this event.

The Filmmuseum Berlin has published a book on Murnau to accompany the exhibition and retrospective. The German-language publication contains articles written by present-day German film directors, including Dominik Graf, Ulrike Ottinger, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Tom Tykwer, and Wim Wenders, and essays by Thomas Koebner, Daniela Sannwald, and Janet Bergstrom. There are also documents and other information as well as a section on the exhibition.

Murnau can be discovered again and again. Seventy years after his death, the Filmmuseum Berlin is offering a number of ways for you to do so.

Hans Helmut Prinzler

1888 – 1919

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was born as Friedrich Wilhelm Plumpe on December 28th, 1888 in Bielefeld, Germany. His father, Heinrich Plumpe, was a textile manufacturer and his mother Otilie, a former schoolteacher, was his father's second wife. Murnau had two brothers, Robert and Bernhard, and two stepsisters, Ida and Anna. The family moved from Bielefeld to Kassel in 1891/92. After completing secondary school, Murnau registered for the 1907 summer semester at the university in Berlin but he transferred shortly thereafter to Heidelberg.

Murnau studied German and French philology and also attended lectures in art history. He developed an intimate friendship with Hans Ehrenbaum-Degele, a fellow student and son of a wealthy Berlin banker. Ehrenbaum-Degele, whose early poems were published in Herwarth Walden's »Der Sturm« (The Storm), a weekly journal for culture and the arts, introduced Murnau to Berlin's bohemian subculture. The two of them became friends with writer Else Lasker-Schüler. Murnau had a passion for the theater. Max Reinhardt was supposedly in the audience of a student production in Heidelberg and he invited Murnau to come to Berlin to his acting school. As of 1912 Murnau was part of the ensemble of the Deutsches Theater.

The First World War brought the end to Murnau's career in the theater. He was drafted in 1914 and after serving on the western front he became a company commander in Latvia in 1915. His friend Hans Ehrenbaum-Degele was killed in action in 1915 on the Russian front. Murnau returned to the western front in 1917 as a radio operator and observer for the air corps. He was interned in 1918 in Switzerland, where he wrote his first film script. In early 1919 Murnau returned to Berlin, where he was taken in by Mary Ehrenbaum, mother of his deceased friend, to live in her villa in Berlin-Grünwald.

## 1919 – 1922

After returning to Berlin in 1919, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau started working as a film director in collaboration with Ernst Hofmann, a former colleague from the Deutsche Theater. Hofmann was the lead actor in *DER KNABE IN BLAU* (*THE BOY IN BLUE*), 1919. The film tells the story of an immigrant who thinks he sees himself in a portrait of an ancestor and falls victim to the painting's »curse«.

By late 1921 Murnau had made ten feature films, five of which starred Conrad Veidt. Veidt and Murnau had been friends since they both worked for the Reinhardt theaters. *SATANAS* (1919-20), *DER JANUSKOPF* (*LOVE'S MOCKERY*), and *ABEND – NACHT – MORGEN* (*EVENING – NIGHT – MORNING*), 1920, all of which were directed by Murnau, contributed to Veidt's image as a portrayer of the devil and the demonic.

Movies boomed in the years immediately following World War I. Censorship was lifted and the new times called for amusement. Adventure and crime films were especially popular among film audiences. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's first films were also characterized by exotic subjects and crime stories. Only three of his feature films from 1919 to 1921 still exist; seven are considered lost.

Murnau's *NOSFERATU* premiered in Berlin in March 1922. It is a vampire film that continues to influence international genre cinema today. The eerie, sinister mood of the film was created in close cooperation between the director and his scriptwriter Henrik Galeen and costume designer and art director Albin Grau. Grau – set designer, painter, and spiritualist – also produced the film with his newly founded production company Prana Film.

## 1922 – 1924

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau started collaborating with scriptwriter Thea von Harbou in 1921. Their first joint film was *DER BRENNENDE ACKER* (*THE BURNING SOIL*), 1921/22. It is a »drama of an ambitious man«, as the film is subtitled, depicting two contrary lifestyles, that of a traditional peasant and a worldly aristocrat. *PHANTOM* (1922), the next project, is about the unrequited love of a town clerk. The dramatic action develops from the opposition of petty bourgeois, proletarian narrowness and the cosmopolitan world of the rich. Thea von Harbou's script was based on Gerhart Hauptmann's novel of the same name.

After the peasant drama *DIE AUSTREIBUNG* (*THE EXPULSION*), 1923 and the comedy *DIE FINANZEN DES GROSSHERZOGS* (*THE GRAND DUKE'S FINANCES*), 1923/24, the UFA studios in Babelsberg started filming *DER LETZTE MANN* (*THE LAST LAUGH*) in May 1924. This film spurred the beginning of Murnau's international career. The story of a hotel doorman who is demoted to a washroom attendant was written by Carl Mayer, one of the most significant German-language screenwriters of the 1920s. It was the fourth of a total of seven collaborative efforts between Murnau and Mayer.

Murnau's crew for the filming of *DER LETZTE MANN* (*THE LAST LAUGH*) included cinematographer Karl Freund and production designers Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig; the lead was played by Emil Jannings. The film was produced by Erich Pommer, who had been supporting Murnau ever since they worked together on *SCHLOSS VOGELÖD* (*THE HAUNTED CASTLE*) 1921. The shooting exhibits an incredible joy in experimentation; it is marked by footage shot with a moving, or »unchained«, camera. The film was critically acclaimed when previewed to the press in New York in early December 1924, three weeks before its world premiere in Berlin.

1924 – 1927

Ufa producer Erich Pommer and his successful team collaborated again on Murnau's film TARTÜFFE (TARTUFFE, THE HYPOCRITE), 1925. Scriptwriter Carl Mayer transformed Molière's comedy into a »film within a film«: The housekeeper of an elderly man tries to cheat the man's grandson out of his inheritance by convincing the grandfather to write him out of his will. The young man disguises himself as a showman with a traveling cinema and shows his grandfather a film of the story of the crafty Mister Tartuffe. The Ufa opened the Gloria Palast, Berlin's new showpiece cinema, with the German premiere of TARTUFFE, thus making a Murnau film into a major social event.

Murnau's next film, FAUST (1925/26), was planned by Ufa as a prestigious mammoth production for the international film market. Though in debt, the company budgeted two million marks for the film. The story of Goethe's »Faust« was considered a guarantee for sophisticated and successful German cinema. The leading actor was once again Emil Jannings, who had already made a name for himself in Hollywood. The film developed its visual strength through ingenious camera techniques and special effects.

This was Murnau's last film for Ufa. In January 1925, after his first trip to the United States, he signed a contract with film producer William Fox. By the time FAUST premiered in Berlin in October 1926 Murnau had already started working in Hollywood. He returned to Berlin in the summer of 1927 to negotiate with Ufa, but a new project failed to materialize.

1926 – 1929

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau traveled to the United States for the second time in June 1926 to begin work on SUNRISE (SUNRISE – A SONG OF TWO HUMANS), 1926/27, his first project for the Fox Film Studios in Hollywood. The script for SUNRISE was again written by Carl Mayer, as Murnau had demanded in his contract. The film is about a man who is seduced by a woman from the big city but who in the end returns to his wife. William Fox had landed a prestigious project by contracting the »German Genius« and in return he offered Murnau everything conceivable.

After the shooting was completed, Murnau spent the summer of 1927 in Berlin. In December he began preparations for his next film project for Fox, 4 DEVILS (1928), which takes place in the circus artiste milieu. SUNRISE was critically acclaimed in the United States after its premiere in September 1927 and it won three »Oscars«. When the film failed to be a box office success, however, Murnau was forced to make certain compromises for the filming of 4 DEVILS, the ending of which was changed based on an audience survey carried out by Fox Studios. The film is presently considered lost.

The ultimate break between Murnau and Fox Studios came during production of CITY GIRL (1929). As was also the case with 4 DEVILS, parts of CITY GIRL were later re-filmed as a talkie. While filming CITY GIRL Murnau got to know documentary filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty. They respected each other's work and shared their disappointment regarding working conditions in Hollywood. Together they had the idea to travel to the South Pacific and make a film exactly as they envisioned. The result was TABU.

1929 – 1931

Murnau and Robert J. Flaherty founded Flaherty-Murnau Productions for their film project in the South Seas. A first draft of the script was titled »Turia«. Murnau bought a two-masted schooner and acquired a captain's license. In early 1929 he set sail for Tahiti from Los Angeles with his yacht »Bali«; Flaherty followed a short time later.

The script had to be rewritten after the Colorart Company, a financial backer of the project, declared bankruptcy. The original story of the exploitation of the Tahitians by Chinese pearl fishermen was changed to a love story, a narrative about the »taboo«. Murnau and Flaherty had different artistic visions and when Flaherty abandoned the project, Murnau decided to finance the film on his own.

By the time the filming was completed, Murnau's financial resources had been exhausted, but Paramount bought the film and offered Murnau a ten-year contract. He returned to Los Angeles to negotiate and planned to attend the premiere of TABU in New York and then travel on to Europe. But that never happened. One week before the premiere in New York's Central Park Theater, on March 11th, 1931, Murnau was killed in an automobile accident in California.

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was buried on April 13th, 1931 in the Waldfriedhof Stahnsdorf, a cemetery at the outskirts of Berlin. A large group of mourners assembled. Among those bidding Murnau their final farewell were colleagues of his: Emil Jannings, Robert Herlth and Walter Röhrig, Erich Pommer, Rochus Gliese, Robert J. Flaherty and Carl Mayer. Director Fritz Lang delivered an eulogy.