



**Fri Oct 14 | 8:30 pm**

\$10 [students \$8, CalArts \$5]

**Werner Schroeter: *Der Tod der Maria Malibran***

*(The Death of Maria Malibran, 1972, 16mm, 104 min)*

Written, photographed and directed by: Werner Schroeter - Cast: Magdalena Montezuma, Christine Kaufmann, Candy Darling, Manuela Riva, Ingrid Caven, Annette Tirier, Einar Hanfstaengl

A faux biopic of Spanish opera singer Maria Malibran, who died in 1836 at the age of 28. Werner Schroeter eschews chronological continuity, plot, dialogue, even logic, creating highly stylized tableaux vivants in order to portray in a profoundly melodramatic manner the death of his leading lady, whom he depicts as singing while dying, or dying while singing. For Schroeter, even in her tragic death, Maria Malibran was as a symbol of hope desperately at odd with the hopelessness of the 20th century. (Adapted from the Thessaloniki Film Festival)

"...hermetic, expressionist, oblique, and of a creative perversity that bespeaks the presence of a genius... The lip-sync is off; the singing is off-pitch; mouths are frequently open while no sound issues forth, or closed, with mellifluous arias or cheap popular songs heard on scratchy renditions of old records. Neither burlesque nor slapstick, the film's intent is nevertheless ironical and subversive, though mysteriously so." – Amos Vogel

"Look at the kisses, the faces, the cheeks, the eyebrows, the teeth in Werner Schroeter's *The Death of Maria Malibran*... What Schroeter does with a face, a cheekbone, the lips, an expression of the eyes is a question of the multiplying and burgeoning of the body, an exaltation, in some way autonomous, of its least parts, of the least possibilities of a body fragment. There is an anarchizing of the body, in which hierarchies, localizations, designations, organicity if you like, is being undone... This is no longer a tongue, but something completely different that comes out of the mouth. It's not the organ of a mouth that has been soiled and meant for somebody else's pleasure. It's an "unnamable," "unusual" thing, outside of all programs of desire. It's a body made entirely malleable by pleasure: something that opens itself, tightens, palpitates, beats, gapes. In *The Death of Maria Malibran*, the way in which the two women kiss each other, what is it? Sand dunes, a desert caravan, a voracious flower that advances, insect mandibles, a grassy crevice. All of this is antisadism. The cruel science of desire has nothing to do with these unformed pseudopods, which are the slow movements of pleasure-pain." – Michel Foucault

**Sat Oct 15 | 6:00 pm**

\$10 [students \$8, CalArts \$5]

**double bill!**

**Elfi Mikesch: *Mondo Lux – Die Bilderwelten Des Werner Schroeter***

(*Mondo Lux – The Visual Worlds of Werner Schroeter*, 2011, HDCAM, 97 min.)

With Werner Schroeter, Anne Ratte-Polle, Almut Zilcher, Pascale Schiller, Doerte Lyssewski, Isabelle Huppert, Rosa von Praunheim, Wim Wenders, Peter Kern, Ingrid Caven, Monika Kepler.

At the time of his death, Werner Schroeter, who had been diagnosed with cancer in 2006, was working for the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf gallery on a musical piece entitled *Schönheit der Schatten* (*The Beauty of Shadows*) based on the works of Robert Schumann and Heinrich Heine. In *Mondo Lux*, experimental filmmaker and award-winning cinematographer Elfi Mikesch, who had started to work with Schroeter as a make-up artist and costume designer on *Salome* (1971) and went on to shoot four of his movies – *Der Rosenkönig* (*The Rose King*, 1986), *Malina* (1991), *Poussières d'amour* (*Love Debris*, 1996) and *Deux* (2002) – provides us with an intimate insight into Schroeter's artistic output during the remaining four years of his life. We observe him at rehearsals for *Antigone/Elektra*; preparing the photographic exhibition 'Autrefois & Toujours' and working intensively on the dubbed version of his last film, *Tonight* (*Diese Nacht*), shot in Portugal in 2008.

Copious excerpts from Schroeter's films, from *Eika Katappa* (1969) to *Tonight* (2009), reflect the colorful spectrum of his oeuvre, inscribed into a retrospective view that is pervaded by music. The film also foregrounds the passionate bond that Schroeter felt towards film, opera and theatre, as well as towards his friends and artistic collaborators. *Mondo Lux* constitutes an intimate space – in which, in view of the time the protagonist has left to live, every day becomes quite unlike any other. Werner Schroeter died on April 12, 2010.

**Werner Schroeter: *Deux***

(2002, 35mm, 121 min)

Screenplay: Cédric Anger, Werner Schroeter; camera: Elfi Mikesch; editing: Juliane Lorenz; sound: Philippe Morel; with: Isabelle Huppert, Manuel Blanc, Arielle Dombasle, Annika Kuhl, Bulle Ogier, Jean-François Stévenin, Robinson Stévenin, Philippe Reuter

*Deux* revolves around a superb performance by Isabelle Huppert, in the double role of twin sisters. With a great feeling for decorum, Schroeter lays out a powerful and almost schizophrenic drama. (Rotterdam Film Festival)

"*Deux* is a sort of impossible autobiography, deconstructed into two female personas (both played by Isabelle Huppert). The anxiety that predominates in the film comes from a specific relationship to time. Here, time devours itself, and *Deux* moves forward by eradicating its own traces, by casting a doubt on every image, by constructing a floating, uncertain present." – Philippe Azoury

"In every human mythology, the protagonists spend their time looking for their double, and cannot bear not to find it. It is the basis of every love story: you look for yourself in the other. In romantic German legends, you find yourself, and then you die. You cannot resist yourself. I then thought that Isabelle Huppert had to play herself and her double, be a lesbian, and come close to catastrophe..."  
– Werner Schroeter

What separated **Werner Schroeter** (1945–2010) from most of the other "New German Cinema" filmmakers, such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders and Werner Herzog, was his almost complete rejection of realism, social and political, and his espousal of high camp. His mixture of flamboyant, gender-bending minimalism and stylized melodrama, inspired by 19th-century Italian bel canto opera and the music of German romanticism, often juxtaposed with popular song, blurred the distinction between art and kitsch.

Born in the German state of Thuringia, Schroeter enrolled at the University of Mannheim to study psychology, and, a few years later, began to make short, experimental 8mm films. A meeting with another German experimental film-maker, Rosa von Praunheim, later a gay rights activist, resulted in their co-directing *Grotesk – Burlesk – Pittoresk* (1968), which featured Magdalena Montezuma, who was to become Schroeter's favorite star, appearing in almost all his feature films until her death in 1986.

*Eika Katappa* (1969), Schroeter's first feature, is a 144-minute, black-and-white film that anticipates some of his archetypal themes; asequential and dissociated vignettes, asynchronous music and sounds, characters striking campy poses, literary citations and an operatic approach to passionate love, painful beauty and death. *The Death of Maria Malibran* (1971) gained him the reputation as the mad genius of German cinema, and the only director Fassbinder considered an artistic equal. This hypnotically perverse biopic has no discernible plot and no direct dialogue, no diegetic singing, with the music on the soundtrack ranging from Mozart to anachronistic melodies such as *St Louis Blues*. In contrast, *Willow Springs* (1973), shot in the eponymous resort in California, has a unity of place, time and plot, but is just as visually dense and formalistic. There followed two features in which he temporarily aimed to move away from theatrical melodrama towards naturalism: *The Kingdom of Naples* (1978) and *Palermo or Wolfsburg* (1980). The former is constructed as a working-class family chronicle and the latter, about the travails of a young Sicilian worker in Germany.

In 1986, Schroeter made his most explicitly gay film, *The Rose King*. A young man who is obsessed with cultivating the perfect rose, lovingly feeds and tends a boy, whom he keeps as a prisoner in his barn, carefully grafting roses on to his body, all under the watchful and disapproving eye of his mother (Montezuma, then dying of cancer).

Then began a six-year gap in filmmaking during which Schroeter became known as a controversial theatre and opera director. Among his most celebrated productions were Schiller's *Don Carlos* in Hamburg, *Tosca* in Paris and *Don Giovanni* in Leipzig. Schroeter returned to cinema in 1991 with *Malina*, based on a novel by the feminist Austrian author Ingeborg Bachmann and adapted for the screen by Elfriede Jelinek. Starring Isabelle Huppert, it is set in Vienna and tells of a writer torn between her lover and husband. His next picture, *Deux* (2002), had an original screenplay. And original it was. Starring Huppert as contrasting twin sisters, it was composed of a

series of seemingly unconnected, opaque vignettes, punctuated by arias. Schroeter's fascination with operatic divas was given voice in *Love's Debris* (1996), an alluring documentary in which he gathered many of his favorite opera singers at the Abbey of Royaumont in France to talk about their lives and vocation.

His last film, *Tonight* (2009), was shot in Portugal.

(From the obituary published in *The Guardian*)

The daughter of a projectionist, **Elfi Mikesh** studied photographic and started to work as a painter. She met Rosa von Praunheim and moved in 1965 to West Berlin where she worked for the publisher V. Magdalinski. In 1969 she published with Rosa von Praunheim *Muvie Oh*, an "anarchist history of photography." She directed *Passion*, her first film, in 1971. She has worked as a documentary filmmaker for ZDF and as a noted cinematographer for Rosa von Praunheim, Werner Schroeter, Peter Lilienthal, and Monika Treut. She has also directed a number of experimental films, including *Execution: A Story of Mary* (1979), *Macumba* (1982), *The Blue Distance* (*Die blaue Distanz*, 1983), *The Breakfast of the Hyena* (*Das Frühstück der Hyäne*, 1983) and *Seduction: The Cruel Woman* (1985, co-directed with Monika Treut). Since 1991, she has been teaching at the Berlin Academy of Arts

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud

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