

**Cinema of Crisis?
Weimar Study Day
Saturday 1 June
BFI Southbank**

In association with the German Screen Studies Network

12.00 **Intro**

Erica Carter, King's College London/German Screen Studies Network
Aga Baranowska, BFI Southbank

12.15 **Crisis: what crisis?**

**Weimar Film Theory, Criticism and Crisis
Mattias Frey, University of Kent**

This presentation introduces the major purposes, forms and personalities of Weimar film theory and criticism, including the strong overlaps between the two. Written in a time of political crisis but also in an era of extraordinarily rich cinema culture, Weimar film theory and criticism helped establish the modern treatment of film as both industry and art - and also previewed today's grappling with 'new media'.

Is Weimar Good to Think With?

Jane Caplan, University of Oxford

Sitting on the fault-lines between Germany's imperial past and a present born of defeat and revolution, and between German, American, and Soviet visions of the future, the Weimar Republic was Europe's laboratory of modernity. How can we understand the relation between crisis and creativity in this barely 14-year history? And how explain the grip it continues to exert on our cultural imagination?'

Panel discussion chaired by Erica Carter

13.15 Break – LUNCH

14.00 **Curating the Kaleidoscope: exploring a multifaceted film culture**

Why we love Weimar cinema

Philipp Stiasny, Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf and Film Museum Potsdam, Germany

The "canon" of Weimar cinema that is praised for its artistic and technical innovation, social and thematic significance and creators hasn't changed a lot in the last 70 or 80 years. On the other hand, in more recent decades a whole continent of lesser known and less ambitious, more generic, non-canonical films has surfaced. Today, for film curators, scholars, students and fans of Weimar cinema a variety of films is becoming available and visible that is larger than ever before. While these re-discoveries do not necessarily question the idea of a "canon" they nevertheless challenge some conceptions of Weimar cinema in general. That goes, i.e. for the definition of national and international styles and modes of production, the relation between art and entertainment, high and middlebrow culture, and the role of

cinema in the age of modernity. This presentation reflects on Weimar cinema from a curatorial point of view and addresses questions of archival research and access, publicity, branding, performance – and love.

Michael Cowan, University of St Andrews

How to do things with Films: Advertising and Weimar Cinema

Advertising film was an important if little known, component of Weimar cinema. Using some representative examples from the period, this presentation will contextualize the practice of advertising film with respect both to Weimar cinema and to larger questions of visual culture and urban modernity.

Paul Flaig, University of St Andrews

Weimar Slapstick: Grotesque Eccentrics, Comic Schlemihls and Cartoon Creatures of Weimar Cinema

This presentation will explore the vibrant yet largely forgotten world of slapstick shorts and features produced during the Weimar era. Dubbed Groteskfilme and often influenced by American slapstick cinema, these comic features and shorts reflect the extraordinary diversity and comic energies of Weimar culture, featuring cabaret performers, Dadaist provocateurs, Jewish comedians, expressionist set designers, and gender-bending film stars.

Panel discussion chaired by TBC

15.20 **Tea**

15.35 **Stars and body politics**

Cornelie Usborne, Roehampton University, London

`Your body belongs to you!' Reproductive Freedom in Weimar film

In the latter Weimar years the Communist Party used this slogan to mobilise proletarian women to fight for the right to control their own body. But abortion law reform had been one of the discursive obsessions since the beginning of the republic and was aired in politics, everyday life and culture leading to significant concessions. Films, even earlier than literature, eagerly adopted the topic and opened it up to a mass audience. How far did fictional abortion narratives support or challenge dominant views and did they diverge from the experiences of ordinary women?

Erica Carter, King's College London/German Screen Studies Network

Star Bodies and Cinema History

Focussing principally on female stars including Asta Nielsen, Louise Brooks and Marlene Dietrich, as well as the cabaret and film performer Rosa Valetti, this presentation considers how star bodies in Weimar Cinema articulated the competing wishes and fears of popular audiences. Focusing in part on the industrial function of stars within Weimar's expanding cinema industry, the presentation uses examples of star performance across the period to explore how star bodies, face and gesture embodied the tensions of a turbulent historical moment.

James Donald, UNSW Australia

Josephine Baker in the 1920s: Paris, Berlin, Vienna

Josephine Baker is, quite rightly, forever associated with Paris. However, within months of her arrival in Europe, she had also made a profound impression on Berlin. By the end of the 1920s, however, times were changing, and her reception in Vienna was more ambivalent. Baker, as performer and persona, had already become a barometer of cultural aspirations and anxieties.

Chair: Leila Mukhida

17.00

End