



12 Moons Film Lounge

8th Mond: 11.8. - 8.9.2018

HerStories of the Second Wave

**– The Women's and Lesbian Movement
in Germany, 1970-1990**

During its 8th cycle, the 12 Moons film program features four films that portray the social climate for women* and lesbians in Germany in the years between the 1970s and 90s, documenting their practices of resistance. During what is often referred to as the Second Wave of the women's movement, lesbians funded political initiatives that played a crucial role in the emerging social protests against repressive, patriarchal and sexist structures in society.

The early 1970s represented a crucial time for the women's and lesbian movement in West Germany. All across the republic, a number of feminist initiatives had been founded. Lesbian groups were leaving gay male organizations and started to organize within the framework of the women's movement. Together, they introduced female* homosexuality to the political agenda of the Federal Republic (FRG). Much like today, Berlin was a political stronghold of the movement at the time.

In 1973, the first German documentary about lesbian women* was broadcasted on public Television: **Zärtlichkeit und Rebellion – zur Situation der homosexuellen Frau / Affection and Rebellion – the Situation of the Homosexual Woman** (1973). The film by Eva Müthel, an author of broadcaster ZDF, portrays (white) lesbian and bisexual women* from various professional and social backgrounds. The women* recount how they experience their respective environments and talk about their political views. The documentary offers an insight into the social and political climate of a time when, according to a representative study introduced in the film, 34% of the population claimed to be appalled by lesbian women*, and when 71% of the participants of the study stated that they did not find lesbians to be amicable. The film addresses the multiple forms of discrimination lesbian women* experience in patriarchal society, while also promoting empathy as well as the acceptance and normalization of ways of life not revolving around the heterosexual nuclear family and its traditional gender roles. The documentary caused a wave of protest from the public, and even though it was highly contested among politicized lesbians, it nevertheless strengthened the lesbian movement and paved the way for representations of lesbian women* on TV. While the film was shot in the context of the second interregional "Pfingsttreffen" (Pentecost meeting) of the women's branch of *Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin/ Homosexual Action West Berlin (HAW)* in 1973, the group did not play a conceptual role in the making of the film. In a statement read at the end of the documentary, the *HAW-Women* criticize the psychologizing gaze of the film and demand a decidedly political perspective: fighting against the isolation of lesbian and bisexual women, being in solidarity with each other and becoming active to change one's social and political circumstances. This message reverberated across the FRG and following the broadcast, the group received numerous letters from women* who did not reside in major cities, but who were interested in community exchange and - partly inspired by the film - decided to move to West Berlin. The *Women's Group of HAW* (later *Lesbisches Aktionszentrum / Lesbian Action Center, LAZ*, 1972-1982) was a crucial catalyst for lesbian subcultures from the 1970s to the 1990s, inspiring countless projects, book shops, bars and coffee shops, health initiatives, counseling centers and the interregional *Lesbenfrühlingstreffen / Lesbian Springtime Gathering*, which still takes place today.

In the GDR, restrictions of the freedoms of assembly, association and expression outlawed political work outside of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). Lesbian life after the Second World War was characterized by isolation, invisibility and a lack of political organizing structures and subcultural spaces. Social taboos, marginalization by Sexology and social pressure created a climate in which homosexual women* were rarely able to lead self-determined lives and in which it was nearly impossible to shape collective identity. While equal rights for women were written into the constitution, marriage and family were still understood in patriarchal terms and protected by the state as "the foundation

for communal life" (section 30 of the first constitution, later section 38/1). Anyone deviating from this mandate could be surveilled for potential opposition to the state, marginalized and sanctioned.

Some Protestant congregations in the larger cities of the GDR allowed for oppositional groups as well as homosexual activists to gather under their protection. In 1982/83, the *Arbeitskreis Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe Berlin – Lesben in der Kirche (LiK) / Working Group Homosexual Self-help – Lesbians in the Church (LiK)* was founded. Meetings took place at the Gethsemane Church in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg and until the mid 1980s LiK was the only lesbian group in the GDR. The Staatssicherheit (secret police) put the group under surveillance. The fact that the group held connections to other women*'s networks, peace activists and homosexual groups served as rationale for this surveillance, as did the oppositional politics of some of the group's members and their connections to "non-socialist" countries. One of the most important political actions of the group was their attempt to install a memorial plaque dedicated to lesbian victims of the National Socialist regime at the *The Ravensbrück Memorial Site (Nationale Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück)*, located on the premises of what had been the largest National Socialist concentration camp for women. Like in the BRD, the history of queer people had been systematically erased from the official history of the GDR. Twenty years later, students at Humboldt University in Berlin portrayed the participants of these actions in their film **warum wir so gefährlich waren / why we were so dangerous** (2006), which documents the history of the activist group.

Despite the long history of engagement by lesbian-feminist activists, the goal of the group to install a plaque commemorating lesbian women, has not been realized to this day. The initiative *Autonome feministische FrauenLesben aus Deutschland und Österreich (Autonomous Feminist WomenLesbians from Germany and Austria)* has been lobbying for many years to install a memorial plaque in the form of a memorial sphere at the site. Today, objection to this cause does not stem from state authorities, but has mainly been voiced by the *LSVD Berlin-Brandenburg's* (Berlin-Brandenburg branch of *The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany*) member of the Ravensbrück Memorial Site's advisory board. The argument for this objection being that this gesture of commemoration would enable "the legend of lesbian persecution" and that it was "dubious" and based on "questionable isolated cases". In cooperation with the initiative and as a sign of solidarity with the cause of the group, a copy of the memorial sphere has been on display at Schwules Museum since last year.

To this day, Audre Lorde, Caribbean-African-American feminist poet, literary scholar and women's rights activist (1934-1992), is one of the most important figures of inspiration for feminist, Black and People of Color activists worldwide, as well as their allies. With her empowering essays and inspiring speeches she substantially shaped debates about racism, classism and homophobia within the Black Civil Rights Movement and the Black and *white* women's movements. Between 1984 and 1992, Lorde often taught as a guest lecturer at Freie Universität Berlin (FU Berlin). She inspired and supported the development of the self-designation "Afro-German", as well as the foundation of the initiative *ADEFRA – Schwarze Frauen in Deutschland / ADEFRA – Black Women in Germany*, which is still active today. During this time, Lorde also supported the publication of the groundbreaking book *Farbe bekennen. Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte / Showing Our Colors – Afro-German Wom-*

en Speak Out (edited by May Ayim (Opitz), Katharina Oguntoye and Dagmar Schultz), the first comprehensive publication on Black German history. Important protagonists from East and West Germany of the time, like Katharina Oguntoye and Ika Hügel-Marshall, Ina Röder-Sissako, Raja Lubinetzki and Peggy Piesche, still produce works against racism today and contribute to the empowerment of Black people and People of Color.

The title of the film **A Litany for Survival: the Life and Work of Audre Lorde** (1995) is inspired by one of Audre Lorde's poems of the same title, containing the line "we were never meant to survive". The film portrays Lorde's life: Her childhood in Harlem, New York, her years at Hunter College, her involvement in the civil rights, women's and lesbian movements, her work as university lecturer and her fight against breast cancer. The two Black filmmakers, Ada Gay Griffin and Michelle Parkerson, accompanied Lorde for over eight years until shortly before she passed away. Footage from personal reflections during her last years, which she spent in the Caribbean, are interwoven with archival materials, writing and lectures by Lorde, and interviews with her partner, family members, friends, students and fellow poets like Sonia Sanchez, Adrienne Rich, Barbara Smith, Maua Yvonne Flowers, Sapphire, Essex Hemphill and Jewelle Gomez. The film illustrates the depth of Lorde's famous self-characterization as "Black woman, lesbian, mother, warrior and poet" and shows that she lived by her principles and values in her closest relationships as well. In a moving way, her warmth, courage, but also vulnerability become tangible through the film: as such *A Litany for Survival* demonstrates the urgency of her oeuvre and its continuing relevance to current issues. Lorde never wanted to be glorified; instead she wanted to encourage people to uncover their inner strength and never to give up fighting – with their own tools – for a world more just.

The protagonists of **Die Ritterinnen / Gallant Girls** (2003) appear equally fierce. The film is an important and rare take on an aspect of the West German women's movement that has received only small coverage: the shared experience of communal life and cohabitation. Barbara Teufel's autobiographical montage consists of rehearsed scenes, archival footage and interviews. It narrates the story of a group of women from the left-autonomous scene who initially lived in an all-gender co-op at Ritterstraße ("Knight Street") 11 in the Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg and who engaged in political activism together. As a "provocation in the flesh", they became increasingly separatist, threw the men out of their co-op and organized plenary sessions for women. The film takes the viewer through the history of West Berlin during the time between 1987 and 1992 and captures its atmosphere: from the famous Labor Day events of 1987, to the interventions during the annual convention of the IMF and the World Bank in 1988, to the squatting movement in East Berlin following the German re-unification. Political actions overlap with personal anecdotes about everyday life at the co-op, ranging from love and desire to work life, domestic work and sharing a bank account. Barbara Teufel worked closely with the actors of the scripted scenes, asking them to do archival research about the time and to have conversations with the people living in the co-op who they would portray in the film; in turn, interviews with the residents are woven into the film, showing the actual "female knights" reflecting back on those times.

Their dream of the revolution did not come true and the fall of the German Wall created new living conditions. In 1992, the co-op

split up when priorities changed for some of the residents, shifting from political struggle to education and jobs. Things had „run out of steam“. The women passed their floor in Ritterstraße on to a new women's collective. Most of them moved to single-room studios that were typical for the Eastern part of town – upon squatting there, people were able to receive rental contracts. Today, the "female knights" agree on one thing: what made their time together special, was sharing a self-determined life as a collective.

on the right monitor:

**Zärtlichkeit und Rebellion – zur
Situation der homosexuellen Frau /
/ Affection and Rebellion – the Situation
of the Homosexual Woman**

Eva Müthel
Germany, 1973, 46 min.
in German



**warum wir so gefährlich waren /
why we were so dangerous**

Songül Bitis, Samira Mahmud, Colin Müller, Marie Schlingmann
Germany, 2006, 50 min.
in German



on the left monitor:

**A Litany for Survival:
the Life and Work of Audre Lorde**

Ada G. Griffin und Michelle Parkerson
USA, 1995, 80 Min.
English with German subtitles



as projection:

Die Ritterinnen / Gallant Girls

Barbara Teufel
Germany, 2003, 96 min.
German with English subtitles



**Moving HerStories:
A Talk with Second Wave Feminists**

23.8.2018, 19.00

As part of the 8th 12 Moons program, dedicated to **HerStories of the Second Wave – The Women's and Lesbian Movement in Germany 1970-1990**, we invite you to a talk with four of Berlin's eye witnesses to the era, giving testimonies and telling stories of the time. All four are important and influential figures in the German women's and lesbian movement. In this talk we will discuss the social climate of the 1970s, 80s and 90s in East and West Germany with them, their achievements, as well as the particular 'blind spots' of the second wave activists. Discussions will highlight questions over racism both then and now, the role lesbians played within the women's movement, the dreams and courage they held, as well as the things that didn't quite work out. We will also discuss the movies that they participated in, showing these in excerpts.

Joining us for the discussion:

Katharina Oguntoye is a companion of Audre Lorde in Berlin. She also featured in the movie *A Litany for Survival: the Life and Work of Audre Lorde* (1995), as a student of Lorde. Oguntoye is a historian and co-editor of the ground breaking book *Farbe bekennen. Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte / Showing Our Colors – Afro-German Women Speak Out* (1986). She is also a co-founder of *ADEFRA – Schwarze Frauen in Deutschland / Adefra – Black Women in Germany* and director of *Joliba e.V.*

Barbara Teufel will talk about her own life as part of the women's housing project *Die Ritterinnen / Gallant Girls*. She studied at the *Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (dffb)* and at the French film school *La FÉMIS* in Paris. For 12 years she worked as a film director and author in Berlin and Paris. From 2007-2015 she taught at *Kunsthochschule für Medien* in Cologne. Since 2016 she has been on the board of directors of *Pro Quote Regie/Pro Quote Film*.

Marinka Körzendörfer is a journalist and documentary film maker, who has been active in the lesbian movements of the GDR since 1984, including being part of the "Gethsemane-Lesben." She is a co-founder of *Unabhängiger Frauenverband (UFV) / Autonomous Women's Union* participating in many film projects about the East German lesbian movement, including the film *warum wir so gefährlich waren / why we were so dangerous* (2006).

Monne Kühn was part of the *HAW Women's Group* and *Lesbian Action Center (LAZ)* from 1971-79, she was also involved in the making of the movie *Zärtlichkeit und Rebellion – zur Situation der homosexuellen Frau / Affection and Rebellion – the Situation of the Homosexual Woman* (1973). She is one of the curators of the current *LAZ* retrospective at Schwules Museum. She's a pedagogue, has run a carpenter's workshop, as well as being a licensed yoga and Shiatsu teacher. She lives with her partner in the country(side) and is an activist in ecology and animal welfare.

The talk is hosted by Vera Hofmann, curator of the *12 Moons Film Lounge*, co-curator of *Year of the Women**, artist and member of the board of directors at Schwules Museum.

12 Moons

A year-long program featuring films by feminist filmmakers and video artists

For *12 Moons*, one of the exhibition rooms at Schwules Museum is transformed into a film lounge inviting visitors to encounter various cinematic formats and international (queer) feminist positions. The film lounge is open during regular Museum opening hours, with each new moon initiating a new program cycle.

The series is a yearlong intervention against the under-representation of women's* perspectives, specifically in media and museum contexts, but also in the arts and society overall. Month by month, the screenings raise questions about the construction and communication of forms of *femininity_ies*, and also gauge the potential of an alternative gaze.

In search of classics in lesbian and feminist film history, of contemporary queer positions and of the voices of women* of color, we will turn to the OWLs (Older Wiser Lesbians) and talk to experts of porn film. We will dig through archives and visit festivals and ask the communities about the stories that need to be seen and heard.

The selected films provide insights into everyday lives and desires, they question relationship structures and power constellations. A critical eye is cast on societal pressures, while times of uprising and resistance against coercive gender norms offer inspiration. The utopian concepts and moments of healing emerging from the selected films are testimonies to the global struggles of women* for respect, self-determination and spaces to unfold.

12 Moons is funded by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe as part of the project *Year of the Women**.

Team

Curator: Vera Hofmann

Assistance: Anina Falasca, Felix Roadkill

Engl. translation: Noemi Y Molitor

Scenography with Carolin Gießner and Théo Demans

**Sun, Mon, Wed & Fri: 2-6pm,
Thu: 2-8pm, Sat: 2-7pm,
Tue: closed**

7,50 € (4 € reduced)

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schwulesmuseum.de**