

**My Felt, My Fat, My Hare – 48 Hours Survival for Germany**  
**Christoph Schlingensief**

MoMA PS1, March 09, 2014 - August, 2014

(documenta X, Kassel, 1997)

Starting in the mid-1990s, Schlingensief began to explore the possibility of relocating theater works and actions outside of traditional stages. Increasingly, his theater productions and actions became more and more politicized. Presented as part of the contemporary art exhibition documenta X (1997) in Kassel, *My Felt, My Fat, My Hare*, successfully moved beyond the confines of an actual theater.

Schlingensief and his ensemble, which was comprised of both professional and amateur artists, barricaded themselves in a public exhibition space in the Orangery of the celebrated Auepark in Kassel. Tasks such as sleeping, washing and cooking were all staged as performances and the audience was given the option of watching or joining in. Schlingensief passed out flyers asking people to imagine Germany as a gigantic theater performance with Chancellor Helmut Kohl as its director. While the actors and the audience were separated by a pile of sandbags, Schlingensief encouraged audience members to climb over them or to move them aside in order to literally and symbolically remove any barrier between art and observation.

Shifting between a rehearsed script and improvisation, Schlingensief and his ensemble variously sang about the all too recent death of Lady Diana, who had died earlier that day, threatened to destroy artworks, and posted a banner emblazoned with the words, "Kill Helmut Kohl," an action that led to his arrest and brief imprisonment.

The exhibit features an excerpt of the documentation of *My Felt, My Fat, My Hare* (Germany 1997, 9 minutes, 57 seconds, originally 90 minutes), courtesy Akademie der Kunste, Berlin/Christoph Schlingensief Archive

## **Passion Impossible. 7 Day Emergency Call for Germany**

(Deutsches Schauspielhaus, 1997)

Identified by Schlingensiefel as a continuation of his documenta X performance from the same year, *Passion Impossible. 7 Day Emergency Call for Germany* (1997) begins with his demand for the façade of the theater, the Schauspielhaus Hamburg, be torn down and for the seating be turned the other way so that the audience could see the human and every-day misery of the homeless, the prostitutes and the junkies in and around the nearby train station. This demand symbolizes Schlingensiefel's conviction that films and plays are not the only things that are staged, but that social and individual lives also follow written and amended scripts.

After a charity event in the theater, Schlingensiefel, his ensemble, and the audience relocated to an empty police station. For an entire week, they lived and slept at the station, while a daily commando of fictional policemen fanned out into the city – to Hamburg Town Hall, to the red light district, to the train station and to the local Scientology branch, among other places.

Once the commando arrived at its destination, the officers checked whether promises of law, order and happiness had been kept. In the process, these fictitious police officers occasionally ran into trouble with the real police. Central to this action was the creation of ambivalence and the destruction of habitual patterns of perception.

The exhibit shows a film still, photography of the action and an edited version of the film *Friend!Friend!Friend!* (Germany 1997, 18 minutes 30 seconds, originally 73 minutes), directed by Alexander Grasseck and Stephan Corinth, © ahoimedia Alexander Grasseck, Stephan Corinth, Hamburg

## **Chance 2000**

(St. Gilgen, Austria, 1998)

Schlingensiefel, who often challenged the limits of art and politics, formed his project *Chance 2000* in response to the 1998 German parliamentary elections. In collaboration with the Volksbühne in Berlin, he established a political party that offered marginalized groups the opportunity to voice their concerns. Called *Chance 2000*, the party scrutinized the rules of an election campaign and encouraged people to become candidates in the upcoming election.

Originally called the Last Chance Party, *Chance 2000* held evening campaign events at the Volksbühne from March 13 through April 12, 1998. The party, whose slogan was, "act! act! act!," sought to make "art more political and politics more artful." In the course of the project, the boundaries between the two systems became ever hazier, and transcended even Schlingensiefel's own vision — as a political entity, *Chance 2000* was sometimes taken so seriously that its artistic ambitions got pushed to the sidelines.

Secretly, and in compliance with legal requirements, the party elected a chairman, co-chairman, party executive, treasurer and press spokesman. A mobile trailer served as the first party headquarters.

Schlingensiefel's parliamentary electoral campaign was accompanied by actions such as the call to bathe in Lake Wolfgang at Chancellor Helmut Kohl's summer home. During the action, which Schlingensiefel hosted on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, he called upon Germany's six million unemployed citizens to swim in the lake at the same time. His goal was to raise the water level sufficiently to flood Kohl's home. The action was meant to highlight what can occur when people neglected by the state and ostracized from society assembled in such a concentrated form. Only a few hundred individuals, most of them journalists or police, showed up.

On the evening of the federal elections on September 27, 1998, the party celebrated its "Election Debacle" at the Volksbühne. Subsequently, the party voluntarily exiled itself to Switzerland.

The exhibit shows documentation of the action and an edited version of the film *Failure as Opportunity* (Germany 1998, 21 minutes, originally 94 minutes), directed by Alexander Grasseck and Stefan Corinth, © ahoimedia, Alexander Grasseck, Stefan Corinth, Hamburg

## **Searching for Germany '99**

(Germany/Austria/Switzerland/USA/Namibia, 1999)

In *Searching for Germany '99* Schlingensief embarked on an expedition through the heartlands and provinces of his motherland in search of a new German hero, one modeled after Siegfried, the heroic protagonist from the third opera of Richard Wagner's epic *The Ring of the Nibelung*.

Like Wagner's opera, Schlingensief's action was composed of four parts. The first was a theater tour entitled *Wagner lives! Sex in the Ring*, during which Schlingensief and his ensemble traveled to ten cities in German-speaking countries. The second consisted of evening events in refugee camps and a series of midnight street actions. Schlingensief declared both to be a form of motivational training in order to draw hidden heroes out of inner exile. He and others recited texts from Richard Wagner and developed survival strategies for Germany as it approached the new millennium.

Schlingensief held the *First International Evening of Comradeship* on October 3, 1999 in the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg. It was styled as a small-scale preview of the third part of the project, the *Second International Evening of Comradeship – Toolbox of History*, which took place the following month at the Volksbühne.

In November, invited by P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Schlingensief traveled to New York dressed as an orthodox Jew. In the course of the action "Sink Germany" (November 9), he threw an urn containing ninety nine items from everyday German life into the Hudson River and, in a solemn ceremony at the foot of the Statue of Liberty, kneeled down to hand Germany over to globalization.

For the final part of the project, Schlingensief traveled to Namibia for a "Wagner Rally" during which he played Wagnerian music to the colonial remnants of the former German Southwest Africa and buried a ring in the sand.

The exhibition shows film stills of the New York action, *Sink Germany*, from of the documentary *If you're serious you need to step on it – Christoph Schlingensief's Toolbox of History* (Germany, 1999), courtesy Alexander Kluge/dctp, Düsseldorf

The exhibition features an excerpt from *If you're serious you need to step on it – Christoph Schlingensief's Toolbox of History*, a conversation between Alexander Kluge and Christoph Schlingensief (8 minutes, originally 25 minutes); Director: Alexander Kluge, © Alexander Kluge/dctp, Dusseldorf

## **Please Love Austria – First Austrian Coalition Week**

(Wiener Festwochen, 2000)

*Please Love Austria*, which came to be known as the “Container Week,” continued Schlingensief’s direct engagement with the intersection between politics and culture. At one end of Vienna’s main shopping strip, Schlingensief installed a village of shipping containers, which he described as “an Austrian film studio for fascist film projects.”

Schlingensief selected twelve foreigners seeking asylum in Austria to live in the containers for a week. Their actions were visible to the public through webcams and monitors and, throughout the week, spectators voted one of the “contestants” out of the container. Schlingensief combined the TV program *Big Brother*, which at the time was hotly-debated throughout Europe, with the election slogans of the right-wing populist Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and its figurehead Jörg Haider. Slogans and mottoes such as “Foreigners Out” and “Our Honor is called Loyalty” were mounted conspicuously on the container walls.

Because the action was officially a contribution to the prestigious Vienna International Festival, the commotion surrounding the containers grew by the hour. The question of whether the inhabitants of the containers were actual asylum-seekers or actors remains unanswered; FPÖ flags and the logo of the country’s biggest tabloid newspaper, the Wiener Kronenzeitung, were added to the outside of the container, suddenly making them look like sponsors of this game of elimination; Schlingensief moderated the project but at times replaced himself with an obvious doppelgänger.

*Please Love Austria* encompassed a variety of levels between art and reality, playfulness and earnestness, theater and politics. The content was such that nearly everybody involved felt addressed, attacked, and challenged to react: the FPÖ protested against the use of its party logos; the Kronenzeitung announced it would take legal action; anti-Haider demonstrators stormed the container village to liberate the asylum-seekers, whereupon the project had to be temporarily suspended; tourists complained to their embassies about Austria’s brazen xenophobia; and Schlingensief was charged with suspicion of incitement. For the first time, Schlingensief’s concept of theater successfully moved outside the confines of a traditional theater.

The exhibition presents an extract of the documentation *Foreigners out! Schlingensief’s Container* (Austria/Germany 2001, 21 minutes, originally 90 minutes), courtesy Aino Laberenz/ Estate Christoph Schlingensief and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin and Paul Poet, © Paul Poet

The exhibition presents an extract of documentary material from webfreetv.com (Austria 2001, 2 minutes 45 seconds, courtesy Aino Laberenz/ Estate of Christoph Schlingensief and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin and Paul Poet, © Paul Poet

## **Talk 2000**

(1997)

During the mid-1990s, Schlingensiefel was very active in a diverse range of media, including theater, opera and performance. He produced several feature-length films, a series of radio plays and four television shows. While he had been steadily gaining a following among filmmakers and other members of the avant-garde, it was through his work as the host of several controversial television shows that he became widely known in Germany.

*Talk 2000* marks Schlingensiefel's debut as a talk show host. Filmed over eight episodes in the basement cafeteria of the Volksbühne in Berlin, the show featured prominent Germans such as Hildegard Knef, Harald Schmidt and Beate Uhse. Each episode digressed from the standard talk show format when Schlingensiefel spontaneously began discussing personal problems, wrestling with guests or taking a short nap.

The exhibition features extracts from episode 1, *Forever Young* (17 Minutes, originally 30 minutes), and episode 7, *Morality in Germany* (18 minutes, originally 30 minutes), aired by Kanal 4 (RTL/SAT 1), production: Avanti Media

**U3000**  
(2000)

Three years after his first talk show, Schlingensief produced a second series. *U3000*, which aired on MTV, consists of eight episodes shot in Berlin's subway system. Filmed in regularly operating train cars and on station platforms, the episodes feature a diverse group of guests, such as famed mother-daughter musical dirndl duo Margot and Maria Hellwig, a camera crew, a studio band, religious and political posters, dogs and a "live studio audience." Throughout the series, Schlingensief becomes more and more frenzied, proclaiming the apocalypse of "German High speed TV."

The exhibit shows extracts from episode 1 (13 minutes, originally 43 minutes), episode 7 (15 minutes, originally 29 minutes), and episode 8 (13 minutes, originally 33 minutes), Aired by MTV; production by Avanti Media

## **Freakstars 3000**

(2002)

Inspired by the German version of American Idol, *Deutschland Sucht den Superstar*, and other popular "casting shows," Schlingensief produced *Freakstars 3000*, a six-part television series that followed a group of contestants seeking a spot in a new band Mutter sucht Schrauben (Mother Seeks Screws).

Throughout the series, two dozen individuals from the Tiele-Winkler home in Berlin, an assisted living institution for individuals with mental disabilities, were selected to sing their favorite song in front of a merciless jury. From the first singing audition to the premiere performance and the release of an album, Schlingensief's anarchic TV parody exposes and explores the lack of visibility of people with mental disabilities in the German media.

The exhibit features extracts from episode 2 (23 minutes), episode 4 (24 minutes) and episode 5 (25 minutes), aired by Viva/Viva Plus, Cologne



## Christoph Schlingensiefel's Theater Works

In 1992 Schlingensiefel left during the middle of a production of *A Clockwork Orange* because he could not bear the rehearsed assertion of realism in a self-evident play. As he noted, "Theater suffers because it simulates a stability that it wants to challenge at the same time."

He was highly ambivalent about rehearsed roles, automated figures, and the repetition of the same performances. Schlingensiefel stated, "Substantive analysis is so faked. What remains is a palsy of the theatre and its audience: Today one doesn't need revolutionaries who attack with polished sentences and take out the machete at the right moment. When provoked on the stage, societies/corporations are hurt, it was against the rules, and then at the end, they all agree that it was a wonderful, meaningful evening of theater. This kind of handling of problems considers everything from a distance, and we sit before them coolly."

Regardless, or perhaps precisely because of this, Schlingensiefel attempted to adapt his films into theater. *100 Years of CDU – Game without Limits* (1993), which was adapted from his film *Terror 2000* (1992), marked the beginning of Schlingensiefel's extended involvement in theater production. He worked particularly closely with the Volksbühne in Berlin, which was among the most influential theaters in Europe, and in the early 2000s became an in house director there.

In *Rocky Dutsche '68* or *Battle for Europe*, his doubts about the theater became an important engine and factor crucially in the anarchic and excessive character of his works. Schlingensiefel's performances often began in a reserved and civilized mannered and often ended in chaos. Many contained Dadaist elements as well as elements of agitprop and splatter films. As Schlingensiefel stated, "The control mechanisms are discarded and at the same time apprehended as a production in a state of flux — this is the core of my theater." Schlingensiefel combined film with theater, politics with art, pathos with obsession. He mixed professional actors with disabled performers in one comprehensive ensemble, an ensemble that Schlingensiefel felt he belonged to.

During the 2000s, Schlingensiefel attempted to dissolve the concepts of theater even further.

## **100 Years of CDU – Game Without Limits**

(Volksbühne Berlin, 1993)

*100 years of CDU* marked Schlingensiefel's debut as a theater director. Announced as an "open war theater" it is, in fact, an adaptation of his film *Terror 2000* (1992). Invited by Matthias Lilienthal, an artistic director of the Volksbühne in Berlin, to stage a work, Schlingensiefel embraced the challenge to work outside of his traditional medium, film. Schlingensiefel's production showed the "vision of a fascistic madhouse Germany." Attempting to recreate the state of chaos in Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Schlingensiefel transformed the stage into a madhouse. His characters included the former German president, Richard von Weizsäcker, who sang a song about the lovely Bellevue Palace and the stupid Berlin; a United Nations officer who bet that he could paint a Star of David on the window of a Turkish grocery; and victims of a neo-Nazi attack, who sang the famous pop song of a children's charity.

Despite Schlingensiefel's radical intentions, he felt the audience was not taking his material seriously. During the sixth performance, he stormed onto the stage with a blood bag under his shirt and a blood capsule in his mouth. Screaming, "Lights down! I am the pharmacist's son from Oberhausen, and now you've got me. You wanted it." When the lights were turned back on, Schlingensiefel was covered in fake blood. Through his direct intervention, Schlingensiefel interrupted the aesthetic distance inherent to theater.

The exhibit shows a video extract (9 minutes 26 seconds) and images in celebration of the premiere of *100 Years of CDU – Game without Limit* on April 23, 1993.

**Rocky Dutschke '68**  
(Volksbühne Berlin, 1996)

In 1996, Schlingensiefel was offered a position as an in-house director at the Volksbühne in Berlin, where he directed intermittently until 2006. *Rocky Dutschke* was the first theater-piece that Schlingensiefel produced as an in-house director. Designed as a participatory theater experience, the show began in the foyer of the well-known theater. As the audience gathered together, a brass band marched through the space with a banner stating "No Power for Anyone" while actors dressed as police shouted out a variety of orders to the audience. Schlingensiefel played both Rudi Dutschke (1940-1979), the spokesman of the West German student movement during the 1960s, and himself, the master of ceremonies and host of the performance.

Using a megaphone, Schlingensiefel/Dutschke orders the audience to assemble at the party headquarters. He urges them to move down the street while theater police attempt to stop the audience. A second Dutschke appears on a bicycle. Mirroring the historical 1968 shooting of Dutschke in the Kurfurstendamm in the Berlin neighborhood of Charlottenburg, three shots ring out and Dutschke is struck down.

Schlingensiefel successfully turned each member of the audience into actors, each of whom was involved in recreating a street scene from the late 1960s. While attempting to deal with the mythology of the year 1968, Schlingensiefel set the audience of his production up as the heirs of the student protesters who had pushed for change through political campaigns and demonstrations.

The exhibit shows a video extract (14 minutes 3 seconds) and images in celebration of the premiere of *Rocky Dutschke '68* on May 17, 1996

**Battle for Europe 1-XIII/ Ufo Crisis 1997: Space Patrol Schlingensief**  
(Volksbühne Berlin, 1997)

Schlingensief's *Battle for Europe 1-XIII/ Ufo Crisis 1997: Space Patrol Schlingensief* continued his obsessive pursuit of expanding the parameters of theater. Derived from his abhorrence of the megalomania of civilized humanity and the economic, political and ecological subjugation of the continent, Schlingensief's production leads the ensemble and the audience on a journey through space.

Images rushed through the theater in quick procession. Showing material such as rocket tests by the national socialists, the sterilization of an African girl, overly beautified models, desolate orphans in Romania and a skier falling into an abyss, they are exhausting to experience.

While dancing, singing and talking, Schlingensief and his ensemble moved through the room. They continuously circled Werner Brecht, an actor best known for his roles in Schlingensief's *Freakstars 3000* (2004) and *Failure as Opportunity* (2000). Brecht, who suffered from narcolepsy, slept through the entire performance.

*Battle for Europe* unfolded over 27 performances, none of which used the same film subject material. As Schlingensief noted, "I decided on principle not to deliver a finished product on the day of the premiere, but to change the material every night. I discovered that I need to work against myself or that maybe I do not need to work against myself in order to let the unpredictable happen."

The exhibit shows a video extract (15 minutes and 12 seconds) and print media in celebration of the premiere of *Battle for Europe* on March 21, 1997

## **Art and Vegetables, A. Hipler**

(Volksbühne Berlin, 2004)

Superficially, *Art and Vegetables* is Schlingensiefel's reckoning with the strict rules and house ordinances of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus, an opera house dedicated solely to the performance of operas by the 19<sup>th</sup> century German composer Richard Wagner. While in Bayreuth to direct his controversial production of Wagner's *Parsifal* (2004), he felt substantially restricted by Wagner's heirs and estate. In order to "avenge" himself, he ignored Wagner and focused instead on Arnold Schönberg, an Austrian painter and composer associated with the expressionist movement in German poetry. Historically, Schönberg and Wagner were considered counterparts as Wagner's music was highly tonal while Schönberg is best known as being a leader of the atonal avant-garde.

Schlingensiefel used an alter-ego, Hosea Dzirngirai from Zimbabwe, to direct the production. Dzirngirai was assisted by Angela Jansen, who suffered from ALS and contributed from a hospital bed in the middle of the room.

The production evokes works by Marcel Duchamp, Jean-Luc Godard, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Martin Kippenberger.

The exhibit shows a video extract (14 minutes and 15 minutes) and print media in celebration of the premiere of *Art and Vegetables, A. Hipler* on November 17, 2004

## **A Church of Fear Against The Alien Within**

(Ruhrtriennale Duisburg, 2008)

Following his cancer diagnosis in the beginning of 2008, Schlingensief dealt with his illness more and more artistically. If he had previously and consistently crossed the boundaries between his art and his autobiography, he never had done so as intensively as in *The Church of Fear Against The Alien Within*.

For the theater piece, Schlingensief transformed an old mechanic shop into the Catholic Church from his hometown, Oberhausen. The altar was populated by young altar boys, choirs from different denominations, and two popular German actresses, Angela Winkler and Margit Carstensen, who appear later on as alter egos of Schlingensief. They recite soliloquies that Schlingensief had spoken into a voice recorder throughout the course of his illness. His orations range from a hope of recovery to a revilement of fate. Time and again he returned to the same existential questions: Where is God? Did he leave me? Did I leave him? How do I get in touch?

The *Church of Fear* is not a plea for pity. Instead, it is a symbolic funeral that Schlingensief staged for himself. Home videos, projected through a room filled with incense and flickering candles, show Schlingensief as a child, while cellphone footage from 2008 shows Schlingensief despairing and crying in a sickbed.

Subtitled *Fluxus-Oratorium*, the all-enveloping theatrical installation doubled as a last salute to Joseph Beuys whom Schlingensief viewed as his artistic father figure and who was famous for elevating and extolling life and death as art.

The exhibit shows a video extract (15 minutes and 19 seconds) material in celebration of the premiere of *The Church of Fear Against The Alien Within* on September 21, 2008.

## **Stairlift to Heaven**

(Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2008)

In the media installation *Stairlift to Heaven*, Schlingensiefel makes literal his call for the abolition of all boundaries between art and daily life. Inspired by the installation of a stair lift in his parent's home in Oberhausen, Schlingensiefel incorporates the viewer into the work by elevating him. On the seat of an ascending stair lift, the viewer traverses a large-scale projection of Schlingensiefel's film *The African Twintowers* (2007). At the top, the viewer is directed to open the curtain to a box where he can watch a movie privately. Schlingensiefel thus "rewards" the viewer's autonomy and willingness to explore.

*Stairlift to Heaven* (2007), mixed media, courtesy Hauser & Wirth, Zurich.

## **The African Twin Towers**

(Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2007)

For *The African Twin Towers*, Schlingensiefel modified footage from the third part of his *Animatograph* series, the *African Twin Towers* (2005), into a monitor wall assembled from 18 screens. The work formed the center of his first major solo exhibition "18 Bilder pro Sekunde" (18 Images per Second) in Haus der Kunst, Munich in 2007.

The sequences do not narrate a linear story. Instead, the viewer is invited to experience a parallel universe of surreal and apocalyptic imagery that they can then combine into a narrative of their own making. When discussing his experimental film, Schlingensiefel stated, "The cinema is not the right place for this kind of film."

*The African Twin Towers* (2007), 18 flat screens, courtesy Hauser & Wirth, Zurich



## **Action 18**

(Festival Theater der Welt, 2002)

To mark the German federal elections in 2002, Schlingensiefel plagiarized the election campaigns of the FDP (Free Democratic Party), the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany). The title, *Action 18*, refers to the "Project 18," a statute according to which each political party had the goal of achieving 18 percent of the vote. The Deputy Party Leader and former Minister of Economic Affairs, Jürgen Möllemann, tried to appeal to anti-Semitic sentiments by resorting to anti-Israeli statements and tirades against prominent German Jews.

As with *Please Love Austria* (2000), Schlingensiefel sought to address populist politics. He launched *Action 18* on June 23, 2002 in the Theater Duisburg with a special edition of "Quiz 3000", his politically incorrect adaptation of the popular TV show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

Schlingensiefel, the quizmaster, asked candidates specific questions about FDP party policies. The high point of the event was when he challenged the audience to complete his exclamation "Kill ..." with the name "Jürgen Möllemann." The following day, flanked by a huge police presence and media pack, Schlingensiefel conducted another action on the grounds of Möllemann's dubious export consultancy firm Web/Tec in Dusseldorf.

At the entrance to the company, Schlingensiefel performed something akin to a Joseph Beuys action with a piano. His action diary reads: "Washing powder into the piano to check the purity of its notes. This place requires a cleansing ritual. The old detritus of the Möllemann era must be disposed of: the besmirched flag of Israel and a straw doll. It stands for the Axis of Evil. Then we distribute 20 kilograms of feathers and 7,000 ammunition shells in the gardens of Möllemann's weapon-dealing firm. Then some smelly meat. An old witch's ritual. Besmirching is followed by defense."

Meanwhile, Möllemann held a press conference in the regional parliament in Dusseldorf during which he accused Schlingensiefel of sedition and incitement to commit a crime. Furthermore, he made an implicit threat to end funding for the Festival Theater der Welt, with Schlingensiefel was participating in.

Subsequently, Schlingensiefel organized a book burning event on the banks of the Rhine in Dusseldorf, set up a book of condolences in the pedestrian zone in Bonn for the death of the FDP, and terminated *Action 18*. "The original estimate of seven days turned out to be longer than necessary to trigger such massive and specious responses from politicians, especially the FDP. It is reactions of this kind that strengthen us in our hope that art can still have effects in the political sphere."

The following year, while Christoph was installing his *Church of Fear* at the Venice Biennale, he receiving a phone call from his mother, who stated: "Christoph, Möllemann just fell out of the sky. Keep quiet if the police call!" On June 5, 2003, Möllemann was killed in a parachute jump. At the time, Schlingensiefel's mother was not the only one who was convinced that it was an aftereffect of Schlingensiefel's Dusseldorf action.

The exhibition features a recording (9 minutes 40 seconds) of *Action 18* from June 24, 2002, courtesy Jan Artl.

**Church of Fear – CoF**  
(Venice Biennial, 2003)

Schlingensiefel established the *Church of Fear* on March 20, 2003, the day of the first air raids on Baghdad by the US-British "coalition of the willing" and the beginning of the third Iraq War. Citing the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush described the aerial campaign as a preventive war aimed at averting an allegedly imminent attack on the US and the western world with weapons of mass destruction.

Schlingensiefel, explaining how the project came about, said people's fears had been instrumentalized to incite and justify a religious war. He sought to radicalize the relationship individuals had with professions of fear by stating that fear was private property. Schlingensiefel highlighted this theme with a range of actions, including three "pole-sitting competitions." The competitions, which took place at the Venice Biennial, in Katmandu and in Frankfurt, required individuals to compete in order to find out who could publicly profess and sit out their fears, self-doubts and worldly worries for the longest amount of time.

While in Venice, Schlingensiefel also presented the prototype of an actual Church of Fear, a walk-in multimedia and multi-religious chapel, equipped with peep-holes, monitors and audio signals. It was later exhibited on the roof of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne in 2005.

The exhibition features a model of the *Church of Fear* (2003), wood, paint, CD, CD player, courtesy Hauser & Wirth, Zurich

This exhibition features an excerpt from an unfinished cinema documentary *Ich, Schlinge* which chronicled Schlingensiefel's *Church of Fear* (2003, 5 minutes 18 seconds); directed by Paul Poet, camera by Paul Poet and Ralf Jacobs; selection and montage by Frieder Schlaich

## **Parsifal**

(Bayreuth Festival, 2004–07)

In 2004, Schlingensiefel received an offer to produce Wagner's *Parsifal* for the Bayreuth Festival, an annual festival during which operas by the 19<sup>th</sup> century German composer Richard Wagner are presented. For his opera directorial debut, Schlingensiefel presented the endless near-death experiences of the protagonist, Parsifal.

Schlingensiefel's central contribution was to substitute overt references to Western religious symbolism with Eastern concepts of the search for enlightenment. He de-mythologized the material by creating a frenzied, immersive atmosphere, complete with extended projections and film clips. Religious allusions alternated with references to Schlingensiefel's own artistic cosmos, which included Matthew Barney, Stan Brakhage and Joseph Beuys. At one point, Schlingensiefel replaced Wagner's famed dove with footage of a slowly decaying rabbit, which he claimed symbolized the great life-death cycle of all creation. The time-lapse film of the rabbit became the most discussed motif of the production.

Schlingensiefel's *Parsifal* dislocated art, religion, and life itself. As one character named Gurnemanz exclaimed, "Here time becomes space." Until *Parsifal* was dropped from the Bayreuth program in 2007, Schlingensiefel continued to work meticulously on his world of illusions. Although the basic concept held firm over four seasons, the plethora of film clips and image projections was steadily reduced. Schlingensiefel continued to draw upon *Parsifal* and Wagner throughout the remainder of his career.

The exhibition features various material from Bayreuth, a postcard from Bayreuth, a 30 second film by Christoph Schlingensiefel and a 19 minute film featuring footage from the Bayreuth rehearsals; courtesy Aino Laberenz/Estate of Christoph Schlingensiefel, Berlin, and Matthias Lippert

## **The Flying Dutchman**

(Teatro Amazonas, Manaus, Brazil, 2007)

Following his production of Wagner's *Parsifal* in Bayreuth, Germany, Schlingensief produced *The Flying Dutchman* (2007) at the Teatro Amazonas in Manaus, Brazil as part of the eleventh Festival Amazonas de Opera. The performance did not begin with act one, but with the final duet from act three. Additionally, the performance began not on the stage but as part of the opening of the festival two days before the actual premier. Following the opening ceremony, Schlingensief initiated a carnivalesque street parade through the streets of Manaus; in addition to the singers and musicians, the audience, bystanders and local Samba schools all participated.

"The parade and the *Dutchman* cannot be regarded separately," Schlingensief later explained. "The transition was fluid. On the one hand the opera, which finally broke out of its encrusted structures, and on the other hand the citizens of Manaus, who were to be washed into the opera house along with the *Dutchman*. The score deals with immortality, a muggy, sticky life, and the entry of the mortals into the stuffy opera house."

During the actual premiere on the opera stage, Schlingensief superimposed material from the opera with references to Brazilian culture and the history of Manaus, a former capitol of the rubber industry. Using material he shot in the rainforest and on a river boat, he projected film sequences throughout the theater. He then layered material derived from films by his cinematic role models: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salo or the 120 Days of Sodom* and Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*, which was also produced at the Teatro Amazonas.

Schlingensief's *The Flying Dutchman* was, in many ways, his first successful "expanded concept of opera."

The exhibition presents documentation of *The Flying Dutchman*, courtesy Aino Laberenz / Estate Christoph Schlingensief and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin

## **Opera Village Africa**

(Burkina Faso, founded 2010)

Schlingensief began work on the Opera Village Africa starting in 2008. He sought to develop an "artistic reservoir for the future" in which concepts of culture and art would be renegotiated. On February 8, 2010, in the presence of over six hundred Burkinans and guests, among who were Schlingensief and his wife Aino Laberenz, the foundation stone was laid for the Opera Village. Francis Kéré, a Burkinan architect, worked with Schlingensief to develop sixteen residential and work buildings, a sports facility and cultivatable farmland.

"What happens in the Opera Village is much more beautiful to watch than this stuff in the art scene which is totally out of touch with reality. And what kind of art is it that no longer has any access, no longer lets anyone in, and also doesn't step out of itself? Here the idea is to finance an art platform which is to serve as a basis for children and teenagers. So we can learn again how creativity comes about and develops. That's the idea of the Opera Village."

To date, the Opera Village has built a hospital, a birthing clinic and a primary school. The school, which was established in 2011, pursues artistic aims: in addition to the obligatory subjects, the curriculum includes special classes in which the children's creativity in the areas of film, music and performance is fostered. There is a theater group which regularly offers creative workshops. A monthly culture program, which encompasses concerts, film and theater programming as well as a series of events, informs employees, village residents and Burkinans from beyond the village borders about the progress of the projects.

Considered "one of the currently most interesting culture projects" (Chris Dercon, director of the Tate Modern London), the Opera Village Africa has been directed by Aino Laberenz since Schlingensief's death in August 2010. Her work is supported by two honorary bodies, a German and a Burkinan advisory council. Among the members of the German advisory council are Antje Vollmer, Matthias Lilienthal and Peter Raue. The members of the Burkinan advisory board include Irène Tassembédo, Gaston Kaboré and Smockey Bambara. The honorary patron of the Afrika GmbH Festival Hall is former Federal President of Germany Horst Köhler. Fundraising campaigns for the project are supported by Patti Smith, Henning Mankell, Herbert Grönemeyer, and others.

Klaus Biesenbach, speaking about the Opera Village, stated, "Opera as synesthesia, as a synthesis of the moving images of film, stage performance, and art, is possibly the art form that best unites the 'gesamtkunstwerk Schlingensief.' In this sense, the opera project in Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries in the world, is a quite specific intensification of his oeuvre. It lays the foundation for a future, a place where all the facets of his art praxis can be taught and exercised—artistic training in the form of a sort of extended concept of opera."

For more information, go to [www.operndorf-afrika.de](http://www.operndorf-afrika.de) and [betterplace.org](http://betterplace.org).

*Model of the Opera House in the Opera Village Africa* (2008), various media, courtesy Hauser & Wirth, Zurich.

*A Bird's Eye View of the Opera Village* (October 2013), courtesy Francis Kéré.

*Enroute to the Opera Village* (2013), courtesy Aino Laberenz

Excerpts from *Crackle of Time – Christoph Schlingensief and His Opera Village in Burkina Faso* (Germany 2012, 10 minutes, originally 106 minutes), Director: Sibylle Dahrendorf, Camera: Philipp Tornau, Ingo Brunner, Christoph Krauss a.o., Sound: Bianka Schulze, Ulla Kösterke, Production: Michael Bogár, Perfect Shot Films; scenes collected and selected by Alex Jovanovic and Frieder Schlaich; distribution: Filmgalerie 451, Berlin, © Perfect Shot Films

## **The Animatograph**

(Iceland/Germany/Namibia/Austria, 2005/2006)

For Schlingensiefel, the *Animatograph* was the summation of an objective he formulated during his time as an assistant to the experimental filmmaker Werner Nekes: to combine different mediums and art genres into an organism, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in order to break the separation between art and the viewer. Earlier works such as *Parsifal* (Bayreuth Festival, 2004) or *Art and Vegetables, A. Hipler* (Volksbühne, 2005) directly influenced the *Animatograph* series. The *Animatograph*, itself, is comprised of a revolving stage, building materials, wooden walls and screens, film and theater props, and a series of projections. Rather than limit visitors to merely a frontal view, they are invited to enter into and explore the installation.

The series is comprised of four editions: the Iceland edition, *House of Obsession* (Reykjavik, 2005); the German edition, *Odin's Parsipark*, built on the grounds of a former German Democratic Republic People's Army facility (Neuhardenberg, 2005); the Africa edition *The African Twintowers*, built in the Namibian Township Area 7 (2006); and the *Animatograph*, installed at the Viennese Burgtheater, (2006). Each edition incorporated themes and geographically-specific elements from the previous installations. Whereas in Iceland the concern was with Nordic deities, in Germany, Germanic myths and Wagnerian motifs were added. In Namibia, Schlingensiefel expanded the spectrum of the German edition to encompass subjects such as colonialism and terrorism.

While introducing *Odin's Parsipark* in Neuhardenberg, Schlingensiefel stated, "The *Animatograph* is not an artificial eye, not a camera, but a human visual organ. It is the viewer as he sees himself, leaving traces behind in the process, just as images leave traces behind on our retina." The *Animatograph* would prove to be an incisive point of departure for his subsequent works.

*Animatograph Edition Parsipark (Ragnarok)*, (2005), mixed media installation, courtesy Deichtorhallen Hamburg / Falckenberg Collection

The exhibition features an excerpt from the film *Odins Parsipark: Schlingensiefel's Animatograph in Neuhardenberg* (2013, originally 21 minutes), filmed by Kathrin Krottenthaler, courtesy Aino Laberenz /Estate Christoph Schlingensiefel and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin

## **Cross Mutilation**

(Migros Museum for Contemporary Art, Zürich, 2008)

First installed in the Zürcher Migros Museum for Contemporary Art in Zurich, Schlingensief's *Cross Mutilation (Querverstümmelung)* presents a sketch of Schlingensief's "theater of the future." Through a series of projections, Schlingensief creates an immersive installation that repurposes and overwrites his own material. At the center of *Cross Mutilation* is his short film *External Mutilation* (2007), which calls to mind the work of Austrian avant-garde filmmaker Kurt Kren. Inspired by Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932), the film documents an unrealized opera work by Schlingensief.

*Drosophila Melanogaster* and *Holländer 2C – Expanding Dark Phase* (both 2007) were created using footage of Schlingensief's *The Flying Dutchman* at the legendary Teatro Amazonas in Manaus, Brazil in 2007. *Hare Decay* (2007) features footage from Schlingensief's controversial production of *Parsifal* at the Bayreuth Festival in 2004 in which Wagner's dove was replaced with high-speed shots of a rapidly rotting rabbit corpse.

*Cross Mutilation* highlights Schlingensief's belief that one's own work must remain fluid, must draw upon itself and must be self-degenerating. As he states, "Nothing is certain because I show it. Everything describes itself, overwrites and dissolves. This is not fatalism; this is my principle of pleasure." This exhibition has been adapted from an installation by Christoph Schlingensief.

*Hare Decay* (2007), 6 minutes 37 seconds, courtesy Alexander Kluge/dctp, Düsseldorf

*Drosophila Melanogaster* (2007), 5 minutes 21 seconds, courtesy Aino Laberenz /Estate Christoph Schlingensief and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin

*Holländer 2C – Expanding Dark Phase* (2007), 9 minutes and 21 seconds, courtesy Aino Laberenz /Estate Christoph Schlingensief and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin

*External Mutilation* (2007), 30 minutes 1 second, courtesy Aino Laberenz /Estate of Christoph Schlingensief and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin

## Club 69

After receiving his high school diploma, Schlingensiefel applied to the influential University of Television and Film Munich (HFF) twice without success. Subsequently, he attended the University of Munich where, for five semesters, he studied philosophy, art history and German studies. In 1982, he moved to Mülheim, a city near to his hometown of Oberhausen. In his small one-bedroom apartment he started his own production company, DEM Film. Through DEM, he produced his first feature-length films, including *Tunguska – the boxes are here* (1984) and *Menu Total* (1985), both on view here as part of the cinema program.

During the mid-1990s, Schlingensiefel opened *Club 69*, a temporary theater in his apartment where he screened his own films and those of Jacques Tati, Herschell Gordon Lewis, Russ Meyer, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Luis Buñuel, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Douglas Sirk, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. The club also served as a place for discussion. *Club 69* remained a secret hotspot for people interested in film and filmmakers alike until 1993 when Schlingensiefel moved to Berlin. There, he established a second "Kino 69" at KW Institute for Contemporary Art where he was an artist in residence.



## **The Germany Trilogy and 120 Days of Battrop – The Last New German Film**

Shortly before his death in August 2010, Christoph Schlingensiefel stated, "Actually, I have been making movies throughout my life." While his last feature film was released nearly two decades ago, Schlingensiefel continued to view himself first and foremost as a filmmaker.

Schlingensiefel produced his first film at age 8 using his father's Normal 8 camera. His early films featured relatives and friends of his parents. Later, he filmed his classmates and friends. During his early teen years, he and several of his friends founded a film club, in which he created seven short films in Super-8 format. Between 1984 and 1987, Schlingensiefel filmed the first four of nine feature-length films including *Egomania – Island without Hope* (1986) starring a young Tilda Swinton and and famed German actor Udo Kier.

He first came to public attention with *The Germany Trilogy (Deutschlandtrilogie)*, three films dealing with turning points in 20th-century German history. All three films from *The Germany Trilogy* are presented here in conjunction with *Christoph Schlingensiefel*, which continues on the third floor. A fourth film, *120 Days of Bottrop – The Last New German Film* (1997) is also presented here.

*100 Years Adolf Hitler - The Last Hour in the Führerbunker* (1989) was the first of the trilogy. Starring Udo Kier, who had worked with Schlingensiefel on earlier projects, the film was shot over sixteen hours in a former World War II bunker. The film is a wild take on the demise of Hitler and his followers. It is a story of incest and intrigue, drugs, suicide, and blasphemy. Schlingensiefel's film reminds its audience that Hitler was merely a man whose possession of power caused him to mutate into a catastrophe for humanity.

*The German Chainsaw Massacre* (1990), the second part of the trilogy, is Schlingensiefel's best-known film. Loosely derived from Tobe Hooper's classical horror film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), Schlingensiefel's work explores sudden and unpredictable turns within history. The film addresses the first several hours after the reunification of Eastern and Western Germany in 1989. Within the first few hours, a butcher's family from the former Western Germany has killed a large number of euphoric DDR citizens in order to make sausages. Through rapid camera movements, blood and gore close-ups, and the roar of chainsaws, Schlingensiefel relates the political reunification to an annexation of one state by another.

*Terror 2000 – Terror Room Germany* (1992) represents the culmination of the trilogy. Drawing upon Alan Parker's *Mississippi Burning* (1988), Schlingensiefel sets *Terror 2000* within the fictional small town of Rassau in Eastern Germany. While Neo-Nazis chase down and harass newly arrived immigrants, local journalists and politicians take advantage of the extreme acts of violence and the loss of control within the town to assert their own agendas. *Terror 2000* addresses the escalation in xenophobic violence after the reunification of Eastern Germany and Western Germany.

*120 Days of Bottrop* is Schlingensiefel's last feature-length film. At first glance, the film appears to be a pandering homage to the work of director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, whom Schlingensiefel revered along with Douglas Sirk, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Luis Bunuel. The film, however, is more accurately a farewell to the New German Cinema, a movement that originated during the late 1960s and 1970s and which directly addressed German society and culture. Here, an untalented film director gathers the last survivors of Fassbinder's film crew to make the "last New German Film," in this case a remake of Pasolini's notorious *Salò or The 120 Days of Sodom* (1975). Schlingensiefel's absurd homage to and parody of New German Cinema is complete with appearances from figures from German film, TV, and theatre scenes.

*100 years Adolf Hitler - the last hour in the Führerbunker* (Germany, 1989), 55 minutes, Blu-ray

*The German Chainsaw Massacre* (Germany, 1990), 60 minutes, Blu-ray

*Terror 2000 – Terror Room Germany* (Germany, 1992), 79 minutes, Blu-ray

*120 Days of Bottrop – the Last New German Film* (Germany, 1996), 55 minutes, Blu-Ray

Each courtesy Aino Laberenz/Estate of Christoph Schlingensiefel and Filmgalerie 451, Berlin