

2024 (2023)

Director Stefan Hayn

Germany | 2025
64 min. | German with English subtitles

Screenplay Stefan Hayn. Cinematography Stefan Hayn. Editing Stefan Hayn. Sound Design Steffen Martin, Jochen Jezussek. Sound Stefan Hayn. Producer Stefan Hayn. Executive Producer Stefan Hayn. Production company Stefan Hayn Filme und Malerei (Berlin, Deutschland).

World sales Stefan Hayn Filme und Malerei

Synopsis

In **2024 (2023)**, Stefan Hayn unpeels layer by layer what he sees, where he is and what he does. He paints the city in which he lives, Berlin. He portrays his family. His daughters are used to it, they don't pose. It's a relationship-based interaction that is reflected in his painting and a struggle for the image. Wouldn't it be easier just to take a photo? Painting takes time and gives you time, it shows how differently we see things and how important it is to be within reach of what is being depicted. What shows through? Hayn also addresses and depicts this struggle for the visible – every day, for hours on end. He himself becomes a motif, as a street painter with a large canvas, in front of the Jewish Museum, the Haus der Deutschen Wirtschaft, the Amerika-Gedenk-Bibliothek. In **2024 (2023)**, his first film shot solely on a smartphone, the 'painting-on-film' director takes diary-like and very personal snippets of the two years that give the film its title. Without forcing a specific reading, he uses light, weather, turpentine, tired limbs and fleeting encounters to create an airy, sharp critique of the availability of images. A social medium. (Christiane Büchner, Barbara Wurm)

Stefan Hayn, was born in Rothenburg ob der Tauber in 1965. He works in Berlin as a painter and filmmaker (including in collaboration with Anja-Christin Remmert). He studied at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) and the Baden-Württemberg Film Academy, and is a fellow at the UdK's graduate school, the Künstler*innenhaus Büchsenhausen in Innsbruck, and Franklin Furnace in New York. He has released paintings, drawings, texts, and films since 1989. He has been invited internationally for fellowships and exhibitions, and to present his films in cinemas, on TV, and in festivals..

Films: 1992: Fontvella's Box (short film). 1994: What to Put on Top of Jack Smith's Memorial Christmas Tree? (short film). 1996: Am Israel Chai – Bericht von Dr. Ursula Bohn / Am Israel Chai – A Report by Dr. Ursula Bohn. 1997: Ein Film über den Arbeiter / A Film about the Worker (short film). 1998: Dreizehn Regeln oder Die Schwierigkeit sich auszudrücken / Thirteen Rules or The Difficulty of Sexpressing Oneself. 2002: Gespräche mit Schülern und Lehrern / Conversations with Pupils and Teachers (co-

directed with Anja-Christin Remmert). 2002: Schuldnerberichte / Debtor Reports (co-directed with Anja-Christin Remmert). 2005: Malerei Heute / Painting Now (co-directed with Anja-Christin Remmert). 2007: Als Landwirt / As a Farmer (co-directed with Anja-Christin Remmert). 2009: Weihnachten? Weihnachten! / Christmas? Christmas! (co-directed with Anja-Christin Remmert). 2014: S T R A U B (co-directed with Anja-Christin Remmert). 2015: Nie Wieder Klug / Never Ever Clever (short film). 2016: Dahlienfeuer / Dahlia Fire. 2019: Pain, Vengeance? / Bread, Revenge?. 2025: 2024 (2023).

Director's Statement

Why Paint?

I find it hard to write a director's statement for this film. My preferred two questions would be:

Why and how does one paint today?
How does one look at painting?

The statement is the film, and what every viewer personally experiences, sees and feels while watching it.

Stefan Hayn

Interview

Seeing Layers

Stefan Hayn talks to Christiane Büchner and Barbara Wurm about art theory, the specifics of shooting with a smart phone and dealing socio-politically with pictures today

Barbara Wurm: Stefan Hayn, we are really glad to welcome you to the Forum with your latest painting movie. Is it also your first film shot on a smart phone?

Stefan Hayn: I haven't had this kind of phone for so long. And yes, it was really the first time I used it this way. There were two painting movies, as I'm calling them, prior to this film. One is called MALEREI HEUTE (PAINTING NOW), which Anja-Christin Remmert and I shot together with Bernadette Paaßen and Klaus Barm in 2004. And then the film S T R A U B, which is related to the work of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub. Both of those films were shot on 35mm and the overtly painterly process took place prior to filming. Now, for the most part these are not alla prima pictures here, that is, pictures made in one go. Instead, I continue to paint the pictures on location. When I continue to paint, a portion of the previous session is always destroyed. When I got this phone in 2021, I actually only used it to capture certain states of the paintings. And since I find it rather hard to look at photographed paintings, at some point I started shooting short videos. More and more of them accumulated. Last summer, I watched the series of clips together for the first time and decided to edit them into a film.

Christiane Büchner: We see both water colours and oil paintings in the film. How did you decide on one or the other painting technique?

SH: Painting with oils is a complicated process. It's poisonous. The paint medium stinks. Outside, I always spread out a plastic sheet so I don't poison the ground. Water colour is a less complicated process.

CB: I noticed that you paint with water colours at home. Your daughters are familiar with the situation and aren't bothered in what they are doing when you do a water colour of them. But then there is the scene in which you do an oil painting of your mother on an outside terrace, and she basically becomes a kind of monument. Is there a link between the Jewish Museum or the bust of Karl Marx, which you paint in oil, and your mom?

SH: There are oil paintings of all of them, not only her. The picture you mean may have a monumental quality, because it is in portrait format. The others are in landscape format. In the film, she certainly has a role like in Cézanne's mid-19th century Le patron, who is seated in a chair reading a newspaper. That's her here. So if you mean it that way, it may have something of that. And then there are totally banal differences. I don't have to ask a house: 'How long will you remain seated and how much time will you give me?' There are very beautiful films, for instance those by Jake Auerbach, the son of Frank Auerbach, or the grandson of Alice Neel, which are about the question: What does it mean to be part of a family in which someone paints and you are asked, 'May I paint you?' How long do you play along? How often do you play along and why? There is also a film by Auerbach about Lucian Freud featuring Freud's daughters, who were painted a lot – that is something very special. And it is of course very different than going out and painting a landscape or cityscape. But in both cases it is a matter of seeing and the fleetingness of what I see, how a new layer is always being added and something is also destroyed and, finally, something results from it which contains these different layers. The film shows these different states. What really amazed me about the smart phone footage was how precisely it reproduces the different season-specific moods of the light.

BW: The film has many doublings. The confrontation between private and public, Berlin and Franken. There is the doubling of the smart phone photo or movie shot and, usually in it, your painting. City views, family views. Was this your original conceptual idea or did it develop over time?

SH: I didn't think of it that way and the term doubling may not be quite accurate. In these confrontations, the question is one which is very virulent today: Where is the deviation and where is the connection? Maybe it is even more about that than something conceptual. I would also claim that the film or the visual work in which I enclose the painting partly attempts to go against something that is very cunningly conceptual. The film attempts to bring some air back into the concept, into this conceptualism. We have returned – and Pierre Bourdieu says so in his lectures on Manet – to a neo-academicism in the visual world, that is, a form of academicism that comes along as an avant-garde academicism and in this way often recalls 19th century Salon painting. With its special collision of painting processes and the pictures this smart device delivers, the film attempts something different.

CB: I had the impression that it is always about being in exchange and the time you put into it. Can you talk a little about the paths you went down?

SH: I'll describe it in comparison to my experiences between 1998 and 2004, which are portrayed in the film MALEREI HEUTE, where I painted water colours outdoors of election and advertising posters. This earlier film recounts encounters that were partly friendly, but sometimes also very aggressive, including to the point where the police were called. The big difference with my experiences this time is that smart phones still did not exist in this form, whereas now this device is pulled out to film or photographs very often and in most cases immediately without any questions. And that makes a difference. Each time, it disturbs an enormously focused situation: Working outside on that kind of oil painting for three hours, holding it against the wind, and also wanting to make progress visually with

what you see there. At the same time, I was also looking for this friction with the situation outside. In the Straub-Huillet film, I painted from memory in the studio, where you aren't disturbed. That is a completely different situation.

BW: How did you choose the locations, streets, and buildings, and based on what principle?

SH: They are on the one hand private spaces in Franken and Berlin and on the other hand specific locations in the city. They are locations that simply have something to do with now. I also painted public buildings on which certain flags are flown. And I was attracted to these locations because I had certain questions and because it is different when you are on location and not just reading about it in the newspaper, but rather participating and experiencing something there.

BW: And did you also experience something new or different there? Did things become less theoretical? How is the film related to your political stance? Is your medium or mediums exactly the right form of expression for that which you embody as a political stance too?

SH: Yes, I've already had experiences on location which are in the paintings or the film. Two weeks ago, I heard a lecture by Till Gathmann, "Zur Bildkrise des 7. Oktobers" (On the Visual Crisis of October 7th). He investigated antisemitic pictures and caricatures from the 1930s and says that these antisemitic caricatures always contain the transgression to the deed. In his analysis of antisemitic pictures, he also comes to the video that immediately went viral, as they say, on October 7, in which armed men in the cargo area of a car driving away stand over the body of a murdered woman upon whom other men spit, and says: "The antisemitic picture became documentary." This means it is no longer only that the picture is a call to action, but that the deed has occurred and the picture shows this to people: here, look here, it happened, and we are proud of it. And that is really the point that needs to be considered in the questions: In an emancipatory sense, what is a political picture or political film today? How do we think about the connection between making pictures and politics? And in my opinion, the psychoanalytic aspect should not be forgotten, that is, the gaze on the deeper moves* in making and publishing pictures, including ones that are intended as emancipatory. I'll quote Jean-Marie Straub again, who said that as the one who makes pictures, he stands there empty-handed. And he isn't talking about getting paid, but about the concept of art and the concept of politics. And in my opinion a lot of simplifications and confusions have occurred here in the past few years. Which speaker position is the right one? What does it imply? At the moment, this is, and justly so, a big discussion. And to come back to the film now – right at the start of the film a Christmas tree is visible, that is, in a simple manner, the occidental Christian tradition in the living room. And I think that is very important in relation to the speaker position, how the film unfolds and in which direction it moves. I think the film attempts to build a space in which certain things become tangible without explicitly being named or conceptually specified. A space in which people can watch something and can think about it and have sensations. My aim is not that people watch something that then drives them to action. It is highly dangerous to think pictures are better when they bring viewers to act. The point is to produce as precisely as possible a visual/acoustic space that gives many different people room to relate their personal experiences and feelings to what they perceive in the pictures or that the pictures trigger.

CB: I think this is exactly why we liked the film so much. I wanted to ask you about the painter Auerbach, whose name appears at the end.

SH: The year I made the film, a few people died with whom I'd personally shared a portion of my life. Not with Auerbach. But I also discovered his painting more closely through the films his son made. Auerbach is a very strong painter who is not so present here, like many painters from the Anglo-American sphere, and for whom

seeing is very important. For many years, I've been interested in Fairfield Porter, who only a few people here know, and with Jane Freilicher. With the cityscapes of Konrad Knebel too, to whom Knut Elstermann dedicated a very beautiful book. Writing about art history is often limiting. As a child, Auerbach was saved by his parents and sent to London, they themselves were deported from Berlin. And that is in his painting. He died last year and he painted many, many great pictures which are not shown much here.

BW: Back to the choice of the locations. There is not only the Jewish Museum and the Holocaust Memorial. There is also the Haus der deutschen Wirtschaft with the diversity banner, the Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek. Did you think in categories which together make up your picture of Berlin, or were there other reasons for choosing the locations?

SH: It isn't representative. Like everything in the film, it is very personal and, as Vlado Kristl said, 'Painting must be socially and personally unrepresentative. Unauthorised. Unexplainable. It must not submit to abstractions whose horizon is dark.' The film is highly personal and not representative. A lot is needed, a working routine is needed. You notice this in the film too. And it is difficult to set off again and again and do this in the morning with all the material and equipment. But that is part of it, so that a picture has the right weight or force.

BW: When you say 'right', what does it actually mean for you when it is right?

SH: I leave that up to the viewers who can really observe everything and maybe sometimes think: 'Oh, now he did more here when he should have left it alone.' Maybe it was more right before. This is very easy in this film, you can understand the process from time to time. I don't want to define what is right, instead I want people to be able to understand the tight-rope act: To go back and make a few more brushstrokes, like with the picture of the Jewish Museum, where the lawn is suddenly totally yellow.

CB: How did the film find its form in the editing?

SH: In comparison to other films that I or we made, this film was edited very quickly, in a few weeks. And I spent a long time trying to tell as little as possible and only to look at what the painting itself tells. In MALEREI HEUTE, we worked on the text for a long time beforehand and rehearsed the speaking for a long time: Who says what and how? While editing this one, I tried to say something short and concise when necessary and simply spoke into the phone microphone. That was a very different flow than developing a script beforehand, precisely planning the text, placing it, and then putting everything together in the complicated 35mm process. It's pretty special when you have a phone like this in your trouser pocket. I was so focused in this painterly way of seeing. Also when you look at painting and are really focused and then go into the street, it is as if you suddenly see better, certain things become sharper. It was astounding to see how this is all contained in the footage. I didn't even need to produce the space in the editing, but the smart phone footage seemed to leave space for the viewers, through its rhythm too, maybe to be able to remember their own experiences with family or in certain situations throughout this whole past year.

BW: The film also shows that the equipment is not the issue, but instead how it is used. Namely, that the pictures are only there to be evaluated. And not only as that which they are, that is, as expressions, but instead that as beholders of these pictures we are only there to be evaluated. It is a kind of radical de-subjectifying. And that in your work, each picture goes against this trend so completely, displaying the social possibility of the medium. In this way, your film exudes a central political stance for me.

SH: Thank you very much. I was delighted by your use of the term "social medium" in your short synopsis of the film. Because it doesn't go in the direction of cultural pessimism, but rather something

subversive emerges if you mention the possibility of another way of reading this loaded term.

*In English in the original. – Trans.