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## Cinema: A Public Affair

### Tatiana Brandrup

**Producer** Katrin Springer, Tatiana Brandrup **Production company** Filmkantine UG (Berlin, Germany). **Director** Tatiana Brandrup. **Screenplay** Tatiana Brandrup. **Director of photography** Martin Farkas, Tatiana Brandrup. **Sound** Tatiana Brandrup. **Music** Jonathan Bar Giora. **Sound design** Michal Gideon, Ariel Orshansky. **Editor** Tatiana Brandrup, Arsen Yagdjyan.

DCP, colour. 96 min. Russian, German.

**Premiere** 12 February 2015, Berlinale Forum

What are films and the cinema capable of accomplishing in the best case? Who can answer this complex question more beautifully and wisely than Naum Kleiman? The Russian film historian and curator of the legendary Eisenstein Archive was director of the Moscow Film Museum, which was closed in 2005. Since then the cinemathèque's films and collection have been in storage on the grounds of the Mosfilm Studios. The Moscow Film Museum – Kleiman and the Friends of the Museum – continued working in exile however, against all resistance. The film reconstructs the events leading up to the summer of 2014, when Kleiman was scandalously dismissed. "Cinema has the ability to turn people into citizens." Only a few film excerpts are needed to grasp why Kleiman is such an admired film advocate and enthusiast: like his allies Erika and Ulrich Gregor of Berlin's Arsenal cinema, Kleiman knows how to use film as a weapon in the fight for better, more open societies. It's thus fitting that while this film looks back on an impressive, courageous life, it first and foremost documents why Naum Kleiman's understanding of cinema in today's Russia can hardly be surpassed in terms of force and topicality.

*Dorothee Wenner*

## A site of freedom

"A film begins when it's over. It begins in conversations and the exchange of opinions. That's where the dream we have just seen crystallises. In this mental work, you become a bit better, freer, and more open."

Naum Kleiman

Moscow's film museum, the Musei Kino, was founded in 1989 by the world-famous film historian Naum Kleiman. It had enormous significance for Moscow in the years of change and for a whole generation of young Russian film directors. In 2005, a real estate scandal made the Musei Kino homeless; since then it has been only an archive. From 2005 to 2014, its Director Naum Kleiman and his associates struggled to get a new building. Their tireless commitment kept the 'Film Museum in Exile' alive by organising screenings almost daily in cinemas and museums all over Moscow. In October 2014, the Russian Culture Minister replaced Naum Kleiman with a director loyal to the current government. This spelled the end of the Musei Kino as a forum for film and the free exchange of ideas. I lived in Moscow from 2009 until 2014. I'm half Russian, half German. As a filmmaker, I'm surrounded by friends and colleagues who are constantly grappling with film. But I have never met people to whom film meant so much as the Muscovites who are struggling for the survival of this film library. For Naum Kleiman and his companions, film is a path to personal growth and democracy. Their commitment has moved me again and again over the years.

The mood among my Russian acquaintances is increasingly one of fear. Statements against the government can cost you your job. Many people want to leave the country.

My Russian family's experience has shown me what it means to live under a totalitarian system and how fear can mould daily life and become a reason to emigrate.

Naum Kleiman has spent his whole life under repressive regimes. Although he had the opportunity to emigrate, he never considered leaving the country. Fear is not an option for him. He responds to the current political situation with courage and imperturbability. The people who support him belong to the widest possible range of age and professional groups. Some of them have become internationally award-winning directors who regard the Musei Kino as their most important training ground. Others have no professional connection to film. But one thing unites them all: film's existential significance for them.

Around the globe, the digital revolution has changed filmmaking as well as how we see films. Anyone can shoot a film with their smartphone, and everyone can watch films alone at home. Although there are still film libraries in the West where movies can be watched in company, this option is valued less and less.

My film tells a story about people who no longer have a forum for the films that are important to them, even though they live in a country with one of the world's most significant and oldest film traditions. They no longer have any opportunity to discover and discuss 'their' and foreign films together. This absence suddenly makes palpable what such a place can mean. The Musei Kino was a site of freedom.

For Naum Kleiman, the right to freedom is a central theme. He experienced discrimination and deportation first-hand. Cinema plays a decisive role for him in the struggle against fear.

Listening to Naum Kleiman gives one courage.

Tatiana Brandrup

## Moscow on foot

Research for the film began in 2009. The project received a development grant. We tried everything to get production funding, but received only rejections. I have the impression that television stations have less and less scope for culturally demanding films. There were some enthusiastic commissioning editors who wanted to carry out the project, but it floundered because it was not considered a good ratings prospect. It was impossible to find funds to make *Cinema: A Public Affair*. At the same time, the political situation in Russia was growing tenser. The threat to Naum Kleiman's work and the Musei Kino was increasing. So we decided to make the film independently, with a minimal budget. From 2011 to 2014, I shot alone, with the support of the cameraman Martin Farkas, who came to Moscow several times. When I recall shooting the film, the key term that occurs to me is 'on foot'. Moscow is always in a traffic jam; you can hardly move with a car, so you use the Metro instead. That's why I often went on foot, with the camera in tow. That opened up a lot of perspectives for me that I might not have found otherwise. Shooting over such a long period without financial means entails many limitations. But the advantage was that I was able to really get to know the people who appear in the film. That was important for the interviews. I got to meet a great many unusual, wonderful people during that time.

Tatiana Brandrup



Tatiana Brandrup was born in North Carolina, United States, in 1965. She studied Visual Anthropology with Jean Rouch and others in Paris, then Feature Film Directing at New York University and at the University of Television and Film Munich. She has worked since 1990 as a director and screenwriter of feature films and television series and as a documentary film director for television and Internet formats. In 2004, she directed her feature film debut, *Georgisches Liebeslied/Georgian Lovesong*. She also works as a lecturer. Tatiana Brandrup lives in Tel Aviv.

## Films

1991: *Das Haus mit dem Bananenbaum/The House With the Banana Tree* (60 min.). 1995: *Neuschwanstein sehen und sterben/To Live and See Neuschwanstein* (15 min.). 2004: *Georgisches Liebeslied/Georgian Lovesong* (90 min.). 2015: *Cinema: A Public Affair*.