



## **Celebrating 50 years of film archiving: *Edition Lamprecht* and *Fünfzig Jahre Österreichisches Filmmuseum***

Rolf Aurich, Wolfgang Jacobsen, and Eva Orbanz, eds. *Edition Lamprecht*. Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2013. 568 Pages.

Alexander Horwath, ed. *Fünfzig Jahre Österreichisches Filmmuseum 1964-2014*. Vienna: FilmmuseumSynemaPublikationen, 2014. 768 Pages.

### **Book review by Philipp Dominik Keidl**

Since the 1990s, the study of film archives and their policies and practices of preservation has become a notable subfield within the discipline of film and moving image studies. Scholars and archivists have researched and discussed the cultural, political, technological, aesthetic, and financial impact and implications of film archives and preservation on various platforms, ranging from specialized journals like *The Moving Image* to general conferences like the annual meeting of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. Yet, what has remained relatively understudied are the institutional histories of key film archives themselves, as well as the biographies of individuals working on a daily basis to guarantee and improve the safeguarding of moving image heritage for the future. Studies by Penelope Houston (1994), Haidee Wasson (2005), and Paula Amad (2010), among others, have illustrated how the study of archival infrastructures enlighten the development of film culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while works by Richard Roud on Henri Langlois (1983) and Robert Sitton on Iris Barry (2014) have brought us closer to the mindset of some of the archive movement's most recognized, glamorous, and fabled representatives. In light of the diverse archival landscape that has emerged since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, however, those examples represent the exception to the rule. Two German-language editions significantly contribute to filling this gap by covering the histories of two key institutions in Germany and Austria that have had a lasting impact on both germanophone and international film culture: the Deutsche Kinemathek–Museum für Film und Fernsehen in Berlin and the Österreichisches Filmmuseum in Vienna.

In 2013, the Deutsche Kinemathek–Museum für Film und Fernsehen celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, using the occasion to honor its founder Gerhard Lamprecht (1897–1974) with the three-volume *Edition Gerhard Lamprecht*. Lamprecht, who directed 70 films between 1918 and 1957,<sup>1</sup> was also a passionate film collector and historian whose personal collection laid the foundation for one of Germany’s most important film institutions. For three years after the initial establishment of the former Deutsche Kinemathek e.V. in 1963, Lamprecht served as the archive’s director. He continued his historiographical work after his retirement and completed a comprehensive reference book on German silent cinema. *Edition Gerhard Lamprecht* emphasizes these roles Lamprecht took on throughout his life by dedicating each of the three volumes to one of his distinct yet interconnecting roles as filmmaker, archivist, and historian. *Mosaikarbeit: Gerhard Lamprecht und die Welt der Filmarchive* by Rolf Aurich investigates Lamprecht’s activities as a collector, while *Zeit und Welt: Gerhard Lamprecht und seine Filme* by Wolfgang Jacobsen is dedicated to his filmic oeuvre. *Miteinander und Gegenüber: Gerhard Lamprecht und seine Zeitzeugengespräche*, edited by Eva Orbanz complements the edition with eight transcribed interviews Lamprecht conducted with contemporary filmmakers. This stimulating conceptual structure enables unique access to the cinematic thinking of Lamprecht in his different positions without ever compromising one role over the other.

However, Aurich’s *Mosaikarbeit* stands out with its diverse and meticulously researched primary archival sources, including Lamprecht’s daily planners that offer an intimate glimpse into the collector’s ambitions to establish purposeful collections of German film heritage. In 39 chapters, Aurich investigates Lamprecht’s focused collection of movies and film ephemera, tracing his passion for cinema from his childhood in Berlin to his efforts to bring his collection safely through the Second World War, and finally its institutionalization in the politically and culturally heated atmosphere of post-war Germany. Moving effortlessly between anecdotal descriptions of Lamprecht’s love for

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<sup>1</sup> *Buddenbrooks* (Germany 1923), *Die Verrufenen* (Germany 1925), *Menschen untereinander* (Germany 1926), *Der Alte Fritz* (1927/1928), *Emil und die Detektive* (1931), *Irgendwo in Berlin* (Germany/East 1946), among others. For a full filmography, see: [http://www.filmportal.de/person/gerhard-lamprecht\\_9ae397d8bde1412c93062002b529801d](http://www.filmportal.de/person/gerhard-lamprecht_9ae397d8bde1412c93062002b529801d).

cinema and rational analysis of the bureaucratic challenges inherent in establishing an archive for the depreciated medium of film, Aurich's lively account rigorously contextualizes Lamprecht's extraordinary accomplishments in national and international developments in the archive movement.

What falls short with this focus on Lamprecht, however, is a discussion of the activities of the Deutsche Kinemathek after Lamprecht's retirement. Despite some excursions into more recent developments of the Deutsche Kinemathek—its move to the Potsdamer Platz and the opening of a permanent museum exhibition on the history of film and television, for example—the volume falls short when it comes to the institution's history of the past thirty years. Nevertheless, *Edition Gerhard Lamprecht* is a rich and captivating account of Lamprecht's biography and his profound role in Germany's film history and historiography.

Avant-garde filmmaker Peter Kubelka and cinephile Peter Konlechner founded the Österreichisches Filmmuseum in Vienna, Austria in 1964. Known for its innovative programming and publications, today it is one of the most prestigious institutions of its kind. Edited by the museum's current director, Alexander Horwath, the three-volume collection *Fünfzig Jahre Österreichisches Filmmuseum 1964-2014* offers a more ample survey of its fifty-year-long history than is allowed for by *Edition Lamprecht's* focus on its founding father. *Aufbrechen: Die Gründung des Österreichischen Filmmuseums* by Eszter Kondor is a thoroughly researched history of the museum's first ten years and the cultural milieu that supported, challenged, and sometimes obstructed Kubelka and Konlechner's curatorial objectives. Their main goal was to offer an alternative cinematic culture to the mainstream Hollywood fare and trivial German-language productions that swept post-war Vienna. In nine chapters, Kondor positions the Österreichisches Filmmuseum in the socio-political and cultural struggles of the era, which included conflicting ideas of film as apolitical entertainment or as progressive art. Her careful study of primary sources covers the development of the museum, beginning with an overview of related clubs and institutions established in the 1950s and Kubelka and Konlechner's involvement in the Cinestudio and the Technical University of Vienna that

initiated the foundation of the museum, and ending with the museum's role as both forum for and target of the antiauthoritarian protest movements at the end of the 1960s. This remarkably rich history of 10 years reminds the reader that the museum emerged out of often-heated debates about national film culture and identity when Austria was still torn, traumatized and at times undiscerning in its repudiation of its role in Nazism. Framed by a preface and afterword by Horwath, the volume is enriched by plenty of visual materials, such as programs of the Cinestudio, images of screening locations, posters of films, exhibitions and retrospectives, and graphics developed in the long-standing collaboration with artist Gertie Fröhlich.

*Das sichtbare Kino - Fünfzig Jahre Filmmuseum: Texte, Bilder, Dokumente*, edited by Horwath, complements Kondor's study of the museum's first decade through an eclectic selection of 50 historic essays, newspaper articles, and personal correspondences, as well as 30 texts written on the occasion of the museum's birthday that form an intimate insights into the patron's relationship to the museum. Although presented in chronological order, the volume does not aim to represent a complete survey of the past 50 years. Rather, it offers poignant and often very personal access to the museum's function as a cultural platform through the eyes of filmmakers, curators, visitors, and politicians. The wide range of authors represented in the volume offer equally diverse approaches to the task of describing their relationship to the museum, to Kubelka and Konlechner, to the medium of film, and to the institution of cinema in general. Short essays, letters, and notes written or reproduced by Groucho Marx, Don Siegel, Michael Snow, Enno Patalas, Eric Rohmer, Ulrich Seidl, Peter Tscherkassky, Chuck Jones, Eileen Bowser, Serge Daney, Ken Jacobs, Harun Farocki, and Paolo Cherchi Usai, among others, form a dynamic, poetic, and often humorous mosaic of the museum's history that has been enduringly shaped by its guests as much as by its personnel. The texts are accompanied by an energetic selection of visual materials and a complete list of the thematic programs of the museums since its foundation.

Finally, *Kollektion - Fünfzig Objekte: Filmgeschichten aus der Sammlung des Österreichischen Filmmuseums*, edited by Paolo Caneppele and Horwath, offers rare

insights into those collections of the film museum that remain stored away in archives. Besides its vast moving image collection, the Österreichisches Filmmuseum's archives also hold an enormous collection of film-related materials that are as necessary for a comprehensive historiography of cinema as moving images themselves. 50 selected objects from the museum's different collections—each introduced and described by an employee of the museum—are represented in the edition's third volume with one or more images. This concise selection includes Edison Company's *Unfinished Letter* (1911/1913), a Zsigmond film camera (1920), images for a magic lantern (1860-1880), concept art by Chuck Jones (1983), Amos Vogel's diaries, photos from Josef von Sternberg's *The Case of Lena Smith* (1929), Michael Haneke's director's script for *Amour* (2012), Dziga Vertov's storyboard and notes for *Človek s kinoapparatom* (1929), as well as lobby cards, press clippings, film journals and fan drawings from the silent era, among others. Each text introduces the objects, but also contextualizes them in a wider net of cinema's material culture that often remains locked away in museum vaults. This brief but entertaining glimpse into the museum's different collections forms a valuable conclusion to this exemplarily edition, which has the potential to serve as the model for similar endeavors for other archives and museums in the future.

*Edition Lamprecht and Fünfzig Jahre Österreichisches Filmmuseum* contribute significantly to a better understanding of the emerging archival landscape in post-war Germany and Austria, as well as the expanding international film archive movement. The scope of sources, contemporary witnesses, text genres and visual materials offer a vivid variety of perspectives on the hurdles that visionary collectors and curators like Lamprecht, Kubelka, and Konlechner had to overcome to establish those institutional structures that are integral parts of film culture today. As such, they are also a reminder that the financial support of film archives is not a given, but that they remain sites where the past, present, and future of film and cinema history is shaped, renewed, and reinvented.

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