

SCHATTEN



FILMOGRAPHIC DATA

director: Hansjürgen Pohland, DE 1960 **screenplay:** Leon G. Friedrich

cinematographer: Friedhelm Heyde **editing:** Christa Pohland

music: Manfred Burzlaff Septet **produced by:** Pohland Film (West Berlin)

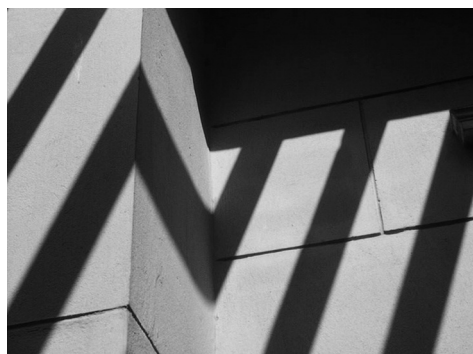
running time: 10 min **format:** 35mm **image/sound:** b/w, sound

OVERVIEW OF CONTENT & FILM AESTHETIC

The short film SCHATTEN („Shadows“) by Hansjürgen Pohland shows a metropolis, Berlin, with a focus on the shadows thrown by architecture, diverse objects and people on the walls of buildings and on pavements. In this way, a parallel world is conjured up on black and white film in which flat, black shadows on a grey background take the places of real people or objects. Composed exclusively of exterior shots filmed in public places, SCHATTEN shows the routine of daily life in a big city, as well the beginning of a new day. Berlin, however, reveals itself only indirectly as a location, as the backdrop for the shadow play comprises mundane architecture, such as residential buildings, streets, ruins or construction sites, rather

than sightseeing landmarks. The material of the city becomes a screen on which shadows are projected, accompanied by modern jazz music by the Manfred Burzlaff Septet.

The music locates the film in the 1960s. Burzlaff's musical interpretation of the film images nonetheless seems tailor-made, fitting the images in a suitably loose or tight fashion, as required. The musical progression helps in organising the progression of the images and structures the thematic stages of the film. At some points the music dynamises the images, which have been shot with a largely static camera, without, however, dictating their rhythm. By contrast with the film VIRTUOS VIRTUELL by Tho-



mas Stellmach and Maja Oschmann, in SCHATTEN the images were not matched to the music, rather, the music was written to the completed images. Pohland's film combines modern architecture, jazz and film to create a contemporary language of form and transmits some of the mood of anticipation of the 1960s West German young post-war generation.

The film's structural design

A clear structural design can be perceived in the film SCHATTEN. The shadow images are transformed into dramaturgy on the one hand by their thematic context, on the other by the different forms of moving and static shadows. Thus the film begins with geometric shapes and a graphic interplay of lines. These emanate from the architecture and relate to the constructed surroundings encountered (facades, fire-proof walls, wood panels etc.). Moving shadows follow the static ones, gradually becoming concentrated in small shadow plays involving people. The film moves from construction sites to playgrounds, to the motif of a couple of promenading lovers, until finally arriving at the theme of city traffic. At the film's closing credits, it returns to the static shadows of architecture on the walls of buildings with which it began. Each stage of the film is accompanied by different musical motifs, leading to musically differentiated moods for each; it blares to get going, drives forward or pulls the action back.

Static shadows

The film begins with static architectural shadows falling across Wilhelminian architecture. Accompanied by fast-paced, pulsing brass with percussion, old masonry, housing blocks, ruins, etc. are used as projection surfaces; post-war buildings eventually follow them. The interplay of lines also beco-

mes more graphic with the language of architectural shapes; how rich in shapes and patterns the city is and how little the images appear to be static when they are given a helping hand by the dynamic editing and the music!



Moving shadows and scenes of shadow-play

At a signal from the brass in the music, the film goes from static shadows to those that move. Along with the shadows of the S-Bahn trains, a driving brass solo and rhythmic percussion accompaniment, the film, too, begins to accelerate. The shadows of laundry flapping in the wind can be clearly made out, as can those of a conveyor belt for coal, an engine shaft, etc. Among these images are a gradually increasing number of little shadow plays involving people: a worker with a ladder; a painter at work – projected at enormous size on the wall of a house; tradesmen taking a break to drink beer. While previously one saw mainly vertical surfaces (e.g. the walls of houses), now the shadows are predominantly projected onto horizontal surfaces: on metal pipes lying on the ground, or stones, cemented ground or natural earth and sand, corrugated rooftops, streets, pavements, etc. Brass and percussion drive the scenes with men and machines at work dynamically forward. A percussion solo booms for the coal conveyor belt and other rotating machines.



With the appearance of children on the image surface, the music also changes its emphasis: a double bass and vibraphone acoustically delineate the play of the children's movement on the street and in the playground. The vibraphone accompaniment to a child swinging on a carousel has a dreamlike sound. As the children scale the heights of a climbing frame, the tones of the vibraphone also rise step by step; as they slide down, the notes tumble down. As the children's tug of war goes back and forth, so the tones jump back and forth on the scale.



Moving backgrounds

In the meantime it has become evening; the light is fainter, the shadows blacker. A new form of movement is introduced to the visual level; it is not only the shadows that can move, but also the objects on which they fall: a white umbrella turns like a carousel and the ornamental pattern of shadows from the fence behind it also turns. In front of it flaps a white sheet, turning static shadows into moving ones. Three-dimensional

objects as screens for the projection of shadows are always an alternative in the film to two-dimensional surfaces and endow the image with greater plasticity.

Interplay of moving and static shadows

It is evening – couples in love promenade through the streets. Static and moving shadows meet one another; over and beyond the shadows of fences rustling leaves



move, people scurry past. Framed by the shadow of a doorway, a couple kisses and the pair briefly melts into a single shadow. The music is relaxed, a guitar and snare brush provide soft sounds, till the image has become quite dark.

Filmically dynamised

With a rising trombone signal, a new day is announced. The dynamically edited chain of moving leaf and branch shadows is followed by static shots of ornamental fences, railings and street signs. The shadow of a bridge railing that fills a whole street is traversed in one movement of a now unchained camera. Swift cuts, tracking shots and a driving drum rhythm develop into a dynamic effect, even with static shadows. The last dramaturgical stage of the film, devoted to traffic, is introduced by visual motifs such as shadows of street signs. A traffic policeman swings his arms, upon which all vehicles appear as either moving

or static shadow projections on pavements, streets and the walls of buildings. Shortly before the end of the film, the driving brass and percussion music of the film's opening is heard once more.

Staged shadows

Films like SCHATTEN that are set in public places raise the question of whether they are documentary or staged. The architectural shadows at the beginning and end of the film, in particular, are examples of shadows found in everyday life shot in natural daylight. This endows them with a documentary quality. The material in which the city serves as the projection surface for the shadows also conforms to documentary language. The film's precise composition and the

shadow-play sequences with people are evidence that the film was staged. For example, the scene in which the couple kiss – clearly framed by the shadow of a window – shows how precisely the characters were positioned in the frame. Since almost all shots were filmed with a static camera, its point of view had to be determined first, after which the shadow actors, adults and children, could play their respective scenes – without entering the frame themselves.



HISTORICAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE FILM

Director Hansjürgen Pohland

The director of SCHATTEN is the Berlin film producer, director, screenwriter and cinematographer Hansjürgen Pohland (1934-2014). Although Pohland may be considered a central figure in the early period of the New German Cinema – he was one of the signatories of the „Oberhausen Manifesto“ and, as a producer, promoted the careers of many talents of the younger generation – his work never achieved the response that was his due.

His extensive cinematic oeuvre includes full-length feature films as well as many short films, produced between the late 1950s and early 1960s. These include

industrial and advertising films, many of which are today lost, conventional „culture films“, commissioned, for instance, by the Berlin Youth and Sports Senator, and several short films built around children.

SCHATTEN is today Pohland's best-known short film; it was awarded a „special merit“ designation and the Berlin „Young Generation“ art prize. The film was nonetheless seen in cinemas for only a short time, being considered „too avant-garde“. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Oberhausen Manifesto, SCHATTEN was one of 35 films restored and made available on DVD as part of the „Provocation of Reality“ project. Pohland's debut film, the experimental feature

TOBBY (FRG 1961), has a close connection to SCHATTEN. The film is also set in Berlin and has a jazz musician as its main character. As in SCHATTEN, Manfred Burzlaff is credited with the music and he is also one of the actors.

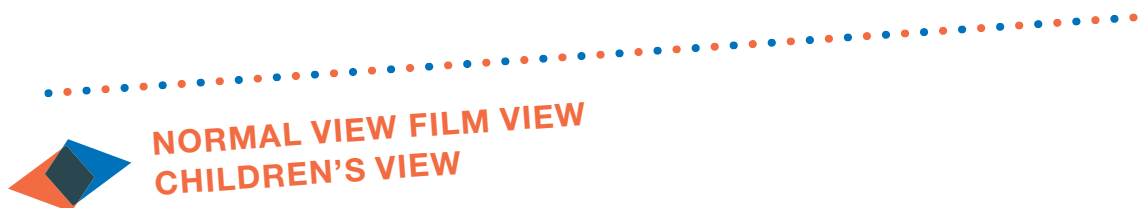
New departures: The Oberhausen Manifesto

Pohland's SCHATTEN conveys something of the mood of new departures of the young post-war generation in the German Federal Republic, by finding new emphases in a thematic, cinematic and musical sense. On the level of the visual thematics, the film has the Wilhelminian buildings and ruins of wartime followed by the modern city. As characters, only young people – tradesmen, young couples, children – make an appearance. The younger generation wants to set the tone for the culture of its time, not only in the cinema.

The same is also true of Manfred Burzlaff's jazz music; after the Second World War jazz was an important component of West German youth culture and provided a point of connection with the American role model. It was particularly in the American Zone of

Occupation that jazz was able to spread rapidly and for many it became the embodiment of a new attitude to life. Filmically, SCHATTEN connects to the newer movements in cinema of the time, via Pohland's camerawork in public spaces. The directors of Italian Neorealism of the 1940s and 50s and of the French Nouvelle Vague (New Wave) of the 1950s and 60s may have served as role models, having left the film studios to shoot feature films out on the streets of their cities.

Analogous to the „new waves“ of the cinema of the time, in Germany, too, there were conceptions of new beginnings for film. The historical culmination of this idea was the „Oberhausen Manifesto“: the manifesto, signed also by Hansjürgen Pohland, was read out on 28th February 1962 during the short film festival in Oberhausen and brings the „Oberhausener's“ spirit of new departures to a head: „We declare our demand to create the new German feature film... The old film is dead. We believe in the new.“ (<http://www.oberhausener-manifest.com/oberhausener-manifest/>).



NORMAL VIEW FILM VIEW CHILDREN'S VIEW

The film SCHATTEN engineers a shift in the spectator's normal manner of viewing: it is not things themselves that are seen, but their shadows. As the film critic Olaf Möller aptly put it, the film shows „life in reflections“. Only at one point in the film does a real person make a surprising appearance within the frame: as if by accident, the legs

of a man in the background of a shadow projection appear, seeming – by contrast to the projected shadow – short and small. Children are familiar with the phenomenon of shadows from earliest childhood. They recognise the shadow of a mobile hanging from the ceiling when less than a year old. In the course of their early childhood deve-

lopment, children discover, as they walk around, their own shadows, the shadows of other people and those of trees and other objects. In Pohland's film, a variety of very different shadows may be found: static and moving shadows, lines and patterns, sha-

dows of adults and children, workers and lovers, houses, users of the street. On occasion, the shadows may be seen as picture puzzles, challenging the watching children to guess who or what they are seeing.



HANDS-ON: SHADOW RESEARCHER GAMES WITH CHILDREN

After the first viewing of the film, a hands-on activity inspired by the film takes place. Using an experimental approach, the children step out of their roles as spectators, in order to put the film's artistic method to the test, before watching the film once more. With the background of the artistic experience they have just gained, the children will see the film with different eyes for the second time.

Looking for shadows

Impulses: Shadows, daily life, documentation, abstraction, patterns, shapes

Equipment: Digital cameras

In this unit the children become shadow researchers. Following the film, they investigate various spaces of their everyday environment for shadows. It is suggested that the same types of locations as those seen in the film are investigated, e.g. playgrounds, courtyards, streets, tram stops. In addition, one may also investigate typical locations of the children's daily lives: e.g. classrooms



and outdoor grounds of the kindergarten, the way home, etc.

In researching spaces, the children look at different kinds of shadows, e.g. shadows of people, objects, geometric patterns and shapes, broken shadows, etc. The children, equipped with a digital camera, photograph and document the shadows they have found themselves. The autonomous photography motivates them in their search for shadows and retains their concentration. The children's photos are printed out and looked at together.



Staging shadows

Impulses: Shadows, light, own body, daily life, defamiliarisation, abstraction, lines, shapes, staging

Equipment: strong pocket flashlights or portable floodlights, digital camera

In this unit the children no longer document found shadows, but consciously stage their own shadow pictures. In front of a white wall illuminated by a flashlight or portable floodlight, the children stage a shadow image. To do this they position either their

entire body as a shadow figure in front of the wall, or show only individual limbs or objects from their daily lives (e.g. keys, bottles, shoes...). They approach the wall singly, create a large shadow figure using several children and experiment with a cross between two shadows. In addition, the children may also experiment with the light sources (ray of light, pocket flashlight) and find out how changes to the light source affect the shadows. One child or educator photographs all shadows created for later perusal in the group.

ADVANCED ACTIVITIES:

Experiments with hand shadows

Impulses: Light, shadows, hands, defamiliarisation, staging

Equipment: digital camera, light source (if applicable)

With bright daylight outside or strong illumination in the room indoors, the children stage hand shadows in front of a white wall. Various shadow subjects are formed with their hands, such as bats, wolves, birds. By changing the distance of their hands from the wall, their hand shadows change in size. A child or an educator photographs the hand shadows for later perusal.

Shadow theatre with figures

Impulses: creative design, light, shadow figures, shadow theatre, staging

Equipment: Cardboard, white parchment, a piece of fabric as required, black construction paper, wooden rods, craft utensils, needle and thread as required, lamps, digital camera

The children make their own shadow theatre, by cutting a frame out of cardboard and



sticking translucent parchment to it. According to their choice they colour and decorate their home-made theatre and hang a cloth curtain – as one would a cinema screen. For their shadow theatre the children design and cut out shadow figures, as well as sets, of black construction paper. These can be moved mounted on wooden rods, without the children's hands being seen in the frame. For further flexibility, the figures may be equipped with movable joints, in the manner of Lotte Reiniger's silhouette figures, by piercing the joints with a needle and thread and knotting the thread at the joint. Held by a rod, the jointed limb may be moved. With a light source in the background, the children stage little shadow theatre scenes in the shadow theatre they have made themselves. A child or an educator photographs scenes from the shadow theatre.

FURTHER READING OR VIEWING:

Olaf Möller: *In allen Gassen, Straßen, Boulevards (In all the Alleys, Streets and Boulevards)* – Hansjürgen Pohland.

In: Ralph Eue, Lars Henrik Gass (eds.): *Provokation der Wirklichkeit. Das Oberhausener Manifest und die Folgen (Provocation of Reality. The Oberhausen Manifesto and its Aftermath)*. Edition Text + Kritik: München 2012.

DVD: *Die „Oberhausener“* (Edition Filmmuseum 69). http://www.edition-filmmuseum.com/product_info.php/info/p137_Die--Oberhausener-.html

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