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NEW DOCS

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# NEW DOCS AUTUMN 2023

Take a look at our  
new line-up!

# PERSIAN SILK – REDISCOVERING AN ANCIENT ART

Iran's silk-weaving tradition goes back 2500 years. For a long time, looking after the silkworms, spinning the delicate threads and weaving exquisitely colourful silk fabrics by hand provided people in rural areas with a secure livelihood and was central to Persian culture. In recent decades, over half of all forests have been destroyed and with them the habitat of innumerable silkworms. Today, almost only industrially produced fabrics from Asia are imported into Iran. An artist couple from Tehran has made it their mission to revitalise traditional Iranian silk weaving and save the Persian patterns from being lost and forgotten.

## **Human Interest**

**Film by** Niloufar Taghizadeh

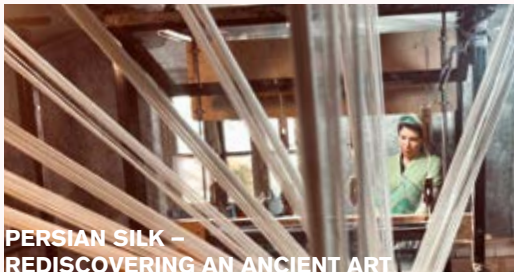
**Length** 45'

**Co-production** Windcatcher-Productions  
with ZDF/ARTE

**Original title** Seide aus Persien –  
Neuer Glanz für alte Kunst / Iran – L'art  
de tisser la soie

**Year** 2022

A journey through the history and art of silk production  
in Iran, from silkworm cocoon to finished woven fabric –  
a living testimony to Iran's cultural diversity.





# ARMING AGAINST PUTIN – NATO IN THE BALTIC SEA

Russia's war against Ukraine has sent shock waves throughout the Baltic. Finland has joined NATO and Sweden has applied for membership, which will make the Baltic Sea an "internal NATO lake". This does not fit in with Putin's imperial ambitions. Power games are constantly being played out in the Baltic Sea by Russian and Western military forces. Finland joined NATO in April 2023 and Turkey finally approved Sweden's bid for membership in July 2023. Estonia's government is urging haste: What other country is more familiar with the dangers that loom than the Estonians, who lived for so many decades under Soviet occupation? On "Navy Day" in 2022, Putin renewed Russia's claim to global maritime supremacy. Given the cost of its war on Ukraine, however, Russia's fleet-building programme seems unrealistic. But weakness makes a regime no less dangerous. Experts do not rule out the possibility that Russia will use nuclear weapons. Again, the Baltic region would be in the middle of such a scenario. In this documentary, high-ranking political and military figures and leading experts explain the political sensitivity of a sea we all thought we knew. It concludes by predicting which state between Kiel and St. Petersburg will retain supremacy. And what this will mean in terms of risks and opportunities.

**Current Affairs**  
**Film by** Knut Weinrich  
**Length** 52'  
**Co-production** Gebrüder Beetz Filmproduktion with ZDF/ARTE and SVT, with the support of Nordmedia  
**Original title** Aufrüsten gegen Putin – Die NATO in der Ostsee / Russie – Otan – Tensions en mer Baltique  
**Year** 2023

When Sweden joins NATO, the Baltic Sea will be almost entirely under the alliance's control. And once again, it will be the focus of geopolitical interests and the source of constant east-west tension.

ARMING AGAINST PUTIN –  
NATO IN THE BALTIC SEA

# EUROMAIDAN – DIARY OF A WAR FORETOLD

Euromaidan – Diary of a War Foretold examines the complexity of events that have unfolded in Ukraine since the Euromaidan protests in 2013/14. Ten years after the revolution that started in Kyiv, Russia invaded its neighbouring country. After years of fighting in eastern Ukraine, the entire country is now under attack. Was this development predictable? If it was – who could have stopped it? Together with Ukrainian documentary film-maker Alina Gorlova and international historians, intelligence experts and politicians, we analyse the history of the ongoing power struggle between Russia, the US and the EU for the first time, and we take a look at the direct impact this has had on Ukraine. Gorlova's outstanding film footage, some of which has never been released before, alternates between poetry and scenes of horror. It is a central element of the documentary and represents the voices of many young Ukrainians. The film decodes Ukraine's DNA, Putin's understanding of power, but also EU and US responses, by examining different perspectives, such as that of leading Eastern Europe experts, former members of the CIA and FSB, as well as contemporary witnesses who helped shape world politics and now analyse for us the complex geopolitical context. It is a story of wounded vanity, perceived isolation, but also of the civil strength of a nation that is still trying to find itself.

Examining the complexity of events in Ukraine since 2013, experts from all sides of the global political stage look at how the Maidan Square protests marked the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

**Feature Documentary / Current Affairs**

**Film by** Nadine Neumann,

Dietrich Duppel, Dana Wolfe

**Length** 90'/52'

**Co-production** Gebrüder Beetz

Filmproduktion with MDR/ARTE, with  
the support of Creative Europe MEDIA

**Original title** Euromaidan – Chronik  
eines angekündigten Krieges /

Ukraine – Chronique d'une guerre annoncée

**Year** 2023



EUROMAIDAN –  
DIARY OF A WAR FORETOLD



EUROPE'S UNIQUE  
WATER LANDSCAPES

## EUROPE'S UNIQUE WATER LANDSCAPES

Where the elements of water and earth meet, the forces of nature are unleashed in a dramatic way. Spectacular landscapes and extraordinary habitats are created for plants and wildlife. And the energies they release have a magnetic effect on man. Often, though, it's a case of love at second sight. As travel destinations, inland bodies of water have always been overshadowed by coastal shores. But this appears to be changing. The environmentally conscious and especially younger people are becoming increasingly interested in these intact landscapes in the heart of Europe. Once they have discovered the magic of these unspoilt regions, they soon want more. This series takes us to little-known areas of untouched natural beauty where water plays a central role: breathtaking canyons, lakes, rivers and landforms whose rich fauna and flora leave a lasting impression on us. Because of the biodiversity of these exceptional regions, some are already protected as national parks, UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites or biosphere reserves. The series introduces us to five especially stunning landscapes in Europe. Far from the usual tourist trails, we explore unique spots in Poland, Slovakia, Romania, France, Montenegro and Germany.

### **Series / Natures**

**Films by** Sibylle Smolka,  
Detlev Konnerth, Katja Runge

**Length** 5x45'

**Production** Telekult Film- und  
Medienproduktion for MDR/ARTE

**Original title** Wasserparadiese in Europa /  
Histoires d'eaux

### **Episodes**

The Tara River Canyon, The Tatra Mountain  
Lakes, The Spree Forest, The Dordogne,  
The Danube Delta

**Year** 2023

Breathtaking canyons, lakes and rivers: from the Tatra Mountains via the Dordogne to the Danube Delta, this series explores extraordinary, still unspoilt corners of Europe where water plays a central role.

# THE BEE DILEMMA – PROFIT OR SPECIES PROTECTION?

The use of pesticides and gradual disappearance of flower-filled meadows in rural regions have made Swiss cities important refuges for rare species of wild bees. But in recent years, beekeepers, too, have discovered the advantages of cities. Professional beekeeper Anna Hochreutener and her husband, for example, keep almost one hundred bee colonies in Zurich and successfully market their urban honey. Beekeeping has a positive reputation and is often believed to have a beneficial effect on biodiversity. According to one study, however, beekeeping in Swiss cities is booming so exponentially that honey bees are taking away food from rare wild bees – like the European dark bee, a wild subspecies of the honey bee. Conservationists are calling for the regulation of urban beekeeping. They see honey bees as agricultural animals that are bred for their yields and kept in beehive densities that are far too high. Breeding for yield has also made honey bees susceptible to disease and parasites. Beekeepers in Zurich who are campaigning for the preservation of the European dark bee believe the solution is near-natural beekeeping, which would allow native bees to return to the wild in Zurich's forests.

*A few years ago, everyone was talking about declining bee populations, but today beekeeping is booming. In Swiss cities, there are now too many farmed bees – a problem for biodiversity.*

**Science / Environment**

**Film by** Isabella Sedivy

**Length** 52'

**Production** Plan Biodivers for SRF

**Original title** Das Bienendilemma –  
Zwischen Profit und Artenschutz

**Year** 2023



THE BEE DILEMMA –  
PROFIT OR SPECIES PROTECTION?

# DRINKING WATER – ARE SOURCES DRYING UP?

Research teams around the world are trying to find ways to save drinking water. Their approaches are very different. The seabed off Malta, Europe's most arid country, contains groundwater from the last ice age. A team of researchers is using new methods to analyse the seabed. This technique could be used to help dry coastal regions elsewhere in the world face the challenges of the future. Research, however, is still in its infancy and tests are being conducted to find out whether the technique can actually be used in a sustainable way. Peru's desert capital of Lima is also located on the coast, but it relies on pre-Incan knowledge to secure water supplies. Early Andean cultures used their in-depth understanding of geology to turn mountain slopes into water reservoirs. In the Swiss Alps, glaciologists are getting to the bottom of the Aletsch glacier. Have we already lost Europe's freshwater reserves for good, or is there reason for hope? Peatlands, too, are important water reservoirs. In Germany, a daring helicopter manoeuvre over a renatured upland moor shows how far seawater is pushing further inland. Rising sea levels are threatening coastal aquifers globally.

## Science

**Film by** Hannes Schuler, Pia Schädel

**Length** 52' / 45'

**Production** IFAGE Filmproduktion for ZDF/ARTE

**Original title** Unser Trinkwasser –  
Versiegt die Quelle? / L'eau potable,  
danger à la source

**Year** 2021

Climate change has upset our water cycle and natural freshwater reservoirs are at risk of disappearing. Researchers around the world are trying to find ways to save drinking water. New technologies offer hope.



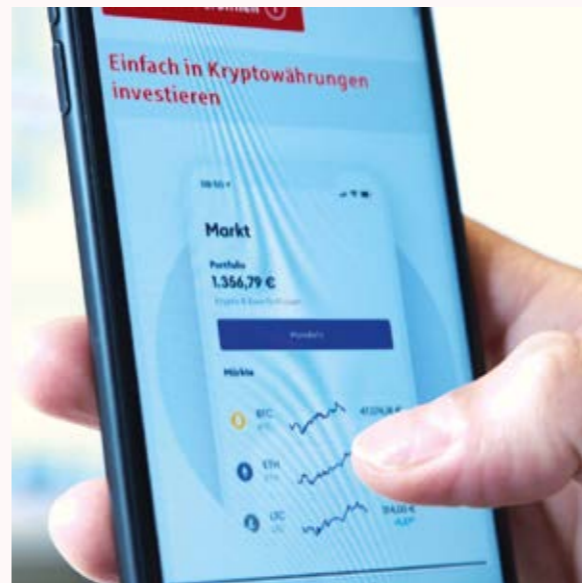
DRINKING WATER –  
ARE SOURCES DRYING UP?

# CRYPTOCURRENCIES – THE FUTURE OF MONEY?

Bitcoin has developed into a global digital currency that is challenging the existing financial system. The international popularity and rapid increase in the value of Bitcoin have encouraged many to join the sweepstakes. The president of El Salvador has even made crypto his country's official currency. Most governments, however, have adopted a strong stance against cryptocurrencies that are not regulated by states. The European Central Bank, for example, is predicting Bitcoin's imminent demise. At the same time, however, the ECB recognises the need for a digital currency in a global internet world. It is likely we will soon see the introduction of the digital euro, which can be used as a means of payment via a smartphone and works like a cryptocurrency. But how exactly does a cryptocurrency work? And what are its risks and benefits? This documentary shows how cryptocurrencies are currently causing a shift in the global financial architecture and introduces the profiteers and victims, and the supporters and critics of the new digital currencies.

Cryptocurrencies polarise – are they the future of money or a dangerous bubble? We explore the shifting global financial architecture. Who are the profiteers and victims, supporters and critics of digital currencies?

**Current Affairs**  
**Length** 52'  
**Film by** Tom Ockers, Ulrich Stein  
**Production** Vincent productions  
for ZDF/ARTE  
**Original title** Kryptowährungen –  
Wie gefährlich ist das neue Geld? /  
Cryptomonnaies – Quels sont les dangers  
du nouvel argent virtuel ?  
**Year** 2023



CRYPTOCURRENCIES –  
THE FUTURE OF MONEY?





## THE TREASURES OF THE PHARAOHS - EBERS PAPYRUS

The film tells of the discovery of the world's oldest medical manual. German Egyptologist Georg Ebers stumbled upon the 3,500-year-old document in Luxor in the late 19th century and took it back to Saxony with him in the most spectacular manner. The manual contains over 800 formulas, descriptions of diseases and educational texts that make it an invaluable find. For the first time ever, we learn how Egyptian healers viewed human life and health almost four thousand years ago. This unique collection of empirical findings, religious beliefs and magical formulas is recorded on a papyrus scroll almost twenty metres long. The film also highlights the outstanding historical significance of papyrus as a writing material. For thousands of years, papyrus was used to record the cultural developments in the country, documenting the changing relations between the Orient and Occident for posterity. The film also looks at the Western world's obsession with the Orient in the 19th century and the often illegal quest for ancient trophies in the land of the Pharaohs. Today, European and African experts are engaging in dialogue in an attempt to advance our knowledge of both papyrus and the development of the art of healing.

**History / Science**

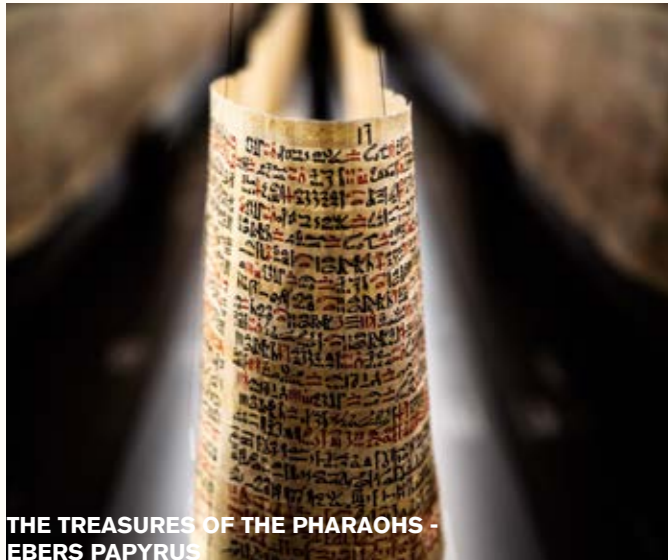
**Films by** Denis Kliewer, Ulli Wendelmann

**Length** 90' / 52'

**Co-production** Schulz & Wendelmann Film with MDR/ARTE and alpha

**Original title** Magie und Medizin – Die Geheimnisse des Papyrus Ebers / Les mystères d'un papyrus égyptien

**Year** 2023



The Ebers Papyrus, the world's oldest medical manual, takes us back to ancient Egypt and to the turbulent times in the late 19th century, when the Western world was obsessed with finding oriental treasures.

# KANT – THE EXPERIMENT OF FREEDOM

Immanuel Kant, born in Königsberg in 1724, was already one of the key Enlightenment thinkers during his lifetime and is still one of the most influential figures in Western philosophy today. Kant wanted to explain the world, but at the same time he was aware that he himself – like all human beings – only had a limited capacity for understanding. He never left his native Königsberg, learning all he knew about world affairs from the books he had sent over to him from England and France. And everything he knew about people was the result of the relentless observation of his environment and his own emotional life. He combined all this knowledge into a complex system of concepts, categories and matrices. The result is a moral philosophy whose universal validity he tested constantly. Marking three hundred years since his birth – in April 2024 – the film shows for the first time just how closely Kant was connected to his native town of Königsberg, which is taken back to the 18th century using sophisticated animation techniques. Many of the pressing questions that plagued people 300 years ago are posed anew in the film, in the face of the climate catastrophe and war in Europe.

Three hundred years after the birth of philosopher Immanuel Kant in April 2024, this documentary takes us back to 18th-century Königsberg.

**History / Philosophy**

**Film by** Wilfried Hauke

**Length** 52'

**Co-production** IDA Film & TV Produktion with ZDF/ARTE with the support of the Bundeskunsthalle

**Original title** Kant - Das Experiment der Freiheit

**IN PRODUCTION**

Delivery January 2024



KANT – THE EXPERIMENT OF FREEDOM



HANS HASS –  
PIONEER OF THE DEEP



## HANS HASS – PIONEER OF THE DEEP

Hans Hass was one of the inventors of underwater photography in the 1940s. His colour photos of coral reefs and fearsome sharks introduced the underwater world to a wide audience for the first time. In his 1949 film "Humans and Sharks", he portrayed sharks as harmless sea creatures rather than clichéd man-eating monsters. A trip to the French Riviera as a young man sparked Hass' enthusiasm for the underwater world. He made himself an underwater camera and observed sea animals in their natural environment as a free-swimming diver. This was a radical new approach to marine research that allowed completely new observations to be made. But how did a young man from Vienna end up making a groundbreaking career for himself as a diver, film-maker and zoologist – at the beginning of World War II at that? And what role did Hass' wife Lotte play – the first woman to take on the male-dominated underwater world? The documentary offers some fascinating insights into Hans Hass' life and work. Producing over 70 films and inventing numerous technologies, Hass paved the way for all underwater film-makers who followed him.

We owe the first spectacular underwater photographs to Austrian zoologist Hans Hass, who introduced the general public to the underwater world for the first time in the 1940s. Who was this adventurer and film-maker?

**History / Environment / Culture**

**Film by** Daniela Pulverer

**Length** 45'

**Production** k22 film for ZDF/ARTE

**Original title** Hans Hass – Pionier der Tiefe / Un pionnier de l'exploration sous-marine – Hans Hass

**Year** 2023

# YES WE CAN – CONTEMPORARY BLACK ART

With their portraits in the National Gallery, Michelle and Barack Obama have shaken up the world of art. Not only are they the first Black presidential couple to be represented at the gallery, but for the first time ever, a Black male and a Black female artist were commissioned to do the paintings: Kehinde Wiley and Amy Sherald. The Obamas have paved the way for a new generation of artists who have made portraiture their own and are now being championed. Throughout the Western world, interest in the work of Black artists has increased significantly. In what way can representations of Black people in art contribute towards their emancipation and equality? Jerrell Gibbs from Baltimore paints portraits that challenge typical clichés about Black men. Shannon T. Lewis, a Canadian of Caribbean descent, wants to make the representation of Black people ubiquitous and create beauty out of something historically abhorrent. The Kenyan-British painter Michael Armitage tells emotionally charged stories from East Africa, allowing his in-depth knowledge of European art history to shine through. How do these artists understand their work? Will museums, portrait galleries and other institutions be receptive to their art? Will they radically change our view of art history?

Throughout the Western world, interest in the work of Black artists has increased significantly. How do they understand their work? Will museums be receptive to their art? Will they radically change our view of art history?

## Arts & Culture

**Film by** Marion Schmidt,  
Kwamina Amissah Baiden

**Length** 52'

**Production** Telekult Film- und  
Medienproduktion for SR/ARTE

**Original title** Yes We Can – Die  
neue Schwarze Malerei / Yes We Can –  
L'art noir contemporain

**Year** 2023



YES WE CAN –  
CONTEMPORARY BLACK ART



# NILA'S DREAM IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Leyla and her six-year-old daughter Nila live in the holy city of Mashhad, Iran. Nila is the product of a temporary marriage, which allows a man to be married to a woman for a pre-determined and limited time, even if he is already married. Children born out of these relationships do not legally exist. Unless the father acknowledges their existence, a birth certificate cannot be issued, and without a birth certificate the child cannot attend school. However, if the birth certificate shows the name of the father, the father has the right to claim custody of the child after it turns seven. Nila's father has never shown any interest in his daughter but he threatens to take her away from Leyla. The documentary film chronicles Leyla's relentless efforts to clarify Nila's legal status, to obtain permission for her to attend school and to secure her future. In a never-ending administrative struggle, Leyla is fighting not only the legal system but also a prejudiced society, constant verbal abuse, threats from Nila's father, sexual harassment from a lawyer who is supposed to help her and other setbacks. Throughout this, she tries to shield her daughter from all she is going through and make her life as positive as possible.

**Feature Documentary / Human Interest**  
**Film by** Niloufar Taghizadeh  
**Length** 109'  
**Co-production** Windcatcher-Productions with ZDF/ARTE, with the support of MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, BKM  
**Original title** Nilas Traum im Garten Eden  
**Year** 2023 / 2024

Leyla and her six-year-old daughter Nila are inseparable. But Nila is the product of a so called “temporary marriage”, which leaves her legal status unclarified and prevents her from going to school. Leyla relentlessly fights for her daughter's custody.

Feature Documentary / Human Interest

# JOHNNY & ME – A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME WITH JOHN HEARTFIELD

The German painter, graphic artist, photomontage artist and stage designer, John Heartfield, who was born in Berlin in 1891, was one of Europe's most important artists according to Bertold Brecht. Rosa Luxemburg personally handed Heartfield, a Communist from the very beginning, the party's manifesto in 1918. George Grosz and Kurt Tucholsky were among his closest friends and artistic companions. In protest against German warmongering, Heartfield anglicised his name. For the Nazis, the inventor of political photomontage soon became one of the most dangerous enemies of the state. He spent years on the run in Europe, and later failed to find a safe home even in socialist East Germany. Plagued by a creativity crisis and self-doubt, graphic artist Stephanie becomes fascinated by John Heartfield's work, which she discovers in an exhibition. A time tunnel transposes her to a studio where the artist, now a cartoon character, takes her on a journey through his eventful life. A close friendship develops between the two colleagues. And Stephanie starts to work with paper and scissors again.

Graphic designer Stefanie is in the middle of a creativity crisis. A time tunnel takes her back to the studio of artist John Heartfield. She embarks on an adventurous journey through his extraordinary life 100 years ago.

**Feature Documentary / Arts & Culture**

**Film by** Katrin Rothe

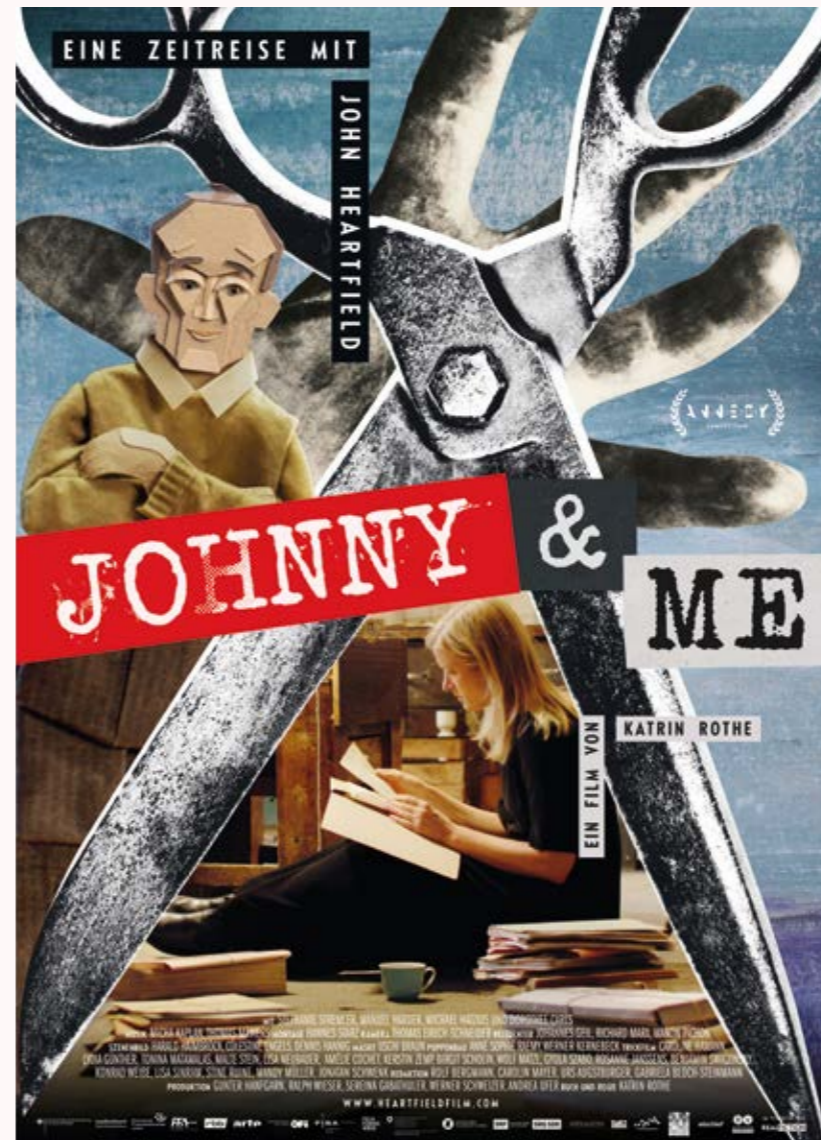
**Length** 100'/52'

**Co-production** HANFGARN & UFER, Mischief Films, Dschoint Ventschr Production with RBB/ARTE and SRF, with the support of BKM, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, FFA, DFFF, Österreichisches Filminstitut, Fisa, Filmfonds Wien, BAK, Zürcher Filmstiftung and Studienbibliothek

**Original title** Johnny & Me – Eine Zeitreise mit Johnny Heartfield

**Year** 2023

**Festivals** Anney Festival, France 2023 / Fantoche, Switzerland 2023 / ANIMAGE, Brazil 2023 / DOK Leipzig, Germany 2023 / Ciné Open Festival Pontarlier, France 2023



JOHNNY & ME – A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME WITH JOHN HEARTFIELD



## POL POT DANCING

Chea Samy was an outstanding soloist in the royal dance ensemble at the Cambodian Royal Palace in the 1930s. But she was also Pol Pot's foster mother. After marrying Pol's older brother, a low-level official at the royal court, she looked after the boy as if he were her own. They lost contact when he disappeared into the underground after his graduation. In 1975, like millions of other Cambodians, she was driven to the rice fields. Only after three years of forced labour did she learn that Pol Pot was the boy she had raised decades before. As one of only few dancers, she managed to survive his reign and returned to Phnom Penh as a dance teacher, thus preserving knowledge of the traditional dance. One of her first pupils was Sophiline Cheam, now a successful choreographer. Her ensemble incorporates events from Cambodia's past in its dance routines. The starting point is a curious fact about Pol Pot's career, which few Cambodians know about: the connection between Pol Pot and classical Cambodian dance. Artists and intellectuals, in particular, fell victim to the brutal rule of the Khmer Rouge, whose leader ironically spent a crucial part of his childhood in the royal palace and gained access to higher education thanks to this dance.

**Feature Documentary / Arts & Culture**

**Length** 99' / 52'

**Film by** Enrique Sánchez Lansch

**Co-production** Fruitmarket and Up North with ZDF/ARTE, with the support of Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, BKM, DFFF, NFI, The Fritt Ord Foundation

**Original Title** Pol Pot Dancing

**Year** 2023 / 2024

A star dancer at the Cambodian royal court lovingly raises her husband's little brother as her own son. Decades later, as a forced labourer under the Khmer Rouge, she discovers that her foster son is Pol Pot.

# IRVIN YALOM – STARING AT THE SUN

Irvin Yalom is a well-known psychiatrist and celebrated author. His scholarly books have become classics. With his fictional stories and novels, he has enjoyed one success after another. As a therapist, with his “here and now” approach, he focuses on the relationship between his patients and himself as therapist, always negotiating themes of death, freedom, loneliness and meaning. Irvin Yalom shared his love of literature with his wife Marilyn Yalom, herself an author of numerous books. The two were a couple for 75 years until she passed away in 2019. After Marilyn’s death, Irvin fell into a deep depression. Eventually, however, he met German therapist Sakino Mathilde Sternberg – and found happiness once again. The film follows Irvin Yalom in his everyday life and creative process. Irvin, his children and friends look back on the eventful life he and his late wife Marilyn led, giving us a very personal view of the “here and now”.

## **Arts & Culture**

**Film by** Eva Fouquet

**Length** 52'

**Co-production** Gebrüder Beetz

Filmproduktion with NDR/ARTE, with the support of Nordmedia

**Original title** Irvin Yalom - In die Sonne schauen / Irvin Yalom - Therapeute et épicurien

**Year** 2023

Irvin Yalom, his children and friends look back on his eventful life.  
How did he become the successful writer and psychiatrist he is today?





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