



## PRESS RELEASE

# World War I in German and American Art and Film

Film series accompanies exhibition "Postcards from the Trenches"

**August 18 - October 6, 2014**

**Goethe-Institut Washington  
812 7<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20001**

[www.goethe.de/washington](http://www.goethe.de/washington)

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(Washington, DC, August 1, 2014) – This week marks a century since the start of World War I in Europe, an event which dramatically changed the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Opening at the Goethe-Institut August 18, the film series "**Film Captures the Great War**" examines aspects of and reactions to the Great War by artists and soldiers. The films accompany the exhibition "**Postcards from the Trenches: Germans and Americans Visualize the Great War**," on display at Pepco's Edison Place Gallery August 19 – September 27.

The Great War has profoundly affected our culture and our politics. The magnitude of material destruction and the staggering loss of lives, combined with the use of censorship, propaganda, and new technologies of war, has had repercussions lasting to this day. Without it and without the controversial treaty that followed, industrialized killing, shell shock, mass-produced prostheses, a contentiously redrawn Europe, fascism and Nazism, an even more terrible world war, and the United States' rise as a global power would be difficult to imagine. The Great War truly was "the cataclysmic event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century." Despite the war's distance from the present, the 1914-1918 bloodbath and the revolutions it spawned continue to haunt today's 21st-century world.

**About the Film Series "Film Captures the Great War":** Screening at the Goethe-Institut August 18 – October 6, 2014, these four films examine aspects of and reactions to the Great War by artists and soldiers. Käthe Kollwitz, who lost a son to the war, literally rendered the loss war caused by creating a series of powerful graphics and sculptures. The sculptor Ernst Barlach's expressionist human figures also captured the horrors of the conflict. American filmmaker Stanley Kubrick directed the classic anti-war film *Paths of Glory*, examining the coercive use of killing soldiers by their commanders for refusing to go to battle, while Ernst Lubitsch used symbolic images and the relatively new medium of sound to explore grief and guilt in *Broken Lullaby*.

The first three films will be introduced by Marion Deshmukh, co-curator, "Postcards from the Trenches: Germans and Americans Visualize the Great War". Marion Deshmukh, Robert T. Hawkes Professor of History, teaches 19th & 20th Century German History and Art History at George Mason University. Her research and publications center on German painting and politics. She curated two Goethe-Institut exhibitions: "Max Liebermann: Works on Paper" (2006) and "Iconoclash! Political Transformations from the Berlin Wall to German Unification."

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812 7th St. NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Media Contact:  
Norma Broadwater  
202-289-1200, ext. 106  
[nbroadwater@washington.goethe.org](mailto:nbroadwater@washington.goethe.org)

[www.goethe.de/washington](http://www.goethe.de/washington)

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Schedule:

**Monday, August 18, 6:30 pm**

**Käthe Kollwitz – Images of a Life (Käthe Kollwitz – Bilder eines Lebens)**

*GDR, 1986, 96 min., Director: Ralf Kirsten*

Käthe Kollwitz was 47 years old, and already a well-established artist in Germany and abroad when Peter, her youngest son, volunteered to join the German army in WWI and was killed two weeks later. This painful tragedy changed Kollwitz's life and art forever. Always politically active, she became a radical pacifist; in her art, she reflected on her son and the meaning of war. After she signed a petition against the Nazis, she was excluded from the Academy of Arts and her art was labeled "degenerate." Director and writer **Ralf Kirsten** (b. Leipzig 1930) was an East German film director.

**Monday, August 25, 6:30 pm**

**The Lost Angel (Der verlorene Engel)**

*GDR, 1966|71, 59 min., Director: Ralf Kirsten*

In the summer of 1937, the expressionist German sculptor and author Ernst Barlach was living an isolated life when he learned that the Nazis had dragged his famous sculpture The Hovering Angel—a memorial for WWI victims—out of the Güstrow cathedral. Barlach started reflecting on his experiences in WWI, on his life in "inner emigration" and on his works, which the Nazis had either confiscated or denounced as "degenerate." This film was banned by East German officials, because they considered it "mystical," with "existentialist interpretations of art and power." GDR director Konrad Wolf and Soviet sculptor Nikolai Tomsky campaigned for the release of the film, which was finally granted in 1971—albeit in a version that was shortened without consulting the director. This is the only existing version of the film.

**Monday, September 15, 6:30 pm**

**Paths Of Glory**

*USA, 1958, 87 min., Director: Stanley Kubrick*

Adapting Humphrey Cobb's novel to the screen, director Stanley Kubrick and his collaborators Calder Willingham and Jim Thompson set out to make a devastating anti-war statement. In the third year of World War I, the erudite but morally bankrupt French general Broulard (Adolphe Menjou) orders his troops to seize the heavily fortified "Ant Hill" from the Germans. General Mireau (George MacReady) knows that this action will be suicidal, but he will sacrifice his men to enhance his own reputation. Against his better judgment, Colonel Dax (Kirk Douglas) leads the charge, and the results are appalling. Still smarting from the defeat, Mireau cannot admit to himself that the attack was a bad idea from the outset: he convinces himself that loss of Ant Hill was due to the cowardice of his men.

**Monday, October 6, 6:30 pm**

**Broken Lullaby (The Man I Killed)**

*USA, 1932, 76 min., Director: Ernst Lubitsch*

Burdened with guilt after killing a German soldier in the trenches during World War I, young French veteran Paul Renard (Phillips Holmes) seeks out his victim's family. The film skillfully combines symbolic images, the relatively new medium of sound, and moments of comedy to form a pensive drama focusing on the effects of war, nationalism, grief and guilt. From his early successes in silent German films such as *The Oyster Princess* and *Madame Dubarry* to his mature Hollywood masterpieces (*Ninotchka*, *To Be or Not to Be*, *The Shop Around the Corner*), the films of Ernst Lubitsch have had a lasting impact upon the cinema of Europe and America.

In cooperation with the Alliance Francaise. Introduced by Sarah Pickup-Diligenti, Executive Director, Alliance Francaise in Washington D.C.

**About the Exhibition “[Postcards from the Trenches: Germans and Americans Visualize the Great War](#)”:**

This exhibition, on display at Pepco Edison Place Gallery (702 8<sup>th</sup> St. NW) August 19 – September 27, 2014, highlights the importance of postcards as a form of social and political communication during the conflict.

Focusing on the beautifully painted postcards by the German expressionist artist Otto Schubert, who sent almost 80 postcards to his fiancé while on the Western Front, they provide a compelling visual record of events. In addition to Otto Schubert’s postcards and several of his war-related graphic works, images from the American Expeditionary Force artists, posters, graphic works, objects, and additional postcards will be on view. Loans are from private collectors, the US Army Art Collection Ft. Belvoir, U.S. Center for Military History, the World War One Museum, Kansas City, the Wende Museum, Culver City, CA, LACMA, and private collections.

Supported in part by the German Information Center at the German Embassy and the Goethe-Institut.

Curators: Marion F. Deshmukh, George Mason University & Irene Guenther, University of Houston



Opening and Gallery Talk

**Tuesday, August 19, 6 - 8:30 pm**

**Postcards from the Trenches: Why We Should Still Care About World War I**

With Marion Deshmukh, George Mason University and exhibition co-curator. Remarks by the Hon. Peter Wittig, German Ambassador. Reception to follow.

Keynote and Reception

**Tuesday, September 9, 6 - 8:30 pm**

**From Fact to Allegory and Beyond: Images of the First World War**

With Peter Paret, Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities, Emeritus, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and author of many books on military history and art, including *Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art*. Reception to follow.

Poetry Reading

**Tuesday, September 23, 6 - 8:30 pm**

*Pepco Edison Place Gallery, 702 8<sup>th</sup> St. NW*

**Poetry Witnesses Wars from the Civil War to World War I**

Commemorating the atrocities of war and its effects on individuals, this poetry reading presents works critiquing civilization and mourning profound personal loss. Audience members will be invited to sign up to read a poem of their choice from among a selection of American works since the Civil War and European pieces responding to World War I. Introduced and moderated by Peter Beicken (University of Maryland) and David Gewanter (Georgetown University).

No charge for the "Postcards from the Trenches" events. RSVP to [www.postcardsfromthetrenches.eventbrite.com](http://www.postcardsfromthetrenches.eventbrite.com)

**General Admission to Films at the Goethe-Institut:** \$ 7/\$ 4 Members of Friends of the Goethe-Institut, seniors and students. Tickets can be purchased right before the screenings, or during office hours Monday-Thursday 10am-5pm and Friday 10am-3pm, or online at [www.boxofficetickets.com/goethe](http://www.boxofficetickets.com/goethe).

***About the Goethe-Institut Washington***

On behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany, cultural institutes around the world provide cultural programs, language courses, support to educators, and up-to-date information on Germany in the context of Europe. Founded in 1990, Goethe-Institut Washington, DC is a center for German culture and language in the midst of the revitalized Downtown. Visit [www.goethe.de/washington](http://www.goethe.de/washington) for more information.

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