

CLEMENS KLOPFENSTEIN



Photo: Keystone / Christian Beutler

Born 1944 on Lake Biel, Switzerland. Instead of following in his father's footsteps, the twenty-year-old man wanted to focus on film. Klopfenstein began as an assistant laboratory worker in a film lab. As the journey there seemed to be too long for him, he switched over to the newspaper business, initially working as a proof-reader and then as a journalist. From 1963, Clemens Klopfenstein was enrolled in the Basel School of Arts and Crafts, where he completed his studies and was awarded his Drawing Instructor and Art Educator Diploma in 1967. Between 1962 and 1965, he made his first short films on Super 8. Together with two friends from high school, Urs Aebersold und Philip Schaad, Klopfenstein founded the AKS Film Workshop in Basel. The group filmed at the weekend mostly, with numerous friends supporting them and becoming involved. **Promenade en hiver** (A Winter Walk), the first piece they made together, was premiered at the Solothurn Film Festival. In 1967–68, Klopfenstein attended the Film Courses I and II under Kurt Früh at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts. He concluded these studies with a Cameraman and Director Diploma. This was then followed by several experimental films, documentaries and fiction films. In 1968–69, he worked as a cameraman with Markus P. Nester and Markus Imhoof. Klopfenstein has been awarded numerous art scholarships, including the one from the Istituto Svizzero, Rome (1973–75). He has held several art exhibitions in Italy and in Switzerland. Since 1972, Clemens Klopfenstein has mainly lived in Italy and in 1976 he finally changed his place of residence to Bevagna in the Umbrian province of Perugia. He established his film production company Ombra-Film here. After making the commissioned film **E nachtlang Füürland** (A Nightlong Fire Land), he was awarded a DAAD film scholarship in 1981, which took him to Berlin. In 1998, Klopfenstein received the Swiss Film Award for his fiction film **Das Schweigen der Männer** (The Silence of Men).
www.klopfenstein.net

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by Vinzenz Hediger, 2015

Dancing with the Camera: Clemens Klopfenstein Makes Movies



A photograph in a landscape format: Revealing a white Mercedes car on the right, with some barren, overcast mountains in the background and a blonde woman beside the car on the left, her hair billowing and a bottle of schnapps in her left hand, with her right one placed dreamily on her forehead, as though she is poised to take a dance step into the wind. And to the left in the foreground, with his legs placed behind each other in a wide sidestep as though he is responding to the woman's dance movement, a man with a camera on his shoulder. The setting is in Umbria, and we are seeing Christine Lauterburg and Clemens Klopfenstein during the shooting of Klopfenstein's **Der Ruf der Sibylla** (The Call of Sibylla, 1984), a love story that mutates from a romantic relationship into a fantasy film when coloured liqueur infuses the heroine with the power of control over the weather and the seasons of the year. Lauterburg's co-star Rüdinger, with whom she formed a couple both on and off-screen just like Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy once did in Hollywood, is not included on the photo. And although Lauterburg's Tracy is missing from the shot, this photograph really is a still from the film set, one which, like the good set photos from the classic Hollywood movies, has an emblematic character: With a single glance, we get to see the whole film, and even more: cinema itself. «All you need for a movie is a gun and a girl» apparently is what Godard once said. All that Klopfenstein needs is a woman, a car, a bottle of schnapps, a landscape and some wind. And the camera, of course. However unlike say Godard, Klopfenstein operates the camera himself, leading it in the exact same way you would a dancing partner, with the whole of your body yet with a light step, always in movement and capturing the movement of the actors, and that in a double sense: With the camera recording them and grasping them, joining in with them.

FILMOGRAPHY

1962	René
1963	La condition humaine Romainmotier
1964	Darf die Schweiz nicht verlassen
1966	Umleitung
1967	Wir sterben vor (co-director)
1968	Nach Rio
1970	Variété Clara (co-director)
1974	Die Fabrikanten (co-director)
1979	Geschichte der Nacht (Story of the Night)
1981	Tranes – Reiter auf dem toten Pferd E nachtlang Fүүrland (in co-direction with Remo Legnazzi)
1982	Das Schlesische Tor
1984	Der Ruf der Sibylla
1988	Macao oder die Rückseite des Meeres
1989	Stones, Storm and Water: In Arcadia (episode City Life)
1991	Das vergessene Tal
1992	Fүүrland 2 (in co-direction with Remo Legnazzi)
1994	Die Gemmi – ein Übergang
1997	Das Schweigen der Männer
1999	Alp-Traum (Tatort)
2000	WerAngstWolf (WhoAfraidWolf)
2005	Die Vogelpredigt oder Das Schreien der Mönche (St. Francis Bird Tour)
2008	Der Weg nach Rio (in co-direction with Lukas Tiberio Klopfenstein)
2009	The It.Aliens (in co-direction with Lukas Tiberio Klopfenstein)
2010	Figures in a Nightscape (in co-direction with Lukas Tiberio Klopfenstein)
2012	Rousseau vs Rousseau (in co-direction with Lukas Tiberio Klopfenstein)
2015	Der Meister und Max (The Master and Max) Compilation film, assembled from works by Clemens Klopfenstein, directed by Marcel Derek Ramsay
	To BE 7151 (in production, release planned for fall 2017)

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> Dancing with the Camera: Clemens Klopfenstein Makes Movies

The hand on the camera turns the camera into a bodily organ. The new age of cinema, as Alexandre Astruc wrote in his essay «La caméra-stylo» from 1948, will be one with an act of personal handwriting: The camera becoming like a pen or a drawing pencil in the hand of the filmmaker, and the films having their own handwritten style. The directors from the French nouvelle vague understood this talk of a personal handwriting style in a metaphorical sense: They wanted to be auteurs, directors, whose films demonstrate a stylistic imprint, one which permits them to be part of a distinctive body of work. Clemens Klopfenstein is such a director too and that because, for a start, he has comprehended Astruc's thoughts on the camera in a literal sense as a pen and drawing pencil. Klopfenstein, who is also a drawer and painter and who trained during the 1960s to become a filmmaker at a film course which would become legendary at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts, not only leads the camera like a dancing partner, he creates cinema in such a smooth, seamless way, like a drawing dashed off with a light touch of the hand, or a painting created from the mere movements of the colours: As a kind of astutely playful Jackson Pollock with actors, who does not throw his paintings down on the flat floor, but projects them onto an upright screen.

For Klopfenstein it seems that he needs only the merest pretext or a favourable opportunity to start filming, as though all that is required is to fill a sheet or a screen. And he has shot several of his films simply because one had to be made. **E nachtlang Fүүrland** (A Nightlong Fire Land) was created for an anniversary of the Swiss Television, while **Fүүrland 2** (Fire Land 2) was made for the anniversary of the Swiss Confederation in 1991. The money was there and Klopfenstein was ready, and as shooting films with a handheld camera came easily to him, films got made. Films which however had not been created after years struggling with funding bodies and whose content resulted from a deep inner need, but which arose instead from a movement and the desire to make cinema. The auteur filmmaker as a director of commissioned and occasional films, one who avails of the commission to make his own films. Not only in terms of financing his films, but in his artistic work as well, Klopfenstein has accorded priority to the favourable opportunity rather than to the deep inner need. Just like when Judy Garland in «A Star Is Born» transforms the furniture in her living room into props and accessories for a virtuoso dance number solely and completely for her husband (and the cinema audience of course), Klopfenstein also proceeds on the basis of the «bricolage» principle, as Claude Lévi-Strauss once termed it, by organising already available signs and events into new structures. With virtuoso tinkering as a principle of the art. For which reason, the actors whom Klopfenstein uses are often amateurs or passers-by who get swept along into the film and include those – such as for instance Max Rüdlinger, Clemens Klopfenstein's Antoine Doinel/Jean-Pierre Léaud, with whom he has repeatedly shot films for a quarter of a century now, ranging from **E nachtlang Fүүrland** in 1981 through to **Die Vogelpredigt oder Das Schreien der Mönche (St. Francis Bird Tour)** from

FILMS WITH FRIENDS

1965/66 **Promenade en hiver**

1967 **Wir sterben**

1968 **Gempen**

Mao... es misslingt

Lachen, Liebe, Nächte

1970 **Die Einsamkeit des
Aeschenplatzpolizisten**

1972 **White Night**

FILMS AS CAMERAMAN

1969 **Ormenis 199+96** by Markus
Imhoof

1980/82 **Reisender Krieger** by
Christian Schocher

1982 **Giro** by Hugo Sigrist

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2005 – who have not emerged from the films anymore their whole life long. And when he does on occasion have a highly acclaimed actor such as Bruno Ganz in **WerAngstWolf (WhoAfraidWolf, 2000)** in front of his camera, then he shoots him with a playful guile such that he is unaware of this at all and never gets an opportunity to contrast Klopfenstein's camera work with the repertoire of his controlled effects. We are also dealing with a virtuoso bricolage when Klopfenstein availed of the charisma of a rock star and repositioned the local Swiss-dialect rock musician Polo Hofer, the Bob Dylan of the Swiss midlands, to become the star of his movies. And even this situation arose from a favourable opportunity: Polo Hofer was a guest at celebrations in the Swiss Parliament Building, which Klopfenstein wanted to shoot as part of his commission for **Füürland 2**; Polo looked good in front of the camera; Klopfenstein paired him with Rüdlinger in **Die Gemmi – ein Übergang** (The Gemmi Pass – A Crossing, 1994), **Das Schweigen der Männer** (The Silence of Men, 1999), and yet again in **Der Vogelpredigt**, to become the comic duo grouch and rock star, the only genuine comedy pair in Swiss cinema since its reinvention in the 1960s.

However the actors in his films do not follow scripted routines. Klopfenstein does work with screenplays, but in the end his scenes frequently become open experimental arrangements. It often occurs whereby that which is lived penetrates into that being acted, and the passions being alluded to take complete possession of the characters. And then the fiction film slips, at least for a few moments, into an ethnographic documentary. Thus for instance at the end of **Das Schweigen der Männer**, an improvised dialogue between Polo and Max ends up in a proper dispute, from which the three persons involved (if we also include Klopfenstein) first had to get over after the shoot. However the scene has been left in the final film without any cuts. A cinematic experience where the favourable opportunity usually outstrips the inner need, is one in which a lot can happen, and where the inner need can also grasp the opportune moment and even come to the fore itself.

But is what Klopfenstein makes really a form of cinema at all? Yes – it is a form of cinema, one that does not wait for the major funding to finally arrive, but simply starts making the film.

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by Irene Genhart, 2006

Clemente K., the Round Human

[...] (at that time) the looks of each human being were as a whole round, with back and sides in a circle. And each had four arms, and legs equal in number to their arms, and two faces alike in all respects on a cylindrical neck. But there was one head for both faces – they were set in opposite directions – and four ears, and two sets of genitals, and all the rest that one might conjecture from this. Each used to walk upright too, just as one does now, in whatever direction they wanted; and whenever they had the impulse to run fast, then just as tumblers with their legs straight out actually move around as they tumble in a circle, so did they, with their eight limbs as supports, quickly move in a circle. [...] Now (these round humans) were awesome in their strength and robustness, and they had great and proud thoughts, so they made an attack upon the gods. (Plato's Symposium,

Aristophanes' Speech)

If we were to ask Clemens Klopfenstein at the premiere to one of his films, how he sees himself as a filmmaker, he is accustomed to replying that he is not a film director, but rather a painter. And were we to enquire about his self-perception as a visual artist during an exhibition opening, the response we would get is that he makes films and is really not a painter: Clemens Klopfenstein is an impressive phenomenon. A man who is exuberant and wide awake, whose sparkling zest for action is combined with charm, roguery and an appreciably great pleasure in life. He is one of the most productive filmmakers in Switzerland, yet also one of the most diverse, as well as a gifted painter whose proficiency can be admired not only in exhibitions, but also in various churches and little chapels in Umbria, where Klopfenstein has lived since 1975.

Clemens Klopfenstein was born on 19 October 1944 in Täuffelen at Lake Biel. Growing up directly at the so-called Röstigraben (the Röstli Ditch) – the inner German and French language border within Switzerland, which is indeed a cultural and mental barrier as well – seems to have shaped and moulded him. Although each of his works bears the completely distinctive personal style of his mastery, Klopfenstein is not that easy to grasp as an artist. He cannot be readily assigned to a generation of artists, nor to a specific artists' group. On the one hand, Klopfenstein clearly operates within the tradition of French-speaking Switzerland especially, in the «cinéma copain» setting of the «Groupe des Cinq» which was formed by Alain Tanner, Claude Goretta and Michel Soutter, and he has worked for years now with the same assistants and actors. On the other hand, there are numerous features and aspects which would place Klopfenstein's work within the context of the German-speaking Swiss film scene. For instance, his protagonists mainly speak Bernese dialect and rarely High German. His long films, shot after he had completed his studies, are mostly set in the city of Bern and its surroundings, or in Italy, Klopfenstein's second home. His first films, which were made in the 1960s and early 1970s with Urs Aebersold and Philip Schaad in the AKS Film Workshop,

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are short and experimental. They place Klopfenstein beside the German-speaking representatives of the New Swiss Cinema, such as Fredi M. Murer, Xavier Koller, Rolf Lyssy and Markus Imhoof. When Klopfenstein speaks about the AKS Film Workshop today, he talks about it being his «first career as a filmmaker». With him describing the AKS films as «happy underground – cheeky, direct, spontaneous». The films had names such as **Umleitung** (Diversion), **Wir sterben vor** (We're Dying Of), **Lachen, Liebe, Nächte** (Laughter, Love, Nights). They are film montages compiled from experimental fiction film fragments, with a parodic-dramatic undertone. In their day, the members of the AKS were happy to be called the West Swiss film rebels. They indulged themselves in Spaghetti Westerns and were admirers of the early Godard. They had a high regard for the fast-motion technique, shot without recording any sound, and would underscore the films afterwards with appropriate genre music. Klopfenstein was in charge of the camera work at the AKS. He mostly filmed tracking shots, something walking with the camera himself. He loved the swish pan and the low angle shot. It was said that the AKS members would «throw the camera up in the air», and after a film critic described the camera work in **Promenade en hiver** (A Winter Walk) as being «tender as the skin of a flower», Klopfenstein then tenderly called his old Bolex H16 Reflex camera, which he still loves today, his «fleur de peau».

In 1967, Clemens Klopfenstein was awarded his Drawing Instructor and Art Educator Diploma from the Basel School of Arts and Crafts. This was followed by him enrolling in the by now legendary first film course at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts, which is the Zurich University of the Arts today. The teacher and head of this course was Kurt Früh, with Clemens Klopfenstein screening his first film under his own direction, **Nach Rio** (To Rio), which was also his graduation film, there in 1968. It consisted on a 14-minute night-time film in which a wounded gangster played by Fred Tanner drives through Switzerland at night.

Nach Rio was intended to be «like the ending of a film by Jean-Pierre Melville» Klopfenstein said. The crime movie director from Alsace is his great role model, and to whom Klopfenstein has accorded his respect and esteem on several occasions over the course of his cinematic oeuvre. For instance, he took his name – Melville's real name being Jean-Pierre Grumbach – and fashioned the pseudonym G(erhard) Grumbach from it, and the very same G. Grumbach was then listed as a member of the film team in the credits of many of his film – such as in **Die Geschichte der Nacht (Story of the Night)**, **Das Schlesische Tor** (The Silesian Portal), **Der Ruf der Sibylla** (The Call of Sibylla) and **Macao**. Likewise, the firm that Klopfenstein has ran together with Thomas Pfister, which was to some extent in charge of the DVD editions of his films, as well as of the film «Film ohne Bilder» (Film Without Images) and the music CD «Tod Trauer Trapani» (Death Mourning Trapani) which he completed in 2001 together with Ben Jeger, bears the name «Edition Grumbach».

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Once he had his mini-diploma as a cameraman and director from the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts in his pocket in 1969, he went on to shoot two more films with the AKS Film Workshop. Working in the AKS together with Georg Janett, they made the documentary **Variété Clara**, a cinematic obituary to the last variety theatre in Switzerland, which was torn down in 1968; then in 1973 the AKS shot its first and only feature length fiction film, **Die Fabrikanten** (The Fabricants). This was an action film in the style of an Italian political thriller that plays out in a Swiss watch industry setting – with which the filmmaker who came from Biel was highly familiar. Although it is pure fiction, **Die Fabrikanten** contains numerous documentary moments which refer to the not always fair takeovers and shutdowns of small business operations by large corporations. However with **Die Fabrikanten**, the AKS took on more than it was capable of. The film proved to be a financial disaster, flopped at the box offices – and the AKS was disbanded.

He did shoot a feature film once and fell flat on his face with it, was how Klopfenstein would comment on the unpleasant experience for several years afterwards, before stepping back from the whole filmmaking game for a while. He immersed himself in Jan Potocki's novel «The Manuscript Found in Saragossa», taking this as his basis to create the Pandesovna Series, a set of paintings whose endless perspectives and interwoven rooms, corridors and arches are reminiscent of the works by M. C. Escher und Piranesi. He was awarded the Swiss Federation Art Scholarship for Painting for his work here, permitting him to be the happy artist-in-resident in the tower room of the Istituto Svizzero institute in Rome in 1973 and 1974.

Here in the Italian metropolis, with its architecture ranging from the newest Modern back to early antiquity, as well as its squares and streets with their perspectives changing constantly depending on the position of the sun in the sky, Klopfenstein began his second career as a filmmaker. In addition to the keenly observed light and shade studies which he completed during the daytime and the highly expressive ruin pictures he painted, Klopfenstein started to photograph and shoot film at night. He would ramble with his camera for hours after midnight through a Rome which «first revealed its true beauty in this emptiness and calm». Gradually, he extended these nocturnal studies across all of Europe. Then in 1978 he presented **Die Geschichte der Nacht (Story of the Night)**: A series of night-time shots of cities filmed over the course of about 150 nights in 50 cities in Europe, strung together in a sequence by nothing other than chance and the congeniality of the editor. Even today, Klopfenstein still goes into raptures when he talks about the sensation caused by the over-life-sized pixels, which were pushed in the lab from 400 to a maximum value of 3200 ASA, when the film premiered at the Forum section of the Berlinale.

Die Geschichte der Nacht (Story of the Night) was completely in the spirit of the alert and highly eventful 1970s art scene, marking the start of an extremely diverse and productive career

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in filmmaking. While this piece was born from the impulse to paint and photograph, and thus still concerned a «stationary» film, its successor **Traneses – Reiter auf dem toten Pferd** (Traneses – Rider on the Dead Horse) set the great journeys in motion that would shape Klopfenstein's complete cinematic oeuvre. And that same year with the «climate film» **E nachtlang Füürland** (A Nightlong Fire Land) set in the local Bern scene and shot together with Remo Legnazzi, the meandering universal subjects began that would become typical for Klopfenstein, such as politics, religion, current events, music and the endless chattering about what being Swiss means, which he would deal with and set in everyday situations that are as funnily nasty as they are tender.

The films from Klopfenstein's second creative phase, even if they are fiction films, move playfully along the borderline between fiction and documentation. With a few exceptions, they are road movies shot with a handheld camera, in which the talking-to-each-other and being-on-the-road serve as the moments propelling the plot onwards. A further striking element are the «genii loci» inherent in them: Which do not act as atmospheric images but rather as atmosphere-creating and plot-defining landscapes and places in which the protagonists frequently lose themselves completely. Emerging from the constrictions of the cities in his first films, over the course of his works Klopfenstein has ventured along the roads and train routes across Europe (**Traneses**) all the way to the forlornness of the Pacific Ocean before China (**Macao oder die Rückseite des Meeres** – Macao or the Back of the Sea) and to the vast expanses of the Egyptian desert (**Das Schweigen der Männer** – The Silence of Man). But his true love is for the mountains with their valleys and passes. In 1984 in **Der Ruf der Sibylla**, the traces of a quarrelsome pair of lovers become lost on a high plateau in the Sibillini Mountains; In 1991 in the mystery thriller **Das vergessene Tal** (The Forgotten Valley), which was shot in the Gasterntal valley in the Bernese Oberland, Klopfenstein lets a NEAT train engineer fall down into an unknown valley in which Jews who fled World War II have established a theocracy; in 1994 he let Max and Polo, cursing and joking around as they do so, ramble across a mountain pass from the Bernese Oberland into the Valais in **Die Gemmi – ein Übergang** (The Gemmi Pass – A Crossing); six years later in **WerAngstWolf (WhoAfraidWolf)**, eighteen actors travel through the Sibillini Mountains in the direction of Rome as they study their roles. A further penchant Klopfenstein has is to work again and again with the same actors. Since 1982 when, for **E nachtlang Füürland**, he «was looking for a well-known Bernese man and Max Rüdlinger, who was employed as a newsreader with Swiss Radio International at that time, met him by chance», Rüdlinger has been the founding father of Klopfenstein's filmic family. After **E nachtlang Füürland**, Klopfenstein would only shoot two films without Rüdlinger, the TV production **Das vergessene Tal** and the TV crime series episode **Alp-Traum** (Alpine Nightmare). With Rüdlinger's partner Christine Lauterburg becoming part of the family from 1982 till 1992. She would play Rüdlinger's sparring partner in each of Klopfenstein's films until the couple split up after

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the shooting of **Macao oder die Rückseite des Mondes**; since **Füürland 2**, this role has been assumed by the Bernese rock musician Polo Hofer with his local Swiss dialect.

Clemens Klopfenstein shot 14 long films from 1979 to 2004, acting as their director, film producer, screenwriter, cameraman and editor. At the same time, he also continued to work as a photographer and painter, and once he ever wrote a novel together with Markus P. Nester – «Die Migros-Erpressung» (The Migros Extortion, 1978/1980). Music is the only area for which this multi-talent does not have a flair – and that «despite 13 years of dreadful piano lessons!». Likewise, acting is not a forte of Klopfenstein. Yet for that he can still be seen on the silver screen: In 2004, **Die Vogelpredigt oder Das Schreien der Mönche (St. Francis Bird Tour)** was produced, the most exciting and also the most revealing of his films in several respects. Eight years earlier, Klopfenstein received the first ever Swiss Film Award for **Das Schweigen der Männer**, while in 2000 with **WerAngstWolf** he presented his first film with «proper» dialogue, or in other words written by sturdy playwrights. In **Die Vogelpredigt**, not only was Klopfenstein behind the camera, but he also acted in front of it for the first time. He plays a Swiss filmmaker by the name of Klopfenstein who migrated to Umbria years ago and who has quit the filmmaking game because of his frustration with the endless filling out of forms and making applications, and who prefers to paint one picture a week «rather than not be able to shoot 24 frames per second». With red shoes, a flowing beard and long hair, Klopfenstein plays himself here – as a fictional character, so to speak. A roguish shoot, with fiction and reality seamlessly blended together and effected not only but also for reasons of pragmatism: At that time in the Switzerland of the 1980s, when quite a few representatives of the New Swiss Cinema were suffering from the excessive bureaucracy and tiresome begging that filmmaking involved there, Klopfenstein was settling into his new home in the Umbrian town of Bevagna. Here, where Saint Francis of Assisi still holds sway, this free spirit from Biel together with his family, the fabric designer Serena Kiefer and their sons Lorenz Cuno (born 1984) and Lukas Tiberio (born 1988), has led a «Franciscan» life as a hospitable hermit and developed a merry sense of activism doing so. Drawing on the motto «that Switzerland looks completely different from a distance of 1,000 kilometres», he would have maliciously niggling arguments with the Swiss film funding bodies now and then, and occasionally analysed the condition of Swiss film in a smugly precise manner in castigating essays. Apart from that, for years now Klopfenstein has advocated a cheap cinema, one with spontaneity and improvisation. And he – a person who himself has not always been funded and for whom the writing of polished screenplays and texts can prove terribly difficult at times – has promoted this worthy idea by bravely setting good examples. Klopfenstein's films have mostly been shot on a minimal budget and with a minimal crew on 16mm, video or Hi8. Yet for that – or perhaps exactly because of it? – not only has Klopfenstein been enormously

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productive, he has always been one step ahead of the zeitgeist and its aesthetics. A long time before the Danes capriciously penned their «Dogma» Manifesto, Klopfenstein was shooting his own «dogma» films: Movies whose plots would continuously result from the events occurring in front of the camera; with «dirty» films too, in whose frames one would search in vain for the perfect edit, the diligently comprehensive lighting concept or some well-choreographed movement sequences. Yet for that they are full of life. With a consistently unrestricted use of handheld camera: Panning with the characters, dancing along after them and leaving the presence of the cameraman palpable in unceasingly faint vibrations on the screen.

Even if Klopfenstein did film a TV crime scene movie once and fantasises aloud in interviews about making an epic blockbuster in the Cinecittà, most of his films have been shot entirely «in the Klopfenstein style, where I have to do everything myself, the financing, the camera work, the directing and the editing». But not always of his own free will. **Die Vogelpredigt** in particular actually started out as a well-financed, off-beat gothic story set in a monastery and planned for a private TV channel. But then the broadcaster rejected the idea. At the same time however, Max Rüdlinger and Polo Hofer, with whom Klopfenstein had already shot the nimble «communication films» **Füürland 2**, **Die Gemmi – ein Übergang** and **Das Schweigen der Männer**, were full of enthusiasm and ready to start. And so Klopfenstein – «after some creative dream work» – combined the great, ponderous monastery movie with the small, lightweight wanderer film. With its content reflecting the story of its creation: The two friends Max and Polo who live in Bern have no money, but for that they are in the mood to shoot a film again. So they head off and try to talk a director living in Umbria into the idea of an action movie set in Africa, with a plot full «of sex, crime and a beautiful Yemenite woman». But «Klopfi» has something else in mind. The failure of his gothic monk movie is nagging at him and he is painting still lifes with geese. He burns the screenplay in the fireplace, slaughters his last goose and invites the friends to food and drinks. In front of the fire, the three of them start to muse about the Swiss person's Switzerland, the Swiss film and globalisation. In the end, Klopfi persuades Max and Polo to rehearse Francis of Assisi's sermon to the birds in a nearby clearing. Wearing austere monks' habits and surrounded by plastic ravens, the guys stand there merrily chatting away. Meanwhile Klopfi, with the camera on his shoulder, is looking for a good place to position it and disappears in the direction of the forest's edge. And because he apparently encounters the Umbrian wolf there, he has never been seen again since then.

Clemens Klopfenstein does not take either himself or his work all too seriously. He loves corny jokes and pranks; night is as important as day for him, the real as precious as the fictional. He likes facts, yet is not adverse to magic either. Seriality, the emerging of something new from what occurs previously, plays an important role in his oeuvre. At the same time he places great

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value on progressing, achieving further development in his creative output. And he sets a swift pace doing so – with Klopfenstein revealing new, unknown sides to himself time and time again, film by film and frame by frame. And through it all, he proceeds in a fascinating, dazzling and clever manner, just like Plato's round humans. Yet he does so with an absolute lack of fear and even turns a few summersaults on occasion to tempt the gods. An act with which Klopfenstein is quite familiar. Even if this is merely the placing of his second-born son as Jesus Christ into the arms of the ex-Bond girl Ursula Andress when she plays the Madonna in **Die Vogelpredigt**.

Seven Depictions on the Works by a Swiss Bon Vivant Living in Umbria

1) NIGHT

«So where exactly does this obsession with the night-side of life come from, with the twilight on the one hand and the nocturnal will-o'-the-wisps and nightly strays then emerging as spectres before they slip away again?» was the quizzical start to an essay the filmmaker wrote on his life and work in the mid-1980s when he was 41 years old. And it is true that with the exception of **E nachtlang Fүүrland**, Klopfenstein has made dark, mostly black and white films, and if not, then with an indulging monotony of colour. Yet in fact, Klopfenstein's nocturnal films all deal with life.

Klopfenstein: «Because at night, which is only a light-dark, the framing that the human eye has becomes twice as wide: Instead of 90 degrees in the daytime colours, this becomes 170 degrees at night. I've always been fascinated by this. And: Rambling through the Rome of the 1970s at three o'clock in the morning and your eyes, as though set in a dream, soaring onwards through the absolutely empty streets of the palaces and ruins. An amazing trip that you can't take anymore nowadays, because it's the night of day there (everything was better in the past).» Clemens Klopfenstein

2) DAY

1984–85 marked a turning point in Klopfenstein's life. On the one hand he turned 40, and he became a father for the first time. On the other hand, he started to reflect on his creative output and the meaning of life. And it may be considered a coincidence that in 1984 of all years, the film **Der Ruf der Sibylla** was made, with most of it being shot in the glaring brightness of day. But in fact, with the exception of **Fүүrland 2** which was made in 1992 as a follow-up to **E nachtlang Fүүrland**, all of the subsequent films from Clemens Klopfenstein are set in the day.

Klopfenstein: «I always try to shoot at night actually, it's got so much more poetry. But it's barely doable now because of the unions. And of course it's hard for me to do the lighting set-up for the Gemmi Pass at night.»

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3) ITALY

«1972 in absolutely the most boring Switzerland, and I get the scholarship for Rome! Italy, crises, attacks, abductions and rampa zampa. Great. And a great press! Arriving in Rome with the (almost) Borghese coup d'état right next to the Istituto Svizzero. The manifestations, the illegal radios. I'm completely blown away. Can even work as a photojournalist in Italy for the *Basler Nachrichten*, *Bund*, *Tagesanzeiger* and *NZZ* newspapers. Fanfani, Almirante, Craxi all up-close from the back and the front, together with the great marches by the left and the right: A superb political time.

Now, 30 years later: I came from Rome to an idyllic place, a simple, Umbrian, communist-petty bourgeois place, to Bevagna. I never thought I'd get stuck there. But the children are really happy and me too, actually. Six months ago, Bevagna was chosen as the place with the best quality of life in Italy (according to the Statistical Office). I've known for a long time that it's okay here. But now the jet set (wine shops) and the masses of cars are on their way. If I could, I'd move to Sicily now, which is also the setting for almost all of my pictures. The best thing about this boom is that now you can get the German *FAZ* and *SZ* newspapers from six o'clock in the morning at the kiosk around the corner. Because: Something is happening in Germany right now (and maybe even in Switzerland?).» Clemens Klopfenstein

4) EIGER, MÖNCH AND JUNGFRAU

Since 1973, Clemens Klopfenstein has mainly lived in Italy. Yet for that his films – mostly of which are shot in the broadest Bernese German dialects – are genuine Swiss movies. For which reason there is also no resentment towards Klopfenstein when he teasingly calls for «drastic treatment for Swiss film» and proposes, for the purpose of developing a corporate identity, that at least five minutes of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau mountains have to be seen in every Swiss film. Which is a subject that Max and Polo then go on to talk about in **Das Schweigen der Männer**, when Polo says at the start of the sausage salad-pyramid scene: «Have a look at that now, they're making mountains where they don't have any: (pointing to the three pyramids) Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.»

5) ALPINE-OSCAR

Even if he himself has long claimed that he is only playing in the B league of Swiss film, Clemens Klopfenstein has accumulated an array of prizes. But his own personal favourite is the Swiss Film Award he received in 1998 for **Das Schweigen der Männer** and which he himself mischievously called the «Alpine Oscar». And the scene in the film when Polo and Max are circling the Egyptian pyramids on camels in the blazing sun and discussing the right way to prepare a Swiss sausage salad is unforgettable.

CLEMENS KLOPFENSTEIN

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Klopfenstein: «Yes, I am proud of it. It was a surprise to be first. Thanks to some dear friends and colleagues on the jury. But what people don't know: For years and years, one of the most important persons on the jury drank up all my wine in Rome, and I told him the whole time that one day you'd pay me back. And he did so after 30 years, by standing up for and supporting me and my film. That's what I call a long-lasting friendship.»

6) MAGIC

In **Der Ruf der Sibylla** (The Call of Sibylla), magic entered Klopfenstein's films. With it being the domain of women to be bound to the powers of the divine, coloured elixirs. Then in **Füürland 2**, Max's Brazilian civil partner used genuine voodoo magic to dispose of her rivals.

Klopfenstein: «After the film **E nachtlang Füürland**, which is set in the Bernese movement and revolution and which then went awry, many of the protagonists committed suicide or became drug addicts. And I became aware of the slogan from Paris: «La fantaisie au pouvoir!» and I said to myself, we just have to pull ourselves up out of the dirt now.

Magic, and magical liqueurs that change the world. At that time, a good friend invited me by chance to the Sibillini Mountains here in Umbria and then told me the legend of the witch Sibylla. And I knew at once that my Bernese married couple would have to drive through there and that the reality would then change itself.»

7) LIQUIDS

Schnapps is his fuel, Klopfenstein says. He does not take any illicit drugs, nor does he smoke – but the glass of wine drunk with friends, or the liquor sipped at a bar: Blissfulness, creativity and a zest for life are all embodied within in. And that not only in real life, but always in his films as well.

Klopfenstein: «Once in **Der Ruf der Sibylla**, Max got some real «Strega» liqueur by mistake in his glass when we were shooting, and as always he drank down the whole glass on the spot in a great gesture, at ten o'clock in the morning. Then we had two days off from the film. But what I wanted to say is: I myself love the light white wine from the Abruzzo region from about eleven o'clock onwards. («The eleven-o'clock shot», my father would say.) And then go driving around on these wonderful roads in the Sibillini Mountains: Then everything starts to percolate, and the best ideas come to me.»

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