

## The Swiss Makers – The Swiss Queer Film Programme

Unity in diversity – this is the motto of the small country in the heart of Europe. Switzerland can be just as engaging as it is dismissive, just as traditional as innovative. Indisputable, however, is the fact that it is a stronghold of direct democracy: Switzerland is the only nation in the world in which its people voted on legalising same-sex relationships – and the law was adopted in 2005.

A nation is defined by how it deals with minorities. When Switzerland admitted foreign workers in the 1960s, the Swiss population adopted a closed and aloof attitude towards them. Hardly any film illustrates this better than "The Swissmakers" ("Die Schweizermacher") – still the most popular Swiss film to date. Self-irony is the best way to improvement.

It also took some time for homosexuality to be accepted in Switzerland. Although officially decriminalised in 1942, it was tolerated as long as it remained invisible. It was only in the 1970s – like elsewhere – that the emancipation movement advocating for gay rights came into being. The film "Katzenball" traces this story with exceptional archive material spanning four generations to the present.

In the 1980s homosexuality was also a theme in Swiss auteur films; in Léa Pool's "Anne Trister" or thereafter in "Emporte-moi", for example. The filmmaker, who emigrated to Canada, was not the only one to find Switzerland too confining and to seek new horizons: Marcel Gisler moved to Berlin, where he produced his film "The Blue Hour". Daniel Schmid had already left in the 1960s to live in Berlin and become part of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's clique. His illustrious biography is portrayed in the film "Daniel Schmid – Le chat qui pense."

To this day, queer filmmaking in Switzerland has enjoyed continuity – particularly among the young generation of filmmakers who have gained international acclaim with their short film productions. They ensure that the small country appears again and again on the programmes of queer film festivals around the world.

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