



# **„UNWANTED PREGNANCY the long way to legal abortion“**

**Films on the occasion of the congress of FIAPAC**

**10/11 September 2004 - Vienna, Austria**

**Technische Universität  
Hörsaal 7/Lecutre room 7  
Gusshausstrasse 27-29  
1040 Vienna  
Austria**

Near Karlsplatz, which is a major subway station

**Thu 9 September**

18.30: A STORY OF WOMEN (UNE AFFAIRE DE FEMMES) 1988 France, original version with English subtitles (108min)

20.30: POTASSIUM CYANIDE (CYANKALI) 1930 Germany, original version (86 min)

**Fri 10 September**

18.30: ABORTED (ABGETRIEBEN) 1992 Germany, original version (90 min)

**Sat 11 September**

18.30: IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK 1997 USA original version (95min)

20.30: UNTOLD STORIES 1992 USA original version (28min) +  
BACKROOM TROUBLES 1997 New Zealand original version (50min)

**Sun 12 September**

12.30: RIVETER FILMS 2003 USA original version with German subtitles (4min) +  
UP THE JUNCTION 1965 United Kingdom, original version (72min)

14.30: WOMEN IN DISTRESS WOMEN'S HAPPINESS (Frauennot / Frauenglück),

1929 Switzerland, original German version with English and French subtitles (Part One: 40 min) +

MR BUSH'S SECOND CRUSADE (Der andere Kreuzzug des Mr. Bush, ARTE-report)  
2004 France and Germany, German version (12 min)

16.30: JANE: AN ABORTION SERVICE 1996 USA, original version (58min) +

DEMOCRACY ON A TRIAL THE MORGENTALER AFFAIR 1984 Canada, original English version (58min)

18.30: CIDERHOUSE RULES, 1999 USA, original version with German subtitles (131min)

Contribution towards expenses: 6 Euro per showing, sale of tickets exclusively at the box office (no reservations)

>>Thursday, 9 September, 18.30:

### **A STORY OF WOMEN (Une Affaire de Femmes)**

Claude Chabrol's matter-of-fact view of the theme of illegal abortion, his criticism of society's double standards and of a male-dominated judiciary in 1940s France is today considered to be one of the most important films dealing with abortion.

Chabrol directs his documentary-like film, which is based on an authentic case, with a great deal of psychological sensitivity for his main character – a woman who gets caught up in illegal activities due to the chaos of war. She is played superbly by Isabelle Huppert. Vichy during the Second World War: While her husband is confined to a military hospital, Marie has to fend for herself and her two small children. She struggles on, but has got hardly enough for bare essentials. Then she has the idea of earning money as a back-street abortionist and by renting a room to a prostitute. After her husband has returned from the war, she manages for some time to keep her activities secret from him. Eventually he has to realise that his wife is keeping the family by carrying out illegal abortions and has also taken a lover. This makes him take a step that has serious consequences which make his wife become the victim of a merciless justice system.

France 1988, 110 min, French original version with English subtitles

Director: Claude Chabrol Screenplay: Colo Tavernier O'Hagan and Claude Chabrol, based on Francis Szpiner's novel of the same name Camera: Jean Rabier, Cut: Monique Fardoulis Music: Matthieu Chabrol Starring: Isabelle Huppert, Francois Cluzet, Lolita Chammah, Nils Tavernier, Marie Tritignant

>>Thursday, 9 September, 20.30:

## **POTASSIUM CYANIDE (Cyankali)**

Hans Tintner's film Potassium Cyanide is very much influenced by the intellectual progressiveness of the Weimar Republic and New Objectivity. It is based on Friedrich Wolf's play of the same name. Wolf denounces the so-called Abortion Paragraph (§ 218) and puts it up for discussion. He was arrested in 1931 for having offended against § 218 and Tintner's film was banned. At the time of the Economic Crisis Hete, a young woman, gets pregnant by her boyfriend Paul. When Paul loses his job and Hete does not know how to feed the child she is expecting, she decides to have an abortion. At first she seeks her gynaecologist's help and advice. However, she learns that, due to the abortion law § 218, his hands are tied and he cannot assist her. That is why she cannot see any alternative but to attempt an abortion on herself and, when this attempt fails, to go to a back-street abortionist, who gives her a tincture of potassium cyanide to take with her. She is to apply the tincture at home. Malnutrition and starvation have already weakened Hete. When her mother, who nurses her, continues giving her the tincture, she nearly dies. Two civil servants are on her track; they interrogate Hete and her mother. Contrary to what might be expected, however, it is the state that is denounced, the state that does not take care of its people and forces innumerable women into having illegal abortions.

Germany 1930, 86 min, partly without sound, partly with sound, German version  
Director: Hans Tintner Screenplay: Hans Tintner; based on Friedrich Wolf's play of the same name, Camera: Günther Krampf, Music: Willy Schmidt-Gentner Starring: Grete Mosheim, Nico Turoff, Claus Clausen, Herma Ford, Margarete Kupfer, and others

>>Friday, 10 September, 18:30:

## **ABORTED (ABGETRIEBEN)**

Based on the sensational trial against gynaecologist Dr. Theissen from the city of Memmingen, Norbert Kückelmann directed a television film in 1992 in which he strictly adhered to the legal facts of the case. Dr. Heß, as he is called in the film, was accused of performing abortions on women who did not provide the legally required medical consultation certificate. Heß is said to have relied solely on his own competence to judge these women's social or psychological difficulties. He is arrested because of this fact and many of the women on whom he carried out abortions are questioned about every possible detail in a public trial and are eventually sentenced, since the court does not acknowledge their reasons as personal plight. Kückelmann's film does not so much put forward arguments for or against abortion. Rather, it conveys a picture of how - being confronted with a

sensationalist public - the most intimate feelings are mercilessly exposed in this matter. The sympathy in this film is clearly on the side of those women who have to give evidence before an inhumane male-dominated court.

Germany 1992, 90 min, German version

Director: Norbert Kückelmann Starring: Hans Zischler, Christine Neubauer, Dominic Raacke, Axel Milberg, Ruth Drexel, and others

>>Saturday, 11 September, 18.30:

### **IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK**

Nancy Savoca's and Cher's star-studded episodic film presents a critical view of the ever-growing conservative forces in America that, on the one hand, scorn consultation and advice about contraception as "immoral" and, on the other hand, bring up the guns against abortion.

The film tells the story of three women who live in the same house in different decades and who are all confronted with the problem of an unwanted pregnancy. In 1952 the newly widowed nurse Clare goes and sees a back-street abortionist in order to put an end to her pregnancy. After giving birth to three children, Barbara at last has the realistic hope of finding a job again, but then a new pregnancy thwarts her plans. In 1974 abortion is already legal; however, this fact does not make it any easier for Barbara to take the right decision. In 1996 Christine, a student, consults an abortion clinic to get information on abortion. While doing this, she is being harassed by militant anti-abortionists.

USA 1997, TV, 95 min, original version

Directors: Nancy Savoca, Cher Screenplay: Nancy Savoca Camera: Bobby Bukowski, Ellen Kuras, John Stanier Cut: Peter Honess, Elena Maganini Music: Cliff Eidelman Production: HBO, Moving Pictures Starring: Demi Moore, Sissy Spacek, Catherine Keener, Jason London, Anne Heche, and others

>>Saturday, 11 September, 20.30:

### **WHEN ABORTION WAS ILLEGAL: UNTOLD STORIES**

The era of illegal abortion is still a chapter in the history of American women that is kept quiet about. In her documentary, Dorothy Fadiman examines the physical, emotional and legal consequences that women had to face up to at a time when abortion was considered to be an illegal act. Several women frankly talk about their experiences, some of them for the first time. Doctors and employees of health organisations as well as the women's relatives also voice their views.

USA 1992, 28 min, original version

Directed and produced by Dorothy Fadiman

plus

### **BACKROOM TROUBLES**

In Andrea Bosshard's and Shane Loader's moving, shocking, but occasionally also ironic documentary from New Zealand women also talk about the illegal abortions they had. The two directors interview women from different generations who very candidly talk about the circumstances that forced them to have an illegal abortion, and about the frequently traumatising consequences. These reports are completed with historical photographs and news material, which demonstrate the conflict between the women's reality and the social and moral expectations people have of them.

New Zealand 1997, 50 min, original version

Directors: Andrea Bosshard, Shane Loader Cut: Shane Loader Production: Vanguard Films, Community Media Trust

>> Sunday, 12 September, 12.30:

### **THE SAINTS, RIVETER DREAMS**

Three short films which show and denounce the radical anti-abortion policy of both the church and the American administration.

USA 2003, 4 min, original version with German subtitles

Director: Jennifer Lee, Production: [Riveter](#)

plus

### **UP THE JUNCTION**

The English director Ken Loach is a true master and always expresses his political and social concerns cinematically. In this semi-documentary early work he deals, among other things, with the topic of abortion. Loach made Up the Junction for the BBC series "Wednesday Play" in 1965. When it was first broadcast, it had nearly ten million viewers and provoked heated debates. Not only its portrayal of sexual promiscuity was discussed, but also its attitude towards abortion. Eventually it led to the legalisation of abortion in England in 1967. Besides, the lyrical style of the film, its use of 1960s pop music and its fragmentary structure make Up the Junction to an audiovisual experience and great contemporary document.

Great Britain 1965, TV, 72 min, original version

Director: Ken Loach, Screenplay: Nell Dunn Camera: Tony Imi, Starring: Geraldine

Sherman, Carol White, Vicerky Turner, Michael Standing, Tony Selby, and others

>>Sunday, 12 September, 14.30:

### **WOMEN IN DISTRESS - WOMEN'S HAPPINESS**

Part One (Frauennot - Frauenglück, 1. Teil) Sergej Eisenstein's and Grigori Alexandrov's film Women in Distress – Women's Happiness was shot in Switzerland. The first part of the film takes the plight of women who have unwanted pregnancies as its theme. Expressive descriptions of the suffering and the deaths of women who secretly consult a back-street abortionist are contrasted with shots of Zurich University Clinic, where abortions can be performed safely and without any problems provided that the abortion is legal for medical reasons.

Switzerland 1929, 40 min, original German version with English and French subtitles

Directors: Sergej Eisenstein, Grigori Alexandrov Camera: Eduard Tissé, Music:

Martin Uhl Production: Lazar Wechsler

plus

### **MR BUSH'S SECOND CRUSADE (DER ANDERE KREUZZUG DES MR. BUSH)**

Since 2001, for ideological and religious reasons, the American administration has cut any financial support for those organisations that defend the right to abortion. As a consequence, numerous clinics had to be closed, a fact that has made the situation of women in Kenya become more and more drastic. More than 4,000 women die there annually, due to the catastrophic medical and hygienic circumstances surrounding illegal abortions in some kind of backrooms.

France and Germany 2004, TV, 12 min, German version Arte report, first broadcast on June 16, 2004

Director: Ludovic Fessart, ARTE GEIE/Hirkaki Productions

>>Sunday, 12 September, 16.30:

### **JANE: AN ABORTION SERVICE**

This fascinating political portrayal of an almost unknown chapter of female history tells us about the Chicago women's health group "Jane", which carried out nearly 12,000 safe, but illegal abortions between 1969 and 1973. Members of "Jane" describe how they got more and more interested in feminist issues; clients report how they got to know "Jane". Archive material about the oppression of women in the early 1960s and about the development of social movements in the late 1960s demonstrates how "Jane's" activities were influenced by them.

USA 1996, 58 min, original version, Directors: Kate Kirtz, Nell Lundy

plus

### **DEMOCRACY ON A TRIAL: THE MORGENTALER AFFAIR**

Canadian physician Dr Morgentaler's fight for legal and safe abortions since the 1970s and its serious legal consequences for him form the centre of Democracy on a Trial: The Morgentaler Affair. This compelling docudrama demonstrates the complexity of this case, which began with the demand for a Canadian abortion law and turned into an explosive civil rights case. Dr Morgentaler's commitment resulted in unique legal progress: Since 1988 Canada has been the only country in which there is no single law concerning abortion any more.

CAN 1984, 58 min, original english version

Director: Paul Cowan Screenplay: Jefferson Lewis, Kamera: Mike Mahoney, Paul Cowan Cut: Paul Cowan, Music: Alex Pauk, Alexian Louie Starring: Henry Morgentaler, Mike Morgentaler, Michael Rudder, Lisa Schwartz, Claude-Armand Sheppard and others

>>Sunday, 12 September, 18.30:

### **CIDERHOUSE RULES (GOTTES WERK UND TEUFELS BEITRAG)**

When John Irving adapted his novel of the same name for the screenplay of Ciderhouse Rules, he compromised to a certain extent by doing without the depth and details that had previously been part of the humanitarian themes connected with abortion, incest and responsibility. Nevertheless, Lasse Hallstrom's brilliant film, which was awarded two Oscars, captivates its audience with its sober, Scandinavian, but also conciliatory focus on the shortcomings, peculiarities and desires of its characters. Homer (Tobey Maguire), a young man growing up in a Maine orphanage, is instructed by the director of the orphanage, Dr Larch (Michael Caine), into medical skills and into how to carry out safe abortions, which are illegal during the Second World War, though. During an abortion he gets to know Candy and her friend Wally and joins them in order to get away from the orphanage. He takes a job on a farm, where he is confronted with violence, but also with love. Dr Larch tries to get Homer back and wants him to be his successor. Homer, who takes a critical view of abortion, is thus drawn into a moral conflict and has great difficulty freeing himself from it.

USA 1999, 131 min, original version with German subtitles

Director: Lasse Hallstrom Screenplay: John Irving, adapted from his novel of the same name

Camera: Oliver Stapleton Cut: Lisa Zeno Churgin Music: Rachel Portman Starring:



Tobey Maguire, Michael Caine, Charlize Theron, Delroy Lindo, Paul Rudd and others

Selection of films: Christa Auderlitzky, Christian Fiala

Film texts: Christa Auderlitzky

We would like to thank all distributors and worldwide sales departments and Arte.

The showing of this series of films is supported by the

Association FIAPAC, [www.fiapac.org](http://www.fiapac.org) and

Gynmed Ambulatorium, Vienna, [www.gynmed.at](http://www.gynmed.at).