German Film Series

Spring 2010
7:30pm
1003 Brown Hall
Western Michigan University

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER (1945–1982)

This semester the focus of the German Film Series will be on the famous German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Fassbinder, the best known director of the New German Cinema, was also one of the most important filmmakers of the post-WWII generation. He directed over 40 films, wrote most of his scripts, and produced and edited many of his films. He worked in several genres, but he is perhaps best known for his socially and politically conscious films of the 1950s. He was involved in the avant-garde theatre movement in Munich and helped form the Antitheatre (1967). His films often explore themes of oppression and despair. Four of his best film productions will be presented in chronological order.

1. **Angst essen Seele auf** – Fear eats the Soul (1974)

   **Monday, January 25**

   Rainer Werner Fassbinder's fifteenth film represents perhaps the peak of his renowned domestic melodrama period. It is the story of an improbable romance between Ali, a young black Gastarbeiter in Munich, and Emmi, an elderly, widowed German cleaning woman.

2. **Die Ehe der Maria Braun** – The Marriage of Maria Braun (1979)

   **Monday, February 15**

   Fassbinder's masterpiece analyzes the German post-War experience through feminist eyes. Nominated for the Golden Globe Award. During WWII, Maria and Herman Braun marry in Germany but Herman is soon sent to the Russian Front and reported missing. Maria uses her beauty and ambition to prosper during Germany's economic miracle of the 1950's. "The Marriage of Maria Braun" is a heartbreaking study of one woman attempting to survive the ruins of her own life, as well as a pointed metaphorical attack on a society determined to forget its past. Fassbinder's biggest international box-office success.
3. **Lola** (1981)

**Monday, March 15**

Ten years after the war, West Germany's market economy is booming. Herr von Bohm, who is committed to progress and high moral standards, is the new building commissioner in an unnamed German city rife with corruption. He is smitten by Marie-Louise, a single mother and his landlady's daughter. Von Bohm does not realize she is also Lola, a singer at a bordello and the mistress of Schuckert, a local builder whose profits depend on von Bohm's projects. When von Bohm discovers Marie-Louise's real vocation and looks closely at Schuckert's work, we begin to wonder if this social satire will play out as a remake of "Blue Angel," a visit of Chekhov to West Germany, or an update of Jean Renoir's "Rules of the Game."


**Monday, April 5**

On a rainy night in Munich in 1955, the sports reporter Robert Krohn offers his umbrella to the former successful UFA actress Veronika Voss but he does not recognize her. Later she calls him and invites him for a drink. He discovers in Voss an unstable and decadent actress living in her past success. Out of love, pity, and curiosity, Robert has an affair with Veronika and discovers a dangerous gang led by Dr. Marianne Katz that addicts wealthy patients to morphine to get their fortune when they die.