

PRESS KIT

A FILM BY
MICHEL RODDE

WITH
AURÉLIA LÜSCHER

KOKOSCHKA

L I F E ' S W O R K

www.kokoschka.movie

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Marked by fire right from birth, passing through it into battle during his youth, cruelly wounded by love and wars, multi-coloured by paint and commitments, pursued, exiled, such is Oskar Kokoschka, artist traveller and seismograph of the bloodiest of centuries.



SYNOPSIS

Painter, writer, lover, playwright, traveller, and freethinker, Oskar Kokoschka is a rare being, remaining young, lucid and passionate throughout the many ordeals he experienced during his long life. Both classic and modern, his pictorial works of art remains avant-garde, and his topicality relates to us and warns us in a most ardent way: his high moral standards which are cruelly lacking in our times are an example that should be more widely known. The intimate life of Kokoschka mingles with the artistic and social life of that of a committed citizen. Added to his tireless life is the unremitting activity of the painter – thinker, each painting is a declaration of liberty and hope, a message of painful beauty and fraternity, a celebration of life.

NOTE

For certain artists, it's not essential to know about their lives in order to understand their work. For Kokoschka one reflects the other so significantly that his work wouldn't be complete if the life that fuels it wasn't highlighted. Film is the privileged location that allows us to make this synthesis; it precisely here that its power resides. It is, in fact the principal virtue that cinema offers us. Thanks to sounds and images, thanks to a continuum of 90 minutes, all the flashes, the twists and turns, the variations of style, the direction changes, the accidents influenced by History along the way, mixed with suffering and personal joys, produce, ultimately, a form of painting which is unique. This film is a personal vision of the eventful path followed by a great man confronted by his work in a bloody century. Fictional sections that slip into the stream of the film give it its emotional dimension. No learned presentations, no commentary by experts, and no external intervention to break the line of narration or disturb the rhythm. The film proposes a complete immersion in the artist's universe "A thousand and one lives on a solitary road" could sum up the uniqueness and universality of the life work of this man, a man of great rectitude and rare courage.

A FEW FIGURES...

The film contains

- 89 archive photos
- 271 archive films
- 71 copies of the artist's work

LINKS

Preview trailer

www.kokoschka.movie

IMDB

Facebook

Twitter

ABOUT THIS FILM

INTENTION

My aim was not to make a conventional documentary. I didn't wish to punctuate my film using external interventions from the art world. No interviews with people who would have known him, of specialists who would tell us how and why he had painted such and such a painting, who would be situated on the screen between the work itself and the camera. I wanted to create a film that would dive deep into the painter's universe, his work and his life. Without intermediates. A live effect.

DYNAMICS

The film is composed of stylized fictional scenes which are articulated around images from the archives, the work itself and photos, at a sustained pace which corresponds to Kokoschka's constant trips traveling mainly across Europe made in order to paint. My starting point was Kokoschka's own texts, especially his autobiography. His writings in the first person singular, I distributed using two voices: his own and that of the narrator / actress. Music, that played an essential role in his life, gives a strong structure to the account.

DIRECTION

To avoid losing the spectator in this abundant life-work, I, from the outset chose a chronological form. We take off with Kokoschka across Europe and the Middle East, with his incessant voyages, mostly accomplished by train, more rarely by plane or boat. This perpetual movement crosses a time period that coincides with the 20th century, since Kokoschka (1886 – 1980) is the near perfect contemporary, witness and committed person.

SIGNED: OK

Throughout his life's work, Kokoschka constantly projects himself ahead. He draws and paints at an extraordinary rhythm shaken by the upheavals of History and the hazards of his passionate love life... He's a visionary. He penetrates deep into the psyches of his models rendering even the most secret parts visible. What is most particularly interesting when following his path is that Kokoschka doesn't calculate anything. Right from his first exhibition at the Kunstschau in Vienna in 1907, he provokes a scandal by radically breaking away from the decorative art of the Jugendstil that of his teacher Gustav Klimt, and head of the dominant artistic movement. The publicity posters for his play "Assassin Espoir des Femmes" "Murder Hope for Women" remains still today the emblematic model for nascent expressionism, violently challenging the establishment. Look at this poster, and note that it could be the expression of a punk artist today. If the Kokoschka of 20 years old had been working today he would perhaps be a master spray paint "outdoor" artist and would have covered the walls of all the towns in Europe.

HISTOIRE, HISTOIRES

As young man, citizen of the Austro Hungarian Empire, Kokoschka lived in Vienna, a major cultural capital city. He developed in artistic bohemia, talented and hard working. He was fed by great hopes. He was a young man cherished by his mother and supported by Loos, architect iconoclast and mentor who gave him his confidence. First disaster: Alma Mahler his great love left him. Second disaster: the gigantic slaughter of the first world war, during which, he was seriously injured. Then the rise of extremes, fascism and Nazism foremost, communism veering to tyranny: the infernal machine is set in motion with just a few short moments of respite before the more technical butchery, but none the less deadly, of the second world war. Kokoschka is caught in the maelstrom, never ceases to paint, and clings to his art. The human face troubles him, he doesn't want to paint it any more; however it's the face of towns that he captures seen from an elevated position. At 50 years old, even though already famous, shown in the biggest galleries of the whole world, he doubts, he says his work remains problematic.

COMMITMENTS

Though not a militant artist like George Grosz, he never stopped speaking out during the century, placarding his texts and works on several occasions in Prague, Dresden and London, contributing to newspapers against the Nazism of Germany, risking his life. It didn't take long to join the cohorts of pilloried artists, declared « degenerates » by the 3rd Reich. Exiled in London, he painted a series of so-called « political » paintings condemning by means of the grotesque and belligerent. Fervent pacifist he will make an official protest against the bombing of German cities ordered by Churchill. The film takes into account all these elements, like the fact that Kokoschka was particularly touched by the plight of war orphans. He painted, sold his work, and spent a part of his income on such causes.

HELVETIA

Moving to Switzerland after the war, he has a house built above lake Lemman, at Villeneuve. He settles in the region where as a young man, he had experienced his first trip to a foreign country and painted his first landscapes. He also knew that he would find in this country, art lovers who would appreciate his work and buy his paintings. Anxious to communicate his knowledge, he created at Salzburg his « Ecole du Regard » School of looking. He travels to Greece, cradle of our civilisation that he revered, and taking simple coloured crayons out of his box before the ancient ruins... he distances himself thanks to the contemplation of these masterpieces, which help heal his soul. Meanwhile his sight is fading, he stops painting and concentrates entirely on writing his memoirs.

OLDA AND OSKAR

Kokoschka is a being with an extraordinary life force. He had always kept a childlike sense of playfulness and mischief. He never gave in to hopelessness, despite the terrible events he encountered. He was a modest man the very essence of elegance. He always knew how to keep positive, without ever compromising. He remained faithful to his

family and his friends. His wife Olda, with whom he married during the bombardment of London, became the pillar of his existence. After the death of Kokoschka, she would create the Foundation that bears his name, which can be found at Vevey, on the banks of lake Lemman.

For these many reasons this man attracted me as much as an artist and also as a human being. Today, and for the time to come, he remains an example. I've made this film as homage and make him better known to the public in general.



OSKAR KOKOSCHKA: brilliant painter and man of honour

In order to accomplish my dream of taking up the life work of a man of the calibre of Oskar Kokoschka, the road has been extremely long and difficult. For more than fifteen years the works and the life of this painter, writer and untiring traveller have fascinated me. Since becoming immersed in the paintings and in the writings of Oskar Kokoschka, the desire to make a film featuring this brotherly man as its subject has never left me. Several years of research, reflection and writing have been necessary to find an adequate form, to achieve the making of this film and I am today proud and pleased to be able to present it to the public.

Oskar Kokoschka (1886 -1980) crossed a troubled and bloody century, marked by two world wars and the abyss of genocides, but also enriched by extraordinary scientific discoveries and fundamental social gains. Participant and witness of his times, Kokoschka varied his style according to Historical tragedies and personal dramas. In his lifetime the major and multiple works of the painter were perhaps less well known to the public than his teacher Gustav Klimt, but today, a number of important works of Kokoschka are hung in the biggest museums of the world and not a year goes by without an exhibition being devoted to him, as will be the that of Kunsthaus in Zurich at the end of 2018. In the course of many years of work on this painter, I have discovered, not only an impressive volume of works, but also a man both exceptional and close to humanity, of a great generosity, also ready to commit himself against all forms of oppression, and acclaiming a life of liberty. He possessed effectively a stupendous vitality, carried a curiosity for beings without bounds. It's in the moments of doubt, the moments when obstacles rise up in a manner seemingly insurmountable, when I was close to giving everything up, that I remembered Kokoschka exiled, very sick and unknown in London, during the war. He used to hide away in museums. He found himself before Rembrandt's auto portraits. Kokoschka was deeply troubled by this painter of genius who had the courage to look himself in the face, before his own decrepitude, and paint. Each time Kokoschka returned to see the old Rembrandt a wonderful empathy came over him. Slowly, his courage restored, he returned to his canvases and brushes and it wasn't bombs falling on the city that were going to stop him... that's the kind of talisman that's never left me. The uprightness and vision of Oskar Kokoschka are values that are often lacking in our times. In the troubled period which is ours today, a man like him, who never gave in to despair- he who would have had, several times, reason to despair – is an example for everyone of us.

Kokoschka, life's work is a film that's off the beaten track. A life's work condensed into 90 minutes, crossing virtually the totality of the 20th century, composed of archives and fiction, supported by the works and words of Oskar Kokoschka. A film turned towards the future, dedicated to today's youth and those of tomorrow.

MICHEL RODDE Author – Filmmaker

Born in Paris. Baccalauréat obtained in Neuchâtel (Switzerland). Independent, self taught film director. A brief time spent at INSAS with André Delvaux. Prizewinner of the Vocation Foundation, Bleustein-Blanchet. Fictional works, documentaries, cinema and television reporting. Photographer, scriptwriter and consultant. Work on screenplay with K.Kieslovski and E.Zebrovski. Assistant to Andrej Zulawski. Theatre with André Steiger, Hervé Loichemol and Jacques Roman. Pedagogical workshops: film analysis, writing and direction: Theatre and cinema schools, secondary and primary schools.

FILMOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTARY with bursts of FICTION

2017-2018 KOKOSCHKA, Oeuvre-Vie Vevey (Avant-première) Ottawa (Award World Fest best documentary feature) salles : Martigues, Mudaison, Journées Cinéma Suisse Montpellier, Festival Aventiclap Avenches, Festival Master of Art Sofia Bulgarie.

FICTIONS

- 2010 IMPASSE DU DESIR 94' 35mm Sortie salles Suisse et Canada, Soleure, Festival des Films du Monde Montréal, Cinefranco Toronto, Rencontres Européennes du Cinéma de Vannes, Festival cinéma suisse de Montpellier, tournée aux Etats unis: Los Angeles et Denver. Diffusion sur TV5 Canada, TSR
- 2004 JE SUIS TON PERE, 90' 35mm Sortie salles, Locarno, Soleure, Selb, Diffusion TSR
- 2001 LUDIVINE OU LE GENIE DES EAUX, 6'30, 35 mm Festival Cinéma Tout Ecran, Genève, Diffusion TSR
- 1998 L'AMOUR FOU (Requiem Glove) 85', 35 mm Festival Cinéma Tout Ecran Genève, Soleure Sortie en salles, Diffusé sur la TSR
- 1994 L'ECUME DES REVES 33', 16 mm Festivals de Locarno, Sarajevo, Tout Ecran Genève, Soleure, SELB Diffusé sur la TSR
- 1991 LA PRINCESSE BLANCHE, Adaptation cinématographique de la pièce de R.M. Rilke Fragment d'un film inachevé : Diffusion Cinémathèque suisse 21', super 16 mm (support Betacam)
- 1986 LE VOYAGE DE NOEMIE, 90', 35 mm Prime Fédérale à la Qualité Sortie salles Festival de Locarno, Festival CAC Genève. Diffusé TSR, ZDF.
- 1984 BEATRICE 8' 35 mm Prime Fédérale à la Qualité. Diffusé en salles en avant-programme. Diffusé sur la TSR
- 1983 LES AILES DU PAPILLON 52', 16 mm Prime Fédérale à la Qualité Festivals de Mannheim, Cannes, Locarno, Montréal, San Remo... Diffusé sur la TSR

- 1981 SWEET READING 30', 16 mm Prime Fédérale à la Qualité Festivals de Locarno, Lille, Huesca, Cracovie... Diffusé sur la TSR et FR3
- 1979 AU BORD DU LAC, 23', 16 mm Prime Fédérale à la Qualité Festivals de Lille, Soleure... Diffusion sur la TSR
- 1976 UNE DIONEE 65', 16 mm Prime Fédérale à la Qualité, Prix Image au festival de Cabourg, Diffusé sur la TSR
- 1974 DRIFT 1974, 10', 16 mm Grand Prix du festival d'Hyères (83) Prime fédérale d'Etudes. Diffusé sur la Télévision Suisse Romande (TSR) et sur Antenne 2
- 1973 LE TRAJET 13', 16 mm Prix Ecole et Cinéma, Nyon
- 1972 VADE RETRO 35', super 8 mm Prix Ecole et Cinéma, Nyon
- 1970 J'SUIS HEUREUX 25' 8mm

Documentaries for the TSR (RTS)

- 1999 PORTRAIT DE A. ZULAWSKI, 35', BETACAM Réalisé lors du tournage de «Mes nuits sont plus belles que vos jours» Diffusé sur la TSR- Spécial Cinéma- Christian DEFAYE

Made for the magazine "my eye" of the TSR (RTS)

- 1987 IL A DU NEZ 13'
- 1987 L'HOMME DES CAVERNES 10'
- 1988 UN INVENTEUR CHEZ LES CHINOIS 10'
- 1989 COR A CŒUR 1989 12'
- 1989 CHIENS EN CAGE 10'

Made for the magazine "Temps Présent" of the TSR (RTS)

- 1990 LA VOIX SI, LA VOIX LA 52'
- 1991 REVES BRISES DANS LA MONTAGNE 50'
- 1997 LES PASSIONNES DU TRAIN 45' Journées cinématographiques suisses de Soleure.

Made for the magazine "Viva" of the TSR (RTS)

- 2000 TOUT CE QUE VOS ENFANTS ONT TOUJOURS VOULU SAVOIR SUR LE SEXE...