



CULTURE SHOCK

CURATED BY STEVEN LOFT



CULTURE
SHOCK

CING...

The Goethe-Institut Toronto is pleased to co-present this exciting project based on former West and East German “Westerns” together with our partners at the imagineNATIVE Festival, Vtape, and the National Gallery of Canada. We have jointly commissioned four Indigenous artists to critically view features from two collections of German “Westerns” and to create short films that reflect upon the stories and the modes of representation exhibited in these films that were primarily produced in the 1960s and 1970s.

The West German “Westerns” were inspired by the enormously successful novels of Karl Friedrich May (1842-1912), who did not set foot in North America until after finishing his series of books about the famous main characters Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. The legendary French actor Pierre Brice played the fictional Native American chief called Winnetou of the Mescalero Apache tribe, appearing alongside such Hollywood stars as Lex Barker, Stewart Granger and Rod Cameron. The second series of films at the root of this project are the so called “Red Westerns” created far from the American West by Communist East Germany’s legendary DEFA film studios. One of the main qualities of these beautifully shot productions is that they portrayed the Native Americans as heroes and cast the white settlers as villains. Gojko Miti, the popular Serbian actor, stuntman, director and author, played the lead in the films of this historically important collection. We would like above all to thank the four artists Bonnie Devine, Keesic Douglas, Darryl Nepinak, and Bear Witness for their collaboration. We are grateful to Danis Goulet of imagineNATIVE and Lisa Steele of Vtape for their insight and enthusiastic participation, as well as to Stephen Loft of the National Gallery of Canada for his curatorial vision.

Sonja Griegoschewski, Director, Goethe-Institut Toronto
Doina Popescu, Deputy Director, Goethe-Institut Toronto

Once again, it has been a great pleasure for all of us at Vtape to work with the creative and energetic team at the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival on this innovative addition to the 2008 festival programming. This commissioning project also introduces new partners – The Goethe Institute (Toronto) and The National Gallery of Canada. The results - four commissioned new works - contribute to what is becoming a very nuanced and critically challenging dialogue - a dialogue about how “Indianness” is defined and who is allowed to participate – or to be more accurate, who is encouraged or discouraged. Vtape is proud to offer this publication as a part of this evolving dialogue.

Lisa Steele, Creative Director, Vtape

COYOTE AND KARL

BY STEVEN LOFT

Coyote loved stories...he especially loved stories that made him laugh.

Karl was a small man, but always animated and scheming about the things he'd do when he "got out." But Coyote liked him. And Karl spoke that earthy, guttural language that Coyote thought sounded like trees groaning under the weight of frozen, ice coated limbs.

Karl thought Coyote was just a bored prison guard. But when Karl read his stories, Coyote was enthralled.

He called out an Indian word I did not understand and now two exceptionally interesting figures made their appearance. Slowly and with dignity, they were coming toward us. They were Indians, father and son, as one could tell right away.

The older of the two was of somewhat above medium height but strongly built. His stance had something truly noble, and his movements suggested considerable physical agility. His serious face was typically Indian but not as pointed and sharply defined as that of most redskins. His eyes had a calm, almost serene expression, an expression of quiet, inner concentration which certainly made him the superior of the rest of the tribe. He wore nothing on his head. The dark hair had been tied to resemble a helmet, and had an eagle's feather sticking in it to suggest that he was the chief. He wore moccasins, worn out leggings and a leather hunting coat, everything being simply and durably made. In his belt, he had a knife. Several bags were also hanging from it which contained all those things one needs in the west. The medicine bag was attached to a cord looped around his neck, and next to it hung the pipe of peace and a scull carved of sacred clay. He held a double barreled rifle in his hand.

The younger man was dressed identically except that his garments were more delicately made. His moccasins were decorated with hedgehog bristles and the seams of his leggings and the hunting coat with fine, red decorative embroidery. Like his father, he wore a medicine bag and the calumet on a cord hanging from his neck. Because his head also was uncovered, I could see that his hair was arranged like his father's, except that it was interlaced with rattlesnake skin and showed no feather. It was long and fell heavily and abundantly over his back. Certainly many a woman would have envied this splendid, bluish ornament. His face was almost more noble than his father's and of a subdued, light brown with a tinge of bronze. As I guessed and later discovered, his age was about the same as my own and even that day when I saw him for the first time, he made a profound impression on me. I felt that he was a good human being and exceptionally gifted. We scrutinized each other at length and then I thought I observed that a momentary, friendly expression came into his eyes, which had a velvety shimmer. It was like a greeting the sun sends to earth through a cloud cover.

Coyote laughed and laughed. This was going to be a good one, he thought... one to tell all his friends about. And the other humans, the ones he used to see more often...before.

He would tell them, and they would think it was so funny, these stories about them, but not REALLY about them, just a bit about them. Coyote couldn't figure out why Karl wrote those stories kind of about places and people he'd never met. But they were funny, and that's why Coyote liked coming to this strange place.

"My white brother is calling the Indians dogs?" Winnetou asked severely. "He should remember that Winnetou is also an Indian, and knows them better than he does. When they attack a paleface, they usually have good reasons. ..."

"I don't believe that."

"The chief of the Apaches doesn't care what you believe. He suspects that things are as he says...So you didn't ask the Sioux whose land this is?"

"Certainly not."

"And now you are surprised that they consider you their enemy and treat you as the thief of their land? You are calling them dogs, and want to kill them? You fire one shot, and Winnetou will put a bullet in your head."

"What else am I going to do?" The settler sounded subdued.

"You are not going to do anything. Old Shatterhand and Winnetou will act. If you do as they say, nothing will happen to you."

Coyote had seen a lot of real fighting. It never went like that. And everyone got hurt...in some way. Wasn't it enough that there was already so much already? Bullets, thought Coyote...bullets, bullets, bullets...

Thus the testament of the Apache disappeared like its author, and as the entire Indian race will disappear...Just as the shards of the testament were scattered into the air, so the red man drifts restlessly across the wide prairies which once were his. But anyone standing before Winnetou's grave on the Metsus River will say, "Here Winnetou lies buried, an Indian and a great man." And when the last scrap of the testament will have moldered in the bushes and the water, a fair minded generation will be looking out on the savannas and the mountains of the west, and will say, "Here lies the Indian race. It did not become great because it was not permitted to."

Coyote told Karl what a good story it was. Coyote thought he should tell Karl that some day, when he got out of this jail that he should really visit all the amazing places he wrote about. Coyote knew that if he did that Karl's stories wouldn't be as funny anymore, but thought it would probably be better in

the long run. But maybe it wouldn't. Coyote had seen what happened when the other storytellers visited those beautiful places.

Karl was already writing intently. Coyote thought it best just to leave him alone.

COYOTE AND KARL

CULTURE SHOCK

BY STEVEN LOFT

“Many take issue with the thought that the Indian is a ‘vanishing race’. As far as the ethnologist is concerned, this race is not only vanishing but has almost vanished. We are now working late in the afternoon of the last day....”ⁱ

- Edward S. Curtis

Karl Friedrich May (February 25, 1842 – March 30, 1912) is one of the best selling German writers of all time, and the favourite of many famous Germans, including Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, and Herman Hesse. According to the Karl May Press based in Bamberg, his works have sold over 100 million copies across the globe, and his 60 novels have been translated into over 30 languages, including a recent series in Chinese. During his years serving time in prison for a series of petty crimes, May began writing. In 1875 his first known story was published. However, not until 1892, when ‘Winnetou I’ appeared in a book edition, did he achieve success with his writing. Many of his books are written as first-person accounts by the narrator-protagonist, and he sometimes claimed that he actually experienced the events he described.ⁱⁱ

- biography of Karl May

“Culture shock”ⁱⁱⁱ is a term often associated with travel. It refers to a feeling of disorientation when a person is suddenly confronted with an unfamiliar culture, way of life or set of attitudes.

But defined from a position of resistance to colonialism, the term takes on a much more ominous and sinister connotation.

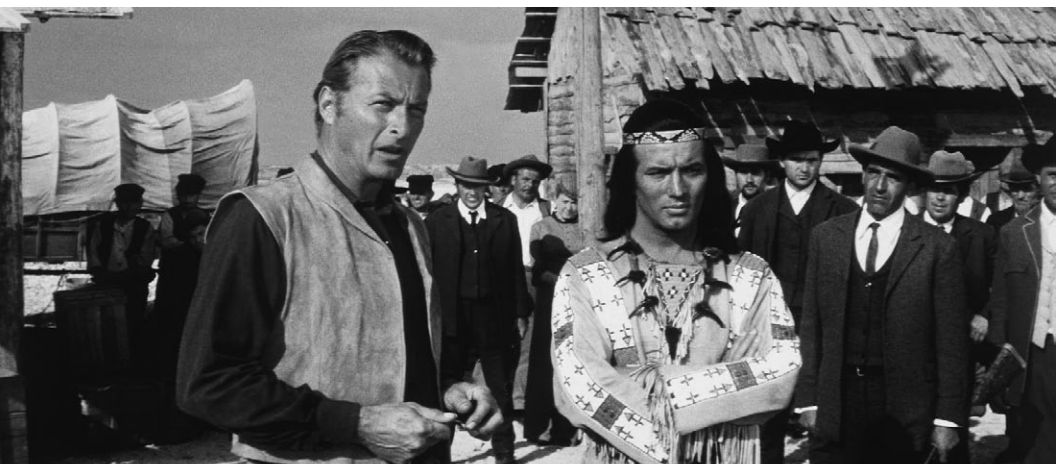
Culture “shock” occurs when peoples are disconnected from themselves. It is the loss by a person, or peoples, of psychological, social and familial integration into their culture. It can be individual or communal and manifests itself in a sense of exclusion, isolation and powerlessness. When inflicted on whole societies it represents a psycho-social amnesia. It is a byproduct of what we now know as “cultural genocide.” Aboriginal people know all about culture shock. And we know about its aftermath.

Throughout the last hundred years has come a non-stop barrage of imagery, malignant and benign, that purports to document, describe, place and conserve “disappearing” societies. Past, present, even future...a continuum on which the very notion of Aboriginal culture is subsumed to the imaginations of non-Native content providers. Images that have been manipulated to render those societies “ever more compliant to the inevitability of material exploitation by the colonizer.”^{iv} For Aboriginal people, our image has been used in popular culture as a device of social and political agendas.

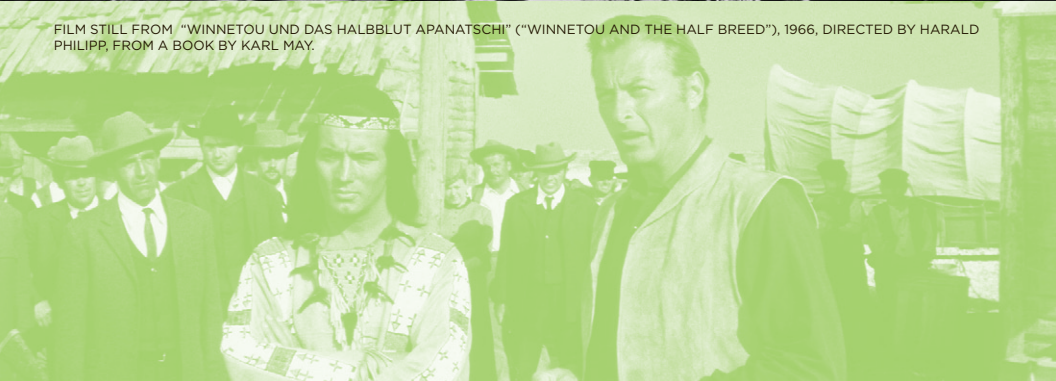
Between 1912 and 1968 German cinema produced twenty-three movies made from Karl May's novels, many of which feature the Apache leader Winnetou and his German-born "blood brother" Old Shatterhand.

Karl May was certainly writing fiction but the central tenet of his work was the same as Edward Curtis's. May believed (without even traveling to North America) that "the Indian race" was doomed to "not become great because it was "not permitted to." He engaged in a cultural revisionism that still is embedded in the popular psyche of the German people.

As Stephen Foster has noted in his essay (published in this catalogue) "*European Fantasy*", DEFA (*Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft* – the state-run East German film studios where films were made from 1946 to 1990), producer of the *Indianerfilmes* was "interested in promoting a social and



FILM STILL FROM "WINNETOU UND DAS HALBBLUT APANATSCHI" ("WINNETOU AND THE HALF BREED"), 1966, DIRECTED BY HARALD PHILIPP, FROM A BOOK BY KARL MAY.



moral ideology consistent with their brand of socialism.” For them, the importance of these films lay in the denunciation of American “imperialism” against Aboriginal people, but the widespread popularity of the films and their obvious philosophical kinship with the works of May (and others) places them firmly within the myth of the “Imaginary Indian”.

Because of the almost non-existent contact with and understanding of North American Aboriginal cultures, the works of May and the DEFA shared the common goal of memorializing Aboriginal people’s lives and cultures in a highly romanticized way, each for their own ends.

The Hollywood westerns were an altogether different model, vilifying the Aboriginal nations and seeking to revision the conquest of the “wild west” from a particularly American sensibility. That the May and DEFA films seem to refute this version of history is an interesting departure from the ethnopolitical narrative North Americans are used to seeing, but it is instructive that even these “positive” views of Aboriginal people are still infused with many of the stereotypes common in Euro-western mythologies that place Aboriginal people as victims and leave the cultural revisionists as arbiters and authors of the “real”.

But what happens when those same mythologized people find their voice? What happens when they re-inscribe customary culture and merge it with contemporary creative and artistic production? This is the radical subjectivity of anti-colonial practice that leads to cultural sovereignty. It is a rejection of the myth of the white man’s fantasy and a disavowal of the “Imaginary Indian” so prevalent in art, film, and literature. And it is the fundamental proposition of the *Culture Shock* project.

The work of affirming a continued Indian existence, of convincing ourselves and others that our culture is alive and dynamic, that history has often lied about us, that we are not all the same: this work is done. It will never be completed, and I fully expect, that in the year 2027, Indians will be answering questions about what Indians eat. But these items can now be safely crossed off our list. Indian people are clear about this: they want to remain Indian.

- Paul Chaat-Smith^{vii}

Identity is a complex narrative, woven up in personal as well as communal histories. But it is also the culmination of lived experience. Remember that it was not long ago that forced assimilation, residential schools, and dislocation were not only commonly supported, they were government policy. Aboriginal artists work from a history grounded in the colonial experience.

By reconstructing the narrative of race, Aboriginal artists self-determine the image that manifests the reality of Aboriginal culture. They represent the wide plurality of Aboriginal histories, cultures, traditions and contemporary realities, what Paul Chaat-Smith so eloquently described as “rising to the challenge of creating our own visual history.”

What our artists are doing is what they’ve always done - creating cultural presence. This kind of art making is not about identity politics; it is the assertion of cultural sovereignty. But they also make the statement that they (and by extension, we) are not afraid to view ourselves in relation to our colonial history. They are locating our culture, and they are locating it beside, as part of, bumped up against - and separate from - other cultures we intersect with, a manifestation of what homi bhabha termed “the logic of reversal”, wherein “cultures recognize themselves through the projections of otherness.”^{viii}

It can be a messy dialogue, full of charged dynamics, misunderstandings and even some hurt feelings, but it can also point to the recognition of Aboriginal societies as living, dynamic cultures, freeing them from the static view of the appropriators, the revisionists and the re-enactors.

Stephen Foster has commented on the history and aesthetic of these films and their effect on German (and indeed European) conceptions of North American Aboriginal people:

Before reunification both East and West Germany made genre films that sit outside and even contradict the standard Hollywood formula. Although they offer an alternative perspective, they are not intended to be realist depictions but instead create a simulacrum of Indianness by mimicking the Hollywood genre and fusing it with a distinctly German and European perspective.

What the filmmakers in (what was then) East and West Germany were fashioning was a view of western mythology that could best be called cultural revisionism. Viewing these films for the first time certainly gave me a new understanding (if not appreciation) of the phenomenon of the “Noble Savage” within the European psyche, but it also struck me that it seemed a perfect entry point for a discussion of cultural sovereignty and radical subjectivity.

For our project, this involves the clear refashioning of mimetic literature and film, transposing its ability to create social change from the re-enactors to the “real Indians”, what curator and cultural critic Gerald McMaster referred to as “the double entendre of re-enactment.”^{ix} McMaster’s analysis examines

re-enactment as both a zealous naiveté on the part of non-Natives and as subversive cultural practice by Aboriginal artists.

The *Culture Shock* film project builds on McMaster's thesis by actively engaging the process. Thanks to a generous offer to imagineNATIVE by the Goethe Institute, we were fortunate to have access to the Karl May inspired films (from the former West Germany) and the East German "red westerns" produced by the DEFA.

Darryl Nepinak, Keesic Douglas, Bonnie Devine and Bear Witness were chosen to respond to two of the films by creating new short works based on them. They are acutely aware of the history and enduring power of the stereotypes they portray, and they are forging clear lines of demarcation between those works, and contemporary Aboriginal society.

The humour in the works is wickedly funny, and unrepentant, a fearless kick at the colonial ass. Sometimes subtle, sometimes bawdy, it is the rejection of the "sacrosanct white story" laden with satire and poignancy. The Swiss painter Paul Klee wrote that "satire must not be a kind of superfluous ill will, but ill will from a higher point of view."^x But that satire is a site of political dissent should be no surprise. It has long been a form of resistance from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* to Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* and certainly in the works of these and many other Aboriginal artists.

Gerald McMaster points out that "for contemporary Native American artists...the difficulty in re-enacting the stereotype hinges on the absurd degree to which they acutely address - through the strategy of humour - something that is almost completely lacking in the works of non-Natives."^{xi}

As Scott Vickers has written, "our search for a 'real' Indian identity must be deferred to the articulations of real Indians."^{xii} Devine, Nepinak, Douglas and Witness know that Aboriginal cultures continue to transcend the banality and simple mindedness of stereotype so they might as well have some fun with it. But don't be fooled, the works are much more than simple parody, they provide us with a departure point, a nexus that challenges racist mythologies while valuing the expression of Indigenous perspectives.

They're not trying to convince other Native people; we all get the joke and the irony. What they're creating is a bridge, an invitation to rapprochement, and an indictment of the dangers of trying to undermine a society's culture.

And they're being "real Indians" about it.

- ⁱ Gidley, Mick. *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. p. 18 and quoting article by Curtis in *American Museum Journal*, 1914.
- ⁱⁱ Tutush, Danica. "The Strange Life and Legacy of Karl May," *Cowboys and Indians*, www.cowboysandindians.com/articles/archives/0999/karl_may.html, September 22, 2008.
- ⁱⁱⁱ I am using the term in the same sense as Naomi Klein when she writes about the damaging effects of "economic shock therapy" on societies and peoples in her excellent book, *The Shock Doctrine*. Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2008.
- ^{iv} Churchill, Ward. "Struggle for the Land" in *Fantasies of the Master Race*. San Francisco: City lights Books, 1998. p. 161
- ^v May, Karl. *Winnetou*. translation by Michael Shaw, New York: Continuum Books, 2005, based upon a 1977 translation of "Winnetou", published by Karl-May-Verlag, Bamberg. p. 660
- ^{vi} Chaat-Smith, Paul. "meaning of life" in *Reservation X*, Gerald McMaster, editor, Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1998. p. 39
- ^{vii} *ibid*, p. 38
- ^{viii} homi bhabha, *the location of culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. p. 10
- ^{ix} I would refer you to Gerald McMaster's brilliant monologue "The Double Entendre of Re-Enactment" (published by V-Tape) from 2007's *imagineNATIVE* Festival
- ^x Klee, Paul. *The Diaries of Paul Klee 1898-1918*, no. 420, 1902 entry (1957, trans. 1965).
- ^{xi} McMaster, Gerald. *The Double Entendre of Re-enactment*. Toronto: Vtape, 2007. p. 24
- ^{xii} Vickers, Scott. *Native American Identities: From Stereotype to Archetype in Art and Literature*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

CITED WORKS



WINNETOU
und das
Halbblut Apanatschi

FILM STILL FROM "WINNETOU UND DAS HALBBLUT APANATSCHI" ("WINNETOU AND THE HALF BREED"), 1966, DIRECTED BY HARALD PHILIPP, FROM A BOOK BY KARL MAY.



**FANTASY:
EUROPEAN**

BY STEPHEN S.
FOSTER

**SHIFTING
IMAGES
OF INDIAN
ESS**

INTRODUCTION

Having traveled in Europe, maybe not as much as some, I have noticed a peculiar interest manifest in the pop culture of Germany and other European countries. From my perspective as a North American Indigenous person, it is indeed peculiar, as the images of Indianess they produce seem disconnected and completely foreign to what I have come to expect from the North American popular representation of Indianess. The German popular psyche, at least superficially, seems to have maintained an obsessive fascination with a romanticized Wild West. Underlying the popular imagery is an ethnographic fascination that has tourists flocking to theme resorts across North America and has spawned numerous films and books creating a sub-genre of Western film and literature. Before reunification, both East and West Germany made genre films that sit outside and even contradict the standard Hollywood formula. Although they offer an alternative perspective, they are not intended to be realist depictions but instead create simulacrum of Indianess by mimicking the Hollywood genre and fusing it with a distinctly German and European perspective. These pervasive iconic images presented in film and literature extends to a larger popular culture lexicon found throughout Europe. The North American image of Indianess has been shifted and modified to accommodate the specifics of an altogether different cultural discourse.

BACKGROUND

The contemporary German popular image of the Indian in film has its foundations in European romantic genre writing of the late 19th century and early 20th with such authors as Karl May. However, the fascination could likely be traced back further to earlier idealized philosophical musings by individuals such as Rousseau and Goethe in concepts such as the “noble savage” or more precisely that of the “romantic savage.” The concepts form a central myth and operate as a counterpoint from which to critique what was at the time a rapidly industrializing society.

“... The noble one incarnates a central cultural myth – that of the Golden Age, which the noble savage was pictured as living Adam-like in a higher (because ‘unfallen’) stage of development than his civilized counterpart.”ⁱ

The use of a *noble savage* concept as critique is old. “The necessity for a ‘noble savage’ counterpart to the western European dates back as far as the Greeks...”ⁱⁱ and has certainly not always been used to reference the North American Indian. The terms and concepts relate to aesthetic paradigms that give precedent to the simple and natural over the elaborate and artificial and later would include individual feeling and expression

as important virtues. However these concepts of 'otherness' were used philosophically, they were also important in legitimizing European colonization. The romanticized ideals embodied by the concept of a *noble savage* still permeate the popular iconic representations of indigenous people both in North America and Europe. The pre-Vietnam War Hollywood films tend to dehumanize and demonize the 'Indian' as an antagonist while the German films invert this tendency with an idealized 'Indian' as a protagonist. The films derived from Karl May's books were widely received in Germany throughout the 60s and 70s and are consistent with other European interpretations of the western film genre such as Sergio Leone and the Italian "Spaghetti Westerns" of the same period. While the "Spaghetti Westerns" are familiar to North American audiences, the German films have had less of a resonance in American pop culture. "In a cultural context dominated by Hollywood imports, popular European cinema has, at least until now, been dismissed as a pale imitation of the original."ⁱⁱⁱ This is likely due to their campy nature but perhaps this also has something to do with the political undertones inherent in their narrative and the inversion of the traditional relationship between "Cowboy and Indian" roles as protagonist and antagonist.

While the works of Karl May were being made into films in West Germany (the *Winnetou* series), East Germany simultaneously made their own films for distribution in Eastern Bloc countries. Subsequently they comprise the more specific genre of *Indianerfilme*, a term sometimes used to discuss Western genre films from Germany. I find that the films of both West and East Germany of this time period share similar approaches, themes and storylines. While West German films follow May's written works more closely, the East German films include general references to these earlier works of fiction as well as a more general interpretation of the Hollywood film genre.

INDIANERFILME

DEFA (*Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft* – the state-run East German film studios, where films were made from 1946 to 1990) was not interested in making entertainment films but did produce the *Indianerfilme*. "DEFA's mission was to educate and to promote the development of a social consciousness."^{iv} They were interested in promoting a social and moral ideology consistent with their brand of socialism and that direction contradicted the making of films for entertainment purposes especially genre films. As a result the making of genre films was limited even though they were extremely popular. There were also other factors related to modernist artistic elitism that limited the production of genre films for mainstream consumption both in East and West Germany.



LEFT: FILM STILL FROM "DIE SOHNE DER GROSSEN BARIN" ("THE SONS OF GREAT MOTHER BEAR"), 1965, DIRECTED BY JOSEPH WACH.
BELOW: KOFF REAL INDIAN CORN BEER, FINLAND.
LOGO: COLORADO BAR AND GRILL, HELSINKI, FINLAND.



COLORADO
BAR & GRILL

“The critical paradigms set in particular by the Frankfurt school and notably by Theodor Adorno’s highly influential concept of the culture industry has resulted in a disdain for mass culture, including mainstream cinema...Only since the mid-1980s has this position been reconsidered and German genre cinema has been revitalized both in terms of film production and critical reception.”^v

Despite these limitations, DEFA produced fourteen *Indianerfilme* from 1966 to 1985 and they remain among their most popular films, and have a pervasive impact on the popular image of ‘Indianess’ throughout Europe.

Vera Dika in her essay “An East German *Indianerfilm*: the bear in sheep’s clothing” refers to Gojko Mitic, a lead actor of *Indianerfilme*, citing a specific difference between Hollywood representations and what is occurring in *Indianerfilme*: “Mitic is openly in disguise here, and his image is a picture of a picture, one that refers to the history of the North American Indian on film, yet to no one image in particular.”^{vi} By distancing its representation from historical accuracy and referencing not an historically accurate image but instead referencing a mass media idealized composite image of Indianess the film and the actor create a simulacra of ‘Indianess’.

A recurring theme in the narrative of *Indianerfilme* is one of partition. *The Sons of Great Mother Bear* tells the story of an Indian hero who fights against the forces confining his people to a reservation. In this way, the film presents a conflict best described as “...the struggle for nation against the forces of partition.”^{vii} I find this reading of the films to be compelling and one that speaks to a larger Cold War context that may be imbedded in the discourse of *Indianerfilme*. One must recognize that these films were at their most popular and had the greatest resonance during the height of the Cold War.

Following WWII, Germany was a dispossessed country in the process of being partitioned by two imperial global powers. The tensions in the films were analogous to contemporary circumstances and had a pertinent cultural resonance for their audience. This is a significant historical parallel that forms a social and cultural context to these genre films that go beyond a German ethnographic fascination with indigenous peoples.

The film *Chingachgook: The Great Snake* also could be contextually analyzed in this manner, but in addition has strong narrative parallels to E.S. Curtis’ *In the land of the Headhunters*, an early ethnographic film. It is not surprising that these two concepts of film and representation would find compatibility in this East German genre as Curtis, and his representation of Indigenous peoples, influenced many Hollywood Western films.

On another level, the recurring themes of conflict within the *Indianerfilme* engage in a critique of capitalism. The Native American populations are confronted by an American settler population and pushed out or attacked because their land holds some economically exploitable material (gold, copper etc.). This critique demonstrates and even fulfils the socialist DEFA mandate but it also has a strong resonance with contemporary indigenous audiences and contains more than one grain of truth.

“Arguably, The Sons of Great Mother Bear also set out to critique the Western genre, and the United States as well, by telling stories of U.S. greed and dishonesty and acts of aggression against the Native American population.”^{viii}

Taken together the body of films forms an interesting critique of U.S. capitalism and of U.S. ‘Manifest Destiny’ (the popular concept underlying the U.S. belief in an inherent right to territorially expand westward during the 1800s). I find this critique embedded in the film subtext personally compelling as it transforms what is a rather mundane, campy pastiche of the Western genre into a poignant and ironic critique of European colonialism.

CONCLUSION

There is something more that should be mentioned concerning the ‘Imaginary Indian’ as it is presented in the European popular collective consciousness. As I write this essay on June 21st (Canada’s National Aboriginal Day) in Helsinki, Finland, I sit drinking a Koff Real Indian beer in a Colorado Bar and Grill and find myself perplexed by the visibility of a generic ‘Indigeneity’ that contradicts my understanding of a European and perhaps North American myth of ‘Indianess.’ However, these establishments and products - although quaint and arguably embedded with positive attributes - are not points of entry into North American indigenous culture but, instead are pure European fantasies that profoundly resonate within their respective popular culture.

Is it an ironic act for a North American indigenous person to sit in this bar and drink this beer on this day? Perhaps, but no more than an Irish person sitting in an Irish Pub in Singapore on St. Patrick’s Day. Yet I still can’t help but wish I could get this beer in Canada. It is about a personal or even collective indigenous desire to have and partake in alternative images of Indianess - even if the source of the image is not indigenous. In North America we are so bombarded by one-dimensional characterizations of Indianess that any complexity is a welcome relief.



CITED WORKS

- ⁱ Castro, Michael. *Interpreting the Indian: Twentieth-Century Poets and the Native American*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. p.48
- ⁱⁱ Shanley, Kathryn. "The Indians America Loves to Love and Read." *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. Ed. By Gretchen M. Bataille. p.30
- ⁱⁱⁱ Berghahn, Daniela. *Hollywood Behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005. p.39
- ^{iv} *ibid.*
- ^v *ibid.* p.40
- ^{vi} Dika, Vera. *An East German Indianerfilm: the bear in sheep's clothing*. Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media. No. 50, spring 2008. p.1
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/Dika-indianer/index.html>
- ^{vii} *ibid.*
- ^{viii} *ibid.*

REFERENCED WORKS

Chingachgook: The Great Snake. Dir. Richard Groschopp. Film. 1967. DEFA Film Library, 2008.

In the land of the Headhunters. Dir. Edward Sheriff Curtis. 1914. Film. The Milestone Collection, 2008.

The Sons of Great Mother Bear. Dir. Joseph Mach. Film. 1966. DEFA Film Library, 2008.



COMMISSIONED

THIS PAGE: FILM STILLS FROM "A GRIM FAIRY TALE"
BONNIE DEVINE, 2008.

OPPOSITE PAGE: FILM STILLS FROM "THE STORY OF APANATSCHI AND HER REDHEADED WARRIOR"
BEAR THOMAS, 2008.

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS.



WORKS



THIS PAGE: FILM STILLS FROM "WAR PONY"
KEESIC DOUGLAS, 2008.

OPPOSITE PAGE: FILM STILLS FROM "ZWIE INDIANER AUS WINNIPEG"
DARRYL NEPINAK, 2008.

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS.





PROGRAM

WINNETOU UND DAS HALBBBLUT APANATSCHI (WINNETOU AND THE HALF-BLOOD APANATSCHI)
DIRECTOR: HARALD PHILIPP
WRITERS: KARL MAY, FRED DENGER
WEST GERMANY · 90 MIN (7 MIN EXCERPT) · 1966 ·

Between 1912 and 1968 German cinema produced twenty-three movies made from Karl May's novels, many of which feature the Apache leader Winnetou, and his German born "blood brother" Old Shatterhand.

Karl May was one of the best selling German writers of all time. History. His romantic novels of the "old west" and "the orient" have sold over 100 million copies across the globe, and his 60 novels have been translated into over 30 languages, including a recent series in Chinese. and been made into 23 films and a short lived television series.

He was a favorite read of many famous Germans, including Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, and Herman Hesse. May's house "Villa Shatterhand" in Radebeul near Dresden, Germany has been made a museum devoted to him and his collection of anthropological artifacts of American Indian origin. It is also the home of "Karl May Foundation", which publishes a quarterly journal called "Beobachter an der Elbe".

THE STORY OF APINACHIE AND HER REDHEADED WARRIOR
DIRECTOR: BEAR WITNESS
CANADA · 5.5 MIN · 2008 ·

We see the same kind of stereotypes in video games as we do in TV and film. In the case of fighting games like Street Fighter and Tekken the characters' fighting styles are generally determined by their race. This re-visioning of the 1992 arcade game Virtual Fighter 5 follows the howling loin-cloth-clad, red-haired Indian wrestler, Wolf Hatfield. Thomas allows the gamer to play stylist, allowing wardrobe changes including a big headdress and aviator shades. Thomas noted that, "Wolf started looking a lot like my father did in an old photo." This work borrows its title from the keen observation of a sever year old friend who asked Thomas: "Is he Nish? No, he has red hair. He must be Mohawk."

WAR PONY
DIRECTOR: KEESIC DOUGLAS
CANADA · 9:00 · 2008 ·

What does it mean to be in two worlds? Where do our understandings of "others" come from? In this narrative account, Keesic Douglas slyly explores these issues with an eye to challenging perceptions. In the double role of actor and director, Douglas plays the slightly racist white father of the half-blood girl. He wears

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2008, 5PM
CULTURE SHOCK: CURATED BY STEVEN LOFT
AL GREEN THEATRE, TORONTO

clothes by German designer Hugo Boss, IC Berlin glasses, and drives a German car. The viewer may ponder: why is Douglas, an Aboriginal artist, playing a German father? Douglas's response: German people have been playing Indians for years.

DIE SÖHNE DER GROSSEN BÄRIN (THE SONS OF THE GREAT BEAR)
DIRECTOR: JOSEF MACH
EAST GERMANY · 92 MIN (7 MINUTE EXCERPT) · 1966 ·

When gold is discovered in the black hills of the Dakotas by a white settler, a fearless Indian chief takes action to prevent his people from being driven from their land. Filmed in Montenegro and East Germany, starring Serbian actor/stuntman Gojko Mitic.

*Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft, better known as DEFA, was the state film monopoly in the German Democratic Republic. DEFA was founded in the Spring of 1946 in the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany as the first film production company in post-War Germany. While the other Allies, in their zones of occupation, viewed a rapid revival of a German film industry with suspicion, the Soviets valued the medium as a primary means for re-educating the German populace as it emerged from twelve years of Nazi rule and mindset. In the 1960s, DEFA produced the popular "red western" *The Sons of the Great Bear*. This spawned a number of sequels and was notable for inverting Western-cliches by portraying the native Americans as the "good guys", and the American army as the villains.*

A GRIM FAIRY TALE
DIRECTOR: BONNIE DEVINE
CANADA · 6 MIN · 2008 ·

*Inspired by the 1965 DEFA film *The Sons of Great Bear*, starring Gojko Mitic, Devine's video opens with the discovery of an old wooden chest, and weaves together the objects it contains to tell the story of the battle for the Black Hills. Using hand-drawn adaptations of the Fort Marion prison drawings, the ledger drawings by Red Horse and an original score by David Deleary, the story unfolds from the coming of the white man to the discovery of gold to the final battle for the territory now known as South Dakota.*

ZWE INDIANER AUS WINNIPEG
DIRECTOR: DARRYL NEPINAK
CANADA · 2.40 · 2008 ·

Two ersatz "Indian warriors" chase a beautiful Indian maiden through the streets of Winnipeg. But she loves Chief Big Bear. Who is the hunter, and who the hunted in this tableaux? Based on the 1964 German song, "Zwei Indianer Aus Winnipeg," our heroes are in for a surprise when they reach The Ancient Lake of Schwinestieger.

CURATOR STEVEN LOFT

Steven Loft (Mohawk) is a curator, writer and media artist and studied at McMaster University and Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology. From 2002-2008, he was the Director of the Urban Shaman Gallery (Winnipeg), Canada's largest Aboriginal artist run centre. Prior to this, Loft was First Nations Curator at the Art Gallery of Hamilton and Artistic Director of the Native Indian/Inuit Photographers' Association. He has curated gallery exhibitions, programmed media arts festivals and written extensively on Aboriginal art. His video works have been screened at festivals and galleries across Canada and internationally. He has written articles, essays and reviews on Aboriginal art and aesthetics for magazines, catalogues and arts publications. Recently, Loft co-edited *Transference, Technology, Tradition: Aboriginal Media and New Media Art*, published by the Banff Centre Press. Loft is currently completing a two-year residency as the first Aboriginal curator-in-residence at the National Gallery of Canada.

WRITER STEPHEN FOSTER

Stephen Foster is a Video Artist who works primarily with multi-channel video installation and digital photography. As a Haida Metis Artist his work tends to deal with issues of representation in mass media. He has taken part in a residency at the Banff Centre For The Arts and holds two college diplomas, as well as a BFA and a MFA. For his Masters of Fine Arts degree at York University he received the Master's Thesis Prize, one of three given University wide, for his thesis 'Behind a Sheet of Glass'. Stephen spent two years in charge of the programming at Trinity Square Video during that time he programmed, curated and coordinated many screenings and events, most notable of these was the nation wide 'Performance Bytes' teleconference and web broadcast performance event. He currently sits on the Board for the Alternator Gallery, an artist run centre in the Kelowna, B.C. Stephen is employed at the Okanagan University College as a Professor in the Fine Arts Department and continues to work on new video and electronic media projects expanding on his artistic exploration of the digital medium.

BIOGRAPHIES

Ottawa-based artist **EHREN BEAR WITNESS** started making videos while in Junior High and has since experimented with glass blowing, Deejaying, music production and writing. In 2006 Ehren participated in Saw Video's youth program and had his first public screenings of two new video works at the 2006 imagineNATIVE media festival, in the music video category and the short experimental category, where he also received an honourable mention award for emerging talent. Ehren is also collaborating on several video and music projects with his father, visual artist and curator Jeff Thomas.

KEESIC DOUGLAS is an Ojibway artist from the Mnjikaning First Nation in central Ontario, Canada. He specializes in the mediums of photography and video. His work has been exhibited across Canada and the United States. Keesic focuses on issues surrounding his Native heritage in his photo and video work. His videos *Rezurrection* and *Slide* have been programmed at imagineNATIVE Film Festival, with *The Vanishing Trace* winning Best Short Documentary in 2007. He is currently pursuing his Master of Fine Arts in photography at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

BONNIE DEVINE is a member of the Serpent River (Ojibway) First Nation in Northern Ontario and an artist, curator, writer and educator. A graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design and York University, her primary interests are sculpture and installation. However, during the past seven years she has been exploring the possibilities of sound, video and electronics within a narrative sculptural practice. Her video, *Rooster Rock*, co-produced and co-directed with Rebecca Garrett, won Best Experimental Video at the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival in 2002 and subsequently toured internationally. Recently, Devine exhibited *Medicine River*, a sculpture and sound installation at AxeNeo7 Gallery in Gatineau Quebec and *Writing Home*, an installation of sculptural works, photography, drawings and sound at Gallery Connexion, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. She currently teaches Aboriginal Visual Culture at the Ontario College of Art and Design and maintains an active art practice in Toronto, Canada.

DARRYL NEPINAK (Ojibwe) works at the Ndinawe Youth Resource centre in Winnipeg, MB. He curated INDIANPEG: Shorts from Winnipeg Aboriginal Filmmakers at the 2006 Gimli Film Festival. Nepinak is the co-founder of Indie 'N Film/Video Collective and the treasurer of Urban Shaman Gallery. He directed *My Indian Name* through First Stories, a competitive documentary production program for Aboriginal filmmakers, coordinated by the NFB Prairie Centre. He lived in Gisborne, New Zealand for 10 months in 2004, where he directed a documentary about the 30-year history of Te Ora Hou Aotearoa, a Maori youth organization, and mentored Maori teens in video production. Nepinak learned video production through the NSI Aboriginal Youth Pilot Project and the Aboriginal Broadcasting Training Initiative of the Manitoba Indian Cultural Education Centre.

Published in 2008 by Vtape
401 Richmond Street West, #452
Toronto, ON M5V 3A8
Canada

tel 416 351-1317
fax 416 351-1509

www.vtape.org
ISBN: 978-0-9734831-6-1

Printed by Print Maximum
Editing Assistance by Alice Evensen
Designed by Linseed Projects

V tape
www.vtape.org

Operating as a distributor, a mediatheque and a resource centre with an emphasis on the contemporary media arts, Vtape's mandate is to serve both artists and audiences by assisting and encouraging the appreciation, pedagogy, preservation, restoration and exhibition of media works by artists and independents. Vtape receives operating funds from the Canada Council for the Arts Media Arts Section, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.



The imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival is an international festival that celebrates the latest works by Indigenous peoples on the forefront of innovation in film, video, radio, and new media. imagineNative runs October 15-19, 2008.



V tape

www.vtape.org