

WHERE I LIVE

A film for Ilse Aichinger
by Christine Nagel



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Supported by:

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Distributed by:

Filmkinotext (Jürgen Lütz), Stadtkino Wien Filmverleih (Claus Philipp)

Synopsis

Stillness, observing and the absurd are the secrets behind Ilse Aichinger's poetry, as brought to life in the film WHERE I LIVE. Figures from stories come to life in a house, whose stories sink in upon themselves. Also, never before shown Super-8 footage shot by Aichinger, inspires awe at our ability to find ourselves, as well as the ways in which we find ourselves. Taking a sensuous approach, the film engages with Ilse Aichinger's work, which stands out in the 20th century for its singularity whilst remaining timeless in its existential dimension.

“Silence – I dislike the word and I don't understand why it is always being applied to me. After all, I once said: “To write is learning to die”. To enter into it, not to speak about oneself. Sometimes I regard it as a cloak of invisibility that hides me. Not for the world do I want anything that depicts me or places me in the spotlight. If anything, I want something that hides me and yet contains that which is fundamental to me, not the “ego”, but rather that which is intrinsic to me.”

Ilse Aichinger



Press Release

Christine Nagel met Ilse Aichinger during a radio play project in 2001, six months before her 80th birthday. At the time, familiar with every back street, the author still travelled through Vienna every day, and spent her evenings going to as many as three cinemas. The city of Vienna had become Ilse Aichinger's home. The first meeting with Ilse Aichinger lasted longer than anticipated and resulted in the filmmaker continuing to meet with the author over a period of many years – right up until today. In the cinema, they shared space and time, which provided Ilse Aichinger with the much-desired chance to “disappear”; they went from coffee shop to coffee shop, to the venues and places that moulded Ilse Aichinger.



Vienna is the central reference point of Ilse Aichinger's work – her memories are grafted onto the city's landscape, as are the “extreme well-being” of childhood, and the “extreme distress” of the War years when her Jewish relatives were deported while she, as a “first grade half-breed” was prohibited from leaving the city. Triggered by the sight of a detail, a fountain, a store, Ilse Aichinger recalls past events in her lyrical prose.

WHERE I LIVE was shaped by the experience of seeing Vienna through Ilse Aichinger's eyes – her movements through the city, her ambit from the city centre to other districts. In retrospect, the short story WHERE I LIVE became a parable for Ilse Aichinger's life in Vienna during the War and post-War years. The need to merge fictional work with documentary pictures became obvious.



The pictures blend profoundly with Ilse Aichinger's poetic language, her themes, her existential questions: how does one carry on living, having lost almost one's entire family to the Holocaust? How does one keep living, cynical of a world that has, as a daily experience, branded one with a consciousness of loss?



The film for the first time reveals text taken from the written correspondence of the twin sisters Ilse and Helga Aichinger, who became separated for life by Nazi persecution. While Ilse Aichinger lived under a constant state of grave threat, and she and her mother survived by some miracle the war in Vienna, Helga Aichinger-Michie escaped to London by Kindertransport. England became a place of longing in the writings of Ilse Aichinger.



Never before seen Super-8 footage shot by Ilse Aichinger during the 60s and 70s in Großmain, her then place of residence, and in Vienna, enhances the film's narrative with "flashes of remembrance".



ILSE AICHINGER

Ilse Aichinger and her twin sister Helga were born on 01.11.1921 in Vienna.

After Nazi Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, their Jewish mother lost her employment as a physician. Helga was able to emigrate to the United Kingdom with a "Kindertransport" (Refugee Children Movement), but the outbreak of WW2 prevented the planned departure of the rest of the family. The younger siblings of the mother as well as the grandmother were deported in 1942 and murdered in the concentration camp Maly Trostinec in Minsk.

During the war Ilse Aichinger was deployed as a forced labourer in Vienna. In 1945 she started to study medicine which she interrupted two years later in order to finish her novel "Die größere Hoffnung" ("Herod's Children"), which was published in 1948. In 1952 her short story "Spiegelgeschichte" won the award of the Group 47. In 1953 she married the German lyric poet and writer of radio plays Günther Eich. Together with their children Clemens and Mirjam they lived in Upper Bavaria and later in Großgmain near Salzburg. In 1972 Günther Eich died. From 1984 until 1988 Aichinger lived in Frankfurt/Main and since 1988 she has been living in Vienna, Austria again.

Ilse Aichinger wrote lyric, prose and radio plays. Her complete works were published in 8 volumes by S. Fischer Verlag Frankfurt/Main.

Her work in English translations:

"The bound Man and other stories" (Secker&Warburg, London 1955)
"Herod's Children", (Atheneum, New York 1963), "Selected stories and dialogs" (Pergamon Press, Oxford, New York 1966), "Selected Poetry and Prose" (Logbridge-Rhodes, Durnago, Col. 1983)

Important awards:

Preis der Gruppe 47 (1952), Nelly-Sachs-Preis (1971), Georg-Trakl-Preis (1979), Petrarca-Preis (1982), Franz-Kafka-Preis (1983), Marie-Luise-Kaschnitz-Preis (1984), Weilheimer Literaturpreis (1988), Manès-Sperber-Preis (1991), Solothurner Literaturpreis (1991), Großer Literaturpreis der Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste (1991), Großer Österreichischer Staatspreis für Literatur (1995)



CHRISTINE NAGEL

is a writer and director. Since 1996 she has been working for German broadcaster ARD in the radio play and feature sector. During her studies of Linguistics, History and Political Sciences in Gießen, Germany, she worked as an assistant director in theatres around Gießen and Wiesbaden.

Since 1994 she has been living in Berlin and works there as an executive and associate producer of cine film documentaries in the late 90ies.

From 2002 until 2005 she lived in London in order to do a postgraduate course at the Laban Centre, International School for Movement and Dance.

Filmography:

2002 Short Film: "Seegeister". After a short story by Ilse Aichinger.

2014 Feature documentary: "Where I live. A film for Ilse Aichinger"



Film Information

Team

Script / Director: Christine Nagel
Cinematography: Isabelle Casez, Helmut Wimmer
Editing: Niki Mossböck
Sound: Christofer Frank, Soundtrack Vienna
Music: Gerd Bessler
Production: Kurt Mayer, kurtmayerfilm Wien

Protagonists:

Ilse Aichinger, Helga Michie

Actors:

Verena Lercher, David Monteiro, Elfriede Irrall, Florentin Groll, Moritz Uhl

Technical Information:

Country of production: Austria
Year of production: 2014
Language: German
Title: Wo ich wohne. Ein Film für Ilse Aichinger
English title: Where I live. A film for Ilse Aichinger
Subtitle: Englisch
World premiere: Diagonale Graz 2014
Supported by: Filmfonds Wien, bmukk, FISA
ORF Film-/Fernsehvertrag
Cinema: DCP
Format: 16:9
Sound: 5.1
Length: 81 minutes
Material: Black-and white und Colour

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