

A black and white photograph of Ulrike Ottinger. She is wearing a large, voluminous, light-colored wig, glasses, and a ruffled collar. She is standing behind a podium with several microphones. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a stage or a public event.

Ulrike Ottinger

Film, Art and the
Ethnographic Imagination

Edited by Angela McRobbie

Introduction

Angela McRobbie

The artist and filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger (born in Constance in 1942 and based in Berlin since 1972) has been making work for over 50 years. In Germany she is fully acknowledged, honoured and garlanded with awards. In France and indeed in most European countries as well as in Southeast Asia there have, over the decades, been major shows, retrospectives and extensive screenings. So prolific is the flow of work that it is hard for academic researchers nowadays to keep up with the new commissions and projects. As a quick glance through the Ottinger website (<https://www.ulrikeottinger.com/en/films>) shows, there is a hectic schedule of openings, shows, book publications, conferences and screenings, as well as new film productions in process. Critical engagement in the English language has come in waves, with the late 1970s and the 1980s marking a high point and comprising mostly of feminist film studies scholars, to be followed through the 1990s with a more concentrated focus by a smaller group of writers, giving way then through the 2000s to sustained interest from art historians and curators within the growing interdisciplinary field of visual culture. This brief sketch is borne out in the comprehensive bibliography of published works compiled by Katharina Sykora and published on the Ulrike Ottinger website and also in the recently published book by Sykora (2022). The website and archive will provide an invaluable point of reference throughout this volume since the artist has paid great attention to the aesthetic value of her own archival practice.

It is relevant here to comment on the origins of this collection. There was a need for a fuller academic response to the work of Ottinger in the English language. In 2009, Goldsmiths University of London (the Department of Media and Communications) collaborated with the National Film Theatre to support a retrospective of key Ottinger films for what, at the time, was called the Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. The following year some of us from Goldsmiths took part in a Goethe Institute programme of screenings. (The Goethe Institute in London has long championed the work of Ottinger.) A decade later, and during the pandemic, some more extended time on my part became available and this allowed me to embark on the work of assembling and editing this current collection. Ulrike Ottinger

herself pointed me in the direction of some key potential contributors. Others I knew to have been involved with the films and exhibitions over the years. There was a snowballing effect with some of the more senior figures suggesting the names of younger scholars to be brought on board. Ottinger's most recent film is *Paris Calligrammes* (2020) and several of the writers draw attention to this work. The artist is looking back at her time in Paris from 1962 to 1969. She does so with a breathtaking sweep of footage that is collaged and montaged together to form something like a cinematic autoethnography. The film incorporates some of the paintings, surrealist photo shoots and the engravings that she produced during these early years. And then from 1972 onwards, there is a more decisive shift to film. The articles included here do not attempt to encompass the expanse of the output, although, as it transpires, the first three contributors cast their scholarly eyes across many of the different pieces created by Ottinger.

There was another aim for this volume which was to celebrate the eightieth birthday of Ottinger (although inevitably there is a time lag between 2022, the year of her birthday and our publication date for 2024). She is a many times over award-winning artist and filmmaker whose work is unique in the postwar German canon. There is a rich and multidisciplinary interweaving of forms that include a cinema of visual anthropology often with films that are of several hours duration. These films depart from the documentary genre by interweaving techniques that include fictional elements, fables, characters and stories. The documentary form is destabilized and becomes a mere point for departure. In the earlier films, there is also an interplay with characters from fiction, such as Dorian Gray and Orlando, now made to inhabit new Ottingeresque imaginative worlds. As in their previous inception, these figures take flight from gender and in so doing they permit a uniquely queer cinema to emerge. In taking flight herself, and by announcing so many grand departures across the works, it seems that Ottinger is driven by a desire for travel, it is a libidinous effect. Even when it is almost local to her own country of origin, the same sense of delight in unknown geographies drives her interest. In the closing scenes of her Vienna film *Prater* (the famous park in Vienna with its historic fairground and discussed here by Mandy Merck), she shoots for the stars. In this modern-day *Riesenrad* attraction, visitors are tightly strapped into their space-capsule type seats before being hurtled outwards and upwards into the night sky, as if destined never to return. Ottinger, with her astonishing camerawork, takes her seat and joins the ride.

There is a world out there to be looked at, where the traveller will encounter other peoples and the objects which they gather around them. The challenge, in the context of the postcolonial critiques of the last decades, across the disciplines as well as throughout the art world, is marked. That expansive body of writing, where it applies to the films and art works under consideration here,

poses many questions which our contributors here face in a direct and thoughtful way. Ottinger, often invited or commissioned to make work in so many different countries, adopts the persona of the gentle but stubborn observer of things. She marries her anthropological eye with an avantgarde optic. The nature of her gaze, the relation established between her camera and an object or person, seems to occlude a proprietary relation, or any sense of a cold museum-oriented scholasticism. Ottinger's 'ethnographic imagination' figures here in the title of this volume, directing us to highly-charged debates in the fields of art theory, critical anthropology and cultural studies. But with some qualifications since, for example, Hal Foster's seminal essay 'The artist as ethnographer' addresses 'paradigms in advanced art on the left' (1995: 302). And from the start we might declare that Ottinger's is not an overtly (or even covertly) a leftist project. In the context of this book, our own imaginations are sparked by a stance that remains constant over the years, unswervingly so. Yet in adhering to an aesthetic auteur-led cinema, the work reveals itself as full of openings to specific political questions and dilemmas. And moreover from the elevated heights of what might seem like an even quaint bourgeois art positionning, richnesses are forthcoming.

Ottinger goes out into the field. But does she impute authenticity or originality to the other cultures she encounters (Foster, 1995)? What is intriguing is that there is something other than this going on. Ottinger's camera is never obtrusive, nor is it interrogatory. As a number of contributors to this volume show, the gaze is inevitably multi-mediated by, for example, institutional or geographical constraints. It is the dwelling upon the formal elements of objects and artefacts that is most striking. Ottinger is aware of her own visitor status on all her artist-expeditions. As viewers and spectators, we are also visitors to these imagined geographies. Does her being a polite and gracious guest in the house of foreign cultures in any way alter the colonial hierarchies still in place? For sure Ottinger never suggests that she is embarking on such a project. Perhaps she is nevertheless making a claim for modes of looking that permit fascination without domination.

And how are we positioned as Ottinger's guests, visitors to her shows and audiences for her films? We might be wandering around the grand-scale exhibition such as the *Floating Food* exhibition at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2013. We could also be part of the art crowds in Seoul, in Tokyo or in Odessa. Or we could be sitting watching the twelve hours of *Chamisso's Shadow* which was shot in the Bering Strait and is usually screened in three or four episodes. The question of the address in Ottinger's work is also as intriguing and as elusive as her ethnographic techniques. How is the viewer to position herself? There is always a warm invitation. The pieces themselves are invariably demanding. And though the early work has exuberant and light-hearted elements often traceable to (what was then) the gay underground, this is more muted from the 1990s onwards. At

the same time, the documentaries do not lead to sombre reportage. Yet neither are they playful. As Wieland Speck mentions in interview this leaves the viewer of the Ottinger work with 'a lot of freedom'.

Ottinger's feminist counterparts of the 1970s German cinema were largely concerned with family, motherhood, social reproduction and domestic labour. With joyful defiance, the first major cinematic journey Ottinger embarks on is one that takes her far away from this realm of the domestic; indeed the opening joke of the film *Madame X: An Absolute Ruler* (1976) is that a megaphone call is issued to women to abandon their family duties and follow the seductive world of adventure conjured by the extravagantly beautiful pirate queen. Maybe we can extend this metaphor with Ottinger issuing the invitation, over the years, as the artist whose promise is always some form of enchantment. There is a constant interest in the magical world of the fable or the fairy tale, as if she continues to leaf through her memories of the childhood classics of the 1940s and 1950s with their marvellous illustrations. This sits alongside the much more formally rigorous concerns she shows with cinema, with celluloid and its histories and traditions, and likewise with the disciplinary conventions of figurative painting and pop art in the late 1960s.

Where some might see something both naïve and problematic in Ottinger's foregrounding of her own self-enchantment with other worlds, the contributors to this volume explore this as a multifaceted positioning of the artist as auteur who is also delving into the history of past enchantments and fascinations, perhaps also into the orientalism of her forebearers. There she is, after all, (re)-enacting, in the long film titled *Chamisso's Shadow*, a famous German expedition undertaken by the botanist and writer Adelbert von Chamisso who set sail aboard the Russian ship *Rurik* in 1815. And as Thomas Love suggests in his article, the work of Ottinger could be seen in terms of what Mary-Louise Pratt calls the 'innocent anti-conquest' genre (Pratt, 1992). Yet Ottinger's work counsels against a reductionist response. She insists on the promise of a transcultural politics of mutuality, of exchange and an ethics of hospitality. She explores the possibility of intercultural mixing, and that we are all in a sense foreign to each other. Her father was an artist who, as a young man, spent time at sea working on board ships. In the course of his travels, he became familiar with African art and collected many pieces. Ottinger herself is soaked in the collector passions of figures like Walter Benjamin (who also remarked on travel as life sustaining). Her inheritances stretch from the German baroque to the Jewish (and Yiddish) traditions of popular song. Like Benjamin, she is drawn to allegory and to those modes of medieval representation that took the form of stations, which she then translates for a more contemporary cinematic idiom.

Ottinger was formed as an artist through her exposure to a multiplicity of cultural influences, from her father's collections and from the childhood fables she consumed, to surrealism and the Dada movement. She has also been drawn to the

history of classic cinema and to the work and writings of queer artists and filmmakers. Was her own incipient queerness a factor which led her to envisage other worlds, other ways of living, other forms of kinship? Did she need this kind of fantasy material as a girl, in order to realize the idea of a career and a professional identity as an artist? Ottinger was born mid-way through the Second World War in the family home in Constance by the lakeside, to a Jewish mother with whom she was hidden from the Nazis in an attic thanks to the courageous role played by her paternal grandmother. Childhood memories have informed her identity as a woman and as an artist.

Part one: The wide expanse of work

The collection begins with three articles that mark the wide sweep of the Ottinger oeuvre. Patricia White brings back into the vista of feminist and queer film theory the idea of the author and the auteur and having written about Ottinger's films in the early 1980s, in this new context, she sees Ottinger taking on so many guises as dandy and conjurer, an artist who slips in and out of the many gender-fluid characters that are centre stage in her work. She is an artist with a strong interest in the history of German orientalism, with the motif of travel and with the mythologies and the 'dense node of perverse histories around the figure of the sailor' (19, this volume). The work is full of gigolos, pirates, loose women and sex workers. White acknowledges Ottinger's commitment to preserving and honouring the history of the gay underground. White also emphasizes the focus on marginalized people and bodies, from the earliest films including the erotica of *The Enchantment of the Blue Sailors* to the more recent shorts including *Still Moving* and *Aloha*. Katharina Sykora provides, in her essay, a consideration of the fluid shifting even restless movements between film and photography in Ottinger's work, and alongside this the use of objects and artefacts which play such an enduring role across the decades of her artistic production. By drawing attention to the power of objects to impose and reinforce specific cultural meanings, such that gender is a mere surface phenomenon, that is, the moustache, the extravagant eyeliner, the fedora hat, Sykora also foregrounds the contingency that underpins the process of gender ascription. She also presents an important account of the multiple framing processes that accompany so much of the Ottinger oeuvre, the 'play within a play' effect in *Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press* from 1984. Sykora pursues the motifs of temporality and the role of the artefact through a range of other works by Ottinger from the *Twelve Chairs* (based on an original fiction by two Russian writers Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov from the 1920s) through to the fabulist film documentaries such as *Under Snow* and *The Korean Wedding Chest*.

Gertrud Koch introduces the question of wit and humour in Ottinger's work tracing a line of connections and reflecting on the anthropology of the smile in so many of cross-cultural exchanges which figure in the films. Koch sees this as a desire to invert the colonial hierarchies. In Ottinger's interest in costumery and masquerade and in the 'baroque excess of ornamental costume', there is also humour similar to the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, with the idea of inverting, as in the carnivalesque, status and hierarchy through the 'interplay of masks'. Koch draws attention to the rites and ceremonies with the comical again surfacing through Ottinger's attraction to the grotesque 'as the uncanny side of the comical' (51, this volume). There is also Ottinger's use of 'lightness as an aesthetic category' which 'becomes a form in the musical comedies and in dance, in burlesque shows and pop' (51, this volume).

Part two: The cities

In the chapter by Angela McRobbie, the focus is on the first of the so-called Berlin trilogy, *Bildnis einer Trinkerin* (*Ticket of No Return*) of 1979. The author counters the early feminist (and somewhat moralistic) responses to the film which loudly railed against the attention given to the urban wanderings of a young woman fashionably dressed and determined to drink her way through the grey semi-derelict landscape of 1970s West Berlin. McRobbie argues that the film and its tensions mark the highly charged collaboration between the fashion designer, musician, model and actor Tabea Blumenschein, and the director Ottinger. By incorporating the signature styles of punk while also transposing onto the fashion items and costumes a fully painterly effect Blumenschein and Ottinger together make a claim to the city as a space of belonging, a city open to many types of deviance. The element of subculture disrupts a more contained aesthetic impulse bringing into vision fleeting glimpses of working-class West Berlin. McRobbie makes the case for a return to the idea of auteurship in feminist media and cultural studies scholarship, this time refracted through recognition of the idea of collaboration between director, leading actor and cast. This points to a more contemporary role for the ensemble. This chapter, with a sociological emphasis on the contribution of fashion and costume to Ottinger's oeuvre, also suggests renewed attention be paid to cultural production in both film and art practice.

The film that Esther Leslie discusses is *Usinimage*, made in 1987, and in effect the last but one of the Berlin works (*Countdown* was made a couple of years later documenting the fall of the Wall). Leslie ruminates on the image of West Berlin as envisaged by Ottinger as a space of everyday life with its shabby bars and small shops, with the bridges and the power stations and gasometers, a grey-toned

post-industrial city. Unlike other European cities of that time with their brightly lit shopping malls and tourist attractions, this remained a city of seemingly randomly sited coal mountains and slagheaps. Of course, until 1989 the city's other half was fully part of the GDR and so officially anticapitalist. Leslie picks up this theme in Ottinger, that she depicts the city not from the viewpoint of consumer culture, or of well-known landmarks but rather and in line with her earlier Berlin-based film *Freak Orlando*, from the viewpoint of a kind of subcultural underground, a space where social outsiders and marginalized people were able to gather in what were more or less undesignated or under-used zones of the city. Leslie tracks the keen interest Ottinger showed in these spaces including the bleak landscapes on the city edges. In *Freak Orlando*, there are the beautiful overgrown and always welcoming cemeteries, but also the site of the Nazi Olympics in 1936, stark and desolate, as if this must rightly be a condition for its continued existence. Leslie is aware of the most recent romancing of the city for its government-approved bohemian image. She looks back to the 1980s when it remained an urban environment where it might be possible to glimpse ideas of a 'non-fascist future'.

Mandy Merck adopts the idea of the carousel to develop her analysis of Ottinger's 2007 film about the Prater park in Vienna and its historic attractions. Dating back to 1766 and later becoming one of the world's oldest and most famous amusement parks, Merck shows the richness of the influences and histories which Ottinger brings to bear in her film, many of which refer to the birth of film itself. The novelty of film found new audiences in the Prater from 1895 onwards with various forms of the Kinetoscopes showing in what were referred to as viewing parlours. These would be sat alongside the various 'curiosities' which also included an Ashanti village with some of the inhabitants also on display for the visitors with their imperial gazes to look at. As Merck points out, the Prater fairground occupied a centre-stage position as if to advertise the advanced state of empire and industrialization in Vienna at the time. Ottinger's film *Prater* traces the idea of attractions, curiosities, especially in the form of the objects and artefacts and peoples from the colonized lands, as Merck suggests, marking Vienna as a place 'to which racialized spectacle – and racialized subjects – are imported for exhibition' (91, this volume). Key to Merck's analysis is the spectre of the racialized narratives of dangerous or primitive black masculinity as a key trope of colonial domination, cast up for popular entertainment, and providing the core ingredients for genres that were to remain in place to the present day.

Part three: China, Mongolia, Japan, Korea

In 1985 and prior to her major feature film *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* of 1987, Ottinger and her team travelled to China for a trip of several months which

produced among other works a 4.5 hour long documentary titled *China. Die Künste – Der Alltag* for German TV. Cassandra Xin Guan makes the case that the film be seen from a viewpoint which transcends the more polarized stances which have emerged by the writers who have either rebuked the director for her ‘imperialist nostalgia’ or who otherwise flag the film for interrupting the conventions which typically accompany and underpin the idea of the documentary. This latter perspective allows the film to be seen as challenging any sense of there being a ‘real’ Orient. Neither is sufficient, neither pays anything like enough attention to the actual existing geography, or to the prevailing political economy. Guan argues that Ottinger develops a kind of ‘view within a view’ so that the ‘ethnographic subject’ emerges as, at the very least, the object of a multi-mediated filmic practice. Commenting on the conditions the team were subjected to in the course of making this ‘avant garde documentary’, Guan suggests ‘they became the pioneering representative of a transnational flow of material and symbolic values that would revolutionize the social relations of rural China’ (111, this volume). Most important to Guan’s analysis is this foregrounding of the political economy that made its presence so felt in the shaping of the cultural field that Ottinger was then able to render into a documentary form.

Erica Carter and Hyojin Yoon focus on the feature film *Johanna d’Arc of Mongolia* (1989), with Delphine Seyrig at the centre of what is a multi-genre and ‘gloriously labyrinthine’ piece of work which traces the history of cinema and the movies through the prism of the ‘densely ornamental’ railway carriage as a group of European ladies embark on a trip that takes them through Central Eastern Europe and Russia and to the steppes of Inner Mongolia and the Gobi Desert. Their trip is interrupted by a band of Mongolian female warriors, led by the beautiful Princess Xu Re Huar and the European women are taken hostage. This adventure gives rise to sequences of intercultural eroticism. Carter and Yoon understand the film in terms of its offering a philosophical rumination on the cinematic imagination and its relation to reality, as well as on the way in which a dense historical essay on multi-culture and on the ‘diasporic affiliations’ of geographical space can be conjured through single images, gestures, songs and decor. Key to their argument is that there is indeed a timeliness to the film, grasped not through direct socio-political themes, but through the dense aestheticism, through the sound of ‘tinkling teacups’ that evoke not just the epochal struggles and the ruptural history of these regions but also the new encounters emerging from changes in the landscapes and psychic geographies of *Mitteleuropa* in the momentous year of 1989.

Ottinger returned to China in 1997, this time to explore the background to the experiences of the Jewish community who had settled in Shanghai. These families had either arrived at the turn of the century or they had fled from Europe

in 1933. Describing this as a film of remembrance, Tim Bergfelder provides an analysis of *Exil Shanghai* (also 4.5 hours long) which emphasizes that the film is primarily about the experience of exile. Ottinger's technique again departs from the convention of documentary film by interspersing the interviews she carries out, with footage from modern-day China. Most of the interviewees moved to California after the war and Ottinger films them in their homes, often surrounded by mementoes and objects from their time in Shanghai. One aspect of the uniqueness of the film and its intense aesthetic effect lies, as Bergfelder argues, in the carefully selected soundtrack, much of which is drawn from Jewish and Yiddish songs, and from German and Austrian *Schlager* pop. There are also mournful songs from the Chinese singer Zhou Xuan, a star from 1930s Chinese cinema.

Laurence A. Rickels is an American scholar and psycho-analyst who has written extensively about Ottinger's art and films over many years. Here he focuses on the film *The Korean Wedding Chest*. Commissioned to make the work in 2011, the film was made in Seoul and it uses, as a kind of entrance point to an extended reflection on marriage culture in Korea, a fiction and a fable (and foundational myth). Within the film text wedding rituals and the place of the 'knot' in the Korean celebration of marriage are prominent. A scholar of Freud and the Freudian tradition, Rickels considers this idea of knots that 'are not' to reflect on the transcultural image of knotting, weaving, binding and unbinding. Weaving figures in Freud's writing (female sexuality, the dream work, Penelope and mourning) and in his life, (bringing into focus his daughter Anna at the loom in their London home and study), leads Rickels to questions of reproduction and inheritance. Rickels is drawn to Melanie Klein in this respect for whom mourning is basic to the psychic reality of desire, and what the parental figures, or couple, bequeath downwards as 'inheritance'. These themes are central to *The Wedding Chest*. Ottinger also makes a specific argument about art in everyday life, in the clothes, the fabrics, the textures, the linens and the world of decoration which, as Rickels notes, is extended in her later film set in the remote Echigo region of Japan and titled *Under Snow*.

Part four: Shadows of the past – Hoards and collections

Dominic Paterson traces Ottinger's hybrid photographic genres and object-led art pieces through the idea of their transmissibility, and through the notion of the collection, or rather the collector's passion for objects, a kind of hoarding. The transmissibility refers to the sliding process that takes place between still and moving image, where each is both secured and untethered by the other. The memorability of the images and set pieces seems to emerge from this very uncertainty

or ambivalence about where they belong. Paterson also sees the artist at work where, as a starting point, there are the story books, notebooks, drawings and other preliminary and preparatory work which are often made available for audiences to see as a practice of 'exhibition making'. However, these installation pieces are not just there to demonstrate artistry as a process, but to signal the multiplicity of forms which constitute the work as such. Paterson, who himself played a co-curatorial role in Ottinger's *Still Moving* exhibition at The Hunterian Gallery in Glasgow University, also makes the important point that these various genres avoid the 'purity and fixity' of modernism. Rather they are full of cut n' mix techniques, retrieving various forms which can then be 'enervated'. This interplay of past and present is most vivid in the idea of 'station cinema'. Paterson makes the link here with Walter Benjamin.

Nora M. Alter writes here about the twelve hour long epic travel piece of 2016 *Chamisso's Shadow*, and her essay proposes that we consider this work as very much about the porous relations that connect humans with the animal world and with nature and environment. But the film also foregrounds 'spiritual life' and the 'lure of the sea'. Alter describes the long slow whale-hunting scenes with which the film opens, shocking as they are, and powerful in the context of questions about ecology and species extinction. The framing devices from the expedition of Adelbert von Chamisso, (and prior to his travels as a botanist, the remarkable novel about the man who sells his shadow and who is then destined to explore the world lonely in his giants' boots, a marvellous children's classic), provide Ottinger with exactly the kind of narrative that can be re-purposed as she herself sets sail. In what is one of her most extraordinary productions to date, this film piece ruminates, as Alter shows, on conservation, extinction, on the ruins of communities in this area of the North West Passage or the Bering Strait and on the peoples of these regions, who are Inuit, or Russian or for that matter American. The long duration of the scenes including the interviews show Ottinger to be indeed a sensitive ethnographer. One older woman who is fishing, it transpires, was the former paediatrician for the region before retiring. Communities are being erased and as Alter shows, Ottinger creates bridges in time and in art. The Romantic German tradition stretches here to the contemporary need to transcend boundaries of human and non-human and plant life for the sake of the world. There is for sure a much longer discussion to be had about *Chamisso's Shadow* to do full justice to its project and even the practicalities of its undertaking. Hopefully for the English-speaking world this can happen in the not too distance future.

Thomas Love also considers this piece of work. As he comments 'the film seems less a document of contemporary Beringia than a reflection on the continuities and discontinuities between the contemporary and its (pre)colonial past' (205, this

volume). Love's contribution is to look at this film through Mary-Louise Pratt's notion of anticonquest, a way of narrating colonial exploration through descriptions of the natural landscape that although seemingly benign nevertheless abetted the colonial project of domination. The literature of anticonquest is characterized by an implication that the natural world acts of its own accord. This kind of lexicon runs through the works which Ottinger drew on for the film and appear to be complemented in turn with her own images of picturesque emptiness. But as Love points out, there are also important moments where it becomes clear that her work also departs from and refuses these conventions. There is no sense of narrative and there is no grand pretence of objectivity, no claim to authority. The film lays bare the terrain, as if to re-open the debate, and then opts to move to a conclusion by way of another fable, something akin to a local legend which winds its way from the imagined past to the present day. The fairy tale uses anachronism, as Love argues, to displace any idea of authenticity. And as a telling conclusion to his article, Love suggests that what appears to be an empty landscape is in fact a location teeming with its own history.

Part five: Comment and interviews

Adrian Rifkin remembers his first encounters with Ottinger's work following a student's enthusiasm. In this self-reflexive short piece, Rifkin draws attention to the processes of seeing the Ottinger works, including the various technologies of viewing, the demands of long slow takes, and what we do when we watch in a distracted manner, how significant and rewarding can such modes of reception be? Rifkin applauds the queer subjectivities in Ottinger's work, their constraint, and he asks 'Why should we know ourselves?'

Angela McRobbie interviews Yeran Kim, a Korean professor of Media and Cultural Studies. Kim looks freshly with a feminist lens at *The Wedding Chest* and provides a non-western and more sociological reply with reference to the new generation of young women refusing marriage as an act of resistance. It is as if Ottinger with all her queering gaze and close attention given to the patriarchal rituals captures simultaneously a glimmer of discontent and a sense of the changes to come.

Julia Meyer-Brehm interviews two women who have each played some role in the social and professional world of Ottinger in Berlin over the decades. Designer Claudia Skoda provides a cartography of the night-life clubs and bars, and her own fashion practice and studio work. Novelist and playwright Heidi von Plato describes the intellectual culture, the shared interest in the fables of pre-modernity and the intense sociality of the Ottinger circle.

Thomas Love interviews costume designer Gisela Storch-Pestalozza who describes her professional working life in Munich and Berlin and working with Werner Herzog before joining Ottinger including the Mongolia trip. Thomas Love also interviews the actor and film director Wieland Speck who has worked with and known Ottinger for many years. This interview marks a timely end point for the book for reasons of Speck's wide panorama and his warm observations on Ottinger's uniqueness in the art world for the duration of half a century.

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