BANAFSHE HOURMAZDI MONA CATHLEEN OTTERBACH JAN BÜLOW ACTOR PRODUCTION DESIGNER ACTOR

FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS

THE FILMMAKERS





























In 2024, the FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS international talent campaign enters its ninth year. German Films' mandate is to support the distribution of German films abroad and improve the visibility of German filmmakers on an international level. In line with this mission, German Films has been organizing the annual FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS campaign since 2016, presenting young, outstanding German film talents to the public worldwide. Over the years, this has created a platform attracting attention at a national and an international level.

In the first few years, the campaign presented different trades each year. Since 2021, FACE TO FACE has been restructured and, in addition to actors, directors and writers, now other departments that are significantly involved in the creation of a film are also considered. This change was made to reflect the diversity of cinematic talent in Germany even more. The expansion of talent selection was and is intended to illustrate how films, more than any other art form, are dependent on the creative collaboration of many different trades in their complex development processes.

FACE TO FACE WITH GERMAN FILMS - THE FILMMAKERS presents seven unique, impressive, and diverse personalities, each of whom has found a very personal and interesting path into the film industry. In a multifaceted way, they all illustrate how colorful and varied work and creativity in the film industry can be.

The FACES 2024 are united by their passion for the medium and their desire to help shape the German film industry. They stand for the excellent reputation that German film and series productions enjoy internationally, and they are eager to present their work at festivals around the world. They have already left a lasting mark on the German film industry with their creativity, skill, professionalism, and love and enthusiasm for filmmaking.

"We at German Films see it as our task to support upcoming talents from the German film industry and to accompany them on their way to becoming successful filmmakers," Simone Baumann, Managing Director of German Films, explains. "It is particularly important to us to show that the film industry is incredibly diverse and that we have fantastic talents in a wide variety of trades here in Germany. We are proud to present seven filmmakers as ambassadors for our campaign this year, whose diverse CVs and professional backgrounds symbolize creativity in the film industry."

Our FACES 2024 are actor Jan Bülow, writer and director Mehmet Akif Büyükatalay, actor Banafshe Hourmazdi, writer and director Moritz Müller-Preißer, production designer Mona Cathleen Otterbach, as well as writers and directors Eva Trobisch and Soleen Yusef.

THE FACE TO FACE AMBASSADORS 2024

JAN BÜLOW actor

MEHMET AKIF BÜYÜKATALAY writer · director

BANAFSHE HOURMAZDI actor

MORITZ MÜLLER-PREISSER writer director

MONA CATHLEEN OTTERBACH production designer

EVA TROBISCH writer · director

SOLEEN YUSEF writer · director



The German actor Jan Bülow was born in Berlin in 1996. He studied acting at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin, but left school early without graduating. This was followed by an engagement at the Schauspielhaus Zurich, where he was a permanent member of the ensemble for the 2018/2019 season. His first role there was the title role in HAMLET by William Shakespeare, staged by artistic director Barbara Frey. For the following season, Bülow moved to the ensemble of Vienna's Burgtheater.

Since 2012 Jan has also appeared on the big screen, including in RADIO HEIMAT (2016) by Matthias Kutschmann, a comedy about four young men growing up in the Ruhr area in the 80s, struggling with the usual teenager problems, and ABGESCHNITTEN (2018) by Christian Alvart, a thriller based on the novel by author Sebastian Fitzek.

In LINDENBERG! MACH DEIN DING by Hermine Huntgeburth, a biopic about the young Udo Lindenberg, Jan played the lead role, singing several songs of the famous German singer himself. His performance won him the Bavarian Film Award for Best Young Actor in 2020, and the character also earned him a nomination for Best Actor at the German Film Awards, also known as Lola. In THE UNIVERSAL THEORY (DIE THEORIE VON ALLEM, 2022) by Timm Kröger, Jan again took on the lead role. In this black-and-white thriller he plays a young physicist attending a conference in the Alps, where strange things happen. The feature film had its world premiere in the main competition at Venice Film Festival 2023.

Jan recently filmed the series KAFKA (ARD, director David Schalko, 2023), which deals with the difficult relationship between the well-known German-language writer and his tyrannical father.

Which German and/or international filmmakers inspired you while growing up?

As a kid I was kind of obsessed with those long sagas like Star Wars. So naturally, someone like George Lucas was an early hero of mine. As I grew older, I fell in love with the work of Hitchcock, Orson Wells, Scorsese and Tarantino. But those are obvious choices, I wouldn't say there's this one outstanding inspirational force that influenced me.

What were your first steps in the film business?

Actually, it was my younger brother's idea to become an actor, back when he was about 10 years old. So my parents took him to an agency, where they met this coach, who was giving acting classes for children. My brother went there, said it was fun, I joined in and just kept on with it. Later I studied acting, started out with theater, and finally made it to the movies.

What advice do you have for young filmmakers?

You should always stick to your own vision. If you're doing something you're proud of, keep it. The same goes for the opposite. Always trust your gut feeling.

Filmography

2023

KAFKA

series · directed by: David Schalko

2022

THE UNIVERSAL THEORY (DIE THEORIE VON ALLEM)

cinema · directed by: Timm Kröger

2018

LINDENBERG! MACH DEIN DING

cinema · directed by: Hermine Huntgeburth

2018

DOGS OF BERLIN

series · directed by: Christian Alvart

2017

WISHLIST Season 2

web series · directed by: Marc Schießer

2015

ABGESCHNITTEN

cinema · directed by: Christian Alvart

2015

MIT DEM MUT DER VERZWEIFLUNG

documentary · directed by: Oliver Halmburger

2014

WANJA

cinema · directed by: Caroline Hellsgård

2014

DER NANNY

cinema · directed by: Matthias Schweighöfer

2014

UNTER GAUNERN

series · directed by: Sophie Allet-Coche, Andreas Menck

2013

AS WE WERE DREAMING (ALS WIR TRÄUMTEN)

cinema · directed by: Andreas Dresen



Mehmet Akif Büyükatalay was born in Bad Hersfeld in 1987 and grew up in Hagen. He studied Media Arts at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, graduating with honors. He was a fellow of the "Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes" (German National Academic Foundation). In 2019, Mehmet directed ORAY. His graduation film not only received numerous international awards at prestigious festivals but also won the Best First Feature Award at the Berlinale 2019. In the following years, the film was released in cinemas in Germany, Turkey, and France.

Through his production company filmfaust, he collaborates with his colleague Claus Reichel to produce international and award-winning feature and documentary films, such as Deren Ercenk's BERZAH and Cem Kaya's LOVE, DEUTSCHMARKS AND DEATH, which captivated both audiences and critics. These films garnered multiple awards at important festivals, including Oberhausen Short Film Festival and the Berlinale. In these films, Mehmet acts as a creative producer, guiding the projects from their initial conception to their grand premiere on the big screen.

filmfaust focuses on auteur films with personal signatures and an artistic-political vision, concentrating on marginalized, post-migrant and artistically challenging voices. Currently, projects like SIRENS CALL by Miriam Gossing and Lina Sieckmann, as well as IMMACULATA by Kim Lea Sakkal, are nearing completion. Additional films are in preparation and development.

For his upcoming project HYSTERIA, Mehmet also wrote the screenplay, and produced and directed the film. The movie is expected to premiere in 2024. He lives and works in Cologne.

How would you describe your current film HYSTERIA in three words?

Hysterical, political and truly strange.

Which German and/or international filmmakers inspired you growing up?

My biggest idols are Pier Paolo Pasolini and Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Which film makes you cry?

ELEPHANT MAN by David Lynch. However, the funny thing was: I watched it with my sister and we both cried so much that my father thought we were having a big fight. He couldn't believe that a movie could touch us so much.

Filmography

2024

HYSTERIA

cinema

(Director, Writer, Producer)

2022

LOVE, DEUTSCHMARKS AND DEATH

cinema, documentary (Writer, Producer)

2019

ORAY

cinema

(Director, Writer, Producer)



Banafshe Hourmazdi was born in the Ruhr area in 1990, and grew up in Germany. She studied acting at the Academy of Performing Arts Baden-Wuerttemberg (ADK Baden-Württemberg) from 2009 to 2012 and then completed a master's degree in acting at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) from 2012 to 2015. In 2015, she won the Newcomer Award of the City of Vienna for the production MEINE NASE LÄUFT at Theater Drachengasse in Vienna.

Banafshe performs at various theatres and works in different constellations and functions at municipal theatres, in the independent scene as well as in film and television. Her greatest successes include the feature film NO HARD FEELINGS (FUTUR DREI, directed by Faraz Shariat, 2020), a sensitive, queer and pop-affine portrait of Iranian youth in Germany, as a country of immigration. The film received numerous international nominations and awards - Banafshe was awarded the Götz George Young Talent Award for Best Ensemble at the First Steps Awards 2019.

In recent years, Banafshe has appeared in numerous TV productions, including the family series MAPA (ARD, directed by Jano Ben Chaabane, 2019), the coming-of-age series LOVING HER (ZDF, directed by Leonie Krippendorff, 2021 and directed by Eline Gehring, 2022), in which Banafshe can be seen in the leading role of lesbian Hanna, and the dramedy series OH HELL (MagentaTV, directed by Lisa Miller, Simon Ostermann, 2021), as well as the feature films KOKON (directed by Leonie Krippendorff, 2019) and PHANTOMS & GHOSTS (WO KEINE GÖTTER SIND, WALTEN GESPENSTER, directed by Bastian Gascho, 2021), among others.

Most recently, she worked on the feature film projects EIN FEST FÜRS LEBEN (directed by Richard Huber, 2022) and TURNING TABLES (KLANDESTIN, directed by Angelina Maccarone,

2023). She is also taking on a role in Burhan Qurbani's new film NO BEAST SO FIERCE (KEIN TIER SO WILD - WT), which is due to be released in 2024.

Quick Q&A

What makes a good movie?

I think the truly good films are the ones that give you a deeper understanding of how complex life is and show that everything is usually much more complicated than you think.

What inspires or motivates you to do your job?

I don't think I need special motivation for my job because I just love it! I can make a living out of expressing feelings, which is what I am passionate about. It's the best thing for me!

What would be outside your comfort zone in your work? What would challenge you?

Being part of an action or horror movie cast would be quite a challenge for me, mainly because I don't see myself in those genres... yet. I just can't watch horror films, but doing one? That might be great fun!

Filmography

2024

NO BEAST SO FIERCE

cinema · directed by: Burhan Qurbani

2023

24 STUNDEN

series · directed by: Lisa Miller, Leonie Krippendorff

2023

TURNING TABLES

cinema · directed by: Angelina Maccarone

2022

EIN FEST FÜRS LEBEN

cinema · directed by: Richard Huber

2022

A THIN LINE

series · directed by: Sabrina Sarabi, Damian John Harper

2021

PHANTOMS & GHOSTS

cinema · directed by: Bastian Gascho

2021/2022

LOVING HER 1+2

series · directed by: Leonie Krippendorff + Eline Gehring

2021

OH HELL

series · directed by: Lisa Miller, Simon Ostermann

2020

GENERATION BEZIEHUNGSUNFÄHIG

cinema · directed by: Helena Hufnagel

2019

KOKON

cinema · directed by: Leonie Krippendorff 2019

NO HARD FEELINGS (FUTUR DREI)

cinema · directed by: Faraz Shariat

2019

MAPA

series · directed by: Jano Ben Chaabane



Moritz Müller-Preißer (*1991) is a German director and writer. Originally from Hamburg, he studied Media Engineering and Social Sciences in Cologne and Duesseldorf before enrolling to study film direction at the University of Television and Film Munich (HFF München). Moritz' focus is on human-centered, subcultural stories, apart from the norm, exploring what is true in reality. He is particularly interested in merging documentary and fiction layers to emphasize the story.

During his studies Moritz was taught by acclaimed filmmakers like Nurith Aviv, Werner Herzog, and Nicolas Humbert. His cinematic works have been showcased at numerous international festivals, earning accolades and recognition.

Moritz received many awards for his short documentary film HAEBERLI (2020); the film has been screened at numerous festivals worldwide, including a finalist nomination at the Student Oscars®. HAEBERLI has been highly praised by critics for its sensitive and profoundly humane portrayal of the protagonist's story. Both his films WE ARE DATA (2018) and HAEBERLI (2020) have also been placed on the shortlist at the BAFTA Student Film Awards.

In his latest film, the feature documentary GOD'S OTHER PLAN (2024), Moritz continues his exploration of sensitive narratives, this time focusing on a queer blended family in Utah/USA, striving for acceptance within their Mormon families.

Moritz is currently working on several future feature films and series to be produced in 2024, including turning his short documentary HAEBERLI into a feature film.

Which German and/or international filmmakers inspired you growing up?

I grew up with Charlie Chaplin, Loriot, and also with Roman Polanski. I am just a fan of excellent humor and subtle, unexpected suspense.

How would you describe your current film/series in three words?

Fundamentalist religion, blended family and LGBTQ+.

What is your favorite movie quote?

My favorite movie quote is from BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S - a dialogue between Holly Golightly and Paul Varjak. Paul: "Honey, I love you, you belong to me." And then Holly: "No. People don't belong to people." I just love this film and this particular scene.

Filmography

2024

GOD'S OTHER PLAN

feature documentary

2020

HAEBERLI

short documentary

2018

WE ARE DATA

docufiction

2016

ON 'N' OFF

exp. documentary



Mona Cathleen Otterbach, born in 1991, gained her first experience in the creative field of production design during her internship at the Film Academy Baden-Wuerttemberg in 2010.

After she had finished her Bachelor of Arts in Architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stuttgart and the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris in 2014, she was drawn back to film. She started her production design studies at the Film Academy Baden-Wuerttemberg in fall 2014, graduating in spring 2017. Since then, she has been working as a freelance production designer and art director.

Mona Cathleen became known with feature films such as SWEET DISASTER by Laura Lehmus and FRANKY FIVE STAR by Birgit Möller, for which she was honored with the special award for Best Production Design in the feature film category at the Filmz Festival Mainz in 2023.

All of her projects have a connection to surreal worlds and deal playfully with reality.

This is also the case in her new project MILK TEETH by Sophia Bösch, based on the novel by Helene Bukowski, which is a dystopian story in an unique setting with strong independent characters. The film celebrates its world premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) in January 2024 and is expected to be released in cinemas in autumn/winter 2024.

She is currently working on other feature films such as SEVEN DAYS OF FEBRUARY by Tatjana Moutchnik and DREI KAMERADINNEN by Milena Aboyan, the latter is based on the book "Sisters in Arms" by Shida Bazyar.

In addition to her work as a production designer, she runs workshops as a mentor for Tinkertank (an initiative of the IMF - Interactive Media Foundation). Here, she creates playful projects for children and adults in collaboration with other filmmakers, engineers, artists and programmers.

Quick Q&A

What were your first steps/beginnings?

Initially, I wanted to be an architect. So, I started studying architecture. To make the world a little better with my contribution. I started an internship in production design by chance - that's when I got to know and love film architecture - which fascinated me with its diversity and creative nature. I realized that I could also help shape people's perspectives on the world through the medium of film. Thanks to great collaboration with very talented film-makers and my studies at the Film Academy Baden-Wuerttemberg, I have already had the opportunity to use this medium in a variety of ways.

Which German filmmakers inspired you growing up?

I appreciate the old films by Friedrich Murnau and Fritz Lang, for example. I particularly like Robert Wiene's THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI because of its very special, incredibly well-crafted production design by Hermann Warm.

A life lesson you learned from a film?

Movies can comfort you, scare you and help you to gain a fresh perspective on some topics. Film itself is a strong medium. And we should see and respect that. It can do so much.

Filmography

2024

MILK TEETH

cinema · directed by Sophia Bösch

2024

ROXY

cinema · directed by Dito Tsintsadze

2023

FRANKY FIVE STAR

cinema · directed by Birgit Möller

2021

SWEET DISASTER

cinema · directed by Laura Lehmus

2020

THE LOST EMPEROR

short · directed by Sascha Vredenburg

2017

SOMEBODY AND NOBODY

short · directed by Joscha Douma

2016

NADRYW

medium length · directed by Katja Ginnow

2016

ABC OF DEATH

commercial · directed by Dorian & Daniel



Eva Trobisch was born in Berlin in 1983. She first worked as an assistant in the theatre, then for several years in various roles in film. In 2009, she began studying direction at the University of Television and Film in Munich (HFF München). Her short films have won several awards.

In 2013, she attended the NYU Tisch School of the Arts in New York to study film dramaturgy on a scholarship from the German National Academic Foundation, and began a Master's degree in screenwriting at the London Film School in 2015. Her first feature film ALL GOOD (ALLES IST GUT) won Best Director, Best Acting and the FIPRESCI Award at the Munich Film Festival in 2018, celebrated its international premiere in Locarno, where it was awarded Best Debut Film, received the Woman in Motion Award at the Cannes Film Festival, and the German Film Critics' Award. Her debut went on to screen internationally at many festivals and received numerous other awards (including at Stockholm, Seville, Thessaloniki, Montreal, Macao, Angers, Marrakesh, New York and many more).

In 2020, Eva was appointed to the jury of the Berlinale competition series Encounters. Her second feature film IVO will premiere at the A-list festival in Berlin in 2024.

In addition to her films, Eva directs for the theatre (Basel), leads seminars at various German film universities, and writes essays in film journalism (in trade magazines such as Kinemathek and Film-Konzepte). As a partner in Trimafilm, she is developing several films in a team with Trini Götze, Mariko Minoguchi and David Armati Lechner, and is currently preparing her own third feature film ETWAS GANZ BESONDERES (WT), which she will shoot in spring 2024 as a co-production by Trima- and Komplizenfilm with if-production.

Which filmmakers do you admire and why?

There are so many, and it changes all the time. I really can't pick just one. Sometimes I use films by directors I admire as a kind of medicine cabinet, and it totally depends on my personal mood or the point I have reached in the process of filmmaking whether I feel I need to watch Cassavetes or Altman, Ackermann or Verhoeven, Verda or Lumet. And I could continue this list endlessly.

I think it was Truffaut (I hope) - who said: directors who love only one type of film are mostly people who don't love film at all. I totally agree.

What do you think about German cinema today, and how it is received internationally?

I think German cinema has the potential to be strong and interesting, I know so many very good and dedicated German filmmakers, who I admire. But I also think we could do much more for our cinema culture: kids are not educated in cinema as an art form. We have literature, fine arts and music at school, but if we watch a film in school it is always about the subject. That is a shame. And I think we could work on our funding structures (on what we do right now), in order to make cinema less dependent on the requirements that public networks face.

Your favorite German film?

The word "favorite" always makes my mind go completely blank. So, just because I saw it recently in preparation for my next movie: Traces of Stones by Frank Beyer - it's a great movie. Big recommendation.

Filmography

2024

ETWAS GANZ BESONDERES

cinema (Upcoming)

2023

IVO

cinema

2019

ALL GOOD (ALLES IST GUT)

cinema

2015

ES IST EGAL, ABER

short

2013

WIE DU KÜSST

short



Soleen Yusef was born in Duhok/Iraqi Kurdistan in 1987. At the age of nine she and her family had to flee to Germany because of the political circumstances. She graduated from high school in Berlin and afterwards attended the Academy of Stage Arts, where she was trained as a singer and an actress. Meanwhile, she also finished training as a fashion seamstress and tried out her expertise in different creative fields. Eventually, she ended up working in the film industry for a few years and was a production and direction assistant at Mîtosfilm.

In 2008 she started studying feature film directing at the renowned Baden-Wurttemberg Film Academy. Within the first two years there, Soleen already demonstrated a great talent and her short movie NOŞ [cheers to you], was shown in competition at several national and international film festivals. TRATTORIA, which she made in her third year, premiered at the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival in 2012.

Because of her outstanding academic achievements, Soleen Yusef received the distinction of the Germany Scholarship in 2012. She also participated, as a Baden-Wurttemberg scholarship holder, in the UCLA Workshop at the Film Academy in Los Angeles in 2013. HOUSE WITHOUT ROOF, which is not only her graduation project but also her first feature film, shot in spring 2015 within and around her hometown Duhok, achieved even greater success.

Since then, Soleen Yusef has been working as a director for several national and international series productions. Among others, these include SKYLINES for Netflix and DEUTSCHLAND 89 for Amazon Prime. In 2022 she worked as a lead director and writer on the miniseries SAM - A SAXON for Disney+.

In addition to developing her own cinema, serial and television projects as a creator, Soleen Yusef is currently fulfilling a dream with a very personal, first children's movie called WINNERS, which is being produced by DCM Pictures and will premiere in March 2024.

Quick Q&A

Which contemporary German or international filmmakers do you admire today and why?

I love the movies of Alejandro Iñárritu. He is a big inspiration and an idol for me. I also love the courageous way that Nadine Labaki makes films. She is a Lebanese film director and I think CAPERNAUM is a masterpiece. Ruben Östlund is also having a big impact on the film industry right now. At the same time, I like the classics such as Quentin Tarantino.

What is your favorite German film?

That would be THE COUNTERFEITERS. I love that movie! I also like FOUR MINUTES by Chris Kraus and WINGS OF DESIRE by Wim Wenders. I think these movies have had a great impact on me emotionally, but also in the context of German history.

Is there a person you would love to work with?

There are quite a few people I'd want to work with. One of them, James Gandolfini, has unfortunately already passed away. He's one of my all-time favorite actors. Then there's also Gustavo Santaolalla, an Argentinian composer. I'd love to have the opportunity to work with him someday.

Filmography

2025 (upcoming)

THE GIRLS OF FIRE

cinema · Co-Writer, Director & Producer

2024

WINNERS/SIEGER SEIN

cinema · Writer & Director

2023

SAM - A SAXON

series, episodes 1-4 · Lead-Director & Writer

2019

DEUTSCHLAND 89

series, episodes 5-8 · Director

2019

SKYLINES

series, episodes 4-6 · Director

2018

MEIBERGER - Chasing Minds

series, episodes 5-8 · Director

2016

HOUSE WITHOUT ROOF

cinema · Writer & Director

A SPECIAL PHOTOSHOOT

The pictures of the seven filmmakers which accompany the campaign were shot by renowned photographer Marcus Höhn.

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ABOUT GERMAN FILMS

German Films Service + Marketing GmbH is the national information and advisory center for the promotion of German films worldwide and the official external representation for German films appointed by the federal government of Germany. The work of German Films focuses on increasing the level of awareness of German films abroad by providing information services as well as initiating PR and marketing measures in order to grant the highest possible visibility in international media.

German Films was established in 1954 under the name Export-Union of German Cinema as the umbrella association for the Association of German Feature Film Producers, the Association of New German Feature Film Producers and the Association of German Film Exporters, and operates today in the legal form of alimited company. In 2004, the company was reorganized and now operates under the name: German Films Service + Marketing GmbH.

German Film's range of activities includes a close cooperation with all major international film festivals, the organization of umbrella stands for German sales companies and producers at international television and film markets, the staging of Festivals of German Films in selected international territories as well as the staging of industry screenings in key international territories. Providing advice and information for representatives of the international press, buyers from the fields of cinema, home entertainment, and television and consulting German filmmakers on international festivals is also part of German Films activities.



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Website: www.german-films.de

Link: https://www.german-films.de/activities/face-to-face-with-german-films/

Press Contact

Von der Kuhlen Kommunikation · Widenmayerstr. 27 · 80538 München Sven Adrian · s.adrian@vonderkuhlen.de · +49 (0)89 9545956-15

Contact German Films

Eva-Maria Pellikan · E-Mail: pellikan@german-films.de Angela Sonntag · E-Mail: sonntag@german-films.de

