



## **MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER – NOMINATION FORM**

**Germany** - "METROPOLIS"-Sicherungsstück Nr. 1: Negative of the restored and reconstructed version 2001

### **PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

Fritz Lang's motion picture METROPOLIS (1927) is without doubt famous testimony of German silent film art, a testimony that made history. The combination of motion picture and architecture: this is above all and still METROPOLIS, the film which was shot by Fritz Lang in the Babelsberg Film Studios in 1925/1926, which, due to its immense expenditure, caused the UFA, the largest German film group, to run into financial difficulties, which then had a glittering première in Berlin in January 1927, and an unparalleled success all over the world ever since - and which became the symbol of a (film-) architectural model of the future.

Substantially shortened and changed almost immediately after the première in Berlin, only one (though fragmentary) of the initially three original negatives of METROPOLIS has been left in the possession of the German Federal Archives, as well as master copies of the lost original negatives in a few archives abroad.

As a result of intense investigations on the initiative of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation, a new reconstruction has been produced. It was first shown in February 2001, on the occasion of the Berlin Film Festival. Considering that the result this time is again not the original version of METROPOLIS, but „only“ a synthetic version made of the fragments handed down, it comes, however, as close to the original piece of work as possible. With this reconstruction project a new digitized “original” negative has been produced to provide more independence and better copying quality in the future. This reconstructed version of METROPOLIS is proposed for nomination here.

#### **1. Identity and Location**

1.1 Name of documentary heritage

"METROPOLIS"-Sicherungsstück Nr. 1: Negative of the restored and reconstructed version 2001

1.2 Country

Federal Republic of Germany

1.3 State, province or region

1.4 Address

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation

Kreuzberger Ring 56  
 D-65205 Wiesbaden  
 Tel. +49 (0) 611 / 97708-0

1.5 Name of organization or institution (if appropriate)

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation, Wiesbaden

## 2. Legal Information

2.1 Owner (name and contact details)

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation, Wiesbaden

2.2 Custodian (name and contact details)

The foundation has transferred the worldwide commercial exploitation of its film stock, and thus of the cinematographic work METROPOLIS, to the federally owned Transit Film GmbH in Munich. This firm's area of responsibilities includes the licensing to broadcasting institutions, digital branch channels, and video distribution companies, as well as the lending distribution to commercial cinemas.

2.3 Legal status (if different from 2.1)

(a) category of ownership (e.g. public, corporate or private)

Corporate

(b) details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage

On the initiative of the German Federal Government, the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation was established in 1966 by the German film industry through the umbrella organization Filmwirtschaft e. V. as a private law foundation with legal capacity based in Wiesbaden.

The objective of the foundation establishment was to prevent a foreign sale of the former "Reich-owned" film assets being an important German cultural property.

The film stocks include the film materials of and/or rights in the film production companies dissolved (Universum Film AG, UFA Filmkunst GmbH, Berlin-Film GmbH, Bavaria Filmkunst GmbH, Terra Filmkunst GmbH, Tobis Filmkunst GmbH) pursuant to the Law on the Liquidation and Decartelization of the Former Reich-Owned Film Assets as of 5<sup>th</sup> June 1953 (Federal Law Gazette, par. 1 page 276), the film materials from and/or rights in the post-war productions of the Universum Film AG from the time 1956 to 1961, and of the Bavaria-Filmkunst GmbH from the time 1956 to 1962, as well as the film materials from and/or rights in films of cultural or historical significance.

Due to the unique cultural and financial value of its film inventory, the Foundation is supervised by a board of trustees formed by the film industry and the public authorities.

## (c) accessibility

In order to discharge its constitutional duties, the Foundation supports and sponsors the education of students, candidates for a doctor's degree, etc., by making available its inventories to the general public for inspection.

Thanks to a complete and computer-aided coverage, access is provided to films, materials, and information within shortest time, whether it is a matter of copy status or legal situation, or of more extraordinary searches for film themes or pieces of music.

This has made the study of the cinematic heritage considerably easier for scientists and people interested in the subject, and in the meantime, the general public has become aware of the foundation as a central place to go.

In the non-commercial area, the Deutsche Filminstitut – DIF [German Film Institute], based in Frankfurt/Main and Wiesbaden, has been entrusted with the general lending.

Besides that, the commercial distribution is carried out by the federally owned Transit Film GmbH, Munich.

## (d) copyright status

The copyright is held by the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation, Wiesbaden.

## 2.4 Responsible administration

details should be given of the mechanism or organization already established, or to be established, to ensure the proper management of the documentary heritage

President:

The President manages the Foundation's business and represents it in and out of court. This includes in particular the maintenance of good relations to numerous public authorities and institutions and to the national and international archives.

Service & Technology:

The constitutional mission of preserving and securing the considerable film inventory and making it accessible to the public is a substantial area of responsibilities of the technical department. It initiates, monitors and handles the necessary technical services, in close co-operation with both domestic and foreign copying installations and in technical co-ordination with archives, film historians and film researchers, and it has a comprehensive range of technical equipment at its disposal.

Legal Department:

Since the Murnau Foundation holds all of the copyrights and hence the exploitation rights of the films in its inventory, the legal department has the responsibility to furnish proof of these rights and to protect the Foundation against any unauthorized exploitation. It is also committed to the new and subsequent acquisition of rights. This is accompanied by the arrangement of contracts relating to restoration projects and to the addition of sound to silent movies.

**3. Identification**

## 3.1 Description and inventory

METROPOLIS not only represents a part of German film culture as well as the cinematic art of the Weimar Republic in an artistically unique and at the same time exceptionally popular manner, it also contains one of the first formulated urban imaginations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stimulated by a journey to New York, Fritz Lang had a city of the future built by his architect Erich Kettelhut in the Babelsberg studios just outside of Berlin, a city whose vision goes far beyond the real skyscraper silhouette.

Sergej Eisenstein, who at times attended the set, was impressed by the technical innovations that highly challenged the inventiveness of the special effects technicians. All superlatives of sets and costumes, however, were only possible with the help of these special effects.

The dubbing of tiny models into real scenes, the so-called Schüfftan technique, created the illusion of gigantic buildings.

Until now, the Tower of Babel in METROPOLIS has been a piece of urban imagination that has inspired architects of every kind time and again. The METROPOLIS models are still regarded as exposed examples of a laboratory of the cinematic and architectural modern age. The stylized utopian dream of an underground city of the future made decisive progress with the German film expressionism. For the first time, the cityscapes in METROPOLIS, the skyscrapers with overhead railroads running and aircraft flying between them, gave the contemporary audience an idea of mechanized future.

The budget of 5 million Reichsmark, the technology used, and also not least Fritz Lang's obsessive choreography of the scenes with thousands of extras, made METROPOLIS the most expensive motion picture of the UFA so far.

The fate of this film symbolizes the problem that the German cinema has been facing for decades: the apparent incompatibility of artistic ambition and commercial success. METROPOLIS failed at the cinema box offices and was substantially shortened by the production firm almost immediately after the première, against the intention of the author.

Around the film, a cinematic myth developed that, until today, has been driving thousands of audience members worldwide into the showings of this shortened version which is left of METROPOLIS. For decades, film archives of various countries have been trying to restore and reconstruct this film, without succeeding, however, in retrieving the lost parts of the film or regaining the original picture quality in the preserved parts. Now a reconstruction has been produced that comes as close as possible to Lang's original intention.

Contents: In METROPOLIS, the gigantic city of the future, the industrial magnate Fredersen reigns over an army of workers doing forced labour in an underground machine city. Due to the love of Fredersen's son of a working-class girl, the planned seizure of power by the workers, which is already on the point of setting off, leads to the reconciliation with the capitalist family.

Sicherungsstück Nr. 1

Silent film, 147 minutes, Black-and-White

Director: Fritz Lang

Screenplay: Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang (not mentioned)

Based on the 1926 novel of the same name by Thea von Harbou

Restoration 2001: The Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation, Wiesbaden  
 Filmmuseum Berlin – Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin  
 Deutsches Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main

The federal Archive/Film Archive, Berlin, in collaboration with  
 Filmmuseum im Stadtmuseum München and the  
 Cinemathek-association partners:  
 Deutsches Filminstitut (DIF)  
 Filmmuseum der Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf  
 Museum of Modern Art, New York

Contributors to the  
 Production of the  
 restored version:

Cinémathèque française, Paris/  
 Fondazione Cineteca Italiana, Mailand/Geoge Eastman House,  
 Rocherster/Gosfilmfond, Moskau/The Museum of Modern Art,  
 New York/National Film and Television Archive, London/  
 Screensound Australia, Canberra

Edition:

Martin Koerber

on behalf of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation

based on the version of the Filmmuseum München and the film  
 preserved passages at the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv

Length:

3341 meters

### 3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

Sicherungsstück Nr. 1/Negative

To restore the copyright in the USA on the basis of the GATT-regulations the foundation gave a "Notice of Intent to Enforce", which was published on the 02.07.1996 in the Federal Register (see annex).

There is no central copyright-register in Germany, but the foundation is always named as the holder of the rights in expert publications.

### 3.3 Visual documentation, if appropriate (for example, photographs or a video of the documentary heritage)

The Foundation has film materials, video cassettes of different techniques, stills, posters, press information, specialist publications, contemporary advertising and periodical materials etc. available.

For the performance of the restored version at the Berlinale on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001, a special brochure was produced, which you will find in the annex. Taken from this brochure you will also find some pictures from the film attached as "jpg".

### 3.4 History

At the festive premiere of METROPOLIS on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1927 at the Ufa-Palast at the Zoo in Berlin, the film had a length of 4,189 meters and lasted approximately 153 minutes. As early as December 1926, the American representative of Ufa, Frederick Wynne-Jones, brought METROPOLIS to the US and showed it to Paramount, intended to distribute the film in America. Apparently it was immediately decided to cut down the monumental film for the American market to "normal" feature length. The playwright Channing Pollock shortened the film to a length of approximately 3,100 meters and changed the plot substantially. The cuttings and new silent film captions produced a new meaning, Pollock's meaning.

In Berlin, METROPOLIS was withdrawn after a few weeks. The reasons for doing this are still unclear. In April 1927 the Ufa's board of directors decided that METROPOLIS should be screened in Germany in its American version, with only slight changes. It is not known whether Fritz Lang was involved in the adaptation of the second German version of his film. We do know that the film was submitted to the Berlin film censorship office on August 5, 1927. Its cuts were largely modeled on the American version and with silent film captions changed as necessary, and released for distribution at a length of 3,241 meters. Only in this and similarly shortened versions that were exported by Ufa to other countries was it ever shown outside Berlin.

Several film archives have been struggling to produce reconstructed copies from the extant mutilated versions that are more complete than the versions marketed by Ufa and Paramount.

The Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation has produced a new reconstruction. Archives all over the world – more easily accessible than before, and better cataloged nowadays – have been searched for evidence regarding the making and unmaking of the film, and the extant film material was compared and edited. Inevitably the produced reconstruct can only mirror the status of research to date. However, it is believed to come as close to Fritz Lang's original version as possible. Scenes and part of the plot that have been removed are replaced by stills or new silent film captions. Missing scenes from all other available versions were incorporated. This has reconstructed the editing of the premiere version as far as possible

The technical process chosen for the copy work was completely new this time: Instead of producing a dupe negative photographically, in a 2K-resolution the preserved nitrate-material was scanned and digitally manipulated in a computer. In the end, this negative, exposed on film, had a decisive advantage over the other negative: there was no loss of quality in the process. Ideally this meant that the copy made from such a negative would look exactly like the positive, made in 1927, produced at the time from a brand-new negative.

3.5 Bibliography: Please indicate up to three published sources describing the proposed documentary heritage.

METROPOLIS has always been taken into consideration in the relevant literature on cinematic history and science. Among others, the following publications have to be emphasized:

- Bock / Töteberg: „Das UFA-Buch“ [„The UFA Book“], 1992
- Brennicke / Hembus: „Klassiker des deutschen Stummfilms“ [„Classics of German Silent Film“], 1983
- Jacobsen / Sudendorf : „Metropolis, ein filmisches Laboratorium der modernen Architektur“, 2000
- Patalas: „Metropolis in/aus Trümmern“, 2001
- German Historic Museum + Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek [German Film Library Foundation]: „UFA-Magazine, Nr. 6 Metropolis“, 1993
- Maibohm: „Fritz Lang“, 1981
- Koebner: „Filmklassiker“ [„Film Classics“], Volume 1“, 1995

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

Federal Archives-Film Archive, Fehrbelliner Platz 3, D-10707 Berlin  
 Filmmuseum Berlin / Deutsche Kinemathek, Potsdamer Str. 2, D-10785 Berlin  
 Mr. Martin Koerber, Stuttgarter Str. 45, D-12059 Berlin  
 Mr. Enno Patalas, Ainmillerstraße 7, D-80801 München

#### 4. Management plan – see below Annex 1

In more than 30 years, and thanks to its constitutional mission, the Murnau Foundation has been able to make a remarkable contribution to the preservation of the German cinematic heritage. The Foundation ensures that the historically-artistically most important records of the German film production are shown in cinemas, on festivals and in television, in a technically perfect state and on secured legal conditions.

Owing to the unique cultural and financial value of its film inventory, the Foundation is supervised by a board of trustees formed by the film industry and public authorities. One representative each is sent by:

Verband Deutscher Spielfilmproduzenten e.V.<sup>1</sup> [Assn. of German Feature Film Producers]  
 Verband der Filmverleiher e.V. [Film Distributors Association]  
 Hauptverband Deutscher Filmtheater e.V. [Main Association of German Film Theatres]  
 Verband Technischer Betriebe für Film und Fernsehen e.V. [Assn. of Technical Enterprises for Film and Television]  
 Exportunion des Deutschen Films e.V. [Export Union of German Film Business]  
 Commissioner of the Federal Government for Cultural and Media Matters (2 representatives)  
 Federal Ministry of Finance  
 Hessian Ministry of Science and Art

In numerous archives in the world, this METROPOLIS film exists as a copy of film versions that are shortened, converted, newly titled, and put together in whatsoever way and provided with information captions and subtitles. Within the framework of a co-ordinated effort of the German film library confederation, the Murnau Foundation as lead manager and the Federal Archives / Film Archive are presently working on the publication of a restored new version and the production of a new negative that will then be available as a unique copy and as close as possible to the 2<sup>nd</sup> release of the Berlin Examining Authority from 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1927.

The most important basic materials come from, among others, the Federal Archives/Film Archive, the London International Film Archive, the George Eastman House in Rochester, USA, UCLA – Film & Television Archive Los Angeles, the Fondazione Cineteca Italiana in Milan, the Film Museum of Munich, the New York Museum of Modern Art, as well as other materials from the Czech and Russian film archives. Individual materials owned by private collectors were also brought in.

The reconstructed and restored version of this film on acetate non-flam film as a cinema film was premièred on the occasion of the Berlin Film Festival 2001, and is currently produced additionally in a digitized form. This is necessary because the original negative fragment was made on flammable cellulose nitrate film and would sooner or later possibly be left to fall into ruin, like all other original materials found in the archives.

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<sup>1</sup> e.V. = registered association

In co-ordination with the experiences of the Federal Archives-Film Archive, the Foundation's technical storage conditions are also created and implemented in an outstanding manner.

Within the bounds of the budget, for which the Foundation's board of trustees is responsible, sufficient amounts of yearly recurrent funds are available so that the constitutional mission of preserving, attending to, and restoring the precious film-historical heritage can be discharged without any problems.

Wherever the cinematic culture is taken care of, the cinematic art will not die. The works must be kept alive.

## **5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria**

### **5.1 Assessment of the documentary heritage against each criterion described in Annex 2.**

#### **Criterion 1 / Influence:**

Cultural heritage of German cinematography

Pioneer and model for the further national and international cinematic development.  
A work of German cinematic culture and art from the period of the Weimar Republic.

#### **Criterion 2 / Time:**

At the time of the Weimar Republic, the German cinema enjoyed worldwide fame. However, it took a couple of years and the keenness of quite a few inventors, travelling showman, engineers, and visionaries, to make the way from the first public film show in 1895 to the great artistic highlights in the twenties.

METROPOLIS was a mammoth work of the large film combine UFA, in the style of comparable Hollywood productions, in order to pave a way for German foreign markets. The production of 1 ½ years of duration, in which 35,000 extras were used, swallowed up over 5 million Reichsmark and brought the UFA to the verge of financial ruin.

#### **Criterion 3 / Location:**

Without specifically referring to any restricted locality, this motion picture has gained an international standing due to its surrealistic, fictitious portrayal of the world of „Metropolis“. Even the American urban visions of the eighties and nineties (such as in the cult film „Blade Runner“) are not conceivable without METROPOLIS.

The film was produced in the Babelsberg Film Studios in Potsdam.

#### **Criterion 4 / People:**

An outstanding piece of work of the director Fritz Lang. His works will live forever. They are being kept safe in all film museums and film libraries, and admired in retrospective shows as in the past - and not only by film experts. François Truffaut: „The style of Fritz Lang? It takes only one word to describe him: uncompromising. Every take, every camera movement, every detail, every movement of an actor, every gesture is definite and inimitable.“

The cinematographic work METROPOLIS was the starting-point of his international career. His wife, Thea von Harbou, wrote the script for the film. They both are closely connected with the history of German cinema, for many illustrious titles have to be attributed to their joint commitment.

**Criterion 5 / Subject / Theme:**

As regards to contents, this utopian dream of a city of the future allegorizes the theme of work and capitalism. In METROPOLIS, workers of the exploiter Fredersen have to erect a second „Tower of Babel“. The climax is the liberating revolt of the oppressed people.

METROPOLIS is both a science fiction film and an epic monumental film.

**Criterion 6 / Form and Style:**

Expressionist-futuristic cinematographic work of the Weimar Republic.

METROPOLIS has a stylistically precisely identifiable place in German film history. It reflects the turn of expressionism to excessive picture emotionalism, to an effectively façade-like monumentality. For many film directors all over the world, METROPOLIS was a milestone. In the film libraries they were able to study the pioneering cunning techniques.

METROPOLIS was the last great silent film before the breakthrough of the sound-film.

**Criterion 7 / Social Value**

Conflict between the classes.

A silent film classic that, due to its social allusion, has lost nothing of its relevance to the present.

Father-Son conflict.

**Secondary Criterion / Integrity:**

Taking the globally still available materials as a basis, the restored version can be regarded as a film that comes as close as possible to the original work, and this in a technically best-possible version that meets the state-of-the-art standard through processing on digital level.

Silent film – a culture of visual expression.

Being the most expensive epic monumental film, METROPOLIS is one of the most impressive examples of the interaction of motion picture and architecture.

**Secondary Criterion / Rarity:**

The new negative will exist as an absolute unique copy in the world – a piece of cinematic history.

Those who watch this silent film will realize that it has lost nothing of its fascination.

Due to the discussions around modern cinema the call for a film repertoire appears increasingly important.

- 5.2 Contextual assessment including an assessment of the importance of a series of documents, the importance of a series of documents in a particular setting, and the assessment against other documentary heritage

METROPOLIS occupies a worldwide outstanding and unique position in the large number of productions of the silent film era. It speaks for itself that the German commission for the UNESCO proposed this film for the „Memory of the World“ programme when first embarking on an international network for the documentation of the great variety of German cultural contributions and cultural history within the context of the documentary heritage available in archives, libraries, museums, memorials, etc.

- 5.3 An evaluation of the authenticity
- 5.4 An assessment of rarity (if appropriate)

## 6. Consultation

- 6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the:

- (a) Owner

Murnau Foundation, represented by its President.

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation  
 Mr. Peter Franz (President)  
 Kreuzberger Ring 56  
 D-65205 Wiesbaden  
 Germany  
 Tel. +49 (0) 611 / 97708-21  
 Fax: +49 (0) 611 / 97708-29  
 E mail: [PeterFranz@murnau-stiftung.de](mailto:PeterFranz@murnau-stiftung.de)

For technical queries, Mr. Martin Koerber, film historian and restorer engaged by the Foundation, may be contacted under c/o Filmmuseum Berlin, Potsdamer Straße 2, D-10785 Berlin, Germany, Tel. +49 (0) 30 / 300903-0, Fax: +49 (0) 30 / 300 903-13, E mail: [MartinKoerber@hotmail.com](mailto:MartinKoerber@hotmail.com).

- (b) Custodian
- (c) Relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee (if appropriate)

## 7. Nominator

- 7.1 Name  
 German Nomination Committee for the Memory of the World Programme  
 German Commission for the UNESCO  
 Colmantstraße 15  
 D-53115 Bonn
- 7.2 Relationship to documentary heritage  
 German Commission for UNESCO

7.3 Contact person (if appropriate)  
Prof. Dr. Joachim-Felix Leonhard  
(President of the German Nomination Committee)

7.4 Contact details

7.5 E-mail:

Web Site: