

Nei momenti in cui il regno dell'umano mi sembra condannato alla pesantezza, penso che dovrei volare come Perseo in un altro spazio. Non sto parlando di fughe nel sogno o nell'irrazionale. Voglio dire che devo cambiare il mio approccio(...).

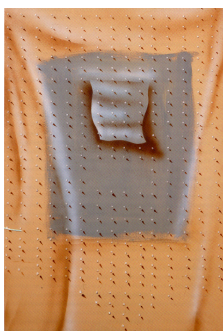
Italo Calvino,  
Lezioni Americane (Sei proposte per il nuovo millennio)



## GEORG

*a story of loss, idylls, illusions and longing*

**A DOCUMENTARY BY CATERINA KLUSEMANN**



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## Synopsis

When my father died it was as if the final burden had been added to the tragedies that the family could carry, and we all just broke apart. As a child I longed for a sign from him, something that would tell me how we could live despite, or with, such accumulated sorrow. My mother's and grandmother's history of Holocaust survival darkened our present. My German father, instead, seemed to have remained untouched by war: he had left an oeuvre of boundless color and beauty.

When my mother needed to talk of her childhood, though, he couldn't listen. His creation simply of "a feast for the eyes" seemed the failure of someone too scared to face the ugliness of reality. Angry and disillusioned, I could not make sense of the contradicting memories that remained of him after his death; his paintings were unintelligible.

This is a quest to understand the father I lost. In the course of the film my rage and singularity of judgement develop into a more difficult and irritating multiplicity of perspective - possibly the only way to look at the story of my family, my father and his art.

More information at:  
[www.georgklusemann.org](http://www.georgklusemann.org)

## Technical Data

Title:	Georg
Category:	Documentary
Director:	Caterina Klusemann
Lenght:	72 min
Format:	Digi Beta
Producer:	Caterina Klusemann for ARTE/ ZDF with Ma.ja.de Filmprod.
DoP:	Axel Schnepapat
Editor:	Christian Flbikar
Music:	Klaus Janek
Sound Editor:	Raimund von Scheibner
Shooting Location:	Toscana, Nordrhein-Westfalen



### SHORT SYNOPSIS

"Georg" is a quest to understand the father I lost. It is a story of idylls, illusions and longing: a love that unites two worlds, an idyll to make up for what the war destroyed, a struggle for an uncompromising art. And it is the story of a tragic shipwreck of those ideals in the face of reality and a haunting past, a story of alcohol and death. In the end all that remains is the longing for the idyll my father created, even if it was just an illusion...



### ABOUT THE FILM

"Georg" is part of a series of autobiographical films by Caterina Klusemann, who was born in Italy to a Jewish mother and German father. As a member of the third generation, she deals, in a highly personal way, with the Holocaust and its consequences today. In breaking down the family history, so steeped in silence and taboos, and shedding light on the rituals of memory and processing thereof, she gradually moves closer to her own ambivalent place in a story full of pain, anger, suppression and hope. "Georg" is Caterina Klusemann's second film in a series of autobiographical documentaries which deal with her German-Jewish family history. The filmmaker's willingness to

tackle the difficult and painful subject in a very personal and open way, creates a bridge to the public - and not only in Germany. Klusemann's first film in the series, "Ima" (2001, co-production with Arte/ZDF), was not only highly successful at many German and international festivals, but was also broadcast in the Netherlands (IKON), Sweden (SVT), Spain (TVC), New Zealand (Documentary Channel).

In "Ima", the director tells the story of her Jewish grandmother, who responds with pain and resistance to her granddaughter as she asks probing questions about the era of persecution and loss. The grandmother's refusal to pass on her memories, to share them with others is indicative of an unresolved trauma which hangs over the family history like a dark shadow, a heavy load, which extends to a deeper, more general level of humanity. How is identity or memory possible without history?

In "Georg", Caterina Klusemann focuses on her German-born father, who died in Italy in 1981 at the age of just 38. She was eight years old at the time. In her film, the director tries to confront her lack of memories and win back a part of her own personal history beyond that of her mother's idealised descriptions. The wish to find a leading figure, to counter the darkness and sadness, the burden and depression of her mother's Jewish roots, with something light and safe, is repeatedly faced with doubts and questions about her father's integrity. Who was he? How can his behaviour

towards his wife and mother-in-law be interpreted? This conflict drives the film forward, and gives it a direction, connecting the father's biography with the questions and opinions of a member of the third generation.

In 1964, ignoring the resistance of his petit-bourgeois family, Georg Klusemann decided to go to the Dusseldorf Art Academy, which at the time was the centre of a notorious young art scene. As the brainchildren of action art in Germany, the artists did more than rehearse an uprising against the established interpretation of art; they also introduced an artistic way of dealing with the past in the post-war generation. Academy artists such as Wolf Vostell, Bazon Brock or Joseph Beuys introduced provocative and consequential symbols and statements from the Third Reich into their actions. Klusemann didn't feel at home in this scene, and his artistic ideas took a different form altogether. He spent his time with complexly produced, almost archaic etchings, and cultivated a more poetic-bohemian lifestyle. In 1968, Klusemann met Elena, a child survivor raised in Venezuela, and moved to Italy with her. They lived in Tuscany in a huge house with a garden, where they had children and ran a vineyard. Klusemann honed his artistic style, creating imaginative and colourful work full of lightness, and with a touch of melancholy. The idyll seemed perfect. But even here, the events of recent German history caught up with Klusemann. His mother-in-law, an embittered survivor of the Holocaust, struggled with



her daughter's decision to marry a German, and in light of the mood at home and the recollection of her traumatic childhood, Elena became increasingly depressed. Klusemann simply withdrew, seeking increasing refuge in his work, in alcohol and maybe even affairs.

Caterina Klusemann tries to understand why her father was unable to react, why he couldn't confront his grandmother, or maybe even help and support mother and grandmother. Klusemann's canvases from this time don't provide her with any answers. What can they reveal?

Shortly after his artistic breakthrough in 1980, when it seemed as though a new start for the family might be possible, Klusemann began to spit blood, and three months later, he died. Today, the filmmaker lives with her German husband and their daughters in the same house in Italy. She is an artist herself - the questions beg answers more than ever before.

Caterina Klusemann traces her father through friends, acquaintances, art historians, and her mother, with whom a conflict develops on coming to terms with the past. She looks at sketches, photographs and films from back then, and of course, studies her father's own work. Her search takes her to family and colleagues of Georg. Step by step, she gets closer to her father. Finally, at Italian friends' of the Klusemann family, she gains insights which bring her closer to her father. She starts to understand...

The film 'Georg' brings the issue of dealing with the past, with the Holocaust and its traumatic consequences into the current day, in a personal, emotionally touching, and comprehensible way. As a member of the third generation and from the double perspective of having both German and Jewish roots, the filmmaker, Caterina Klusemann gets close to a subject which remains sensitive even today, and which continues to spark both paralysis and defence in Germany. In being led to the conflict from the ambivalent, doubting and questioning inner perspective of someone affected, it is easier for the audience to participate and identify with the characters and the story. On a very general level, "Georg", deals with the eternally topical issue of how we deal with guilt and reconciliation.





## ABOUT GEORG KLUSEMANN

Georg Klusemann, (born May 13th in Essen an der Kluse; died May 4th in Pisa) was a prolific artist and a children book author.

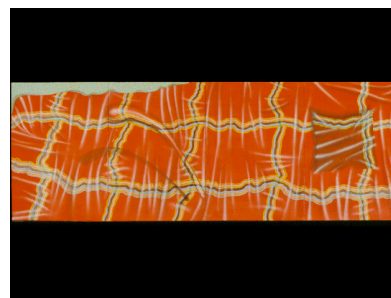
Although he died at only 38 years of age, Georg Klusemann left behind an extensive body of deeply original work.

Georg Klusemann belongs to a group of artists such as Werner Gilles, Eduard Bargheer or Gerhard Hoehme, whose work reflects their adoption of Italian culture. He studied at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf under Teo Otto, from 1962 to 1968, with Katharina Sieverding and Jörg Immendorf. After extensive travels to Spain, the Orient and Latin America, his work gained a clear original profile (Hans M. Schmidt). Impulses from contemporary European Art can be traced to Joan Miró, Victor Vasarely, Giorgio Morandi or Domenico Gnoli, to Surrealism or OpArt. But the impulses are transformed and integrated into a unique concept that cannot be associated to any known current in Art. Critics have called him "Baroque" (Joachim Burmeister), "Indefatigable and fantastic" (Vittorio Sgarbi), "Arcimboldeque" (Heiner Stachelhaus), "an oscillator between abstraction and realism, narrative and representation, elusiveness and application" (Dieter Ronte), or a "legitimator of computer art" (Giampiero Pavanati).

Georg Klusemann worked as a painter, drawer, etcher, and author of children books. His oeuvre comprises at least 350 canvases, 330

etchings, hundreds of drawings, gouaches and water colors, as well as poems and fables. His children books were published by Beltz & Gelberg and Peter Hammer Verlag and are still part of school curricula in German elementary schools because of their playful and imaginative approach to intercultural communication. After several monographies of his work and more than 20 catalogues, the complete works were published in two volumes by Hatje Cantz Verlag in the year 2000.

Georg Klusemanns paintings and etchings have been the object of more than 40 exhibitions in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Venezuela and the U.S.A. The major retrospectives have taken place at the Folkwang-Museum in Essen, the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf, at the Goethe-Institut New York, at the Museo Bagatti Valsecchi in Milan and at the Museo d'arte contemporanea Villa Croce in Genua. His works are part of the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Albertina in Wien, the Rheinische Landesmuseum in Bonn, the Museo d'arte contemporanea Villa Croce in Genua and the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas, as well as of numerous private collections.



Mehr infos unter:  
[www.georgklusemann.org](http://www.georgklusemann.org)

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



### LOSS

"If there be a nobility of character, an aristocracy of the mind, then Georg was a prince", my mother says. "There was something magnificent about him, nothing small, narrow: he overflowed with life", writes the poet Ingrid Bachér. His work is "full of waving drapes, flying boxes, objects coming up in the air, swelling balloons, windows bursting open, instruments coming to life and all this according to a harmony beyond logic," the major biographer of surrealism, Patrick Waldberg, admired. Georg's biographer H. Schmidt said he was an "individualist and a loner of unusual capacities." His friend Christoph Rüger says that in the end "maybe he was just to drunk to stand at the easel".

Like anyone dead, Georg now exists only as the sum of such memories. But they don't add up. Which one was he, a "coward" who couldn't face reality, was he an arrogant man who failed miserably in his ambition, was he someone who drank himself to death, or was he the prince my mother raves about? He once said: "Don't ask me how I am, just look at my paintings."

But even they are incomprehensible to me. My grandmother might have resented him for being German, but finds it unnatural that I refused to learn about my own father, until now. It was just too complicated, though: what grandmother and mother went through to survive the Holocaust is just one of the things

that I can't fit in the same picture as those paintings of his, full of "arabesques".

I merely lost my father. My mother lost her father, her family, her home and her childhood. Maybe my father lost something too, without ever admitting it. He lost the innocence of an ideal, the truthfulness of the world he loved. He used to remember his childhood as completely "untroubled", full of "ancient twisted apple trees" and even more ancient family legends. But my father was born in Essen an der Kluse in 1942, at the foot of the Villa Krupp and I don't think that the innocent fairytale Germany he so loved really existed, then. I would have wished for a statement on his position on guilt, Jews, the war: being the child of a German and a Jew is still difficult to shape into one identity, even so long after the war.

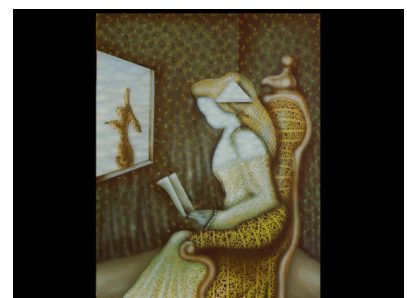
### IDYLL



When Georg entered the academy in Düsseldorf in 1962, artists like Beuys and Immendorf were famous for their statements against the past. My mother tells me "they were a nightmare for him, the theoretical, messianic, political aspect of art that he could not accept". His adored teacher, the brave Teo Otto, who had fought the Nazi regime through his art from the beginning, wrote to Georg "It is your duty to go your way, independently from all others".

And Georg certainly did, living in a small farmhouse with his out-of-the-world friend Udo Meyer, serving beer to the prostitutes at Czikos, only vaguely remembered by famous fellow students like Immendorf as an unassuming guy with a mysterious smile and an odd pair of leather shorts. "He wasn't in the center, he was centered", Heiner Stachelhaus wrote. When my mother came onto the scene my father rushed off with her, boasting to his surprised mates that she even spoke Yiddish; an imaginary claim. Was he trying to prove something? After all, his escape with my mother might be seen as some twisted answer to German guilt - self-styled exile, marrying a Jew - but his close friend Himi Burmeister assures me "he didn't flee from something, but towards something.." My Jewish grandmother bought a property in Tuscany, and Georg transformed it: in a film full of beautiful footage of his life from those years, it looks like a paradise. Franco, Pilo, Beppe, still sitting at the bar, used to respect him as a farmer, but loved him as a friend. Such an idyll impressed his contemporaries, "everybody knows you/the clouds free from the canvas/fly/you, balbano, the hill, the vineyard, the farmers." the painter Ulrich Erben crooned. Looking at that footage of the same year, his art and his life seem to merge, the colors and the shapes appear to overlap. There is a joy in my mother never seen since, a potential that had survived the war after all. My father had brought all that stunning happiness out, in her. But he failed to give it strength.

### ILLUSION



"The things recognized become uncertain, the apparent truth becomes deception," Hannes Harder-



ing writes of Georg's paintings. His work had begun to change. My mother doesn't seem to want to admit it, she speaks of life with him as if there was only that old film full of happiness. "I was living in a dream", she admits. But "in this very idiosyncratic phase Klusemann began with a technique that would become so disastrous for him. In 1978 he painted portraits of his family. They are oppressive scenes, portraits without faces, lonely in almost empty spaces. The paintings of this period are alienating and yet mysteriously attractive. They are permeated with quiet mourning," Heiner Stachelhaus writes. Burmeister tells me he had begun "steal away" to work in another atelier with Maria, at the villa of the Contessa Ginori.

I've never returned to see the villa or Maria since his death, but I want to, now. I want to know why he stole away, what his relationship with her was. Is it because I remember fearing that he would leave us? Am I afraid of knowing that he needed to get away from my grandmother's rage that made him feel "without a skin" or from the ghosts of my mother's past that were coming back to surface and could finally destroy the illusion of the Germany he still clung to? Or is it a never admitted feeling of my own guilt, that I could be the one who spoiled the paradise? "Naturally, before, we had time - much more than we've had lately, after Caterina's birth." I hear my mother saying in an interview... She remembers that "Georg was nervous, couldn't sleep, felt dissatisfied." Was that why he drank so much?

At the art depot I ask to see his last paintings. It's like asking for a grave to be opened. There is something new, in those canvases, a break through, a moving mixture of melancholia and beauty: he had created a universe of "merry desperation". It was to earn him recognition, at last. The Metropolitan Museum bought some works, the Alexander Carlson gallery mounted the first of what

was supposed to be a series of exhibitions in New York. Clara Weyergraf-Serra, Richard Serra's wife, remembers the elation of that time, of what the success meant to him, after going "his own way" alone, for so many years. Maybe there could have been hope for him, now. But it was too late. He was already spitting blood. Three months later, a few days before his 39<sup>th</sup> birthday, he died of liver cirrhosis.



#### LONGING

He completed a last etching, before dying, *La gioia della vita*, The Joy of Life: a huge winged monster rises out of a tropical forest to fly away into the black light.

"Georg was full of works and ideas like a river in flood", my mother says. "The Illusion was deadly", wrote Dietmar Polaczek in the FAZ. "He died for his profession", claimed another article, but my grandmother admits that some might say he drank too much. She was with him in London when he was offered a transplant, and she is still touched when she remembers his mysterious smile when he refused.

What Burmeister told me about the funeral I wasn't allowed to attend seems like the description of the first painting by Georg I ever saw: the absurd procession of priest and villagers and dogs peeing on graves he had painted on the walls of my room, when I was born. On the tapes I have found I can hear him making up his wild fairy tales, again, and for a moment he seems to be there. I realize I've been angry so long, thinking that he was to blame for dying, that he wanted to leave anyway, that he left me to fight the terrible memories in this family alone. But rage, the refusal

to know about him, the blindness: maybe it's not hate, but fear of liking him too much... He might have been a prince but not a hero. A German married to a survivor who could not help her with the pain but made her discover happiness. A man who embraced life and drank himself to death. A loving father, after all, who still flew away from me like a handkerchief in one of his paintings. What I might have learned, in the end, is what Klaus Honnef wrote about looking at his works: "The viewer is forced to question his viewpoint, to change it. To decipher the intricacies of these images one must learn to accept one's judgement as always temporary and never ultimate." Accepting all these perspectives might be the only way to understand "the soft-souled, round-bellied, fine-feeling and loud-laughing Georg Klusemann" and a world where death and the trauma of the Holocaust can coexist, even in the same family.



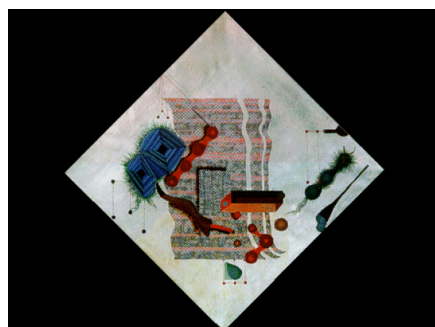
## Form

The film is built around a quest. The coming of age story of a daughter develops as she tries to solve her conflict with the past and with a complicated but fascinating father. Georg, the central but absent figure is brought to life by minutely circling around his memory, a back and forth in perspective that on one hand propels the arc of the coming of age of the daughter, while also giving depth and dimension to the character of the father.

Crucial to this are the discoveries made in interviews. They range from famous artists from Duesseldorf's scene like Ulrich Erben and the writer Ingrid Bachér, to the forgotten Udo Meyer, from the writer and publisher Hermann Schulz to the Italian farmer friends, the descendant of a countess, Klusemann's survivor mother in law, and of course, Elena Hochman-Klusemann, Georg's great love and Caterina's mother. This peculiar mix reflects the peculiar family story, views of Georg's character, Caterina's lingering questions of identity. The multiplicity of voices and points of view allows a continuous displacement in judgement, which is part of the process and of the theme of the film. The question of "how to look" is further developed in the way the paintings are shown, which follows the narrative of the development of the daughter's growing ability "to see".

The goal is to show, with documentary means, a world where history, personal trauma and whimsical, colorful flights of desire are inextricably woven together.

A complete dialogue list and more information available under [www.georgklusemann.org](http://www.georgklusemann.org)





## **CREW**

### **CATERINA KLUSEMAN**

#### **DIRECTOR**

Caterina Klusemann, born 1973 in Italy, grew up in Venezuela, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. 1991-95 graduated in Neurobiology at the University of Basel, 1996-2001 graduated in directing at Columbia University, New York. She lives in Berlin and Italy, working on fictional and documentary projects. Films (selection): Matrilineal (2001/30min, producer, writer, director and editor), Ima (2001/58min, co-production with ARTE/ZDF, co-producer, writer, director and editor), Dresscode – How to dress right (2007/52 min, co-production with ARTE/ZDF, writer and director), La vieille dame et la mer (2007/52 min, co-production ARTE and GEO), Paul and Bataar (2008/70 min, produced by Ziegler Film Köln, writer and director), Ménages à Trois (2008/52 in, co-production with ARTE/ZDF). Broadcasts on ARTE, 3sat, Nederland 1, TVC, ZDFdoku, svt1, Eurochannel, Planete PL, Documentary Channel NZ, etc. Awards (selected): New Line Outstanding Filmmaking Award und Milos Forman Fund Award, 2001, New York; Europäische Koordination von Filmfestivals - Jameson Kurzfilmpreis beim Filmfestival Dresden 2002; Erster Preis Kurzdokumentar, Le réel en scène, Gentilly, 2001, Bayerischer Dokumentarfilmpreis beim Filmfestival München 2002; Frauenmedienpreis Niedersachsen, Juliane-Bartel Preis 2002; Findlingspreis des Landesverbandes Filmkommunikation Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2003; Lobende Erwähnung Dokumentart 2003; Finalist Prix International du Documentaire et du Reportage Méditerranéen 2003; Input 2003. Screened at (selection): Visions du Réel, Nyon; Shanghai Filmfestival; Prix Italia; R.I.D.M., Montreal; Shadowfest, IDFA, Femme Totale; Women make Waves; Premio Bizzarri, San Benedetto del Tronto; Goethe Institute, Internationales Festival für Dokumentarfilm Leipzig; DokumentArt, Kasseler Dokumentarfilm- & Videofest; Up and Coming, Washington Jewish Film Festival, Grenzland Filmtage, Filmfestival Dresden; Belo Horizonte Short Film Festival; Rio de Janeiro International Short Film Festival; Critics week Cannes. More information at [www.caterinaklusemann.com](http://www.caterinaklusemann.com)

### **AXEL SCHNEPPAT**

#### **DOP**

Born in Rostock, Germany in 1971. Cinematography studies at the HFF “Konrad Wolf” in Potsdam 1993-2000. German Cinematography Award 2000 for “Havana mi amor”, dir. Uli Gaulke. He is also well known for his cinematography on award winning films like “Schultze get's the Blues”, dir. Michael Schorr, “Marry me”, dir. Uli Gaulke, “Homemade Hilly-billy Jam”, dir. Rick Minnich, “Comrades in Dreams”, dir. Uli Gaulke. His films have played at Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Sundance, etc.

### **CHRISTIAN FIBIKAR**

#### **EDITOR**

Born 1968, he has edited innumerable documentaries and documentary series, short films, such as the award winning “Tailor Made Dreams”, dir. Marco Wilms.

### **KLAUS JANEK**

#### **COMPOSER**

Klaus Janek is a double-bassist. His interest lies in improvised music, traditional and electronic music. He has published CDs with FMP, edel classics, Minor Music, Solponticello, Ubiquity and others, plus three solo doublebass CDs. Janek composes music for cinema, theatre and dance theatre. In 2004 he signed an exclusive contract as composer for scoop music gmbH/bmg publishing. Art direction of various concert series in Italy, Germany and UK. Concert and festival appearances in EU and USA.

## **RAIMUND VON SCHEIBNER**

### **SOUND EDITOR**

Born in Berlin, Germany in 1966. Sound engineering studies at the HFF "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam-Babelsberg. Production sound and sound design on numerous film and television projects including "Three Star Red", dir. Olaf Kaiser, "Marry Me", dir. Uli Gaulke, "Homemade Hillbilly Jam", dir. Rick Minnich, "Full Metal Village", dir. Sung-Hyung Cho, "Comrades in Dreams", dir. Uli Gaulke.

## **REINHILD FELDHAUS**

### **PRODUCER**

Reinhild Feldhaus, born 1964 in Germany, studied history of art, performing arts, German literature in Kiel, Vienna and Berlin. 2002 Phd in cultural studies. She worked as a freelance journalist and editor at several institutions and publishers (SPIO, Medienkontor, A&C Verlag, Susa Verlag). Since the beginning of 2004 she has been developing and supervising projects at MA.JA.DE Filmproduktion (Berlin), including Traumland Ost (Pamela Meyer-Arndt), Krisenherde (Hannes Schönemann), Maßgeschneiderte Träume (Marco Wilms), Khadak (Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth), Dresscode – How to dress right and Georg (Caterina Klusemann).

## **MA JA DE FILMPRODUCTION**

### **PRODUCTION COMPANY**

MA.JA.DE. Films was founded in 1991 and is based in Leipzig and Berlin. The main area of work is the production of feature-length documentaries. Since 1995 Heino Deckert is the sole shareholder and director of MA.JA.DE Films. MA.JA.DE also is one of the co-founders of d.net, an organisation of seven European independent producers. Last productions (selection): Broadway. Black Sea (Vitalij Manskij, 2002, Prix SRG SSR Visions de Réel, Nyon), Fatherland (Thomas Heise, 2003, Prix SRG SSR Visions de Réel, Nyon, Silberne Taube, Leipzig), Estland Mon Amour (Sibylle Tiedemann, 2004). International Co-Productions (selection): Justice – In Time of War (Fabrizio Lazzaretti, 2003, Joris Ivens Competition, IDFA), Three Rooms of Melancholia (Pirjo Honkasalo, 2004, Human Rights Film Network Award, Lina Mangiacapre Award, EIUC Special Mention). MA.JA.DE has recently become involved in the production of international feature films which have led to the founding of MA.JA.DE fiction in 2005. KHADAK, by Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth, celebrated its world premiere as opening film of the Venice Days at Venice International Film Festival 2006. It was awarded with the Lion of the future - Premio Venezia Opera Prima "Luigi de Laurentiis" for best debut feature film.

## **ARTE "LA LUCARNE"**

### **COMMISSIONING STRAND ARTE ("GEORG" WILL HAVE IT'S FIRST BROADCAST ON "LA LUCARNE" ON JUNE 8TH, 2008)**

"La Lucarne" is a unique strand on European television for experimental and creative documentaries. It regularly commissions works that gain great recognition on the festival circuit by filmmakers such as Naomi Kawase, Alexandre Sokourov, Alain Cavalier, Sergei Loznitsa und Victor Kossakovsky, Lech Kowalski, Chris Marker, Claudio Pazienza. "Ima" by Caterina Klusemann was part of the retrospective "Les Films Cultes de La Lucarne d'Arte" at the Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2007

About 12 films are contributed by the German Arte/ZDF to this strand, all cared for by the commissioning editor Doris Hepp.