



Renate Hehr

**Margarethe von Trotta – Filmmaking as Liberation**

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Margarethe von Trotta's name has been synonymous with high-quality cinema for over twenty years. She sees film-making as a critical analysis of society and a way of experiencing oneself. This view is rooted in the '68 student revolts and the '70s women's movement. She deliberately rejects formal experiment, preferring to use the conventional resources of classical narrative cinema in order to reach the widest possible public. Nevertheless her films have a very personal and individual signature that takes them well away from the mainstream. Because all her stories deal with people who are prisoners of social constraint, their social and personal relationships and needs, and not least their own personality, her films have often been called »prison films«. The conflict with reality that triggers the plot arises from rebellion against this prison situation and giving in to a desire for self-realization, dreams of a fulfilled life and a more humane society. These attempts to break out always have their price. As a rule they fail. The characters develop in that they sub-sequently understand their situation better and have thus taken the first step towards change. But Margarethe von Trotta is not inter-ested in conveying messages or offering solutions. She wants to identify problems and reveal reality by exploring human beings in all their facets and showing the relationship between social role, feelings, desires, fantasies and expectations for the future.

Her aesthetic concept is based on inner feelings. Recognition of and identification with the characters in her films arise mainly from atmospheric density created by precisely detailed creation of the figures and the background to their lives, carefully considered use of cinematic resources and concentration on what is fundamental and typical. This often leads to the emergence of uncomfortable truths that are painful but still contribute to making the world more comprehensible and open to change, thus meeting one of art's most ambitious claims.

Margarethe von Trotta recently made her mark as an opera director. Her interpretation of Alban Berg's *Lulu* in Stuttgart was widely acclaimed.

Renate Hehr studied theatre, German and journalism at the Freie Universität Berlin. She went to South America for political reasons in the late seventies. In 1992 she returned to Berlin, where she lives and works as an author and translator.

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