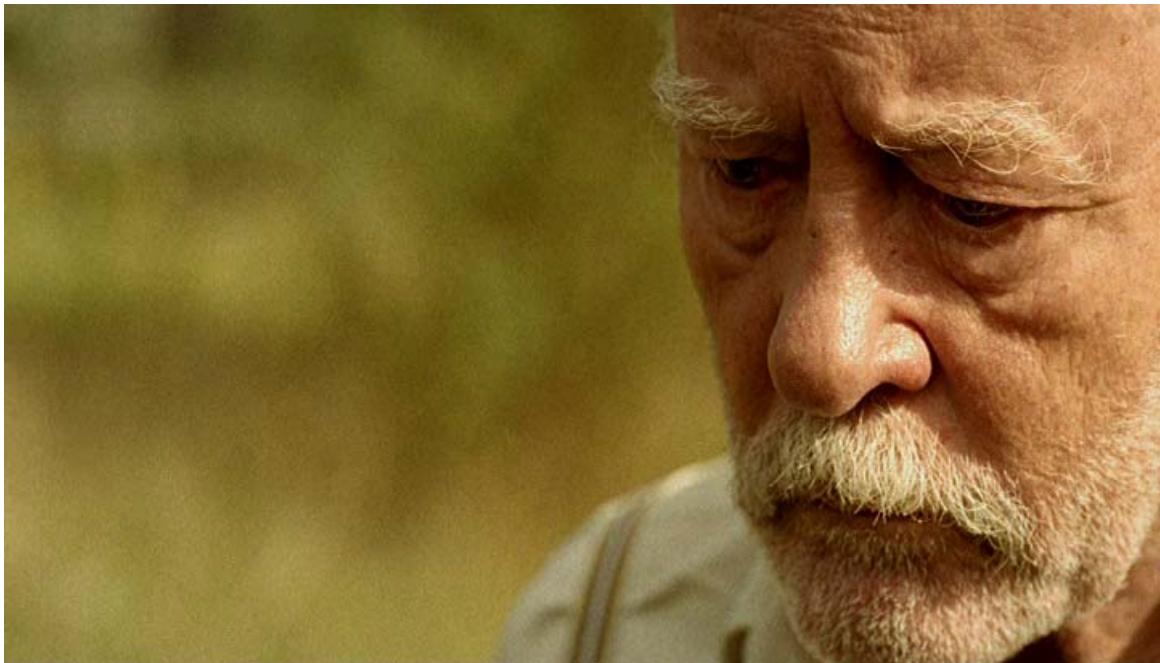




Kaminski.Stiehm.
Film GmbH

THE BERLIN WALL
by Paul Cotter

press kit



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Synopsis

Werner Schloemerker, 75, has just lost his wife. Following her funeral, he returns to his house and starts to clear away her belongings. In a wooden box under his desk he finds an old, oddly shaped brick.

The following day he walks to the back of his house which looks out onto a wasteland. It is a large empty wasteland full of old bricks and rubble. On one side of the wasteland is Werner's house, situated in a long row of suburban houses. On the opposite side of the wasteland is a large, communist-era housing complex, populated with refugees and immigrants from Somalia, Kosovo and Kurdistan. The refugee children happily play in the rubble-strewn wasteland, together with children from the "western", suburban house side. However the parents do not see eye to eye.

Werner walks out into the middle of the wasteland, carrying a bag of mortar and a bucket, and begins to build a wall using the rubble and bricks that are lying on the ground.

Before long, Werner's wall-building has roused the interest of the neighbourhood. They all want to know what he is doing, but Werner says nothing. He is a unassuming man, quietly going about his business building the wall. The kids are intrigued. People from the suburban side of the wasteland begin to gossip. Some think the old man is mad, others think it is a great idea. He is re-building the Berlin Wall and they are happy about it because it will separate them from the refugees. Some people even join in and help to build the wall even higher. Bigotry begins to boil over and soon the neighbours are arguing amongst themselves.

The police arrive. They break up the arguments and decide it is illegal to build the wall. If it isn't dismantled when they come back the next day, they will tear it down.

The next morning Werner comes out to look at his wall before it is destroyed. There is a distinctive hole in the middle of it. He pulls a brick out of his pocket. It is the brick he had kept under his bed. He looks at some scratches on the brick. It is graffiti, written onto the brick when it was part of the original Berlin Wall. The graffiti reads, "Werner and Theresa 1962 – Forever". Werner places the brick into his wall. It fits perfectly.



Director's statement

"The Berlin Wall" started with the idea, "what if a man wanted to rebuild the Berlin Wall".

I loved the idea of one man flying against the tide of public opinion, of what the world wants, rebuilding a wall that everyone wanted torn down.

This opened up questions about the nature of public opinion. What it means, how groups of people so often develop opinions that are not logical, that are not based on the facts. Instead people often project their own, already-formed opinions onto whatever they see in front of them.

This was the genesis of "The Berlin Wall".

Werner is a straightforward man. He keeps himself to himself and says very little. At the start of the film, due to the loss of his wife, he is going through an immense period of grief. He deals with it in his own quiet way, and one way is to rebuild a portion of the Berlin Wall that used to stand at the back of his house. It was on that spot that his love affair with his wife first began. They used to stand by the Wall and write messages of love to each other, etching their feelings onto the concrete. The fact that he wants to recreate this is an act of love, and by extension, healing.

However, when other people see Werner start to rebuild the Wall they project their own biases and feelings onto his act. To Werner, the wall was a symbol of love, but to most people the wall was a symbol of hatred, of division, of separation, of dislike. His actions feed their opinion, even though they are very separate.

This introduced me to the topic of xenophobia, fear of the stranger, fear of the unknown. Europe is dealing with this a lot right now; eastern Europeans migrating west, refugees arriving from Africa. There has been a large influx of "unknowns" into our communities and the tendency has been to keep these people separate. These prejudices come to the fore when Werner builds his wall.

Stylistically, I shot "The Berlin Wall" with a gentle, cinematic, handheld camera. I am a big fan of ex-documentarians like Krystoff Kieslowski, who keep the camera handheld, but use cinematic framings and an editorial language to create a very classical form of cinema. I am a big fan of a device called an Easyrig. It allows me to be handheld, but still enables me to use long lenses for close-ups and cinematic framings.

Casting is a vital part of my process. As you can see from my work, I don't like overacting. I tend to use a lot of theatrically trained actors, but push them towards a natural, instinctive form of acting, relying on their instincts to "react" to what's happening around them, rather than to "emote".

I like to keep my crew very simple. I am a big fan of the smaller the better. It helps with the atmosphere on the set. When it comes time to shooting, the actors feel like it's just them and me. They shouldn't feel like there is a big circus involved.

"The Berlin Wall" is a script that is very close to my heart, and I hope I have done justice to it as a wonderful, poetic film.

Paul Cotter – Writer/ Director/ Producer



Paul Cotter, born in the United Kingdom, studied geography at the University of Manchester and then cinema and photography at Southern Illinois University. He has directed for film, TV, commercials and theatre.

Filmography

2009	THE BERLIN WALL	short film
2009	BOMBER	feature film, shot in Germany
2008	ODD SHOE	short film, premiered at South by Southwest Film Festival
2008	HOLLYOAKS	TV series on Channel 4; 5 episodes
2007	DOCTOR'S	TV series on BBC; 3 episodes
2005	ESTES AVENUE	short film, premiered at Sundance Film Festival
2003	LAST HAND STANDING*	short film
2003	JEFF FARNSWORTH*	short film

* made when he was a Finalist in the Chrysler Million Dollar Film Festival

Radio:

Paul wrote a radio play, *DROPPING BOMBS*, for the BBC.

Commercials:

In addition to his film work, Paul is an award-winning commercials director. He won an AICP award for *STUPID*, an anti-smoking ad which is now part of the permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. His *DODGE RAMRASH* campaign collected four Telly Awards, and his *KITTEN* spot was recognised by the Chicago Sun Times as one of the ten best television commercials of the year, also winning a Telly and being honoured at the Chicago International Television Festival.

Theatre:

Paul's recent productions include Donald Lewis's *GOOD GIRL* for the Bailiwick, Richard Dresser's *WONDERFUL WORLD* for the Infamous Commonwealth Theatre, and Neil Simon's *BAREFOOT IN THE PARK* for VPT in Chicago.

Kaminski.Stiehm.Film

Frank Kaminski and Ulrich Stiehm, born in 1972 and 1968 respectively, met during their studies at the *Film & Television Academy (HFF) „Konrad Wolf“/ Potsdam Babelsberg*. After graduation Stiehm went to the USA and worked at *New Line Cinema* in the international feature films development division while Kaminski worked for the market leader *DoRo Film Production* as a producer for music videos and commercials in Vienna and Berlin. In 1998, they were commissioned by *DoRo* to establish a feature film department. In 2002, after five successful productions, Kaminski and Stiehm parted ways with *DoRo* and set up *Kaminski Stiehm Film GmbH* in 2003.

In 2003, only four months after the foundation of the company, shooting started on their first production; "Seven weeks in Italy" (OT: Cappuccino zu Dritt), a tv-movie for *Sat1*. After completing a short film project that same year, the pair then focused on the development and preproduction of new film projects in 2004. Of these, six feature films came to fruition and were produced from 2005 to 2007.

Since 2003, *Kaminski Stiehm Film GmbH* has established itself as a reliable partner for broadcasters and distributors. The company has successfully produced a wide variety of content, from mainstream television films to feature films that have appeared in national and international festivals; all the while supporting young directors in bringing their vision to the screen. The features "Vineta", "Sunny" and "Last exit Norway" (OT: Der Letzte macht das Licht aus!) have successfully screened at festivals in Munich, Saarbrücken, New York and Shanghai. "Kerber's next life" (OT: Im nächsten Leben) with famous German actor Edgar Selge premiered at the German high reputed Hofer film festival in Octobre 2008 and is going to be out in German cinemas in spring 2009.

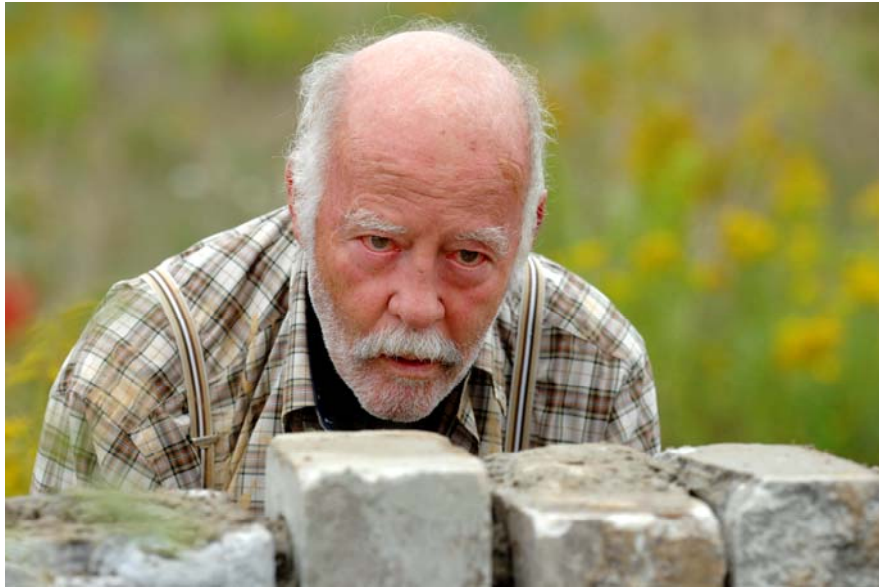
Key production partners and customers include *Sat1*, *NDR* and *ZDF*. The *NDR* production, "Ein Sommer mit Paul", was the first production for the *ARD* prime time. Project funding partners have included *Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg*, *FFA*, *Nordmedia*, *Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung* and *Filmförderung Hamburg*.

The recent film production "Pirate vacation" (OT: Die Pirateninsel) heralds a move into the production of "television-events", aimed at exploiting new markets. Broadcast by *Sat.1* during Saturday evening prime time, the film enjoyed higher-than-average market share and secured foreign sales to 20 territories, including France, Italy, Spain, China and Russia.

Kaminski Stiehm Film GmbH continues to build its production expertise, constantly striving to create product that fulfils the needs of both clients and viewers. Through innovation and efficiency, the company is using the lessons it has learnt from past productions to create a bright future for itself.

Cast

Joost Siedhoff as Werner



Fritz Roth as Helmut



Dominik Bender as Hans



Yvonne Johna and Lars Pape as Katja and Clemens



Kai-Peter Gläser as Police man



Crew

DIRECTOR
WRITER

Paul Cotter

PRODUCER

Frank Kaminski
Ulrich Stiehm
Miriam Klein

DIRECTOR OF
PHOTOGRAPHY

Jean-Philippe Gossart

EDITOR

Silke Botsch

MUSIC

Stephen Coates

PRODUCTION
DESIGN

Ulrich Friedrichs
Alexander Ward

CASTING

Miriam Klein
Silke Koch & Susann Reitz

PRODUKTION
MANAGER

Meike Kornrumpf

SOUND

Marko Weichler



