

1917

THE

REAL

OCTOBER

Artists in times
of revolution

a film by

Katrin Rothe



Moscow
International Film
Festival
2017



São Paulo
International Film
Festival
2017



competition
BIAF
Bucheon,
2017



Official Selection
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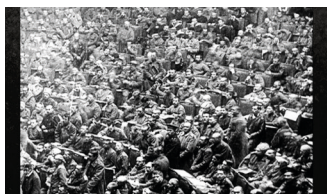
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1917 – THE REAL OCTOBER

An animated documentary by Katrin Rothe

1917 – The Real October is an animated retelling of the Russian Revolution. The award-winning filmmaker, Katrin Rothe conducts a multi-perspective research on the basis of previously unknown diaries, reports, and literary works into the event known nowadays as the “October Revolution”. For the very first time the Russian Revolution is seen solely through the eyes of the artists who experienced the days of that revolutionary year of 1917.



What was going on in Saint Petersburg between the uprisings in February, which forced the Tsar to abdicate, and the takeover of power by the Bolsheviks in October? The Provisional Government was a diarchy of the parliament, Duma and the workers' council, the Soviets. World War One still persisted as Russia drowned in chaos and anarchy with no civil parliamentary democracy yet to be

formed.

How did the situation change after the return of Lenin and Trotsky in the spring? The World War One still continued. No civil parliamentary democracy was formed. How did the situation change after the return of Lenin and Trotsky in spring?

A pointed differentiation of the two revolutions of the year 1917 emerges out of the reflections of five artist eyewitness accounts, put together with a cheerful earnestness.

The director's attention is focused on the contradictory developments within the dangerously unstable power vacuum. Following the historic chronology of the events she immerses herself in her characters' social, cultural and political discourses. At the same time the private worlds of ideas bold visions and flaming pleas become apparent.

At the time of the events no one knew how famous the film's protagonists were to become. Vladimir Mayakovsky (voiced by Steve Hudson), the 25-year-old eccentric poet, dashes tirelessly through the city, is everywhere where there is danger and provokes the older artists. He dreams of a new world and a radically different, truly democratic art.

The bustling avant-gardist and soldier Kazimir Malevich

(Paul Bendelow), then 38 years of age, proves himself as a resourceful organiser and publishes one manifesto after another. The established painter and critic Alexandre Benois (Michael Morris), 47, as well as the internationally renowned writer Maxim Gorky (Trevor Rolling), 49, are already well established in Russia's cultural life. Both fear the destruction of art and creativity. The lyricist Zinaida Gippius (Nicolai Marston), 47, is friends with several ministers and many a paper of grave political importance has been authored on her kitchen table. She lives opposite the Tauride Palace, the parliament building,



in which the discordant Provisional Government confers. In 1917 all of these artists are cultivating contacts to one another. Zinaida Gippius is the poetic "chronographer" of the occurrences of 1917. In February she writes: "Like everyone else, I can't get to grips with these times" and in autumn: "There is [...] no more homeland."

Almost one hundred years later, the film artist Katrin Rothe sweeps together the colourful snippets of her cut out characters and props on the floor of her studio. The brief real-life scenes with her link the animated sequences together. In these she arranges the results of her research and asks questions (voiced by Danielle Green). Unsatisfied by numerous historical scholarly books, she finds more vivid thoughts, observations, and "truths" in the contemporary testimonies of the artists. A timeline of the historical facts gradually grows under her hands. The resulting network of "red threads" makes the re-constructive retrospective as polyphonic as life itself.



The film 1917 – THE REAL OCTOBER is characterized by its unabashed imaginative mixture of artistic and cinematic tools. The visual aesthetics of the film evoke the keen, starkly abstract, precise colour and form of the language of the Russian avant-garde art developing a unique contemporary style.

Material plays an important part in the finished composition. Neither bubble wrap nor fake fur shy away from their actual textures. The five main characters are worked out in detail, using various materials such as cardboard, strings and fabric. They come to life as cut-out animations with complex and highly variable facial expressions, gestures and body language. In contrast everyone else are merely cut out shadows: demonstrating masses, dancing couples and marching troops. City panoramas and interiors combine silkscreen prints, fine line drawings and a colourized tableaux of various light ambiances/moods.

Historical black and white footage complement the dramatic composition. Also the sound is a compelling mix of heterogeneous elements. Noises, historical soundtracks and speakers' voices compose a flow of variously dense layers, reinforcing and enriching the images. The music is composed specifically by Thomas Mävers.



Based on artists testimonials 1917 – THE REAL OCTOBER, addresses the timelessly relevant questions: What role does and what role can art and artists play in turmoils and uprisings? Where and how do they influence the events with their ideas, visions, designs and as well as their doubts? Do they campaign for the preservation of cultural and artistic heritage or the destruction of the old? How much leeway do they have? How important is art when one's life is in danger? What relations did and do artists have to political structures, to state and financial powers? Can art be truly democratic? Is collective self-administration possible? How? The protagonists perceive the events differently and answer these questions in different ways.

The dates are, just as in the film, recorded according to the **Julian calendar** that was used up until 31st January 1918 and has 13 days less than the western Gregorian calendar.

Saint Petersburg = **Petrograd**.

February 13 to March 3 1917: February Revolution (also abdication of the tsar)

October 24 to 26: Bolshevik assumption of power (also October Revolution)

ARTISTS IN TIMES OF REVOLUTION

Vladimir Mayakovsky



„Comrades, if you want your manifestos, posters and banners to draw more attention, turn to artists for help. If you want your proclamations and appeals to be stronger and more convincing, turn to poets and writers for help.“

„The remains of fashionable and wealthy Petersburg began to convene in the 'Comedians' Pub'. I wrote the following couplet to a rousing tune:‘

*Munch your pineapples, chew on your grouse.
Your last day is coming, you bourgeois louse.’*

This couplet was to become my favourite saying.“

Vladimir Mayakovsky is the poet of the 1917 revolution. He has been supported by Gorky. Mayakovsky was obsessed with the radical renewal of culture. In February he organized the cars for the street demonstration. He was out and about on the streets and appeared at meetings and discussions. Mayakovsky criticized Maxim Gorky and attacked Benois. At the same time he often sought their help. He quickly grew tired of the numerous assemblies and reorganisations. Mayakovsky rather provoked and tried out new forms of art for the streets.

Mayakovsky became the poetic "voice of the October".

Alexandre Benois



„More than ever and with all my soul, I feel it necessary to end the war – at once and no matter what the cost! That is a categorical imperative.“

„In the kitchens and servants’ quarters the most terrible things were predicted to happen today: wholesale slaughter and similar. Our butler even locked the front door and refused to let anyone in the house!“

„But I certainly hadn’t expected it to happen today – hadn’t realised we were seeing the last hours of our ‘bourgeois world order’.“

Alexandre Benois was one of the most important art critics of his time. He was an aesthete, painter and considered himself a pacifist. Through the battle about the protection of the Russian cultural heritage and the founding of the ministry of culture, he becomes Gorky’s ally. His loathing of the war lets him sympathise with the revolution, but he does not find an affiliation. During the days of the October Revolution he is primarily concerned about the cultural goods in the Hermitage. Shortly after the attack on the Winter Palace, he finds and saves handwritten notes of the imperial family. Despite all the events happening around him, he tries to keep up a neutral stance.

Zinaida Gippius



„...it would be good to be blind and deaf, show no interest at all and write poems about ‘eternity and beauty’ (ah! If only I could!).“

„All along Nevsky, Tsarist eagles were smashed up – very peaceably. Caretakers swept up the pieces, boys dragged the wings around, shouting: ‘Here, a wing for lunch!’“

„I’m not blind; I know that no intellectual manifesto can save us from those cannon...“

Zinaida Gippius was the lyricist of symbolism and a famous literary critic. She was regarded as grande dame of Petersburg’s literature and philosophy salon. She despised the Bolsheviks. Gippius lived directly opposite the Russian Parliament and became a witness of all kinds of events. In her flat, politicians of the provisional government socialized – even the commander-in-chief Kerensky. Gippius advocated the civil parliamentarism. Her utopia ended with the Bolsheviks’ assumption of power.

Maxim Gorky



„I am going to found a party of my own, even if I don't know what to call it. The only party member is me. I don't think there will ever be more than three members.“

„Yes, we must keep fighting anarchy, but sometimes we must also overcome our fear of the people. The fatherland would consider itself less at risk if there were more culture“

„I would like to stress that an experiment is being carried out on the Russian proletariat. The awful thing about it is that it will long be betrayed by the high ideals of Socialism.“

Maxim Gorky was and is to this day an internationally known author. He was a dedicated critic of the tsarist regime. Gorky has been a Marxist and friend of Lenin's long before the February Revolution. He was one of the constants in the circles of Petersburg's intelligentsia. In February 1917 he unbureaucratically founded the Gorky Commission for educational work and the protection of monuments. Over the course of the year he dissociated from Lenin and the Bolsheviks more and more.

Kazimir Malevitch



„You alone, painters, sculptors, actors, poets, musicians and architects must close ranks to defend art....

Only you can help the young generation, who carry the spark of novelty. Only you can sound out the call to art throughout the land.“

„Everything in life has changed. Life has new helmsmen, alive and healthy and strong – but at the helm of art, it's still the old suppressors of new ideas.“

In 1917 Malevich was already a famous avant-gardist. In February he served as a soldier in a writing room near Moscow. Malevich sympathised with anarchist-individualistic principles. During the revolution he became involved in the soldiers' council, acted as efficient organiser, and arranged, among other things, that artists were withdrawn from the frontlines at the end of May.

Thomas Mävers, Composition

Thomas Mävers has been enthusiastic about British spy films, Italian Western, and French Film Noir from an early age on. The film scores by John Barry, Ennio Morricone, and Michel Legrand have been stuck in his head ever since.

After he had experimented with several bands between avant-garde pop and experimental music, he was drawn to Berlin. After early successes with the duo STEREO DE LUXE, he has produced and written with or for RAZ OHARA and the odd orchestra, ELLEN ALLIEN and other artists.

In 2011, he formed the band PRAG with Nora Tschirner and the singer-songwriter Erik Lautenschläger, whose debut "Premiere" immediately charted after its release in 2013, followed by TV-appearances as well as concerts with a ten-headed band or even a full symphony orchestra.

Silke Botsch, Montage

Silke Botsch has more than 20 years of experience as a cutter for feature length films, documentaries, commercials / image films, music videos, interactive music videos, and interactive multimedia installations. In addition to that, she was able to gain experience at the Deutsche Film- und Fernseh-akademie Berlin (DFFB) in Berlin and New York.

Caroline Hamann, Storyboard

After Caroline Hamann finished her studies in graphics at the Camberwell College of Arts, London, she has worked in the animation industry. She started as a stop motion animator for Tim Burton's «Corpse Bride» and moved on to storyboarding after 6 years. She already worked on Katrin Rothe's film „Concrete Gold“, for which she made designs and drew the storyboard.

Jonathan Webber, Character design

Jonathan Webber studied design and typography in Essex. During the 1980s and 90 he worked on plenty of TV spots, title sequences, and music videos. In 1988 he moved to Berlin, where he focused on animated TV-series and feature films. He has worked for various studios. His works span from storyboards, layout, editing, and animation. In 2008 he founded The Big-B Animations Co. He has been working with Katrin Rothe on her films since 2003.



Katrin Rothe – Writer & Director & Producer



Katrin Rothe was born 1970 in East Germany. She studied 'experimental film-making' at the UdK Berlin and at the Central St. Martins College of Art in London. She is a freelance filmmaker and has primarily directed feature-length documentaries since 2003. Katrin Rothe Filmproduction arose from the company Karotoons, a creative

start up from 2001 which was the first to create internet animations in Germany. Within the production of unconventional animated contents, styles, and formats, a special know-how has formed of producing mixtures of fiction and documentary with a certain amount of animation.

Films: „Concrete Gold – How the Financial Crisis Fluttered into My Living Room“ (2013) „Polen für Anfänger“ (2010) „I'm his Ex“ (2009) „Dark Lipstick Makes More Serious“ (2003)

2007 + 2014 Adolf-Grimme-Award (German TV award)

Werner Schweizer - Producer for Dschoint Ventschr



Werner 'Swiss' Schweizer studied sociology, journalism, and European folk literature at the University of Zurich. Since 1973, he has worked with video and film. He is a cofounder of Video-Zentrum and Genossenschaft Videoladen, Zürich ZÜRI BRÄNNT, and the film production company Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduction, which was established in 1994.

From 1987 to 1989 he realised his first cinematic documentary. He has been working as an author and director of documentaries for cinema and TV. Werner Schweizer is a graduate of the EAVE Producers Workshop (1990) and has since been working as a producer at Dschoint Ventschr film production with a focus on documentary film. In 1997 Samir and Swiss were honoured with the Zürcher Filmpreis for their extraordinary work.

Peter Roloff - Producer for maxim film



Peter Roloff was born in Bremen, Germany. He attended (1986-1990) and then lectured (1990-1995) at the Institute for Societal and Business Communication, University of the Arts, Berlin. Since then Peter Roloff has been managing maxim film in Bremen and Berlin, Germany. Full-length documentaries for TV and cinema, as well as international

co-productions, are the primary focus areas of maxim film. Short films serve as practical laboratories to sound out aesthetic and dramaturgic possibilities and borders for the moving picture. **Invitations to international and national festivals are, among others, Berlinale, Locarno, Dokfest Leipzig, hot docs Toronto, Intern. Film Festival Sao Paulo, Rotterdam, Kassel, Oberhausen, new berlin film award, Filmfestival Max Ophüls Preis Saarbrücken.**

CAST & CREW

Voice Zinaida Gippius Claudia Michelsen | Nicolaia Marston
Voice Maxim Gorky Martin Schneider | Trevor Rolling
Voice Vladimir Mayakovsky Maximilian Brauer | Steve Hudson
Voice Alexandre Benois Hanns Zischler | Michael Morris
Voice Kazimir Malevitch Arne Fuhrmann | Paul Bendelow

written and directed by Katrin Rothe

music by Thomas Mävers

editing Silke Botsch

storyboard: Caroline Hamann

character design: Jonathan Webber

side character design: Nino Christen, Ketī Zautashvili

background design Alma Weber, Caterina Wölfe

background colors Susann Pönisch

colorstyling and lettering: Tonina Matamalas

costume design Hélène Tragesser, Alma Weber,

Lydia Günther, Doris Weinberger, Tamari Bunjes,

Maria Steimetz

animation Lydia Günther, Lisa Neubauer, Caroline Hamann

Gabriel Möhring Matthias Daenschel, Jule Körperich,

Karin Demuth, Kirill Abdrakhmanov, Caterina Wölfe,

Donata Schmidt-Werthern Thurit, Antonia Kremer,

Maria Szeliga

line producer animation Katrin Rothe

compositing Matthias Daenschel, Rainer Ludwigs, Felix Knöpfle,

Thorsten Pengel, Katrin Rothe

assistants: Anna Maysuk, Gregor Stephani, Donata Schmidt-

Werthern, Lara Czielinski, Knut Rothe, Jenefer Flach

cinematography Thomas Schneider, Robert Laatz,

Björn Ullrich, Markus Wustmann

art department Dennis Hannig

live action stills Thomas Funke

sound design Anders Wasserfall

beatbox artist Das Friedl

foley artists André Feldhaus, Urs Krüger

voice recording Klemens Fuhrmann, soundcompany berlin

Ramon Orza, Tonstudios Z.

music recording Stefan Ulrich, palais aux étoiles

sound mixing Oliver Sroweleit, Studio Nord Bremen

post production supervisor Thorsten Pengel

editing TV versions Fabian Eggenschwiler

color grading Lucas Kessler

post production Arno Schumann, Montagehalle

subtitles (creation) Cinetyp AG

historical consultants Margarete Vöhringer,

Heiko Naumann

legal adviser Alexandra Holzer

translations Lydia Nagel, Susanne Rödel,

Imogen Rose Taylor, Jekaterina Jevtusevskaja,

Interna Translations AG

quotations from the translation by Helmut Ettinger aus:

Hippius, Sinaida „Petersburger Tagebücher

1914-1919“, (c) AB – Die Andere Bibliothek

GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin, 2014

translation of Mayakovsky's poetry by Hugo Huppert,

courtesy of Helmut Pawlik

Benua, Aleksandr Nik „Dnevnik. 1916-1918“, with kind permission

by Zacharow Verlags Moskau

archive material „From Tsar to Lenin“ Herman Axelbank,

Socialist Equality Party / David North

production managers Nicole Schink, Sereina Gabathuler,

Rainer Baumert (rbb)

production assistants Liza Cramer, Sophia Rubischung

production consultant Gunter Hanfgarn

commissioning editors Dagmar Mielke (rbb/ARTE),

Rolf Bergmann (rbb) Suzanne Biermann (ARTE G.E.I.E.),

Denise Chervet (SRF Sternstunde), Gabriela Bloch

Steinemann (SRG SSR)

produced by Katrin Rothe, Werner Schweizer, Peter Roloff

production Katrin Rothe Filmproduktion in **coproduction**

with Dschoint Ventschr Filmproduktion (Zürich)

maxim film (Bremen) Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg in

cooperation with ARTE, Schweizer Fernsehen und Radio

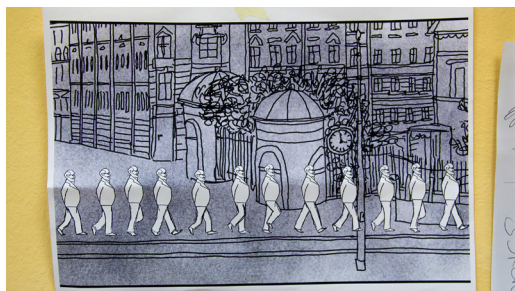
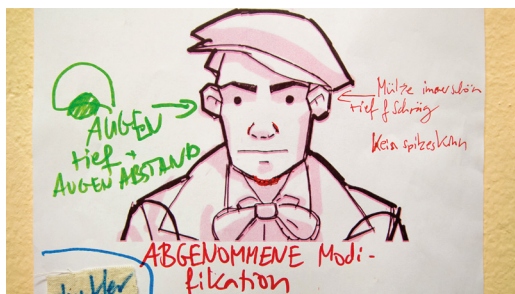
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Niedersachsen/Bremen mbH; Zürcher Filmstiftung;

Stiftung Studienbibliothek zur Geschichte der

Arbeiterbewegung





Statement

Director Katrin Rothe about the film



Where did the idea for the movie originate?

From a bulky book. It was written after the end of the Cold War and contains many formerly unpublished documentary reports of contemporary witnesses. They were incredibly vivid; I kept imagining what it was like at the time. From there it was an obvious choice to make these imaginations come alive. I was especially impressed by the artists' way of thinking, which was not unfamiliar to me at all.

Describe the development of the film!

There was no finished script, only a tremendous amount of source material, all gripping experience reports. The storyboarder Caroline Hamann, with whom I had already worked on 'Concrete Gold', and I have developed a pictorial world for the historic and emotional key scenes. Then we had to experiment: What does cut-out animation for the cinema look like? What kind of designs could carry a feature-length film and still be feasible on a small budget? During this process we had already started with the production. We animated for months in the classic way: underneath a camera. Every day we made around 20 seconds of film.

What is your personal favourite scene of the movie?

There are too many for me to list them.

Which scenes were the most challenging to animate?

What we did was eventually a mixture of two-dimensional animatic and three-dimensional puppetoon, we called it 2.5D. There has never been anything like this before. I have often said: Guys, we'll solve the problems one after another! At the same time all these tiny new inventions were great fun for my team and me.

Art and revolution are current issues. What connection does the film have to the present in your opinion?

We have six completely different subjective points of view: The ones of the five contemporaries and mine, which I have made transparent in the picture through the character of the documentary filmmaker. It is a film that looks at the past from the present stage. Artists do not make a revolution, they have no weapons, they are no politicians. However, they are considerably involved in what can be described as the 'general morale'. They cannot control what comes out of it but they can take on the responsibility or not.



Katrin Rothe, January 2017

The Animators about their work on the film:



(from left to right Lydia Günther, Gabriel Möhring, Caroline Hamann, Katrin Rothe)

Lydia Günther, Animator of Vladimir Mayakovsky and mass scenes

Mayakovsky, Gorky, Malevich ... I grew up with these names, but to me they always belonged to the past - but not for Katrin. She treated the characters as contemporaries. No matter if she travelled back in time herself or brought the characters into our times, it always felt as she was in a dialogue with them. That made work exciting for me. On the animation table the characters got their independent existence, they developed a character. I felt more than I knew, which movement would be the next one and which gestures would reveal which character trait. Every little shadow figure on the table came life, had its needs and fought for a place in history.

Lydia Günther was born 1982 in Bolshoi Istok, Russia. She studied art history and German studies at the FU Berlin and animation at the „HFF Konrad Wolf“ in Babelsberg. Her short film „Vor dem Spiegel“ was selected for various international festivals, amongst them Annecy (France).

Matthias Daentschel, Animator of Maxim Gorky

It was a challenge to make the flat cut outs appear three-dimensional through material, light, and a few tricks, in other words create a 2.5D look. The first character was Maxim Gorky. How do you access the thoughts of a dead poet? through his texts? His words? Or as an animator by making his eyes come alive.

Matthias Daentschel started as a scenic painter for theaters, today he works as a qualified freelance animator for motion pictures, TV series, commercials, and creates projections.



Lisa Neubauer, Animator of Zinaida Gippius

I have my roots in animation drawing, but from now on I only want to do stop-motion. The animation process is more intuitive and I think via simplification one can narrate even denser stories.

Lisa Neubauer has been working as an illustrator and animator in Berlin since 2011. She is specialized on characters and characteristics. She studied to become an animator at the Animation School Hamburg.



Gabriel Möhring, Animator of Alexandre Benois and effect scenes

To enliven the theme of the Russian Revolution from the viewpoint of the creative artists of the time with the help of cut-out animation sparked my interest immediately. The unique aesthetics we have developed for Katrin Rothe's film have had an important influence on the characterisation of the characters and allowed us to experiment during the origination process. The reanimation of historical figures were very fertile and enriching.

Gabriel Möhrings short film "IOA" (2013) was selected by around sixty international film festivals, including Annecy. Since then he has worked as a stop motion assistant animator on the feature "Ma vie de Courgette." Gabriel Möhring lives in Switzerland.



TECHNICAL INFO

Original title:	1917 – DER WAHRE OKTOBER
English title:	1917 – THE REAL OCTOBER
French title:	1917 – LA VÉRITÉ SUR OCTOBRE
Russian title:	1917 – ИСТИННЫЙ ОКТЯБРЬ
Countries of production:	Germany / Switzerland
Year:	2017
Genre:	Animadoc – animated documentary
Duration:	theatrical 90 min. / TV 52 + 45 min.
Broadcasters:	rbb / ARTE / SRF
Projection format:	DCP, Blue-ray
Resolution:	4K / 2K
Picture ratio:	16:9
Sound format:	Surround 5.1
Language versions:	German, English
Subtitles:	English, russian, (soon: french, croatian, portuguese)

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TRAILER & DOWNLOADS: www.1917-derfilm.de
www.1917movie.com

Festivals

Film Festivals

52. Solothurner Filmtage (CH) 1/21/17 panorama
Achtung Berlin - New Berlin Film Award 20.-24.4.2017 competition
Filmkunstfest Schwerin 4.-6.5.2017 competition
ANNECY, 41e Festival International du Film d'Animation, (F) 12.6.-15.6.2017
official selection feature film
Moscow, 39th Moscow International Film Festival, (RU) 24-26.6.2017
special screening
Dokville, SWR Tagung und Festival, 29.6.-31.6.2017
1st Rijeka history filmfestival (Kroatien) 6.-8.9.2017 competition
FANTOSCHE, Baden (CH) 9.-10.9.2017
BIAF (Bucheon, Korea) 20.-24.10.2017
competition
Jüdisches Filmfestival Wien, (AT) 7.-9.10.2017
ReAnima International Animation Film and Comics Art Festival of Yerevan 2017,
41.São Paulo International Film Festival, 20.10.-2.11.2017
competition newcomers and swiss focus
CINANIMA - International Animated Film Festival of Espinho (PRT)
6.-12.11.2017 competition
ARRAS FILMFESTIVAL (Pas-de-Calais, F) 6.-12.11.2017 + Sonderreihe
Cottbus Filmfestival 7.-12.11.2017
XI International Film Festival „Russia Abroad“ Moscow, 2017, (RU) 7.-14.11.2017
competition
Russian Film Week & Golden Unicorn Awards, London (UK) 12.-26.11.2017

Festivals Art/Theater

Perform Filmfestival Moscow 13.-19.7.2017
Manchester International Festival 7/14/17 home.org
Kunstfest Weimar 9/2/17 arte Filmnacht
Stavanger Cinematheque/Kapittel festival of literature and freedom of speech
20.-24.9.2017
TERRITORY Filmfestival Moskow 20.-23.10.2017

latest update: 2 October 2017

www.1917movie.com

In February 1917 the people disempower the tsar. In October, the Bolsheviks assume the power. What happened in-between? An approach to the year of the Russian Revolution from the perspective of the artists of that time. What were painters, poets, and thinkers such as Maxim Gorky or Kasimir Malevich doing?

an animated documentary by Katrin Rothe
Germany/Switzerland 2017, 90 mins

Katrin Rothe



DSCHOINT VENTSCHER
FILMPRODUKTION

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theatrical release Germany: Katrin Rothe & filmokratie
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