

## bio

Born in 1944 at Soekabumie on the island of Java, Harun Farocki studied film at the Berlin Film und Fernsehakademie. Since 1965, he's made over seventy films, spanning a wide range of genres. Most of Farocki's films are "essays": they deal, mostly, with socio-political issues from a resolutely subjective point of view and an ironic determination to interrogate the status of images. In this context, it's hardly surprising that a number of his works are montage films in which the filmmaker reworks material such as newsreel, archive footage and film extracts.

From 1973 to 1984, he was an editor at the fiercely independent magazine *Filmkritik* which finally closed due to lack of resources. In 1969, he established his credentials as a political provocateur with *Nicht lösches Feuer* which deconstructs the production process for napalm B in a relentless, dispassionate manner. For more information on films he has since made, see the list below. It offers a selected bibliography of his work.

## films

**2000 *Ich glaubte, Gefangene zu sehen (I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts)*** Images from the maximum-security prison in Corcoran, California. A surveillance camera shows a pie-shaped segment of the concrete yard where the prisoners, dressed in shorts and mostly shirtless, are allowed to spend half an hour a day. When one convict attacks another, those not involved lay flat on the ground, arms over their heads. They know that when a fight breaks out, the guard calls out a warning and then fires rubber bullets. If the fight continues, the guard shoots real bullets. The pictures are silent, the trail of gun smoke drifts across the picture. The camera and the gun are right next to each other. 25 min.

**1995 *Schnittstelle (Interface)***. The director was commissioned by the Lille Museum of Modern Art to produce a video about his own work. His response was a 1995 installation for two screens; the film developed from the installation. Reflecting on Farocki's

documentaries, it examines what it means to work with existing images rather than producing new images. The title plays on the double meaning of Schnitt, which refers both to Farocki's workplace, the editing table, as well as the "human-machine interface," where a person operates a computer using a keyboard and a mouse. 25 min.

### Other recent films

1998 **Ihre Zeitungen** is a political film rooted in the 1968 student campaign against the Springer press group, which controlled popular dailies such as the Berliner Zeitung and the Bild Zeitung. Claiming the latter were manipulating public opinion, the students laid siege to the publisher's offices. These events made a strong impression on the German collective conscience, and it's in this context that Farocki made this "agit-prop" film.

1997 **Stilleben (Stillife)** A commentary on the influence of Dutch still life paintings in modern advertising photography. Behind-the-scenes glimpses of modern advertising offices in which employees toil at creating a Dutch still life effect in their arrangements of products for photo shoots, presents a vision of reality in which objects bear witness to their producers--in these objects is a new image of man.

1995 **Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik (Workers Leaving the Factory)** Workers Leaving the Factory bears the same title as the first cinematic film ever shown and analyzes the relationship between that film and the representation of workers leaving the factory throughout the history of cinema. Interface developed out of an installation for two screens he created when the Lille Museum of Modern Art commissioned him to produce a video about his work.

1992 **Videogramme einer Revolution (Videograms of a Revolution)** (with Andrei Ujica) This film is a collaboration with Romanian media-theorist Andrei Ujica. In this painstakingly researched documentary, the Romanian 'television revolution' of December 1989 is reconstructed by taking the changes in camera angles as its starting point, while adhering strictly to the

chronological unfolding of events. Farocki and Ujica worked their way through 120 hours of material, shot by the various cameras that were active between the 21st and the 26th of December 1989. They used only this original material, refraining from shooting any of their own footage, such as witness accounts, etc. According to Ujica, they "present a reconstruction based on various kinds of sources. We only pass comment on what the images may show us, not on what might have happened elsewhere."

1990 **Leben BRD ( How to Live in the FRG )** Farocki's amazing dissection of modern life in Germany-- in a country he calls "a training camp in which techniques for living are practiced by the professionally living." Composed entirely of 32 short scenes taken from instructional and training classes, these films, sometimes hilarious, and at times ominous, show rehearsals of real life situations acted out in practice sessions for dealing with life in modern day Germany.