

Schmelzdahin: City on Fire

January 24, 2020, 10:00 pm

The 8 Fest, Polish Combatants' Hall
Co-Presented by Goethe-Institut
Toronto

Curated by Chris Kennedy



From 1975-1989, the artists Jochen Lempert, Jochen Müller and Jürgen Reble collaborated in Bonn, Germany under the group name *Schmelzdahin*, making dozen of films and expanded cinema performances. Their name—translated to English as “Melting Away”—literally describes the root of their process. They would subject found film footage to all manner of chemical and biological de-compositional techniques. They would destroy images through burning them, adding acids and bleaches and even burying film in the earth for extended periods of time. Although these practices are more common now amongst process-based filmmakers, when *Schmelzdahin* first performed them, they were revolutionary. This program brings together four films by the collective and one film made by Jürgen Reble shortly after the group itself melted away.

—Chris Kennedy

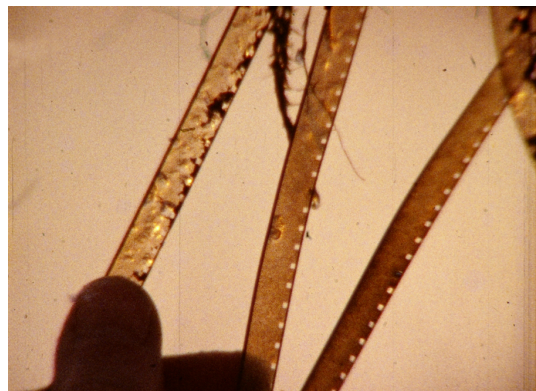


Stadt in Flammen

Schmelzdahin, Germany, 1984

Super 8, 5 minutes

Film material is subjected to biochemical processes by burying it in the garden, storing it in a pond, or overheating it. The results of these natural processes of decay or aging are then copied back onto film and thus conserved in the state of their dissolution. In *Stadt in Flammen* the scenes melt due to overheating, producing an infernal image impression of disappearance. The images no longer show a figuratively represented scene, but rather its dissolution as a temporal process. —Light Cone

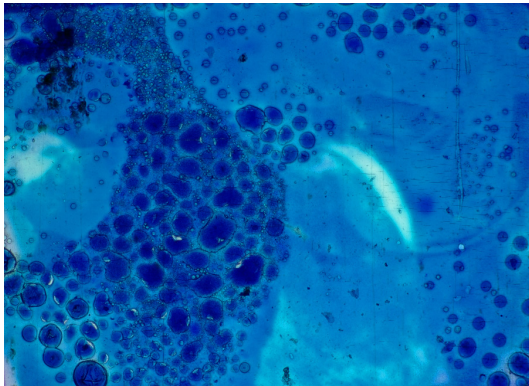


Aus Den Algen

Schmelzdahin, Germany, 1986

Super 8, 9 minutes

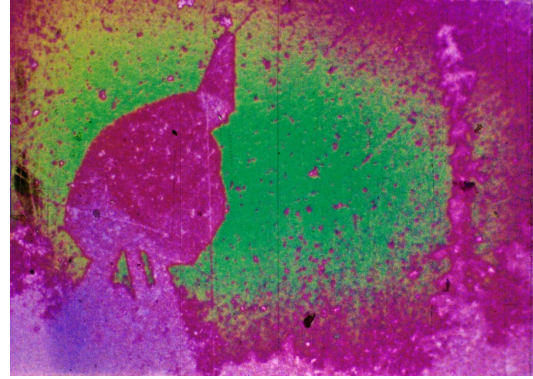
“In 1985, I threw a reel in the little pond in my garden. I believe it was Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. I got it back a year later. This experience is described in *Aus Den Algen*. After the comments, we see the film material recovered. From the original copy, only the support has survived: algae cultures have settled there, which now provide the content of the images.” — Jürgen Reble



Schildmeyer Darlaten

Schmelzdahin, Germany, 1988
Super 8, 10 minutes

“In 1988, we watched a lot of horror films, with curiosity. We took a few images of monsters and mixed them with shots from TV and movies, as well as a sequence from a porn movie. Some of this material has been treated with corrosive chemicals. The monsters started a new life and it seemed that the film had been lost. But a hedgehog ended the nightmare and brought us back to the original fire.” — Jürgen Reble.



15 Tage Fieber

Schmelzdahin, Germany, 1989
Super 8, 15 minutes

“We were slightly feverish when we started working with a particular color process. During development, we obtained wonderful shades of blue and yellow as well as colored solarizations. Amazed, we therefore used this process for 15 days. Then the fever subsided. At that time we listened to the music of *Gilbert and Lewis* and that's why we put a piece on the soundtrack.” — Jürgen Reble.



Rumpelstilzchen

Jürgen Reble, Germany, 1989
Super 8, 14 minutes

Converting simple items to gold.