

A young couple kissing joyfully at the breakfast table, playful, excited, re-embracing, postponing the goodbye for nearly two minutes, before she leaves and he pensively lights a cigarette as the title is superimposed on a blindingly white screen surrounded by a dark circle, suggesting the spot of a projection lamp: The astonishing first shot of Schreiner's debut *Grelles Licht* is an emblematic moment. Immediately, there's an abundance of this special feeling of natural spontaneity, yet also the insistence that things take time. "You can't chase after things," Schreiner declares categorically, "you have to let them become. You have to be long enough in a place for something lasting to emerge, even with the most banal things. It takes time. And it will be beautiful, if you take the time." Part of the disarming beauty of this first shot is that it both evokes vital ecstasy and hope, some unconscious, irretrievable happiness—in this case, of young love—but it applies to Schreiner's notion of living in general.

The strongly autobiographical nature of Schreiner's first career phase certainly helped to establish this inimitably self-evident rapport: Starting with *Grelles Licht*, he made rich collages centring on family and friends. "I began to live with the camera and to love the men and landscapes I film," Schreiner said, and it shows. Artists and lovers, children and colleagues, acquaintances and close friends are talking and thinking, philosophizing and performing, smoking and singing, drumming and dancing, filming and flirting and generally being themselves (or trying to), as if it were completely natural that Schreiner is recording them. The sense of freedom that is so astonishing about Schreiner's films here seems almost couched in a daydream. There's this feeling of amazement and discovery that seems so special about some rare early works—"not naïve, but knowing," as Olaf Möller has noted. "You could also say: There is an adult sensibility at work that has not forgotten its youthful part" (which applies, vice versa, to Schreiner's late phase). *Grelles Licht* is a first treasure-trove of unexpected Schreinerian moments. The director's dad suddenly reminisces that "I have never been lonesome, meaning: when I was lonesome, then it was because I wanted to be...When I'm lonely I feel as happy as a pig in muck." The incomparable Herr Francke, an elderly acquaintance, spouts aphorisms with the qualifying statement that he is a "poetically inclined moron," including: "A poem for the moral of the story: Look at the heart, not at the face" (it rhymes in German), a kind of mission statement. Similarly, when Francke says he prefers the term *Gedankensplitter* (thought fragments) to aphorism, it evokes Schreiner's aesthetic, the fragmentary form of his features, whose omissions are not enigmatic, even as they can confound certain conventional expectations, but point to a spiritual dimension, what Wurm calls "an agitated intuition of an inner belief (and its intermittent loss)."

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