

Wieland Schwanebeck

PS/Ü

**The Cinema of Michael Powell and
the Archers**

Mon (5)

HSZ 405

Michael Powell was one of the great visionaries in the history of British film and a "source of inspiration for a whole new generation of film-makers" (Martin Scorsese). In a career that spanned nearly five decades, Powell worked his way up from a helping hand in film studios of the 1930s to a director of so-called 'quota quickies' (i.e. cheap, British-made pictures designed for light entertainment) and feature films, gradually emerging not only as a pioneer of the British documentary movement, but of British cinema at large.

This seminar will introduce students not only to some of the most fascinating chapters of film history and sketch how British cinema came into its own during the Second World War, but it will also dedicate in-depth analyses to Powell's major works and their stunning technical inventiveness. The major emphasis will be on the works of "The Archers," Powell's long-term collaboration with fellow screenwriter and producer, Emeric Pressburger, a partnership which resulted in unique, genre-defying masterpieces such as *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948).

We will also undertake a case study of Powell's most enduring film (which, ironically, wrecked his career on its initial release), *Peeping Tom* (1960), a gruesome, Hitchcockian tale that critically examines the medium of film itself.

Our analyses and discussions will be based on key introductions to film analysis (e.g. James Monaco, Louis Giannetti, Robert Stam) as well as major concepts in film theory, including *auteur* theory, Gender Studies and psychoanalytic film theory (Laura Mulvey).

Please buy (and watch) *Peeping Tom* (available in a number of formats and editions; try to get the Special Edition with Martin Scorsese's introduction and a documentary) before the start of the seminar.

A reader with key theoretical texts (which must be read on a weekly basis) will be available at the *CopyShop an der Uni* (Mommsenstraße) at the beginning of the term.

You can join this class no matter if you have already attended the introductory course or not. You do not have to register beforehand – just be there for the first meeting.