

## Director's note - Florian Kunert - Progress in the valley of the people who don't know

Born in 1989 I didn't experience the German Democratic Republic directly but am questioning; am I still a part of its collective memory?

I'm interested in the psychological meaning of the peaceful revolution that ended 40 years of socialism in East Germany. For many, personal identity had been shattered by the loss of national identity. But passively participating in the revolution didn't necessarily result in an inner transformation or an understanding of how an individual may have been directly influenced by the GDR regime. Having grown up as a child of parents who lived in the GDR, I wanted to explore the deep complexities and contradictions of this possible loss. I focus on the 'valley of the people who don't know': a region in East Germany that didn't receive TV signal from the west and therefore did not have an alternative source of information to the GDR propaganda. This area is now the heart of the PEGIDA anti-immigration movement.

How can you find a visual language to make the subtle trauma of the GDR everyday-life visible? The experimental nature of the re-enactments in this film helps to disrupt the dominant, often nostalgic narrative of the personal history and to give space for an instinctual choice of words to talk about personal memories. The Syrian asylum seekers who feature in the film play an important role in finding a new angle on the GDR history, bringing their own contemporary political context to the exploration.

In the GDR archive material I find missing images for my fragmented memories. The film takes these images of memory physically into the former factory building 'Progress' which closed down in the 1990s and has since been used as a home for asylum seekers. Placing historical meaning within the walls of the building and watching the slow demolition of the space is also ritualistic and allows engagement with GDR history retrospectively. 'Progress' becomes a space in which to question the legacy of the GDR and its possible repercussions today.