

WERNER HERZOG SAYS...

Werner Herzog grew up in a remote mountain village in Bavaria and studied History and German Literature in Munich and Pittsburgh. He made his first film in 1961 at the age of 19, and since then he has produced, written, and directed more than sixty feature and documentary films. Herzog has also published more than a dozen books of prose, and directed as many operas.

"In the face of the obscene, explicit malice of the jungle, which lacks only dinosaurs as punctuation, I feel like a half-finished, poorly expressed sentence in a cheap novel."

"If you truly love film, I think the healthiest thing to do is not read books on the subject. I prefer the glossy film magazines with their big color photos and gossip columns, or the National Enquirer. Such vulgarity is healthy and safe."

"I'm quite convinced that cooking is the only alternative to film making. Maybe there's also another alternative, that's walking on foot."

"Civilization is like a thin layer of ice upon a deep ocean of chaos and darkness."

"A fairly young, intelligent-looking man with long hair asked me whether filming or being filmed could do harm, whether it could destroy a person. In my heart the answer was yes, but I said no."

"Actually, for some time now I have given some thought to opening a film school. But if I did start one up you would only be allowed to fill out an application form after you have walked alone on foot, let's say from Madrid to Kiev, a distance of about five thousand kilometers. While walking, write. Write about your experiences and give me your notebooks. I would be able to tell who had really walked the distance and who had not. While you are walking you would learn much more about filmmaking and what it truly involves than you ever would sitting in a classroom. During your voyage you will learn more about what your future holds than in five years at film school. Your experiences would be the very opposite of academic knowledge, for academia is the death of cinema. It is the very opposite of passion."

"I do not watch many films—maybe two or three per year."

"There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization."

"Your film is like your children. You might want a child with certain qualities, but you are never going to get the exact specification right. The film has a privilege to live its own life and develop its own character. To suppress this is dangerous. It is an approach that works the other way too: sometimes the footage has amazing qualities that you did not expect."

"I think psychology and self-reflection is one of the major catastrophes of the twentieth century."

"Read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read...if you don't read, you will never be a filmmaker."

"Film is not analysis, it is the agitation of mind; cinema comes from the country fair and the circus, not from art and academicism."