



HOMAGE TO
WALTER
BENJAMIN

Commemorative Events
PORTBOU, 3rd and 4th October 2015

This year we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the death of Walter Benjamin (Berlin, 1892-Portbou, 1940), one of the most eminent philosophers of the XX Century. Benjamin arrived to Portbou on September 25th after a strenuous crossing of the Pyrenees by foot. When he learnt that he would not be able to reach his refuge in the U.S., he decided to put an end to his life.

This event is a homage to Walter Benjamin and to his contemporary legacy. Against the background of the current dramatic situation of migrants in Europe, it is also a homage to all those anonymous fugitives who risk their lives and go into exile in search of freedom.

As part of the event, Benjamin's last letter to Henny Gurland and Theodor W. Adorno, will be installed at the cemetery of Portbou:

"In a situation with no way out, I have no other choice but to make an end of it. It is in a small village in the Pyrenees, where no one knows me, that my life will come to a close.

I ask you to give my regards to my friend Adorno and to explain to him the situation in which I find myself placed. There is not enough time left for me to write all the letters I should have wished to write."

Portbou, September 25th 1940

***Passages* by Dani Karavan in Portbou is integrated in the landscape of this little town and its surroundings. It is dedicated to Walter Benjamin's life and its tragic end, and evokes human values of culture and peace. Since its inaguration, some 20 years ago, *Passages* attracts eminent intellectuals as well as many visitors from around the world. Last year it was nominated a National Heritage Site of Cultural Interest.**

This commemorative event also brings together all those involved in the project of the Walter Benjamin House by Norman Foster and Dani Karavan in Portbou. The event is an opportunity to present this project to the public and to the main institutions in the hope of finding the necessary support and commitment to realise it.

Commemorative event of the 75 Anniversary of the death of Walter Benjamin.

Saturday, 3rd October

18:30-21:00 - Special Cinema Session Homage to Walter Benjamin with the participation of Dani Karavan, creator of 'Passages' and the filmmaker Wim Wenders.

Venue: La Congesta, Portbou.

18:30-19:30 - Dialogue between Dani Karavan and Wim Wenders.

Moderator: Pilar Parcerisas

Presentation of the session: Pilar Parcerisas and Patrick Viret.

Projection of the film *La forme et le lieu* (1990), de Philippe Collin (27'), about the works by Dani Karavan.

Conversation around the relationship between Walter Benjamin's philosophy and the artistic works of Dani Karavan and Wim Wenders.

19:30-20:30 - The Cinema of Wim Wenders: "The Act of Seeing"

Wim Wenders presenting excerpts from his films.

20:30-21:00 - Debate and questions from the public.

Sunday, 4th October

11:00 - Welcome and presentation of the event by Josep-Lluís Salas,

Major of Portbou.

Venue: La Congesta.

Projection of commemorative films:

Guided visit by Dani Karavan to the Memorial Passages to Walter Benjamin (2014) (8'45")

Document of the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Memorial Passages (2014) (6' 30")

11:30 - Visit to the old building of the Town Hall of Portbou, site of the future Walter Benjamin House, Centre for Studies dedicated to his work and legacy.

Venue: Old building of the Town Hall, in front of La Congesta.

12:00-13:30 - Homage to Walter Benjamin.

Wreath laying by Memorial Democràtic of Generalitat of Catalonia.

Unveiling of the commemorative plaque with the last letter written by Walter Benjamin
Official Speeches by Authorities and commemorative words by Dani Karavan, Wim Wenders and Chantal Benjamin.

Harp Live Music by Mèlani Molina and reading of texts by Walter Benjamin.

Venue: Cemetery. Benjamin's symbolic grave.

"There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees on single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is this storm."

Walter Benjamin, About the concept of the History, 1940.

Organisation:

Ajuntament de Portbou i Associació Passatges de Cultura Contemporània, Portbou

Direction and coordination:

Pilar Parcerisas



Ajuntament de Portbou



PASSATGES
CULTURA CONTEMPORÀNIA

Co-organisation:



Departament de Governació
i Relacions Institucionals

memorial
democràtic

DIPLOCAE
Consell de Diàlisi i Patrimoni de Catalunya

With the support of:



Diputació de Girona

Girona

Patronat de Turisme
Costa Brava Girona



Cultura i Identitat
Costa Brava
Pirineu de Girona

With the collaboration of:

**Rencontres Cinématographiques de Cerdère-Portbou
and Cinemaimaginaire d'Argelès-sur-Mer.**

Languages of the event:

Catalan, Spanish, French.

Information:

www.passatgescultura.org, info@passatgescultura.org and turisme@portbou.cat

Photos in the programme:

Walter Benjamin by Gisèle Freund

Design of the programme:

Vicenç Viaplana

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Samuel Molina, Ricard Ripoll, Graham Thomson, Patrick Viret, Wim Wenders Stiftung**