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## HELSINKI, FOREVER

*Helsinki ikuisesti*



"We don't live in the present alone. The past . . . is alive in us." Breaking the ice with this epigraph from Finnish poet Eino Leino, Peter von Bagh's cine-collage is both a lively tour of Helsinki past and present and a poetic tribute to film as a form of collective memory. The film considers the city through archival footage and clips from fiction films, artworks and readings from Finnish literature. The result is less city symphony than city essay, shuttling back and forth across a century as it maps vanished neighborhoods and modern "non-places," compiling the traces of war and peace, construction and demolition. Chris Marker observed, "*Helsinki* deserves its rank among the great 'city poems.'" Helsinki-born von Bagh is a distinguished film scholar as well as a filmmaker—the critic Olaf Möller has called him "an incarnation-condensation of Finnish film culture into one man's vision and works"—and *Helsinki, Forever* could just as well be called *Finnish Film, Forever*; it offers tantalizing glimpses of a national cinema that (Aki Kaurismäki's work excepted) remains terra incognita for most of us in the United States. As attentive as he is to the particulars of Helsinki's history and geography, it's clear that von Bagh's true homeland is the cinema, that imaginary place we all inhabit.

—Juliet Clark