



Peter Greenaway

The OK Doll

£16.75

The Austrian painter Oskar Kokoschka fell in violent carnal love with Alma Mahler, Gustav Mahler's widow. They had a tempestuous affair and Alma aborted Oskar's child and left him. Distraught and disorientated, wishing for oblivion, Oskar signed up as a soldier and was wounded in chest and head in the trenches of the First World War.

He could not forget or forgive Alma and he had her dressmaker make him a life-sized model of her, complete with the full anatomy for making love. He lived with this model for three years, taking it to the opera, to church, to the beach, to restaurants and country picnics and obsessively painting it in his studio. The gap between believing and not believing in the doll's existence as a human being was thin and subject to violent mood swings.

Oskar loved and abused the Alma Mahler substitute to distraction. In an attempt to pull him from his destructive obsession, the dressmaker and Oskar's friends, humoured him, making a model of Oskar himself, such that the model of Alma and the model of Oskar contrived to make a child whose still-born birth shocked Oskar back into reality as the streets of Austria were beginning to fill with Nazis.

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