



a film by HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHMID

THE WONDROUS WORLD OF LAUNDRY

SCREENINGS

TUE, FEB 10	09.30H	CINEMAXX 5	PRESS
THU, FEB 12	15.00H	CINESTAR 8	WORLD PREMIERE
FRI, FEB 13	20.15H	DELPHI FILMPALAST	REPETITION
SUN, FEB 15	20.00H	CUBIX 9	REPETITION [GERMAN SUBTITLES ONLY]

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SYNOPSIS

Behind the fluffy towels and crisp white sheets of Berlin's finest hotels is a tale of seemingly brilliant entrepreneurship: A company takes the dirty laundry of German hotels to Poland - and brings it back clean the very next day. Outside of Germany, labor is cheaper and regulations are less constricting. But over and beyond this fascinating capital venture there remains the harsh reality of the everyday life of the hard-working Polish laundrywomen, through whose hands the white sheets pass. While Beata struggles to raise her three children on her meager salary, Monika reminisces about her unrealized childhood dreams of becoming a doctor, and is compelled to watch her teenage daughter Marta gradually follow in her footsteps.

In his first feature-length documentary since "The Mechanism of the Miracle" sixteen years ago, director Hans-Christian Schmid ("Requiem," "Distant Lights," "23") applies his delicate poetic sensibility to three women, their fears and dreams. The result is an intimate slice-of-life portrait of women from different generations forging a future amidst a spectral whiteness, among linens that cross borders more often in a week than these women will in a lifetime...

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

At the latest since the research work for »Distant Lights« and my collaboration with Bogumił Godfrejów, I've been interested in nearly everything that is happening in and around Poland. »Distant Lights« was first and foremost about how people from the German side of the Oder dealt with their neighbors from across the river and about the border area caught in the crossfire between depression and pioneering spirit.

In »The Wondrous World of Laundry« the main focus lies on two Polish families, who try to find their way around the complex world of work in United Europe, where borders are open, but in which the loss of every job in Germany to a country abroad is at the same time utterly bemoaned.

When blamed of destroying German jobs by employing cheap Polish workers, Mr. Wiesenmann, the managing director of »Fliegel-Textilservice«, answers, »I don't do business in Poland, but in Europe.«

BIOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR



Hans-Christian Schmid was born in Altötting in 1965 and lives in Berlin today. Following his studies at Munich's Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, he won a scholarship for the Script Workshop in Munich and subsequently did a course of study in scriptwriting at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Schmid shot his first film in 1989, »Sekt oder Selters«, a documentary about people addicted to gambling machines which won an award from the Independent Film Days in Osnabrück. He then released the short film »Das Lachende Gewitter«, which was followed by the documentary »Die Mechanik des Wunders« about the conflict between faith and commerce in his native Altötting. It was awarded the Agfa/Geyer Promotion Prize and the prize of the Munich Documentary Film Festival.

Hans-Christian Schmid worked with his producers Jacob Claussen and Thomas Wöbke for several years. His »Himmel und Hölle«, a TV movie about a sect within the church, was produced by Claussen + Wöbke in 1994 (part of the SWR series 'Debut im Dritten'), as well as his feature film debut »Nach Fünf im Urwald« with Franka Potente in her first film role. His collaboration with author and director Michael Gutmann began with their work on »Nach Fünf im Urwald«. Schmid and Gutmann won the RTL television award 'Golden Lion' and the Adolf Grimme Award for their script to »Nur für eine Nacht« (director: Michael Gutmann, 1997, TV). For »23« Hans-Christian Schmid was awarded the Hypo Director's Promotion Prize at the Munich Filmfest, while lead actor August Diehl won both the Bavarian Film Prize as best young actor, and the German Film Prize as best lead actor.

The screen adaptation of Benjamin Lebert's novel »Crazy« found a congenial director in Hans-Christian Schmid, who also discovered two remarkable actors: Robert Stadlober and Tom Schilling, who were awarded the Bavarian Film prize as best young actors in 2001 for their roles in »Crazy«.

The episodic film »Lichter« was premiered in the competition of the Berlinale in 2003 and won the FIPRESCI Award given by the international film critics. Just like »Crazy« and »23«, »Distant Lights« also won the German Film Prize in silver in the category 'best film' as well as the two Bavarian Prizes in the categories 'best script' and 'best film'.

In 2004 Hans-Christian Schmid founded the production company 23/5, with which he produced the feature film »Requiem« (script: Bernd Lange) the following year. Together with company partner Britta Knöller, he produced Robert Thalheim's »Am Ende kommen Touristen«, which premiered at the Festival de Cannes (Un Certain Regard) in May 2007 and was nominated for the German Film Prize 2008.

With »Die wundersame Welt der Waschkraft«, Schmid shot his first documentary feature film since film school graduation. In 2007/08 he also wrote, directed and produced 23/5's first international co-production »Storm«, starring Kerry Fox, Anamaria Marinca and Stephen Dillane. Both very different films are part of the Official Selection in Berlin and will be released in 2009.

Schmid is parallel involved in the development of projects from other writers and directors (e.g. »Zweitausenddreizehn«, »La Lisière«, »Mein Sommer mit Molomok«) at 23/5.

FILMOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR

- 1989 **SEKT ODER SELTERS**
Documentary | Script and Director
- 1991 **DAS LACHENDE GEWITTER**
Shortfilm | Script and Director
- 1992 **DIE MECHANIK DES WUNDERS (MECHANISM OF A MIRACLE)**
Documentary | Script and Director
WINNER *New Talent Award, Munich IFF 1993*
WINNER *Main Prize, Munich Documentary FF 1993*
- 1994 **HIMMEL UND HÖLLE**
TV movie | Script and Director
- 1996 **NACH FÜNF IM URWALD (IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE)**
Feature film | Script and Director
- 1997 **NUR FÜR EINE NACHT**
TV movie | Script (as Co-scriptwriter of Michael Gutmann)
WINNER *Adolf Grimme Award 1998*
- 1998 **23**
Feature film / Director and Script (with Michael Gutmann)
WINNER *Hypo Director's Promotion Prize, Munich IFF 1998*
WINNER *Don Quijote Prize, IFF Locarno 1998*
WINNER *Best Screenplay, IFF Gijon, Spain 1998*
WINNER *Best Film (Silver Lola), German Film Awards 1999*
WINNER *Emerging Master-Award, IFF Seattle 2003*
- 2000 **CRAZY**
Feature film | Director and Script (with Michael Gutmann)
WINNER *"Best Film" (Silver Lola), German Film Awards 2001*
- 2001 **HERZ IM KOPF**
Feature film | Script (as Co-scriptwriter of Michael Gutmann)
- 2003 **LICHTER (DISTANT LIGHTS)**
Feature film | Director and Script (with Michael Gutmann)
WINNER *FIPRESCI-Prize, Berlinale 2003*
WINNER *Best Film (Silver Lola), German Film Awards 2003*
WINNER *Best Screenplay and Best Film, Bavarian Film Awards 2003*
WINNER *Emerging Master-Award, IFF Filmfest Seattle 2003*
WINNER *Best Feature Film and Best Actor, Best Editing, German Film Critics Award 2003*
WINNER *Film of the Year 2003, German Critics Association*



- 2006 **REQUIEM**
Feature film | Director (Script: Bernd Lange)
WINNER FIPRESCI-Prize, Berlinale 2006
WINNER Silver Bear for Sandra Hüller as Best Actress, Berlinale 2006
WINNER Best Film (Silver Lola), German Film Awards 2006
WINNER Best Feature Film, German Film Critics Award 2006
- 2007 **AM ENDE KOMMEN TOURISTEN
(AND ALONG COME TOURISTS)**
Feature film / Producer (Director: Robert Thalheim)
- 2009 **DIE WUNDERSAME WELT DER WASCHKRAFT
(THE WONDROUS WORLD OF LAUNDRY)**
Documentary / Director and Producer
- 2009 **STURM (STORM)**
Feature film / Script (with Bernd Lange), Director and Producer

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Why didn't you film a documentary since your film school graduation film, although you actually studied documentary? And why did you decide to do so now?

At the time right after my graduation from the HFF Munich, in the beginning of the 90ies, it was extremely hard to finance documentary films. In cinema theaters documentaries were nearly non-existent and the scarce broadcasting slots available were reserved for a handful of filmmakers who regularly delivered their dues. I was interested in making a documentary about an inner-church sect, the "Engelwerk", I had already done the research and written a treatment, but couldn't find any production support. When the editorial department of "Debüt im Dritten" suggested to tell a fictitious story, I accepted the offer. That is how my first feature "Himmel und Hölle" initially came to be. I got along well with the editorial department, so I was able to shoot "It's A Jungle Out There" in their debut-filmmaker's slot two years later.

Later there were many attempts to shoot documentaries. I wanted to make a movie about illegal refugees at the Frankfurt Airport, but during research I realized that the filming would harm these people in their home countries. And a few years ago I was in Tel Aviv and in London and met a former secret service employee of the British army, who had enabled Kindertransport trains during the last days of the Second World War. But he was already very old, and filming would not have been tolerable for his health condition.

With "The Wondrous World of Laundry" everything was very simple: I read a newspaper article about this journey of the laundry, knew immediately that I wanted to make this film, met the journalist and then wrote the exposé. It seemed to me like an un-filmed episode of "Distant Lights". As if we had forgotten to tell exactly this story.

Where does your interest for Poland come from?

My interest in Poland began ten years ago in the cellar of a youth club in a small town somewhere in the Taunus. Michael Gutmann and I were on a research trip for his feature film "Herz im Kopf" and there we met Polish au pair girls with their German boy friends. A world of its own, of which we knew only very little.

A few years later, at the student film festival in Munich, my attention was drawn to Bogumil Godfrejow, a young Polish DoP. We shot "Distant Lights" together, I went to his wedding in Krakow and spent some days at the Baltic Sea near Danzig afterwards.

One year later I was the cameraman for a documentary by Michael Gutmann. Together with his mother and daughter, we visited Klodzko in Lower Silesia, where his family had lived until the end of the Second World War. Michael's mother Kriemhild had been 13 years old at that time, the same age his oldest daughter was during our documentary shooting.

Not long after 23/5 was founded, Robert Thalheim presented "And Along Come Tourists" to us. I had met him shortly before in a movie theater in Slubice, where "Distant Lights" and Robert's short film "Granica", both films that take place in Frankfurt/Oder and the neighboring town Slubice, were presented.

Almost two years ago when I read about the German laundry factory Fliegel, which washes dirty laundry for the five-star-hotels in Berlin, it was as if a circle was being completed, from Kolja, the Ukraine refugee from "Distant Lights", who takes pictures of the skyscrapers of the Potsdamer Platz at night, to Wladislaw, who in the early morning hours leaves the Potsdamer Platz behind with his truck full of washing, on his way to the German-Polish border.

How did the work on „World of Laundry“ develop – how „ready“ was the concept for the film before shooting started?

Our concept was open. In comparison to the work on feature films I found that very attractive. Fortunately no one can tell what is going to happen in the lives of the people we wanted to portrait during a period of a few months. We could only roughly outline something like a declaration of intent in terms of what we wanted to achieve or to show.

It's harder to make arrangements. There is no screenplay and lots of the things that happen are unpredictable. This is what is so fascinating about it. At the same time it means, that you have to be wide awake, because nothing can be repeated.

It was very uncomplicated to be able to start off in the mornings with only two other people and the entire equipment in one car, often with not much more than the loose agreement "We'll be coming round today. Let's see what happens."

You collect material without having the final vision of the whole dramaturgy in your mind. The work in the editing room has a larger impact than the editing of a feature film.

How did you find your protagonists? Did you also accompany others? Which criteria had an effect on your final choice?

We had imaged that to be very simple: We wanted to go to the laundry and film everyone on video who had entered their name on a list put up earlier. Approximately 400 washerwomen work at Fliegel. We predicted we'd need about a week, if we keep these preliminary interviews under twenty minutes each. When we arrived, only one single name was written on the list. And that only because a friend of this woman wanted to play a trick on her and entered her name without her knowing.

We decided to stay persistent and kept approaching washerwomen, who seemed interesting to us, separately over several days. It probably sometimes made the impression that we were more or less ambushing them. After lunch break we'd be standing next to the coffee machine trying to start up a chat.

One reason for the meager interest to participate was probably also the fact that through the talks with us they'd lose working hours. The women in specific shifts can receive surcharges for extra efficiency.

Eventually we were able to talk to approximately forty women. Mostly in passing. Right before or after their work hours in the changing rooms, while waiting for the bus, wherever there were minutes to spare. We simply asked what they thought about their job here, if they were single or if they have family, which desires they have, which worries, what they think might come up for them in the next couple of months.

We met again with about ten women for a second time a few weeks later, outside of work, and spent some more time with them. We wanted to find out, if after one or two hours there was still more to talk about, wanted to know more precisely about their plans for the future.

Beata and Monika were chosen by us, because we had the feeling that they are currently in exciting phases of their lives. Monika, newly wed, with a grown-up daughter, who had just quit her job at Fliegel. And Beata with her three children and a mother, who has decided to go to England for half a year soon.



How precise did you define your visual concept / camera concept in advance?

I often have the impression that documentary movies don't unravel their full potential on cinema screens. Mainly because the focus lies on the subject matter so the actual shooting – mostly on video – is less important. This easily catches on during the editing. You need to get from one interview to the next and so you simply cut to somewhere. I often find that sloppily done.

I like the documentary movies of "cinema direct" that emerged from a time when one was technically able to record sound and image separately and 16-mm-cameras became so light-weight and handy that one could easily place them on the shoulder. That's exactly what I wanted for this project. In the end, we didn't really work differently than with our feature film "Distant Lights". Bogumil has the camera hand-held and tries to catch as much as possible of what is going on. The difference being that in "Distant Lights" he knew what was going to happen, in "World of Laundry" he didn't.

Has Bogumil worked documentarily before?

Yes, I watched two of his documentary movies before we started with "World of Laundry". One short film and one medium length film, both made at the film school in Lodz. Very expressive films, whose fascination are derived by their images and precise observations.

How was your relationship to the protagonists – how did you succeed to get such a close look into their personal lives?

This is of course where Bogumil plays an important part. Since I only speak very little Polish, I knew from the start I would only do this film together with him. He was like a mediator for the protagonists and me. The same goes for Malgorzata, who translated for me. We already knew each other from our collaboration on "And Along Come Tourists" and I could absolutely rely on the fact that both Bogumil and Malgorzata knew exactly what interests me and that they were able to put that across to our protagonists.

In the movie you can hear that most of the questions are asked by Malgorzata, some by Bogumil and some by me. If I had been the only one asking questions, it would have never been possible to create a flowing conversation, since each answer would have had to be translated to me. So I accepted that the conversations take their own course over a period of time and asked Malgosia to summarize what had been said whenever there was a short break.

It was surely also the right decision to work with a minimized team. We were three people altogether and I'm sure any additional person would have been disturbing. The strain on Bogumil was really tough. He had to reload and load the camera himself, as well as take over all jobs that are normally covered by a camera assistant. I recorded the sound, Malgosia asked the questions, translated and used any break to coordinate the next appointments.



a film by **HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHMID**

THE WONDROUS WORLD OF LAUNDRY

BAVARIA FILM INTERNATIONAL presents a 23 / 5 FILMPRODUCTION in co-production with RBB / ARTE supported by the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER FOR CULTURE AND MEDIA and the GERMAN FEDERAL FILM FUND director of photography **BOGUMIL GODFREJÓW** editor **STEFAN STABENOW** sound **HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHMID** postproduction **BORIS MANG** sound design and mix **DETLEF A. SCHITTO, ANTON K. FEIST, LARS GINZEL** production manager **MAŁGORZATA ZACHARKO-GALIŃSKA** commissioning editors **SØREN SCHUMANN, ULLE SCHRÖDER** producers **BRITTA KNÖLLER, HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHMID** written and directed by **HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHMID**

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Screenplay **HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHMID**
Director of Photography **BOGUMIL GODFREJOW**
Editor **STEFAN STABENOW**
Producers **BRITTA KNÖLLER**
HANS-CHRISTIAN SCHMID

TECHNICAL DETAILS

97 min, 35 mm, color, 1:1.85, Dolby Digital

THE WONDROUS WORLD OF
LAUNDRY ,