



PRESSKIT

DIE

Ein Film von **Othmar Schmiderer**

TAGE

WIE

DAS

JAHR

Mit
Elfriede Neuwirth
Gottfried Neuwirth

Regie/Kamera/Ton
Othmar Schmiderer


Konzept
Angela Summereder
Othmar Schmiderer

Montage
Arthur Summereder

Originalton
Angela Summereder
Arthur Summereder

Postproduktion
Ulrich Grimm
av-design



 Federal Chancellery
Republic of Austria

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 o.schmiderer
filmproduktion

THE DAYS AND THE YEAR

A film by Othmar Schmiderer

A 2018, 87 min, DCP, 1:1.85, 5.1

WORLD PREMIERE

31. October 2018



AUSTRIAN PREMIERE

Diagonale 2019

The days and the year depicts the life and agricultural work of Gottfried and Elfie on a small farm in the Waldviertel region of Austria. Having decided in favour of 'small-scale' farming, the two of them have consequentially pursued this aim, always regarding their animals as living creatures and the soil as a cosmos in its own right.

The film tenaciously follows the trail of this life, dispensing with any commentary or explanation in order to build up a story of how widespread resource-destroying agricultural practices and unrestrained consumerism lead to an absurd situation and how the effects of it are felt: there is another way. The intention is to convey this impression through the film's visual language and narrative style, very much in the sense of John Berger, whose work provided an important impulse for this film:

A sequence of images is not provided with verbal keys. If it were, then one would be forcing one single verbal meaning upon the phenomena. However, phenomena as such are ambiguous, and have several meanings. That is why the visual sense is so astonishing, and memory, which is based on the visual sense, is freer than the intellect.

John Berger / Jean Mohr: *Another Way of Telling*

I spent a year accompanying my two protagonists in their everyday work and life, and attempted to enter into their work processes and rhythms. This was possible through the long period available for filming and the circumstance that my 'laboratory', i.e. my place of work and study, is located right outside my front door. This laboratory (to continue the metaphor) confronts me personally in particular with the subject of consequentiality. How can I match the consequentiality of my protagonists' behaviour with corresponding behaviour on my part as a filmmaker? This question and this involvement constituted the driving force behind the present film and its aesthetic orientation.

OTHMAR SCHMIDERER
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Days Like the Year is connected to earlier works. On the one hand, to *Am Stein*, 1998, in which I dealt with the subject of Alpine farming and the commercial exploitation of the Alps. On the other hand, to *In the Moment – History and the Open* (2013) vimeo.com/139929396, a collaborative work with Angela Summereder, which explores the relationship between human beings and animals.

For *The Days Like the Year* it was important to find a documentary form of presentation which would make it possible to approach these topics in a new and deeper way. For this purpose, I elaborated, together with Angela Summereder, a concept primarily designed to find an aesthetic orientation which would focus on the language of images and film, dispensing with commentaries and interviews. For us, it was a matter of producing a cinematic and sensory perception of what it means to live like the protagonists of this film.

A matter of exploring processes, laws and rules and making them perceptible via formal serial narrative techniques. Of translating the consistency of action present in the everyday rhythm of work, as well as the cycle of the year as a sequence of movements with its own visual grammar and rhythmically measured repetition, into a cinematic language. Of employing the principle of repetition as a dramaturgical element. For us, it was a matter of developing a thematic and formal study of a set of themes comprising human being, animal, work and meaning.

This method of working was also influenced in no small part by constructive discussions with my film editor, Arthur Summereder. What should repeatedly become discernible in this film is the balance between achieving the dream of autonomy and the self-sacrifice and dedication involved in doing so – not through people talking about it, but rather through what can be glimpsed between and behind the images.

A further factor that triggered the making of this film was the consistent clarity which the protagonists demonstrated in their decision-making, and the consistency with which they implemented the decisions in their lives. This was something that could apply to many areas of life and therefore provided me/us with the exciting challenge of trying to make *our* consistency correspond to *theirs* in the way we used the cinematic means at our disposal.

Moreover, in coming to terms with the formal and structural aspects, it was important for us to send out a signal, in order to indicate the significance of small-scale organic farms, which, if they were in operation worldwide, would be able both to feed humanity and to sustain the earth's soil resources – in contrast to the action of an agricultural industry which actually destroys its resources.

In addition to all this, there is one question, affecting all of us, which should be latently discernible: What does it mean not to be remotely controlled, but instead to become one with oneself and one's work, with others, the environment, plants and animals, to be in a direct relationship of reciprocal exchange with them? Which countenance, which form and which rules does an ecological and economical way of working have, if it is serious about the sustainability of agriculture and life on this planet?

NO SPECIAL LOOK — REMARKS ON OTHMAR SCHMIDERER'S FILM *THE DAYS AND THE YEAR*

BY STEFAN SETTELE

Right at the start of this film, farmer Gottfried Neuwirth, speaking over the black screen before the opening credits, says that he thinks of himself more as a custodian of his land than as a farmer oriented towards relentlessly increasing his yield. The fact that this preliminary, isolated piece of personal information subsequently remains the only statement to be heard outside of a work context, may be regarded as programmatic for the architecture of Othmar Schmiderer's film as a whole.

Together with his wife Elfriede, Neuwirth runs a small commercial farm in a remote corner of the Waldviertel (Lower Austria). 'On the rough earth' (also the film's original working title), sheep, goats, hens and bees are fed and/or looked after, and some grain fields are cultivated, to a large extent independently. From the milk the Neuwirths make cheese, which is sold in the surrounding towns and villages, as well as to restaurants, likewise the meat from their periodically slaughtered animals. In times of zealous media coverage of organic farming, it might be objected that this has certainly been seen before. Not so in this case. Schmiderer's approach is as simple as it is radical: without any reservations, he transcends the picturesque by attuning his work – whether it be with camera, sound or editing – wholly to the rhythm of the various jobs, and their variation and repetition as determined by the seasons. Performative proximity and formal clarity are characteristic features of this piece of rural cinema, which does not treat its subject of small-scale agriculture as a nostalgically dressed-up drop-out success story, but rather as a very modern-day – if overall personally challenging – alternative to an agricultural industry that behaves in an increasingly totalitarian manner, the resource-destroying, damaging consequences of which seem, in the meantime, to have already become irreversible.

Although the film-maker, inspired by the essays and books of photographs by John Berger, here strives for "another way of telling", one that is liberated from the compulsion to provide a commentary, a pointed narrative and didactic non-ambiguity, his approach nevertheless also differs from related enterprises such as Raymond Depardon's *profils paysans*, noticeably in that, for Schmiderer, this type of small-scale farming is not inevitably doomed. The accurate sensitivity with which the life of the animals and the people who look after them is framed and varied in serial sequences, does not, at first sight, appear to be anything very intentional. Yet one may discern in it a vital assertion: namely, that it is indeed still quite possible to pursue agriculture today with a certain self-awareness, without getting completely caught in the traps of the agricultural industry's practical constraints, and thereby burying oneself in a hollow world that parallels urban consumer society. The advantage of such an attitude is not least that one necessarily arrives at another way of behaving with the animals, at an aesthetic equality of human beings and animals that requires no further commentary, and therefore treats the animals not simply as economic and cinematic objects, but rather as the enablers and accompaniment both of a farmer's life and of what we are shown. Instead of following a narrowly constructed narrative, the film relies on the rhythmic congruency of human and animal bodies in the stall and in the meadow, a fluid microcosm which transcends the hegemonial representation of a higher-ranking anthropomorphic being. The animals belong to the film not as a set of cuddly extras. As the farmer lies in the grass taking a short break, his dog sets off, at the slightest of gestures from him, to bring back the sheep on its own. A goat looks into the camera: an insignificant truth of life, yet also the eye of the peaceful meadow. In the encounter between the animal and the human gaze, the latter being conveyed by the eye of the camera, one experiences what makes them different and what they have in common.

"The eyes of an animal," according to John Berger, "are attentive and awake when they look at a human being. They have no special look which is solely reserved for the human being. Human beings, on the other hand, become aware of themselves when they respond to this look of the animals." Such images are to be found at the very beginnings of cinematography, before narrative techniques became more refined, since the early audiences remained for a while keen to see how the wind blows through the leaves, how a dog plays with another dog in the snow, under the "conscience-free apathy of the mechanical eye of the camera" (Robert Bresson).

In the film *In the Moment – History and the Open* vimeo.com/139929396, made in collaboration with Angela Summereder in 2013, Schmiderer was still using his shots of goats to present challengingly complex positions of an advanced philosophy of animals, drawn from thinkers ranging from Montaigne to Giorgio Agamben. In contrast, *The Days and the Year* relies more on the intuitive capacity of its audience to trust, unperturbed, in the course that the film steers between human work and animal life; perhaps even, as audience members temporarily suspended from the possibility of action themselves, to absorb the time of the film in a semi-dream state, becoming one with the animals in that condition of "deep boredom" which Agamben, developing Heidegger's idea, formulates as a redeeming threshold between the nature of being human and that of being an animal, as an anti-totalitarian utopia which counteracts the biopolitical dominance of the administered world: the human being as the animal which has to recognise itself as human in order to be such.

Moreover, from the first scenes onwards, what we have here constantly resembles an audio film, a manifesto of documentary sound cinema, in which the man-made sounds of work are amalgamated with the sounds of the movement and life of the animals into a soundtrack of living creatures. This even allows one – as a further facet of "another way of telling" – to experience it with closed eyes, without having the feeling that one has missed something essential. The will to return again and again to the stall, even though the how and where of milking, or the bloody amniotic sac in the straw have been seen before, produces a sensory denseness, described by John Berger in his book *Pig Earth* as follows: "The stall itself was like the inside of an animal. Breath, water and cud went in; intestinal gases, piss and shit came out." Even though, when the Neuwirths offer their produce for sale at the markets – in this case, local ones – and the mother animal then has to be recorded with the number 818764620 in meticulously administered paperwork, as required by EU standards, this freely chosen type of farming nevertheless still has something autonomous about it, primarily oriented, as it is, to a self-sufficiency that existed prior to the flight from the country and industrialisation, prior to the compulsion to always have to produce, first and foremost, a surplus that is competitive on the market – even before one can feed oneself. In conversation with a representative of the authorities, our farmer tells her how he went about things the other way around to the usual procedure, first buying the house on its own, without a farm, and only then gradually acquiring the grain fields, which in the meantime had become notorious for suffering periods of drought. In all probability, he also acquired his knowledge of farming this way, and although one does not learn in the film whether or how that knowledge might be handed down in the future, one observes with delight the perfectly coordinated duet of the married couple driving the tractors around at harvest time. Anyone who wishes to see that *in natura* will have to travel to Wanzen-dorf, hoping that a colony of bees has not broken out from its hive at that particular moment. The bus stops there on Tuesdays and Fridays. As it has done ever since 1995.





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DIRECTOR & CAMERA

Othmar Schmiderer

CONCEPT

Angela Summereder & Othmar Schmiderer

EDITOR

Arthur Summereder

SOUND

Angela Summereder, Arthur Summereder, Othmar Schmiderer

POSTPRODUCTION

av-design GmbH, Wien

COLOR GRADING

Ulrich Grimm avd

SOUNDDESIGN & RE-RECORDING MIXER

Emanuel Friedrich avd

TITLEDISIGN

Arthur Summereder

POSTER

Ecke Bonk – typosophes sans frontières

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Paul Gasser & Katarina Schildgen

TRANSLATIONS

Peter Waugh, Larisa Villar Hauser

PRODUCER

Othmar Schmiderer

PROTAGONISTS / CAST

Elfriede Neuwirth, Gottfried Neuwirth et al

THANKS TO

Jörg Burger, Harald Friedl, Barbara Fränzen, Clemens Gadenstätter, Bodo Hell, Sebastian Höglinger, Andreas Horvath, Ines Kratzmüller, Hanne Lassl, Rainer Neuwirth, Andrea Nießner, Michael Pilz, Caspar Pfaundler, Hille & Falk Sagel, Uli Spann, Ulli Stepan, Michael Stejskal, Wolfgang Widerhofer, Constantin Wulff, Daniela Zeilinger, Amrit and Marion Zorn

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OTHMAR SCHMIDERER

Othmar Schmiderer was born in 1954 in Lofer, in the province of Salzburg. Since 1973 he has lived in Vienna. He studied sport and, after two years teaching, started working in the theatre in 1980, assisting in production and direction at the Theaterkooperative zur schaubude and other theatres. Finally, in 1983, he began working in film, assisting in various functions on numerous documentary and feature films, incl. work with Michael Pilz, Valie Export and many others. He took part in various productions as a cameraman and sound engineer, and also developed projects of his own. Since 1987 he has worked as an independent filmmaker in Vienna and Grafenwoerth, and in 2009 founded his own production company.

www.othmarschmiderer.com



FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

The Days and the Year 2018

87 min, DCP, color documentary

Out of the Void 2015

90 min, DCP, color/black-and-white, docufiction, producer,
director: Angela Summereder

Culture and Science in Lower Austria 2014–2016

360 min, HDCAM, color, documentary

History and the Open 2013

33 min, DCP, color/black-and-white, experimental documentary,
co-director with Angela Summereder

The Fabric of Home 2012

94 min, DCP, color, documentary

Wiederholte Male Christoph Feichtinger 2009

55 min, HDV, color, artist's documentary

Back to Africa 2008

90 min, HD/35 mm, color, documentary

Jessye Norman 2005

90 min, Super-16 mm, color, TV-documentary, co-director with André Heller

Ferngespräche / Nahaufnahme 2003

8 min, HDV, color, experimental film with Friederike Mayröcker & Bodo Hell

Blind Spot - Hitler's Secretary 2002

90 min, DV/ FAZ 35 mm, color documentary, co-director with André Heller

Videoinstallation for the Opera La Voix Humaine 2002

with Jessye Norman, director André Heller Oct. 2002, Paris Chatlet

An Echo from Europe – Vienna Art Orchestra on Tour 1998

102 min, HD/ FAZ 35 mm, color, documentary

Am Stein 1997

110 min, Super 16/ FAZ 35 mm, color, documentary

Klangsäule – Kraftfeld I–IV – Erinnerungsräume 1994–1996

55 min, 75 min, 90 min, Digi Beta dance videos

Collision 1993

25 min, Beta SP, color, dance video fiction

Mobile Stabile 1992

40 min, Beta SP, color, essayistic documentary, co-director with Harald Friedl

Josef Hauser – Sound and Space 1987

55 min, 16 mm, black-and-white, co-director with Heinz Ebner

ANGELA SUMMEREDER

born 1958 in Ort im Innkreis, Province Upper Austria, Studying film directing, journalism, communication-sciences and german. Dissertation on the work of film Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, University Vienna. Theatre Educational projects in Vienna, Linz, Denmark, Writer and director of documentaries and feature films.

www.angelasummereder.at

FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

The days and the year 2018
concept with Othmar Schmiderer

Ein Traum von Haus 2018
concept for a documentary in cooperation with Othmar Schmiderer

Bartleby Script 2017
docu-fiction, in cooperation with Benedikt Zulauf

Out of the Void 2015
docu-fiction, 90 min, script and director

History and the Open 2013
co-director with Othmar Schmiderer

Jobcenter 2009
documentary, 80 min, script and direction

Abendbrot 2008
documentary, 40 min, script and direction

Vermischte Nachrichten 2006
documentary, 77 min, in cooperation with Michael Pilz

Zechmeister 1981
docu-fiction, 80 min, script and direction

Blut in der Spur 1979
shortfilm, 3 min, in cooperation with Bady Minck



ARTHUR SUMMEREDER

Born 1983 in Vienna, Austria. In 2012 he finished his studies with Harun Farocki at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, and at Villa Arson in Nice.
2013 Postgraduate Programm with Adam Curtis at the Institute Ashkal Alwan, Beirut.
Current PhD researcher at Kunstuniversität Linz with Robert Pfaller.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Drag Racer, expected 2019
director, dop, editor

The days and the year 2018
editor, director: Othmar Schmiderer

The French Road 2016
director, dop, editor

Klassenverhältnisse – Eine Einstellung für Harun Farocki 2014
director, dop, editor

Schusterhof 2011
editor, director: Viktoria Kaser

Meine Bank, der Priester und die Schaumrollenkönigin 2009
director, dop, editor



www.dietagewiedasjahr.at

PRODUCTION / DISTRIBUTION

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