

SFIFF 51



**2008
Schools at the Festival
Study Guide**

for

S T A U B

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FILM SYNOPSIS (German)

Der renommierte Dokumentarfilm-Regisseur Hartmut Bitomsky begibt sich in diesem Film auf eine Spurensuche – nach Staub. Assoziativ und in sinfonischen Bewegungen folgt er den kleinen Partikeln in alle Lebens- und Forschungsbereiche. Bitomsky trifft Putzkolonnen und Erfinder von Luftreinigern, Meteorologen, Wissenschaftler und Künstler, die sich unter verschiedensten Gesichtspunkten mit Staub beschäftigen – einer Materie, die allgegenwärtig ist. (<http://www.filmportal.de>)

FILM SYNOPSIS (English)

Well-known German documentary filmmaker Hartmut Bitomsky tracks down dust in his latest movie. Associatively and in symphonic movements, he is following those little particles into all kinds of living and research areas. He meets caretakers and people, who invent air purgers, meteorologists, scientists and artists, who are all interested in the omniscient substance of dust for their own reasons.

FILMMAKER**Hartmut Bitomsky (Director, Writer)**

Born on May 10th 1942 in Bremen, Germany, Bitomsky started studying at the Film- und Fernsehakademie (German Academy of Film and TV) Berlin, from which he was relegated in 1968 due to political activism. In 1973 he founded his production company *Big Sky Film*. He reached his status of fame with his film project *Deutsche Trilogie* (German Trilogy), which includes *Deutschlandbilder* (1982-83), *Reichsautobahn* (1984-86) and *VW-Komplex* (1988-89). Since 1993 Bitomsky worked as dean and lecturer at the California Institute of the Arts. In 2006, he became the director of the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie in Berlin.

Filmography

1980-82	<i>Etwas wird sichtbar</i>	1987	<i>Infrastruktur Berlin/West</i>	1997-2001	<i>B-52</i>
1982-83	<i>Deutschlandbilder</i>	1988/89	<i>Der VW-Komplex</i>	2006/07	<i>Staub</i>
1984-86	<i>Reichsautobahn</i>	1992	<i>Die UFA</i>	2007	<i>Zelle</i>

*ST A U B***Useful Vocabulary when watching *Staub***

Materie, die:	matter, substance
Bodenerosion, die:	soil erosion
Luftfilter, der:	air filter
Berieselungsanlage, die:	sprinkler
Luftbewegung, die:	airflow
Luftgüte, die:	air cargo
dispergieren:	to disperse
kondensieren:	to condense
Luftfeuchtigkeit, die:	humidity
Überdruck, der:	over-pressure
Unterdruck, der:	under-inflation
Fluse, die:	fluff
Eigenleben, das:	independent existence
Polarität, die:	polarity
Flüchtigkeit, die:	volatility
Kohlendioxid, das:	carbon dioxide
Stickstoff, der:	nitrogen
Schwermetall, das:	heavy metal
Schadstoff, der:	harmful substance/ pollutant

Scientific Programs on German TV



Alpha Centauri

Alpha Centauri is part of the educational program of the Bavarian Broadcast BR-alpha, in which Harald Lesch gives answers to questions about physics; especially astrophysics and astronomy. Each episode is about 15 minutes long and understandable to laypersons, as his teaching is quite enthusiastic and witty.

Podcasts and videos are available here:

<http://www.br-online.de/br-alpha/video-und-multimedia/index.xml>

Quarks & Co

Quarks & Co is a similar science program invented and hosted by physicist Ranga Yogeswar. Since 1993, Yogeswar explains weekly natural phenomena in a correct but yet easy understandable manner. The show works closely together with universities and scientists to guarantee its authenticity.

Podcasts and videos are available here:

<http://www.wdr.de/tv/quarks/vodcast/>

Other links of interest:

<http://www.prosieben.de/wissen/multimedia/videos/artikel/50096/>

<http://www.die-Maus.de/service/podcast/?lang=de>

(this is a show for kids that also features scientific explanations similar to *Sesame Street*. The language is very easy and well-pronounced, therefore a good way for students, who just started learning German to practice their understanding.)

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How to define Documentaries

„Ein Dokumentarfilm sollte nicht die Realität enthüllen, er muss sie artikulieren und gliedern.“ Hartmut Bitomsky
(A documentary should not reveal the reality, but articulate and structure it.)

“The definition of “Documentary” is always relational or comparative. Just as love takes on meaning in contrast to indifference or hate, and culture takes on meaning in contrast to barbarism or chaos, documentary takes on meaning in contrast to fiction film or experimental and avant-garde film.” Bill Nichols

“A documentary is a non-fiction work such as film or TV program that presents political, social or historical subject matter in a factual and informative manner.
American Heritage Dictionary

{Documentary} refers to film or video that explores a subject in a way the public expects to be factual and accurate. Documentaries may be balanced by including various viewpoints, or they may be subjective, offering the viewpoint and impressions of one producer.”
(www.pbs.org/weta/myjourneyhome/teachers/glossary.html)

“Modern documentaries are as close to the truth as glaciers to farting.”
Werner Herzog

“Usually a documentary film depicts events that (1) actually took place; (2) would presumably have taken place had the camera not been present; (3) were not rehearsed, and involved no paid actors. It is a record of real-life events involving real people.”
(www.plu.edu/~jensenmk/271filmterms.html)

Famous German documentaries

- *Lessons of Darkness* (Werner Herzog 1992)
- *Buena Vista Social Club* (Wim Wenders, 1999)
- *Die Geschichte vom weinenden Kamel* (Byambasuren/Falorni, 2001)
- *Little Dieter needs to fly* (Werner Herzog, 1998)
- *Impressions under water* (Leni Riefenstahl, 2002)
- *Marlene* (Maximilian Schell, 1984)

*ST A U B***Classroom Use**

To enrich the students' experience, we recommend pre-viewing and post-viewing activities for *Staub*. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the study guide to meet their own learning objectives for their students.

Subject Areas

American History	Environmental Studies	German
Arts/ Media	Health	Science

Pre-viewing

Before your class comes to visit the screening, share the film synopsis with them and discuss what they are to expect from it. Maybe the students can write some thoughts down so that after the screening they can compare their it with their expectations. The students, who study German, might want to have a look at the vocabulary page, to follow the movie more easily.

Post-viewing Discussion

- a) Why do you like/dislike the film?
- b) How does Bitomsky structure his film? Have you seen similar documentaries?
- c) How would *you* create a film about dust?
- d) Was there a moment in the film when you were really surprised or shocked to learn something extraordinary about dust?
- e) Take a look at the definitions of documentary on page 5. Discuss them in relation to other documentaries you have seen.
- f) Which aspects of *Staub* underline the definition of the American Heritage Dictionary and which ones Werner Herzog's statement? Think about the narrative (How is the film structured? Is there a voice-over? How are the different interviewees connected? Is there a story? How does the intro relate to the ending), editing (how does editing influence the plot? Why are the scenes organized the way they are?) or, the soundtrack (What sounds are significant? Are they important for the film? What would the film look like with a different soundtrack? How could you make dust hearable?)

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- g) Do you think there is a way of manipulating something as stable as dust through filmic devices such as editing, soundtrack or narrative?
- h) Why do you think Bitomsky decided to make this film? What is the legacy of dust? Is it important for future reference? Discuss.

Questions for language students:

- a) Did you notice different accents?
- b) What do you think a film like Staub tells you about German culture?
- c) Would you have watched the film, if it were in English?

Post-viewing ActivitiesCopy the leaf-experiment from the movie!

Collect all kinds of different leaves and try to find out similarities and differences in their behavior if you sprinkle water on them. How does the leaf's structure differ from your skin's, a table's or the street's reaction to water? What does that tell you about dust in your environment?

Look closely!

As you saw in the movie, dust is everywhere. Take a camera and try to take pictures of "unusual" dust, such as for instance dust at unusual spots, unusual shapes of dust, different colors, etc. Compare them to your classmates' pictures. What is fascinating/boring about them? What surprises you? What are the most unusual photos?

Collect dust!

As you saw in the movie, dust has many different shapes and colors. Take a look around in your environment and take samples. Use jars or plastic bags (small plastic bags can serve as gloves simultaneously!). Compare them and be creative! How can you make art out of those samples?

STAUB**Fragen zum Film**

- a) Warum hat dir der Film gefallen /nicht gefallen?
- b) Wie ist Bitomskys Film strukturiert? Kennst du ähnliche Dokumentarfilme?
- c) Wie würdest *du* einen Film über Staub gestalten?
- d) Gab es eine Szene die dich besonders beeindruckt hat oder in welcher du etwas außergewöhnliches über Staub gelernt hast?
- e) Schau dir die verschiedenen Definitionen von Dokumentationen auf Seite 5 an. Diskutiere sie im Kontext mit anderen Dokumentationen, die du kennst.
- f) Welche Aspekte von Staub bestätigen die Definition vom American Heritage Dictionary und welche bestätigen eher Werner Herzogs Aussage?
Schau dir zum Beispiel die Erzählform an (Wie ist der Film gegliedert? Gibt es einen Erzähler? Wie sind die verschiedenen Personen, die interviewt werden, miteinander verbunden? Gibt es eine lineare Story? Wie passt der Anfang zum Ende?), Schnitttechniken (Wie beeinflusst das Schneiden die Handlung? Warum sind die Szenen in dieser Weise angeordnet?) oder den Soundtrack (Welche Geräusche ragen heraus? Sind sie wichtig für den Film? Wie würde der Film mit einem anderen Soundtrack aussehen? Wie kann man Staub hörbar machen?
- g) Glaubst du man kann etwas so standhaftes wie Staub durch Film Techniken wie Soundtrack oder das zusammen Schneiden von Szenen manipulieren?
- h) Warum glaubst du hat Bitomsky sich für dieses Filmprojekt entschieden? Welche Bedeutung hat er für die Nachwelt? Ist so ein Film wichtig? Warum?

Fragen für Schüler, die Deutsch lernen

- i) Sind dir verschiedene Akzente/Dialekte aufgefallen? (im Film hört man Schweizer, Berliner und Ost-Europäische Akzente, u.a.)
- j) Was sagt ein Film wie Staub über Deutsche Kultur aus?
- k) Hättest du den Film geschaut, wenn er in English gedreht worden wäre?