

A film by Christian Frosch

SILENT RESIDENT

Are we ever really alone?

TORONTO
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SYNOPSIS

Never were apartment blocks more menacing, more inhabited by mystery, fear and control than the bright, white towers of "Neustadt", New Town, a self-sufficient "living machine" on the outskirts of place and time ... With the help of a motherly friend and colleague, Hannah leaves her violent husband and moves to a higher, and thus socially superior, floor of her building. There her life quickly begins to derail. Why is she being observed by her new neighbors and spied upon by the internal security system? Why did the previous tenant commit suicide? Hannah begins having visions – or are they? – of shooting her husband. She feels that everyone, including her lover, a detective, is conspiring against her. Her only hope is her friendship with Anna, a kind of "negative" of Hannah, who rebels against the all-pervasive control in New Town. But as their two identities begin to merge, and the boundaries between manipulator and manipulated blur, they are swept up into a spiral of violence that threatens the very foundations of the "living machine" New Town ...

Austrian-born maverick filmmaker Christian Frosch delivers a gripping conspiracy thriller, love story and parable about the fears and paranoia gnawing at the soul of modern-day society. The outstanding cast is headed by sensational young breakout talent Brigitte Hobmeier, and DP Busso von Müller lends the film a brilliantly fitting cinemascope vision.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 1991 a woman charged with attempted murder stood trial in Germany. The crime had been committed in front of running cameras. She had hidden the weapon, a knife, in a bouquet of white flowers. Dressed entirely in white, wearing bright red lipstick, she passed the security guards, without raising any suspicion, and went on to inflict a leading politician with life threatening injuries.

In court, in her own defense, she said: "There are many killing factories underground where people from lower classes are turned into canned goods or are transformed into intellectuals."

This event was the first building block to SILENT RESIDENT. It gave me the idea, to tell a story entirely out of the perspective of a main character, who, in the end, turns out to be a paranoid, schizophrenic assassin.

The audience, despite their better judgment, sees things from the main characters point of view. In the end, they are no longer sure, if the world of "Neustadt" is real or only a figment of Hannah's imagination. The film does not talk about a particular case but is paranoid as well.

There are experiences that are off limits to us. But I firmly believe, that cinema has the power to lead us to these limits and to allow us to experience and understand things that are at, or have crossed, these limits. Matter of fact, to me it is one of the main responsibilities of cinema to do so.

The second building block for the film, were thoughts about post 9/11 architecture. An architecture of fear - of danger coming from the outside as well as the inside. In my film, the architect Auerbach draws upon Corbusier's idea of the "living machine," a rationalistic concept of the classical modernist period.

An architecture that attempted to create a "new man" but instead created "Neustadt" and a totalitarian social order: A new form of fascism that uses a democratic/liberal vocabulary. This "city-state" does not rely on human redemption scenarios but the promise of security and protection.

My intention with this film was to make it possible to experience the connection and the interaction of societal and individual paranoia. A film in which the audience itself is "on the couch."

The film uses thriller and horror elements to accomplish its goals, but the true horror of the film is the world that has been created, and the fact that this world is so familiar to us, possibly more than we like.

A central character in the film quotes Bertolt Brecht's Fatzer: "From now on, and for a very long time, there will be no more winners in this world. Only losers."

At the moment, there is nothing to be added.

Christian Frosch, 31.07.2007







INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR CHRISTIAN FROSCH

AFN: *Has Alt Erlaa, the high-rise apartment complex in Vienna, long been an idea and a source of inspiration for the script to SILENT RESIDENT?*

Christian Frosch: First Alt Erlaa was in my head. But it seemed almost too obvious. Then I was considering a digital solution. But after I visited several apartment blocks all throughout Europe I realized that Alt Erlaa, combined with a digital finish, is ideal.

I needed a location for this film that had the distinct atmosphere of an enclosed city, one that is almost a city-state. Alt Erlaa has the infrastructure and size to make this contention credible. I also found it interesting, that it is a construction that incorporates such classical modernist ideas as that of the “living machine.” A way of life.

Auerbach, the architect, calls his city a “social sculpture.” Architecture works of the premise that people have ideas and concepts of a way of life. Architecture satisfies and creates desires. It’s most likely not a coincidence that many architects are susceptible to totalitarian ideas.

AFN: *What does „Living Machine“ mean?*

Christian Frosch: The term was coined by Corbusier and refers to mass dwelling in standardized units in high-rises apartment blocks. But it also contains the idea of the “new man.” And the “new man” has new desires and broke with old ones. It also refers to a place where the lives of modern mass dwellers can be carried out quite rationally. Harry Glück’s construction, Alt Erlaa, is a much more moderate version of this, because it was built in the 70’s, but the idea still resonates. Many of these buildings are entirely dilapidated today. In Paris and New York many of them have been torn down and others are so run-down that they are posing major problems. This is not the case in Alt Erlaa. According to some polls the approval ratings of the living conditions rank high above average, but so does the suicide rate – quite a contradiction.

AFN: *SILENT RESIDENT has sci-fi, psychological thriller and horror elements. What is it about genre film that fascinates you?*

Christian Frosch: I think what I like about genre film in general is that the audience has certain expectations, which I can meet, refuse to meet or even guide into an entirely different direction. I like playing with ‘form’ itself. But the film is less science fiction and more “social fiction,” because the technologies shown in the film already exist. It is only science fiction because we are projecting the present into the near future, to exaggerate current conditions. We escalate these conditions and think them through to their logical conclusion.

AFN: *Have you developed this project for a long time?*

Christian Frosch: I probably shouldn’t even talk about how long this has been simmering. The first version was written 8 years ago, with a different production company attached that has since gone bankrupt. Then I went through a phase where I wasn’t pursuing the project any longer, but it wouldn’t let go of me. It was a project that kept becoming relevant again and again. After 9/11, with the proliferation of xenophobic paranoia and so on, I just had the feeling, and this might sound dramatic, that I had to make this film.

AFN: *Has the dual character of Hannah/Anna been in the foreground from the beginning?*

Christian Frosch: No, interestingly enough, that came about relatively late in the game. SILENT RESIDENT is about a schizophrenic character. But since the film is not a psychological case study but a visualization of her inner world, I was faced with the challenge, to adequately execute the split in the end. With that switch, her turning into a different person, the film has become impossible to predict. It is a rather common topos but one that leads to an entirely uncommon result.

AFN: *SILENT RESIDENT deals with paranoia, manipulation in therapy and the irrational. Is SILENT RESIDENT, in regards to content, a continuation of DIE TOTALE THERAPIE?*

Christian Frosch: I believe DIE TOTALE THERAPIE was different, because it has purely one external point of view; a scientific look at the development

of groups. In SILENT RESIDENT the inner and outer world can’t be distinguished. But I still do find the implosion of systems or sociological phenomena interesting. In that sense it is a continuation. But in terms of tone and form it is on a very different level. SILENT RESIDENT is also the result of a sort of dissatisfaction with DIE TOTALE THERAPIE. If there is a connection then it is that SILENT RESIDENT is the antithesis of DIE TOTALE THERAPIE.

AFN: *Surely the entirely new formal language had something to do with DP Busso von Müller? What was it like working with him?*

Christian Frosch: Busso got completely involved in the project. For months we talked about the story itself, before we even began talking about how to shoot it. When we began to address aesthetical questions, he had the script in his head, as much as I did. We collaborated very closely. He is a perfectionist, almost a madman, who is very demanding on every set up. To create a fictional world, you need to create an abstract version of a world. Cinemascope captures things quite differently than the human eye does. And Busso brought his incredible ways of dealing with focus and space to the project. It was a very special way of working, which I learned to enjoy very much. I think he is quite an ingenious DP.

AFN: *Visiting the set, one got the impression that in terms of camera setups everything was meticulously planned but that the actors, on the other hand, were granted a lot of freedom. More than two or three takes were the exception?*

Christian Frosch: I always have extensive conversations about the parts and if possible, rehearse with the actors. We rehearsed even once we started shooting. My goal is to make that very first take work, because in terms of the acting, it is usually the best one. That’s why it is necessary to rehearse only up to the ‘right point,’ otherwise you’re really shooting rehearsals. By now, I think, I have a pretty good sense of when that ‘right point’ has been reached. Also, the actors had been extremely well prepared. They had a very clear idea of how they wanted to lay out their characters for this film and I just had to do

some fine-tuning. Brigitte Hobmeier, the lead actress, worked with a coach for three months. She knew exactly where she wanted what emotion. We all, the actors and the entire team, shared the same vision for this film. Otherwise none of this would have been possible. If you have to shoot a film like this in 29 days then you don’t have time to try things out. Obviously, it would have been nice to have 50 days to shoot the film to work under fewer constraints.

AFN: *Many of the people you worked with on SILENT RESIDENT have theater backgrounds.*

Christian Frosch: Brigitte Hobmeier and Johanna Wokalek were my first choices for the roles. But like most actors who are part of an ensemble, they don’t work on many movies. Brigitte is really a phenomenon, the way she meticulously works with nuances and glances.

I also think that in recent years acting for the stage has become more like acting for film.

There is a reason why so many screenplays make it to the stage. I believe that film wins on all levels – in fine art, in theater, in dance – only in the cinema it suffers losses.

There are several theater actors in SILENT RESIDENT, but all of them have worked on films before. And I like to work with them, because in most cases they are more disciplined. It is very important, especially because of those long waiting periods, that the actors are at the ‘right point’ when they need to be. Especially on a film like this, where the camera is so precise and the acting has to be so exact, because of the parour, the choreography, that exists. It’s the opposite from a dogma film. In our case it was a matter of inches, if they were in or out of focus. This resulted in a very interesting concentric game. I am completely happy with my cast. I think, it is a very unusual ensemble.

AFN: *What was it like shooting in the “living machine” Alt Erlaa?*

Christian Frosch: First of, it was difficult to get the necessary permits. In bureaucracies no one wants to take on responsibility, because no one knows how much of a disruption a shoot will be. But once we had obtai-

ned the permits, people were very cooperative and curious. We used a lot of extras from Alt Erlaa and that was quite surprising.

AFN: *Did the authentic ambience affect the work?*

Christian Frosch: Yes, by now I almost feel at home there, even though I have a very ambivalent relationship to the apartment block. I can see what people like about it but on the other hand it depresses me every time. Because of its tremendous size it feels so artificial. There is such an extreme contradiction between the inside and the outside. There is this gigantic building and then you have these low ceilings in these rather depressing apartments. The contradiction between the claustrophobic, narrow interior and the gigantic exterior can be sensed clearly in the film.

AFN: *Key word David Lynch. Was MULHOLLAND DRIVE an influence on the story?*

Christian Frosch: Actually, not at all, although I have been asked this several times. I find the beginning of that film excellent, but I never thought about it, while working on SILENT RESIDENT. David Lynch is dangerous; he is too close and too present. You can't really escape him. I tried to have other role models in mind and chose to go back twenty years and more.

AFN: *Who are these role models?*

Christian Frosch: Within the subgenre of the paranoia thriller, I appreciate some of Polanski's films very much. But we watched other films as well, which aren't immediately connected to the genre, i.e. a lot of Bergmann, even if I am not a huge Bergmann fan. But for the schizophrenia story PERSONA was very important. Also Antonioni, Nicholas Roeg, Hitchcock. We watched a lot, and asked ourselves, where appears what? What has stuck in our minds? What stimulated us? We were asking, can this be reused or is it dated? What could we possibly use, combine? Busso, Michael and I are very much influenced by film history. We sort of have a repertoire which we draw upon. We didn't look at trends. We didn't ask ourselves, what is hot right now, just to jump

onto any bandwagon. No, we tried to ignore current films and looked back to see what of the vocabulary from the last 100 years of film history we could make use of.

AFN: *Does the film have a certain timelessness?*

Christian Frosch: That was the intention. Stylistically the set design was influenced by the 70's and is constantly interrupted by other periods. We found that futuristic look from the past very stimulating. Especially the 60's and 70's because they were, even back then, very futuristic. Now it is dated and it is a contradiction in itself, because the imagined future never came to be and in the meantime has become historical itself. Giovanni Scribano has done an unusual job with the set design, not with the trendy elements of the 70's but with the ones that are dark and not so 'pretty.'

Interview: Karin Schiefer
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Christian Frosch Writer/Director

Christan Frosch is based in Berlin and Vienna. He was born in 1966 in Waidhofen/Th. (Austria) and studied at the National German Film School at Berlin (DFFB). He directed 10 Short Films, realised 4 Feature Scripts and was honoured a.o. with the Carl Mayer Award in 1998 and 2005 and the Script 99 Award for „Familienbande“. His first feature film as writer/director was Total Therapy, which was distributed in 2000. His second Feature K.a.F.ka fragment (2002) won the Special Award of the Jury at Sochi Film festival.

Films (selection)

2007 **Tears Work** Short Film, in production

2007 **Silent Resident** Feature, 96 min, 35 mm
writer/director (A,G, Lux,HU)

2005 **Our America** Documentary 90 min, 35 mm
Co-written with Kristina Konrad
Director: Kristina Konrad

2002 **K. a F. ka - fragment** feature 85 min
writer/director (A, G, CH)
Filmfestival Rotterdam
„Pearl of the World“ Special Prize of the Jury IFF Sochi

1997 **TOTAL THERAPY** feature, 124 min, 35 mm
writer/director
Carl Mayer script award

1997 **GESCHES GIFT** Feature, 92 min, 35 mm
CO-written with Walburg v. Waldenfels
director: Walburg v. Waldenfels

1995 **SEASICK ON SOLID GROUND**, 14 min, 16 mm
Co-directed and co-written with Kristina Konrad
Over 20 Festivals invitations a.o. Intern. Film Festival Rotterdam, Locarno, Oberhausen, Chicago & Madrid

1996 **SISI ON CASTLE GÖDÖLLÖ** Midlength 40 min, 35 mm
writer/director/co producer
a.o Intern. Film Festival Rotterdam

1992 **POVERTY OF TWIGHLIGHT** Short 12 min, 16 mm
writer/director
a.o. In Competition Int. Filmfestival Mannheim

Brigitte Hobmeier

Born in Munich in 1976, Brigitte Hobmeier ranks among Germany's greatest young stage talents of our time. She studied acting at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen from 1996 to 1999, during which time she was discovered by Peter Stein, with whom she worked closely from 1999 to 2001. From 2002 to 2005 she was a member of the ensemble of Munich's Volkstheater. She has been a member of the Munich Kammerspiele since 2005. For her stage roles she has been awarded a number of prizes, including the Max Ophüls Promotion Award. She made her small screen debut in Tomasz Thompson's „Stillter Sturm“ (2000) and her big screen debut the following year in Sören Voigt's „Identity Kills“. These roles were quickly followed by appearances in other feature films such as Martin Gypkens' "Wir" (2002), Hans Steinbichler's „Winterreise“ (Winter Journey, 2006), Gypkens' „Nichts als Gespenster“ (Nothing But Ghosts, 2006) and Markus H. Rosenmüller's „Räuber Kneissl“ (2007). She also starred in Rainer Kaufmann's award-winning TV movie „Marias letzte Reise“. She was voted Best Actress for her role in „Identity Kills“ at the 2004 Mexico Film Festival.

Johanna Wokalek

Johanna Wokalek was born in Freiburg and knew as a schoolgirl that she wanted to become an actress. And since she also knew that Vienna was where she wanted to begin her acting career, she applied to the Max Reinhardt Seminar and pursued her studies there. During that time, she made her professional acting debut at the 1996 Wiener Festwochen in „Alma – A Show Biz ans Ende.“ She also began her film career opposite Maria Schrader and Juliane Köhler in Max Färberböck's drama „Aimée & Jaguar“ (1997). After completing her studies, she joined the ensemble of the Bonn Theater, where her role in Gerhart Hauptmann's „Rose Bernd“ won her the Best Newcomer Actress Award at the 1999 Theatertreffen in Berlin, along with other prestigious awards. She is now a permanent member of the legendary Burgtheater in Vienna. In 2002 she starred in Hans Steinbichler's debut feature „Hierankl“, a family drama in which she played the lead role next to Barbara Sukowa and Josef Bierbichler. She was awarded several prestigious prizes for this role, including the Bavarian Film Award for Best Actress. She then appeared in Rainer Kaufmann's acclaimed TV miniseries „Die Kirschen-königin“ (The Cherry Queen, 2003) and starred opposite Til Schweiger in his romantic comedy „Barfuss“ (Barefoot), a 2005 theatrical hit. She will soon be seen as Gudrun Ensslin in the Bernd Eichinger production „Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex“ directed by Uli Edel.

**KGP Kranzelbinder Gabriele Production
Amour Fou Filmproduktion**

AMOUR FOU FILMPRODUKTION was founded 2001 in Vienna by its managing directors Gabriele Kranzelbinder and Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu. In 2003 the company celebrated its first success with Martin Arnold's "Deanimated", a film installation that was shown at the Wiener Kunsthalle and other international art galleries. The international breakthrough came in 2003, when the company presented four films at the Cannes Film Festival: "Struggle" by Ruth Mader, „Im Anfang war der Blick“ by Bady Minck, "Fast Film" by Virgil Widrich and „Pas de repos pour les braves“ by Alain Guiraudie. Then, in 2004, followed the adaptation of George Bataille's "Ma Mère" by Christophe Honoré (with Isabelle Huppert) and Thomas Woschitz's "Girls and Cars" (Cannes, Semaine de la Critique). In 2005 Jörg Kalt's feature film „Crash Test Dummies“ had its international premiere at the Berlinale (Internationales Forum des Jungen Films) and in 2006 "Taxidermia" by György Pálfy caused a sensation in Cannes (Un Certain Regard). Newton Aduaka's film "Ezra" premiered 2007 at Sundance and had its European premiere in Cannes (Semaine de la Critique). In the same year, Heinz Emigholz's film „Schindlers Häuser“, an essay on architecture, was invited to the Berlinale and so was Anja Salomonowitz's film „Kurz davor ist es passiert“, which also won the Caligari Award that year.

In May 2007 the company underwent restructuring and the two managing directors are now heading separate production companies. Gabriele Kranzelbinder is now the managing director and sole partner of KGP KRANZEL-BINDER GABRIELE PRODUCTION. Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu is managing director and one of the partners – together with Bady Minck – of AMOUR FOU FILMPRODUKTION. The rights to the jointly produced films will be shared. Christian Frosch's "Silent Resident", a co-production of KGP, AMOUR FOU and other international partners, will be seen for the first time at the International Film Festival in Toronto.

www.kgp.co.at

www.amourfou.at

PRODUCTION

KGP Kranzelbinder
Gabriele Production and
Amour Fou Filmproduction
in cooperation with
Mediopolis, Minotaurus Film,
Eurofilm Studio, Weltfilm and
Neue Visionen Filmproduction

Feature Film

Technical Details

96', 35mm, 1:2,35,
color, Dolby Digital

CREW

Director
Christian Frosch

Producers
Gabriele Kranzelbinder
Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu

Screenplay
Christian Frosch

DoP
Busso von Müller

Editor
Michael Palm

Music
Andreas Ockert

CAST

Brigitte Hobmeier
Johanna Wokalek
Xaver Hutter
Martin Wuttke
Walfriede Schmitt
Gabriel Barilly
Erni Mangold

Hannah
Anna
Branco
A. Hauks
Paula Scholl
Erik Lasalle
Mrs. Danneberg

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