

# THE CLEANERS

A DOCUMENTARY BY

HANS BLOCK & MORITZ RIESEWIECK



88 MIN

2018

GERMANY, BRAZIL

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A gebrueder beetz  
filmproduktion

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Grifa Filmes, WDR, NDR,  
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# SYNOPSIS

## Logline

When you post something on the web, can you be sure it stays there? Enter a hidden shadow industry of digital cleaning, where the Internet rids itself of what it doesn't like. Who is controlling what we see... and what we think?

## Synopsis

Enter a hidden third world shadow industry of digital cleaning, where the Internet rids itself of what it doesn't like. Here we meet five "digital scavengers" among thousands of people outsourced from Silicon Valley whose job is to delete "inappropriate" content of the net. In a parallel struggle, we meet people around the globe whose lives are dramatically affected by online censorship. A typical "cleaner" must observe and rate thousands of often deeply disturbing images and videos every day, leading to lasting psychological impacts.

Yet underneath their work lie profound questions around what makes an image art or propaganda and what defines journalism. Where exactly is the point of balance for social media to be neither an unlegislated space nor a forum rife with censorship? THE CLEANERS struggles to come to terms with this new and disconcerting paradigm. Evolving from a shared social vision of a global village to a web of fake news and radicalization, the film charts the rise and fall of social media's utopian ideology.

## Long Synopsis

At their very inception, social media networks like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter claimed to be creating a global community unlimited by geographical or economic boundaries. The idea was through greater communication comes greater understanding. But in recent times these social media networks have faced a sinister challenge to that universal communication ideal.

The ubiquitous presence of these sites is compounded by the ease of access for those seeking to spread something more than just snap-shots of their vacation. Terrorist propaganda and radicalized opinions are rife on such social media sites to the extent that they are now fuelling systemic political change and sporadic acts of genocide around the world.

The majority of the online community has reacted with fear and disgust. The topic has found its way into the political mainstream – laws and guidelines have been set up to censor controversial content. Yet Silicon Valley has its own secret: a set of rules, criteria and processes by which its companies can curate the material posted to their sites – content moderators.

While the policies on permissible content are written in Silicon Valley, the global headquarter for content moderation is in the city of Manila in the Philippines. Tens of thousands of young people are employed here as "digital scavengers," moderating thousands upon thousands of troubling images and videos during the course of a ten-hour shift.

THE CLEANERS delves into the lives of five of these content moderators, uncovering the complexities and nuances of their often-traumatic working lives. It questions how terms like “suitability” and “appropriate content” are evaluated within the glittering Philippine skyscrapers surrounded by garbage dumps where the cleaners do their work (the answer is surprising) while considering how decisions made “on the ground” in this remote environment can affect lives and political systems across the globe.

The film’s story pivots on the relationship between the “digital scavengers” and their principals in Silicon Valley. It explores the core values of the most famous of social media companies, Facebook, through the eyes of its former manager Antonio Garcia Martínez, whilst gaining unique insight into the challenges posed by censorship through extensive interview with Nicole Wong, former Legal Director of Products at Twitter and former Vice President at Google. Former Google Design Ethicist Tristan Harris underlines the inner mechanics of the platforms that fuel outrage and hate by design.

Yaman Akdeniz – Turkish professor and “cyber-right activist” – describes the crucial role of social media in a country with limited press freedom. We learn about his struggle against the covert deals between Turkey’s social networks and the Erdoğan administration. Anti-government posts are regularly deleted, and at any time a misconstrued social media message can land anyone in jail. Even the social media companies themselves face regular censorship threats.

Added to this, algorithms or computer generated code are aimed to keep the discourse on the social media sites safe and civil, but they are simply not discerning enough to do the job effectively. This starkly demonstrated by AIRWARS, an NGO documenting war crimes in Syria. The company discovered that more than thousands of video clips documenting military activity

in that country were automatically removed from Youtube, thereby erasing essential evidence of war crimes.

The censorship vs. free speech debate is complex and exemplified in two cases: those of US artist Illma Gore and LA street artist SABO. The removal of Gore’s anti-Trump painting from Facebook raised troubling concerns surrounding artistic and political censorship as well as issues concerning who controls online content. Yet on the other side of the political spectrum, right wing activist SABO was blocked from Facebook for his provocative racist postings, reifying his claims that the platform is stifling his right to political free speech.

The film climaxes with the largely unknown story of the role Facebook has played in the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. The Rohingya are considered the most persecuted minority in the world and there is a deep connection between fake news and hate spreading on Facebook and the massacres and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

So how can the world find balance in light of this new communication medium? Is it possible for social media to return to its utopian social ideal? Can conduct on the internet be legislated up to a point without producing an online community that is entirely governed by external censorship?

THE CLEANERS unravels these difficult questions with leading experts on the topic of online freedom of speech: David Kaye, UN Correspondent for Freedom of Expression, and Sarah T. Roberts, UCLA Professor and expert on commercial content moderation.

THE CLEANERS struggles to come to terms with this new and disconcerting paradigm. Evolving from a shared social vision of a global village to a web of fake news and radicalization, the film charts the rise and fall of social media’s utopian ideology.

# DIRECTORS' NOTES

## You cannot see what you cannot see

We work collaboratively under the label “Laokoon,” using different media of expression, like theater plays, books and film. Laokoon, the seer, was the only person who unmasked the Trojan Horse’s true nature: A dangerous fraud. We want to follow in his footsteps by revealing the Trojan Horses of our time: In our debut film, *THE CLEANERS*, it’s the double bottom of the safe Internet, which billions of users experience every day. It appears as a matter of course but actually comes at a high price: The hidden exploitation of thousands of young workers in the developing world and the silencing of critical thinking in the digital space.

The relevance of social media goes far beyond holiday photos and cute cat videos. It has become the digital public sphere, where political conflicts take place, where human rights violations are documented in real time, where art and satire is spread, and social movements are organized. More and more, parts of our social life are being transferred to social platforms. Who or what does not appear on these platforms is for billions of people simply not existing. Most of the time we as users don’t even get to know what is being withheld from us.

On the basis of multiple examples, our documentary shows how the deletion of social media posts and the blocking of accounts can have severe consequences. Most of the time it’s critical voices that are being silenced by the non-transparent decisions to delete certain content. At the same time, populists and terrorists are misusing those platforms in order to recruit new members or stir up hatred against minorities. The pressure on social media to halt the spreading of hatred and propaganda on their platforms is constantly growing.

## A hidden industry

The pressure on the shoulders of those people, who have to decide whether content will stay online or will be taken down, is enormous. With our film we managed to give them a voice for the first time. An effort that was far from easy: Facebook, Twitter and others hire outsourcing companies in Manila, that use code words, reprisals and intimidation to keep thousands of employees from disclosing whom they work for. When, after months of research, we eventually got in touch with the young workers we were surprised how proud many of them were to work as “content moderators.” Some even feel a Christian obligation to fight against the evil in the World Wide Web and to keep the platforms “healthy,” as they say. The companies exploit the young workers’ religious mindset and their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the sinners of the world.

The symptoms of trauma so many of the content moderators suffer from as a result of their work are the same symptoms soldiers show, when they come back from war. The difference: content moderators have to remain invisible. In most of the cases not even their families are allowed to know what they see day to day. When some of the moderators finally decided to participate in our movie, we were moved by their courage to show us the images they moderate, which photos are engraved in their memories, and what content they unfortunately cannot get rid of anymore. It was the first time for many of them to share, verbalize and let go the indescribable horror of what they must see daily on their computer screens. In order to adequately deal with the traumatizing experiences of the content moderators we consulted with psychologists at the University of the Philippines as well as a trauma center in Berlin.

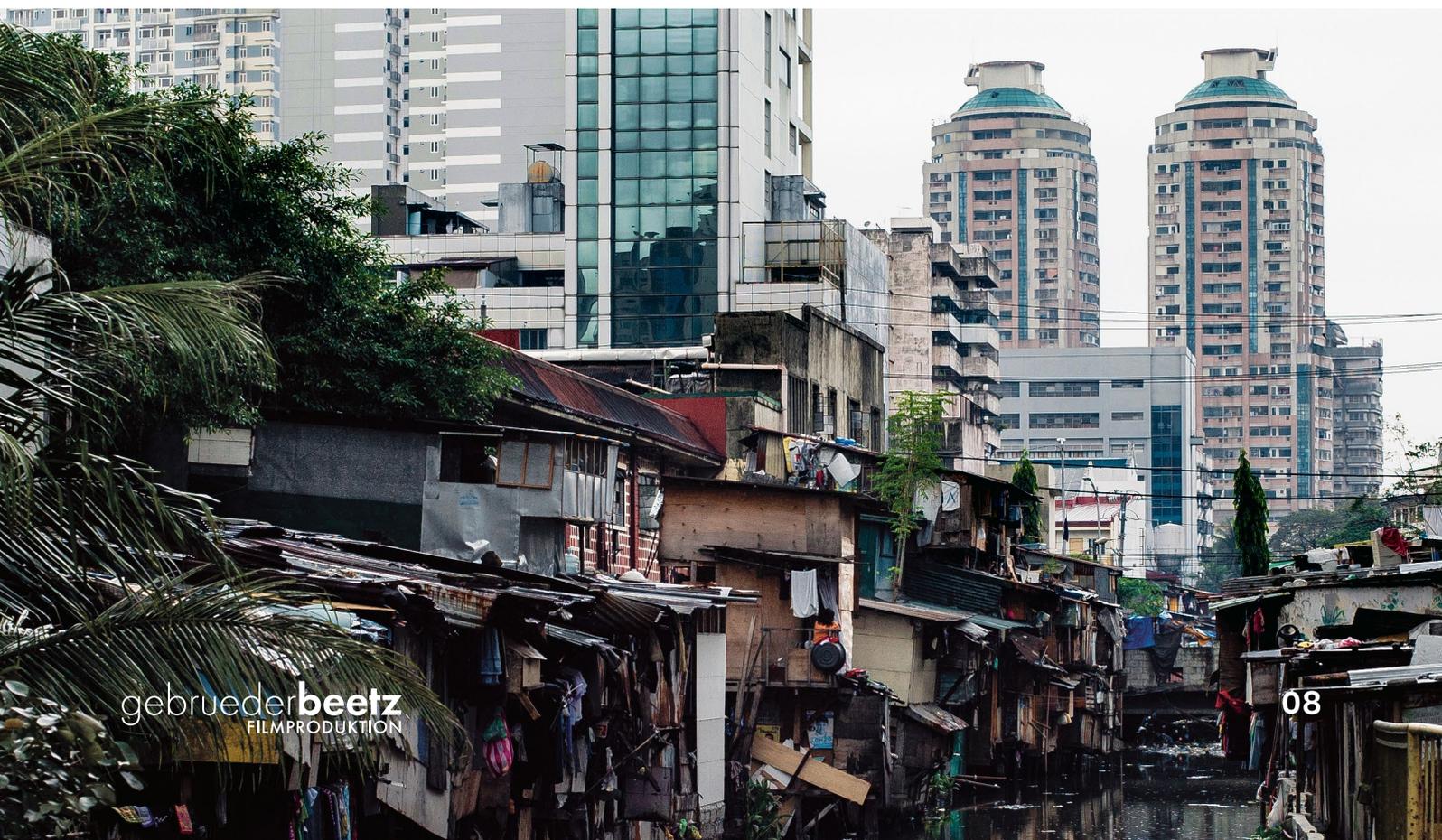
## Social cleansing

What we try to reveal with THE CLEANERS, however, is not only the impact this work has on thousands of workers in the Third World. It's also about the ideological correlations, for instance between a policy of social cleansing that has become socially accepted again worldwide and the mandate of the content moderators to keep the platforms "healthy." How much space is left for grey areas, for otherness and minorities, when many of the content moderators hold down their job with missionary eagerness and aim to battle all that is "sinful" in this world? Within a few seconds a post is either accepted ("ignore") or removed ("delete"). In cases of doubt often their gut feeling decides. Only a very low percentage of the moderators' decisions is double-checked by their supervisors. "Don't overthink" is one of the first rules every content moderator learns. It becomes obvious why content disappears on a regular basis.

With our documentary we want to stimulate a debate that is long overdue: Almost 15 years after their invention, social networks have come to be both a

powerful and dangerous tool that is capable of dividing societies, excluding minorities and promoting genocide. We want to bring into focus where our societies are heading, if we leave the responsibility for the digital public sphere to private companies that turn outrage and collective uproar into money and despite all lip service don't take genuine efforts against these developments. We want to show that it's no coincidence that the political developments worldwide facilitate the elimination and exclusion of everything that "disturbs," rather than deal with the underlying problems. This ideology is gaining consent all around the globe, analog and digital, and it's our duty to stop it before it's too late. We can't longer afford the convenience to outsource every form of responsibility. The question of democracy and freedom of speech must not only have the two options: Delete or ignore.

— Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck





“A neon-lit documentary shot like a noir thriller.”

Variety

“The Cleaners is a riveting documentary about how social media might be ruining the world. A movie of the moment.”

The Verge

“Smart, stylish doc exposes must-discuss issues regarding the companies who dominate the Internet.”

The Hollywood Reporter

“The film is packed with pressing questions faced by internet giants, governments, and you and me.”

Cnet.com

„On the basis of The Cleaners, it feels as if a Frankenstein’s monster has been created and is now out of control.“

Screen International

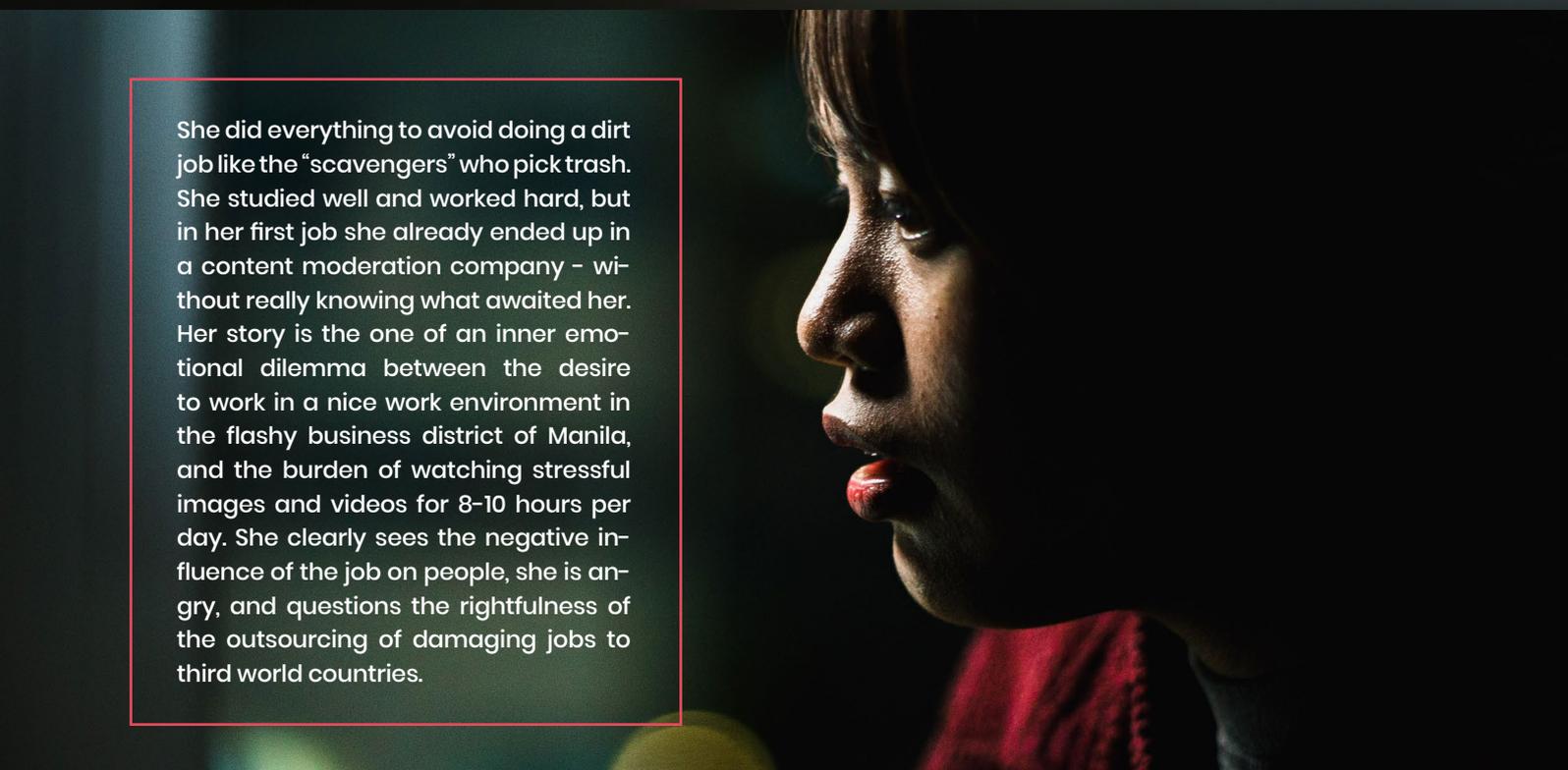
Her personal story is the one of a big culture clash. Born and raised in a strictly catholic family she developed a strong morale in regards to sexuality and nudity. Although she sees it as "her job to prevent the sinful images" online, she is also driven by curiosity towards indecency, and feels "guilty pleasure" in her job. In the film she deals with this conflict between religious values and her urge to explore in a humorous and innocent way.

She guides us as mysterious stranger through the unknown world of image censorship in Manila. She takes us to the turmoil of a city that never stops moving and that turns into Gotham City at night. Her goal is to put a stop to the game of villains and criminals by transferring IP-addresses of child abusers to the FBI or by skimming through videos that show beheadings, torture and killing in order to find the perpetrators. Surrounding her is an air of resignation that sometimes causes a shiver, but ultimately shows, how deeply she is traumatized and paralyzed by the horrendous violence she gets to see every day.

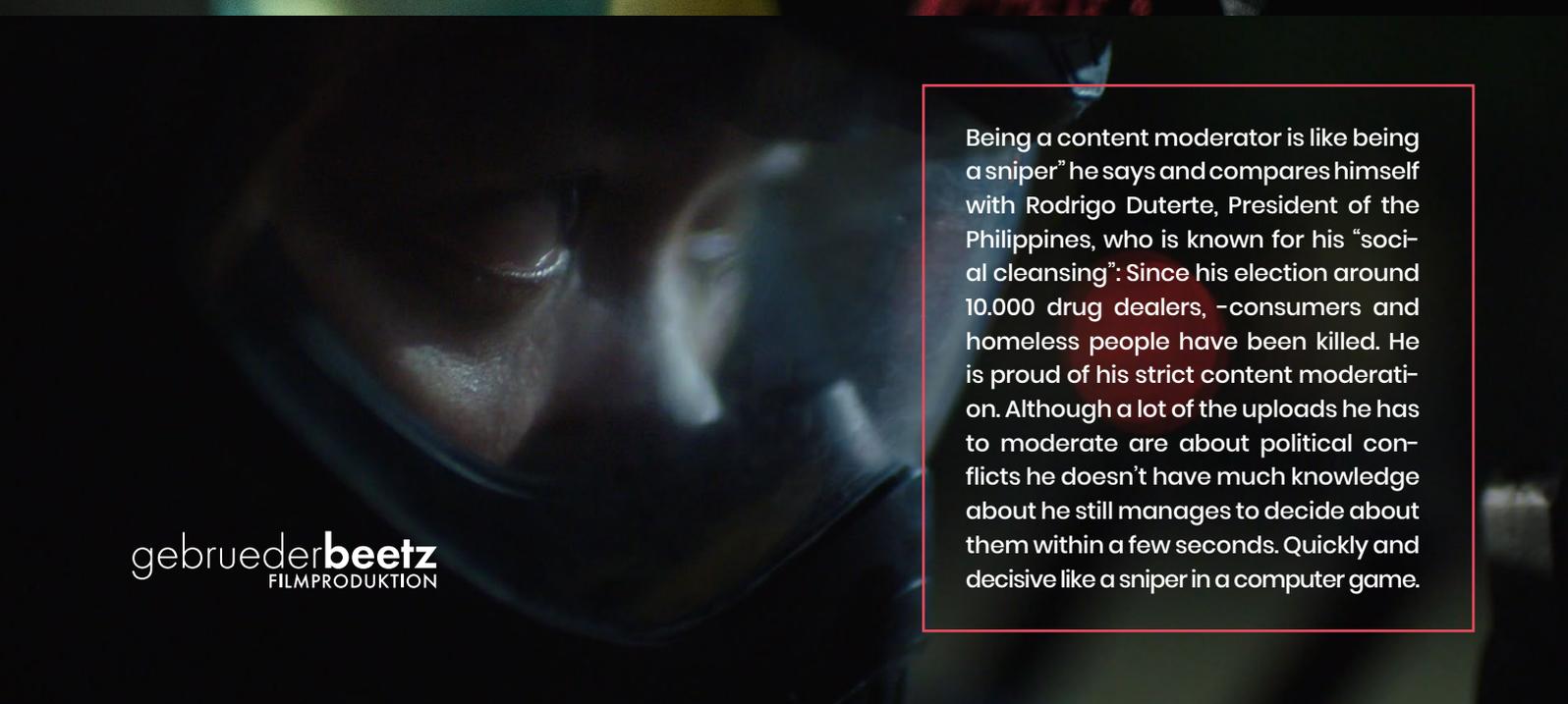
## MAIN CHARACTERS



He jokes that “he could be in the Guinness Book of Records as the fastest content moderator”. Indeed, he is one of the fastest content moderators in his company, with an average of 25.000 images a day. He loves his job, and tries to stay at a distance to the stressful and emotionally wracking job. However, some videos stick in his mind and accompany him home where his small child is already asleep: like the horrible livevideo he had to moderate which he will never forget. Some of his colleagues are already affected by the work...



She did everything to avoid doing a dirt job like the “scavengers” who pick trash. She studied well and worked hard, but in her first job she already ended up in a content moderation company - without really knowing what awaited her. Her story is the one of an inner emotional dilemma between the desire to work in a nice work environment in the flashy business district of Manila, and the burden of watching stressful images and videos for 8-10 hours per day. She clearly sees the negative influence of the job on people, she is angry, and questions the rightfulness of the outsourcing of damaging jobs to third world countries.



Being a content moderator is like being a sniper” he says and compares himself with Rodrigo Duterte, President of the Philippines, who is known for his “social cleansing”: Since his election around 10.000 drug dealers, -consumers and homeless people have been killed. He is proud of his strict content moderation. Although a lot of the uploads he has to moderate are about political conflicts he doesn’t have much knowledge about he still manages to decide about them within a few seconds. Quickly and decisive like a sniper in a computer game.



## NICOLE WONG

Former policy maker for Google and Twitter, was a leading figure in setting up the rules, regulations, and work flow for content moderation. She feels that “it has been a privilege to be part of building the infrastructure of the world we are now living in”. Having fought against online censorship throughout her career she represents the original dream of the social media, the utopia of a connected global community – which has ultimately reversed into its opposite. Reflecting on the spreading of hate speech she sees the dilemma between limiting its harmful consequences, and allowing for free speech online.

## ANTONIO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ

Former product manager of Facebook Antonio García Martínez is one of the few ex-employees who dares to give away internal details about the inner life of the social media giant. He brings to our attention that Facebook sees itself as a tech firm rather than a media company, however, points out ironically that “Mark Zuckerberg is now the front-page editor for every newspaper in the world effectively”.



## TRISTAN HARRIS

Former Google design ethicist Harris explains that it is by design that social media platforms promote division, agitation and hate because they “actually benefit at getting more attention when they show feeds that are filled with outrage”. He warns against the “social externalities” that are created by few people in the Silicon Valley affecting what two billion people around the world are thinking.



## ILLMA GORE

Illma Gore is a Los Angeles based artist, who painted a picture of Donald Trump with a little penis called “Make America Great Again” in 2016. The art piece went viral and got millions of shares and likes over many social platforms. Due to the nudity of the image her Facebook page was shut down shortly after she had posted it online. Reflecting on the question of artistic freedom and censorship she is concerned about the increasing hate, segregation, and violence in our societies.

## ABDULWAHAB TAHHAN

Working for the non-profit project AIRWARS in London Syria-born Abdulwahab helps to track down and archive photos and videos of the war in Syria that are being uploaded on social media sites like Youtube & Co. These war documents are often deleted because they are categorized as terrorist propaganda by the IS. By collecting and publishing these information Abdulwahab counteracts the deletion policies of social media.



## KHALED BARAKEH

Is a Syrian photographer and visual artist living and working in Berlin. He wants to raise awareness for the horrors of the Syrian civil war and posted photographs of dead refugee children that were killed during the war or on their flight from Syria. These pictures were deleted from his Facebook page leaving him without a clue about the reasons for the deletion. His artistic reaction was to scratch the dead bodies out of the photographs in order to re-post and spread them on social media.





## ED LINGAO

Ed Lingao is a journalist at the public TV in the Philippines. He has published a critical post about president Duterte on Facebook that was first victim of an online hate storm, and censored afterwards. Lingao warns against the dissemination of misinformation on social media platforms and points towards the danger “that we might lose democracy because we are willing to give it up”.

## YAMAN AKDENIZ

He is a specialist for digital law at the Bilgi University in Istanbul. Highlighting the secret deals between the Turkish Government and Facebook regarding the deletion of content that is critical of the government he points out the double standards and hypocrisy of many of the social media companies.



## SABO

Sabo is a right-wing street artist and activist based in LA. Provoking with his conservative, undifferentiated and racist views and statements he pushes the idea of free speech to its limit. After having been banned from Facebook multiple times he started a street art campaign called “Fuck Zuck” and claims that “the First Amendment is specifically designed for the things that you don’t want to hear”.





## NAY SAN LWIN

Rohingya activist and blogger Nay San Lwin has been documenting torture and subjugation faced by his people in Myanmar. Living in exile his blog has become one of the most reliable sources on the brutal crack-down against the Rohingya. He accuses Facebook of promoting the dissemination of hatred and harassment on its platform and thus fueling the genocide against the Rohingya minority. He demands that “Facebook must stop all this hate”.

## SARAH T. ROBERTS

As assistant professor at the UCLA Sarah T. Roberts researches commercial content moderation since 2010. Accordingly, her PhD thesis focuses on “Hidden Digital Labour” in the post-industrial age. She is the leading expert on the topic worldwide.



## DAVID KAYE

Kaye is UN special commissioner for Freedom of Speech on the Internet. He sees the digital space threatened by more and more governments who are trying to regulate free speech. Indeed, a growing number of democratic countries like Germany or Israel have already released severe laws, forcing the social media companies to censor hate speech. This opens the doors to any government to restrict public debate on social media.





# FILMMAKER BIOS

## HANS BLOCK

### Director

Hans Block (\*1985) is a German theater director, filmmaker and musician. He studied music (drums) at the University of Arts in Berlin and theater directing at Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin.

In 2014, Block became resident director and member of the Artistic Direction of the Box at Schauspiel Frankfurt. Productions there included "Mysterien – Unberechenbar werden" by Knut Hamsun, "Aufzeichnungen aus dem Kellerloch" by Fjodor Dostojewski and "Flankufuroto" by Bonn Park. In 2014, he was invited to the festival "Radikal Jung" at the Münchner Volkstheater with his production "Austrian Psycho," which was awarded the Best Production Prize of the festival. His radio drama production "Don Don Don Quijote – Attackéee" was awarded as best production of Prix Marulić 2015. Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck work collaboratively under the label "Laokoon" named after the legendary Trojan seer who revealed the Trojan Horse as a dangerous fraud. In their works Riesewieck and Block aim to reveal the Trojan horses of our time. Their projects which they develop in various media forms start with investigations and end up as striking, complex narrations.

## MORITZ RIESEWIECK

### Director

Moritz Riesewieck (\*1985) is a German essay author, scriptwriter, theater- and film director. He studied theater directing at Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. Before he studied some semesters of Economics as a fellow of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation and worked as assistant director at Schaubuehne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin.

In 2014 he staged the piece "Woyzeck" by Georg Buechner in Mexico City. His Spanish / German graduation production was invited to renowned Heidelberg Play Market. In 2016 Moritz Riesewieck was granted the state of Berlin's Elsa Neumann Scholarship for his innovative theater works which were shown at festivals in Berlin and Hamburg and most recently at Theater Dortmund. In the same year Riesewieck presented a lecture performance about digital cleansing at re:publica Berlin and at Berliner Theatertreffen. His essay "Digital Dirt Work" was published by German publishing house dtv in September 2017.


**CHRISTIAN BEETZ - Producer**
**Author, Producer, Founder and CEO of beetz brothers film productions, Germany**

Christian Beetz is the founder and CEO of beetz brothers film productions, one of Europe's leading non-fiction film, TV & cross-media production companies. Under his leadership, the company has released more than 200 high-quality documentaries and cutting-edge cross-media formats for the international market, and, according to the leading industry publication Realscreen, has emerged as one of today's top 100 international independent film production companies. The beetz brothers, productions compete regularly at all major international film festivals and have won numerous prestigious awards, including the Sundance Special Jury Award, three Grimme Awards, the Cinema for Peace Award, three British Independent Awards, the Prix Europa, the Hot Docs Special Jury Prize and the IDFA Special Jury Award. In 2013, the beetz brothers' co-production OPEN HEART was nominated for an Academy Award and the two documentaries THE WAGNER FILES and GABO – THE CREATION OF GABRIEL GARCÍA MARQUEZ were nominated for the International Emmy Award in 2014 and 2016.

Beetz, as the CEO of an internationally oriented production company, works regularly with various European and North American public broadcasters, as well as broadcasters in Brazil, New Zealand or China. The focus of the beetz brothers' documentary out-

put is on the fields of history, culture and society and productions range from feature-film and television documentaries to docudramas and TV series.

Since 2007, Beetz has expanded the company's portfolio to include cross-media formats such as web documentaries, serious games, apps, media events, and books. The company's ten cross- and transmedia projects set standards in the documentary market and have been internationally awarded with 22 nominations and 8 renowned prizes. For example, the award-winning cross-media project FAREWELL COMRADES! Interactive became a European reference project for cross-media storytelling and was licensed in 7 countries. And in 2016 the exceptional TV-Live-Event SUPERNERDS created an international market buzz and was a finalist at the SXSW Festival in 2016.

As of 2012, beetz brothers film productions has also become active in co-developing and co-producing cinema and television fiction for the international market, such as the multi award-winning event film SAVING THE TITANIC and the "excellent children's TV" awarded children's series TRIO – THE KEPLER DIAMONDS (winner "Emil 2015").

In addition to producing films, Beetz is a university lecturer at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, a media consultant, a book publisher, and jury member at film festivals.

## GEORG TSCHURTSCHENTHALER

### Producer

Grimme Award winner Georg Tschurtschenthaler studied Economics and Communication Science in Vienna. He worked as a business consultant before he moved on to be a producer and executive producer for feature films and documentaries. Since 2009, he has overseen the editorial department as Senior Producer Film & Cross-media for gebrueder beetz filmproduktion.

Among feature-length documentaries (MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S TANGO, WADANS WORLD) and award-winning TV documentaries and series (CULTURE FILES, DIGITAL DISSIDENTS), he has launched cross-media TV events such as SUPERNERDS (interactive TV show, Suddenlife Gaming, theater and book; nominated for the Innovation Award at SXSW 2016), THE WAGNER FILES (film, graphic novel and app; nominated for the International Emmy Awards) and FAREWELL COMRADES! (6x 52 min. TV series, book and web documentary). In 2013, he received the Grimme Award for FAREWELL COMRADES! and was nominated for the International Emmys for THE WAGNER FILES in 2014. Tschurtschenthaler regularly teaches at CAST (Zurich University of the Arts), Institute of Documentary Filmmaking (IDF), IDFA, etc.

## CHRISTOPHER CLEMENTS

### Executive Producer

Christopher Clements is an Emmy-nominated and Peabody Award-winning producer and partner at Motto Pictures. Clements is executive producer of WEINER and co-producer of LIFE, ANIMATED, both of which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. LIFE, ANIMATED won the U.S. Documentary Directing Award, was released by The Orchard and has been nominated for the 2017 Academy Award. WEINER won the U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize, was released by IFC Films & Showtime and was shortlisted for the 2017 Academy Award. Clements produced CHICKEN

PEOPLE for CMT, co-produced Ivy Meeropol's INDIAN POINT, executive produced Kristi Jacobson's SOLITARY, Deborah Esquenazi's SOUTHWEST OF SALEM and the CNN Films feature, ENLIGHTEN US directed by Jenny Carchman. He co-executive produced Alison Klayman's film THE 100 YEARS SHOW and THE YES MEN ARE REVOLTING directed by Laura Nix and The Yes Men and executive produced ART AND CRAFT, which was shortlisted for the 2015 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. Clements's camera work was featured in Cindy Meehl's BUCK, which won the Sundance Film Festival's Audience award. Clements is a writer/director of award-winning animated short subject, documentary and narrative films and in 2015 he published The Push and Pull of Things, an e-book that integrates audio video material into a novel.

## JULIE GOLDMAN

### Executive Producer

Julie Goldman founded Motto Pictures in 2009. She is an Oscar-nominated and Emmy Award-winning producer and executive producer of documentary feature films. Goldman is producer of LIFE, ANIMATED and executive producer of WEINER, both of which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. LIFE, ANIMATED won the U.S. Documentary Directing Award, was released by The Orchard and has been nominated for the 2017 Academy Award. WEINER won the U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize, was released by IFC Films & Showtime and was shortlisted for the 2017 Academy Award. In 2016 Julie also produced and executive produced features including: THE MUSIC OF STRANGERS, INDIAN POINT, SOLITARY, ENLIGHTEN US, SOUTHWEST OF SALEM and CHICKEN PEOPLE. Previously, she executive produced BEST OF ENEMIES and several Emmy-nominated films: 3 1/2 MINUTES, THE KILL TEAM, ART AND CRAFT and 1971. Goldman produced GIDEON'S ARMY, MANHUNT, the Oscar shortlisted GOD LOVES UGANDA, THE GREAT INVISIBLE, the Oscar shortlisted AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY and BUCK, which was Oscar shortlisted and one of 2011's top five grossing documentaries. Goldman consulted on the Academy Award-winning THE COVE and produced the Oscar shortlisted SERGIO. Goldman is on the Board of the Producers Guild of America (PGA) and a member of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

## PHILIPPA KOWARSKY

## Executive Producer

Philippa Kowarsky graduated with an M.A. in Communication Policy Studies from City University of London. She has been working in the film and TV industry in various fields since 1993. In 1997 Kowarsky established Cinephil, an international sales and consultancy firm with a well-established reputation for securing distribution deals and financing for documentaries from around the world on behalf of film producers and directors. Cinephil also acts as a strategic advisor, co-producer and executive producer.

Cinephil produced and represented the Academy Award nominee THE GATEKEEPERS by Dror Moreh and represents Academy Award nominees THE LOOK OF SILENCE and THE ACT OF KILLING by Joshua Oppenheimer, CLAUDE LANZMANN – SPECTRES OF THE SHOAH by Adam Benzine, as well as other titles such as THE 50 YEAR ARGUMENT by Martin Scorsese and David Tedeschi, and many more. Cinephil co-produced Documentary Emmy Award winner NIGHT WILL FALL (2016) and represents International Emmy Award winner WAR OF LIES (2016). In 2013 Kowarsky was nominated for an Academy Award as producer of THE GATEKEEPERS.

## AXEL SCHNEPPAT

## Director of Photography

Axel Schnepat studied cinematography at the University of Film and Television "Konrad Wolf" Potsdam-Babelsberg and has since 1995 been engaged in producing documentaries and feature films, which have been regularly screened and awarded at major international film festivals. For his work as director of photography on HAVANA MIAMOR, a feature-length documentary film directed by Uli Gaulke, Schnepat received the German Camera Award in 2000. Other award-winning films are the 2008 documentary FORGETTING DAD along with EYES WIDE OPEN, directed by Haim Tabakman, and SCHULTZE GETS THE BLUES, directed by Michael Schorr.

## MAX PREISS

## Director of Photography

Max Preiss is a Berlin-based cinematographer. He studied at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles (Cal Arts) and the German Film and Television Academy of Berlin (DFFB). Having shot many fictional short films, music videos and commercials, he is now breaking into the feature-length film world. Amongst several cinematography awards and a German Film Award for "Best Short" in 2010, his latest work with Daria Belova, COME AND PLAY, was awarded the prize for Best Short at the 66th Cannes Film Festival (Critics Week) and received the Kodak Student Cinematography Award.

In 2015, he joined Oscar-winning director Louie Psihoyos' feature documentary GAME CHANGERS, executive produced by James Cameron, as DP for the German Unit. Most recently, he teamed up with Academy Award nominee Matthew Heineman (CARTEL LAND) as cinematographer for CITY OF GHOSTS and his Showtime documentary series THE TRADE, which will premiere at Sundance in 2018.

## KARSTEN HÖFER

## Sound

Karsten Höfer was born in East Germany in 1971. He studied audio-visual media at TFH Berlin and audio engineering at SAE Berlin. He currently lives in Berlin and works as a set recordist, sound designer, sound technician, composer, and musician for film and TV productions. He has worked on numerous films including MALI BLUES (2015), SCHLAGERLAND (2015), SILLY (2013), DER TAG DER SPATZEN (2010), and BEATBOX COLOMBIA (2005).

## PHILIPP GROMOV

## Editor

Philipp Gromov studied music at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold, Germany, and now lives and works as a freelance editor in Berlin. He has edited numerous documentaries including THE MAGNITSKY ACT – BEHIND THE SCENES by Andrei Nekrasov (2016), which was awarded second place and Special Commendation at Prix Europa 2016, as well as SIBERIAN LOVE by Olga Delane (2016), HOLY COW by Imam Hasanov (2015), ZELIM'S CONFESSION by Natalia Mikhaylova (2012), and THE OTHER CHELSEA: A STORY FROM DONETSK by Jakob Preuss (2010), which all premiered at IDFA. He also edited the four-part series by Andrei Nekrasov IN SEARCH OF PUTIN'S RUSSIA (2015).

## HANSJÖRG WEISSBRICH

## Editor

Hansjörg Weißbrich, studied music, French literature and theatre, film and TV studies in Dortmund and Bochum, Germany. He edited all of Hans-Christian Schmid's films (NACH FÜNF IM URWALD, 23, CRAZY, AND LICHTER), and has repeatedly worked with Florian Gallenberger (QUIERO SER) and Vivian Naefe (FRAUEN LÜGEN BESSER and both WILDE HÜHNER films). Weißbrich also edited Bille August's 55 STEPS and NIGHT TRAIN TO LISBON, Aleksandr Sokurov's FRANCOFONIA, and the documentary MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE by Marc Bauder.

## MARKUS CM SCHMIDT

## Editor

Markus CM Schmidt started as a projectionist at ARRI-Filmlab and studied editing at the film school in Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany. In 2003 he started Freedom2Speak, a filmmakers initiative against the upcoming war in Iraq. He has edited numerous projects including MARRY ME by Uli Gaulke and Jeannette Eggert, MEIN SOMMER 88 by Carsten Fiebeler, PEACE OLD JAZZ BAND by Uli Gaulke, THE OTHER CHELSEA: A STORY FROM DONETSK by Jakob Preuss, KOMBAT SECHZEHN by Mirko Borscht, THE BIG GARAGE by Uwe Nagel, and THE ANTMAN by Christoph Gampel.

## PARADOX PARADISE

## Music

Paradox Paradise is a composers and producers collective by John Gürtler, Jan Miserre and Lars Voges. specializing in authentic soundtracks and songs. Their trademark is creating emotional music and sounds, which are strong in themselves, using all real and live instruments.

## gebrueder beetz filmproduktion

## Production Company

Beetz brothers film productions has produced more than 200 high-quality and feature-film documentaries for the international market and, according to the leading industry publication Realscreen, is one of the top 100 most important independent production companies worldwide. The company's productions compete regularly at all international A-festivals and have won numerous respected awards – including three Grimme Awards, the Cinema for Peace Award, three British Independent Awards, the Prix Europa, the Sundance Special Jury Award, the Hot Docs Filmmakers Award, and the IDFA Special Jury Award. In 2013, the beetz brothers' co-production Open Heart was nominated for an Academy Award®, and in 2014, the documentary The Wagner Files has been nominated for the International Emmy® Award for Best Arts Programming. In 2016 our international co-production The Land of the Enlightened, won the Sundance Filmfestival's 'Special Jury Award for Best Cinematography' and our transmedia project Supernerds was nominated at the South by Southwest SXSW Festival for the 'Interactive Innovation Award'.

Many of the company's productions join additional exploitation on Netflix, such as the Grimme Award-nominated 10-part TV series Gasoline Deluxe or our recent feature documentary Dream Boat, which was featured at the Berlinale Panorama 2017 and had its US theatrical release last year. Before our music documentary Mali Blues – which was nominated for the German Film Award 2017 – toured through cinemas across the US after a successful premiere at the TIFF Toronto Film Festival.

Many of our films emerge in the course of international co-productions and aim at a broad audience. We regularly work with all national public broadcasters (ARD, ZDF, ARTE, 3Sat) and co-produce our films with various European and North-American broadcasters as well as broadcasters in Brasil, New Zealand or China. Documentary content in the fields of history, culture, and society are our main focus. Thereby the spectrum ranges from cinema documentary features (The Land of the Enlightened, The Yes Men are revolting, Autumn Gold, Midsummer Night's Tango) to documentaries (The Wagner Files, FC Barcelona,

Nelson Mandela: The Myth & Me), docudramas (Viking Women, Saving the Titanic, Hostages of the SS) and television series (Make Love, The Seasons, The Culture Files,) to cross-media formats (Supernerds, Falcianis SwissLeaks, Farewell, Comrades! Interactive, The Wagner Files App, Isungur (Serious game).

Our innovative projects aim to convey culture and reach a broad, international audience. With this in mind, since 2007 we've complemented our cinematic content with cross-media formats such as web campaigns, apps for tablet PCs and smart phones, web documentaries, serious games, media events and books. Particularly the award-winning, exceptionally comprehensive cross-media project Farewell Comrades! Interactive set new standards for the documentary market.

The production became a European reference project for crossmedial storytelling and was licensed in 7 countries. Lately, our transmedia TV-Live-Event Supernerds was internationally valued and accompanied with extraordinary media coverage. At the South by Southwest Festival 2016 the project was nominated for the 'Interactive Innovation Award'. Other crossmedia projects are: #Arthunt, The Wagner Files App, The Vikings (Exhibition, Serious Game, App) and the Grimme-Online nominated scroll-documentary Falcianis SwissLeaks. With the tri-medial project Make Love (TV, web, radio) we have produced a format that was outstandingly successful in all media: With the 10-part TV series we achieved a rate of more than 2.44 million viewers and increased the rating partly by 400%. Not only in the linear TV but also in the media library the format was outstandingly demanded and became with 373 934 online viewers by far number one broadcast of the year in the ZDF media library – even ahead of Germany's most popular crime-thriller "Tatort". For the Grimme-Online-Award nominated website [www.make-love.de](http://www.make-love.de) we counted more than 5,3 million visitors since its release and broke the records for public-service broadcasting.

Since 2012, beetz brothers film productions has also become active in co-developing and co-producing cinema and television fiction for the international market, such as the multi award winning event film Saving the Titanic or the, as „excellent children's TV“ awarded children's series Trio – The Kepler Diamonds (winner „Emil 2015“). Further information about current projects can be found under [www.heetz-brothers.de](http://www.heetz-brothers.de).

GRIFA FILMES

Co-Producer

GRIFA FILMES, led by Fernando Dias and Mauricio Dias, has been creating high-quality TV programs for over 20 years, having been nominated for two International Emmy Awards. Specialized in documentaries and international co-productions, the company is one of the foremost content producers in Brazil. Grifa Filmes created several successful programs in co-production with renowned broadcasting companies such as ARTE, Discovery, NATGEO, Animal Planet, France 3, France 5, CBC, NHK, Multishow, GNT, Globosat, TV Cultura e STV. Grifa Filmes also produces special audiovisual projects and offers production services such as setting up teams for shootings, surveys, pre-production and post-production.

Founder of Grifa Filmes in 1996, Fernando is in charge of the Executive Production of the company. Director and Producer, Mauricio has produced and directed more than 60 films.

MOTTO PICTURES

Executive Producer

Founded in 2009, Motto Pictures is a documentary production company specializing in producing and executive producing documentary features. Motto creatively develops films, secures financing and builds distribution strategies with an eye toward maximizing the position of each project in the domestic and international markets. Motto has produced over 25 feature documentaries that are Emmy, Peabody and duPont award-winning and have been nominated for Academy Awards, Independent Spirit Awards, Gotham Awards and many other prestigious honors.

Motto Pictures produced ABACUS: SMALL ENOUGH TO JAIL and LIFE, ANIMATED both nominated for the Academy Awards and executive produced WEINER, which premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival and was awarded with the US Documentary Grand Jury Prize.

Motto executive produced 3 1/2 MINUTES, TEN BULLETS and BEST OF ENEMIES both of which premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival and were shortlisted for the 2016 Academy Award BEST OF ENEMIES was released by Magnolia Pictures to critical acclaim and 3 1/2 MINUTES, TEN BULLETS won a Special Jury Prize, was released by Participant Media and acquired by HBO for US broadcast. Motto produced INDIAN POINT, which premiered at the 2015 Tribeca Film Festival and executive produced THE MUSIC OF STRANGERS: YO-YO MA AND THE SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE, released by The Orchard and broadcast on HBO. Motto also executive produced THE KILL TEAM and ART AND CRAFT, both released by Oscilloscope and shortlisted for the 2015 Academy Award and 1971, which was released in 2015.

BLUE ICE DOCS

Founded in 2014 in partnership between Robin Smith, president of KinoSmith, and Steven Silver and Neil Tabatznik, co-owners of the Blue Ice Group, Blue Ice Docs intends to use the expertise and skills of both organizations to build a singular, world-leading documentary distribution entity that will take non-fiction product across all media platforms within Canada and beyond.

I WONDER PICTURES

Co-Producer

I Wonder Pictures distributes the best of documentary cinema in Italian theaters. With a careful selection of titles, I Wonder Pictures brings to the cinema small and big life stories that not only thrill and entertain, but above all offer a new point of view on culture and current events. Recent titles are the Oscar® winning films SUGAR MAN and CITIZENFOUR, the Grand Jury Prize in Venice THE LOOK OF SILENCE and Golden Globes nominee DIO ESISTE E VIVE A BRUSSELS, a blockbuster in Italy for arthouse cinema.