

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This project was very special for me because it was a big risk. How can I tell a very complex topic that has a centuries-long history and that has revolutionized humanity in the simplest possible way? I decided to take this risk for the simple reason that I believe that making films requires taking risks. Even if they ultimately don't work out. Nothing is more boring than not risking anything.

I was interested in the idea that cleaning is much more than what you might associate with it at first glance. Cleaning and hygiene work seems self-evident to us. We brush our teeth, wash our bodies, our homes, our cars, go to the therapist etc. And we expect it to be clean when we go somewhere, a hotel, the zoo, or a plane. In fact, this is anything but self-evident, because there is a huge financial, personnel and organizational effort behind it that we no longer even notice. And even more. Cleaning and cleansing are always about ideas of order and values, i.e. the question of what should be cleaned. In this context, Bruno Latour speaks of a modern desire for purification. He says that it is a genuine part of modernity to practice ideas of order or to carry out purification processes in order to advance this constant interrelationship of order and mixing, of hybridization and new separation and purification. This is something typically modern. What is perceived as miscellaneous must be organized, separated and cleaned again. And then of course the question arises: What idea of order do we have? What is perceived as the ordered and the structured and the unseparated and what is not? These are somewhat abstract thoughts that are related to very concrete images in the film. I think the film is very concrete and very abstract at the same time.

I had a precise concept for this film that was also very open. I wanted to shed light on cleaning and hygiene in its breadth: from the immaterial to the material, from life-destroying to life-sustaining, from the human body to its disappearance, to mechanical cleaning. There is a medical dimension (hospital), spiritual (soul cleansing), an aesthetic (restoration), a religious (baptism) and a political-racist dimension (concentration camp). At the same time, the material always has its own logic. In a way, it demands something from you. This is a kind of resonance relationship. As director and editor, I shape the film, but the film also shapes me. The material always offers surprises. I knew that beforehand, so I deliberately left the concept open so as not to restrict the film conceptually. The incalculables had already been taken into account.

Working on this film radically changed my own perception. Since I've been working on this film, I've noticed how constantly things are being cleaned. Suddenly I saw things, situations and people that I hadn't noticed before. I walk through town and within ten minutes I see five people cleaning something. Or I see a cleaning cart standing around somewhere. I wouldn't have noticed this before. At first glance this may be banal. But that's what I was interested in in this film: What do you actually see in these everyday, mundane images? Images are always much more than just what is visible.

This visual excess is perhaps most visible in the images from the concentration camp. Here two cleaning and cleansing regimes come together that are almost completely opposite to each other: the cleaning of a memorial site that serves to keep the memory of a completely different type of hygiene and cleansing alive, namely racial hygiene and ethnic cleansing. With the aim of ensuring that it doesn't happen again. To a certain extent, cleaning the memorial creates the possibility of remembering a cleaning that should not be repeated because it destroys human life and brings death. Although at first glance this scene may seem very simple and almost banal - cleaning women mopping a floor - in this scene life, death, cleaning and purging are very closely intertwined.