

# OUR DAILY BREAD

A Film by Nikolaus Geyrhalter



92 minutes / color / 2005 / shot on HDCAM / blown up to 35 mm / 1:1,85 / dolby digital

**SPECIAL JURY AWARD, JORIS IVENS COMPETITION**  
**2005 AMSTERDAM INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY**

**OFFICIAL SELECTION**  
**2006 NEW YORK FILM**

**“A MUST-SEE! SUPERB! The film’s formal elegance, moral underpinning and intellectually stimulating point of view also make it essential. Takes us inside worlds of wonder and of terror.”**

—Manohla Dargis, The New York Times

**“OUTSTANDING! PROVOCATIVE! Eccentrically lovely and frequently horrifying.”**

—Premiere

**AN ICARUS FILMS RELEASE**

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## Synopsis 1

In sealed rooms, as sterile as computer-processor factories, chicks hatch while being closely monitored. A huge hose sucks salmon out of a fjord. Metal teeth chomp up fields of sunflowers which withered at just the right time thanks to chemicals. Chickens are cut up and pigs are gutted in seconds, though cows take a little longer: This is high-tech agriculture—the industrial production of food.

**OUR DAILY BREAD** shows the places where food is produced: surreal landscapes plasticized and optimized for tractors and agricultural machinery, clean rooms in cool industrial buildings designed to ensure logistic efficiency, machines that require uniform materials for smooth processing. What might look like something from the world of science fiction is reality. Our food is produced in spectacular spaces which are seldom seen.

There's little space for humans here. They seem like flaws in this system: undersized and vulnerable, though they adapt as best they can, with hygienic clothing, ear protectors and helmets. They're at certain places on the production line, doing the jobs for which machines have not yet been invented. One last bit of individuality interferes with the process.

When a worker takes a break for a bite to eat, it seems to provide an absurd contrast, but at the same time a reference is made to the actual purpose of these seemingly utopian factories.

Precisely framed continuous tracking shots take on the system's efficiency, bare it, put it on display, approach it with a mixture of fascination and horror. **OUR DAILY BREAD** shows the industrial production of food as a reflection of our society's values: plenty of everything, made quickly and simply by a specialized few.

Dispensing with commentary and explanatory interviews, the film unfolds on the screen like a disturbing dream: a detailed feast of images, an insistent gaze, accompanied by whirring, clattering, booming, slurping, the machines' hydraulic breathing—only the screeching of chickens is louder.

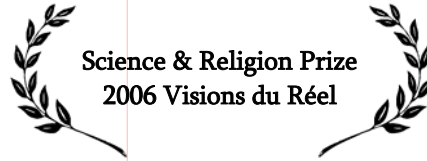
**OUR DAILY BREAD** is an invitation directed at our sense of curiosity, our desire to get to the bottom of things, to look, listen and be amazed, to associate and think about our civilization as it currently stands. Only after seeing something for ourselves can we believe it.

## Synopsis 2

Welcome to the world of industrial food production and high-tech farming. To the rhythm of conveyor belts and immense machines, the film looks without commenting into the places where food is produced: monumental spaces, surreal landscapes and bizarre sounds—a cool, industrial environment which leaves little space for individualism. People, animals, crops and machines play a supporting role in the logistics of this system which provides our society's standard of living.

**OUR DAILY BREAD** is a wide-screen tableau of a feast which isn't always easy to digest—and in which we all take part. A pure, meticulous and high-end film experience that enables the audience to form their own ideas.

## Awards & Review Excerpts



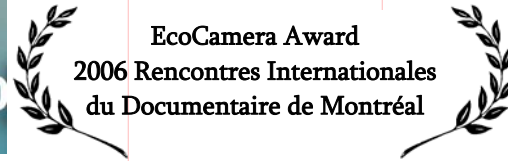
Science & Religion Prize  
2006 Visions du Réel



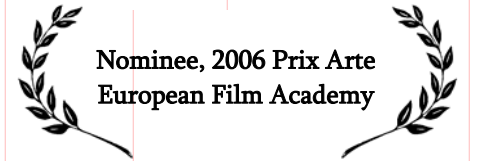
Best Film  
2006 ECOCINEMA Film Festival



Grand Prize  
2006 Paris Festival International  
of Films on the Environment



EcoCamera Award  
2006 Rencontres Internationales  
du Documentaire de Montréal



Nominee, 2006 Prix Arte  
European Film Academy

“A POWERFUL CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE! A great and important film.”  
— Joris Ivens Jury, Amsterdam International Documentary Festival

“Critic's Pick! *Fast Food Nation's* got nothing on [this] strangely incisive documentary... Beautiful images.”  
—New York Magazine

“Geyrhalter can be compared with suspense master Hitchcock...  
a pure cineaste and motion scientist.”  
—Der Standard

“Calmly unsettling... painterly...  
The images recall Kubrick in their extreme, head-on formality and tight, obsessive control.  
This is *Fast Food Nation* envisioned, *Koyaanisqatsi*-like, on a grand scale: *Fast Food Planet*.”  
—Chicago Tribune

“Stuart Klawans, *The Nation's* excellent film critic, has compared *OUR DAILY BREAD* to  
Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, whereas I was reminded of *The Matrix*. Chilling!”  
—Salon.com

“Deeply rooted in landscape and duration, it is hypnotic and magisterial, about moment and passage, about the  
industrialization of food and the necessity of nurture. Monumental and surreal, wordless, a collation of clean,  
bright images of supernal calm and contains the most striking cropduster scene since *North by Northwest*.”  
—NewCity Chicago

“A happy version of *Metropolis*. Gives new meaning to the species paranoia dramatized in those gore-soaked  
scenes of human harvesting in *War of the Worlds* or *The Matrix*. *OUR DAILY BREAD* is quietly radical  
in showing creatures whose existence is solely and inexorably a preparation for death.”  
—The Village Voice

“Stunning!”  
—ArtForum

## Film Festivals

**2006 Los Angeles International Film Festival**

**2006 Rencontres internationales  
de cinéma à Paris**

**2006 Melbourne International Film Festival**

**2006 Full Frame International  
Documentary Festival**

**2006 Hot Docs Documentary Festival**

**2006 Jerusalem Film Festival**

**2006 Munich International Documentary Film  
Festival**

**2006 Diagonale Graz**

**2006 Documentary Film Platform ZONE Ghent**



**2006 Thessaloniki Documentary Festival**

**One World International Human Rights Films Festival (Prague)**

**2006 Belgrade International Film Festival**

**2006 Zagreb Dox International Film Festival**

**2006 Berlinale European Film Market**

## Nikolaus Geyrhalter Filmography

2007

**THE FINAL DAYS** (in production)  
(A, 100 min., color; Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter)

2006

**I AM ME** (in production)  
(A, 55 min., color, Director: Kathrin Resetarits)

**MOUNTAIN MEADOW MOVIE** (in production)  
(A, 55 min., color; Director: Gundula Daxecker)

**GOOD MORNING AUSTRIA!** (in production)  
(A, 90 min., color; Director: Hannelore Tiefenthaler)

2005

**OUR DAILY BREAD**  
(A, 90 min., color; Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter)

2004

**FLIGHT NUMBER 884. RETURNING HOME**  
(A, 52 min., color; Directors: Wolfgang Widerhofer, Markus Glaser)

**ACROSS THE BORDER. - FIVE VIEWS FROM NEIGHBOURS**  
(A, 131 min., color; Directors: Paweł Łozinski, Jan Gogola, Peter Kerekes, Robert Lakatos, Biljana Cakic-Veselic)

**KANEGRA**

(A/D, 50 min., color; Director: Katharina Copony)

**PESSAC. LIVING IN A LABORATORY**

(A, 52 min., color; Directors: Claudia Trinker, Julia Zöllner)

**THE SOUVENIRS OF MR. X**

(A/D, 98 min., color; Director: Arash T. Riahi)

**CARPATIA**

(D/A, 127 min., color; Directors: Andrzej Klamt, Ulrich Rydzewski)

2003

**SENAD AND EDIS. ONCE THERE WAS A WAR**  
(D/A, 30 min., color; Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter)

2002

**LOUD AND CLEAR. LIFE AFTER SEXUAL ABUSE**  
(A, 67 min., color; Director: Maria Arlamovsky)

**TEMELIN. A VILLAGE IN SOUTHERN BOHEMIA**

(A, 30 min., color; Directors: Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Markus Glaser, Wolfgang Widerhofer)

2001

**ELSEWHERE**

(A, 240 min., color; Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter)

1999

**PRIPYAT**

(A, 100 min., b/w; Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter)

1997

**THE YEAR AFTER DAYTON**

(A, 204 min., color; Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter)

**KISANGANI DIARY**

(A, 52 min., color & b/w; Director: Hubert Sauper)

1995

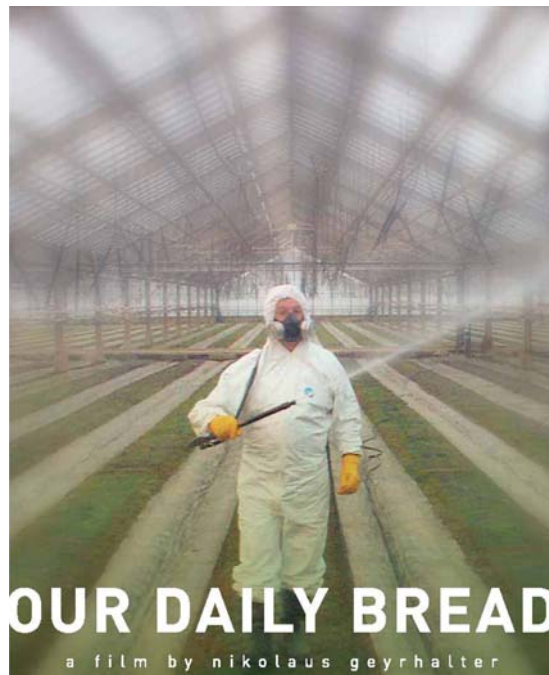
**THE DREAM THAT REMAINS**

(A, 155 min., color; Director: Leopold Lummerstorfer)

1994

**WASHED ASHORE**

(A, 86 min., b/w; Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter)





## Interview with Nikolaus Geyrhalter, director

What moved you to make this film?

Basically I make films that I'd like to see myself. I'm fascinated by zones and areas people normally don't see. That was the case with both PRIPYAT and ELSEWHERE, and the production of food is also part of a closed system that people have extremely vague ideas about. The images used in ads, where butter's churned and a little farm's shown with a variety of animals, have nothing to do with the place our food actually comes from. There's a kind of alienation with regard to the creation of our food and these kinds of labor, and breaking through it is necessary.

OUR DAILY BREAD, like all your films, doesn't have voice-over commentary, but in this case, there aren't any interviews either.

I imagine my films mainly in continuous tracking shots which also contain scenes with interviews. In this case worlds of work which can stand alone are shown. The people work in spaces which are otherwise empty, and there's not much talking while they work. At the beginning we conducted a number of interviews. During the editing, which Wolfgang Widerhofer started while shooting was still going on, it turned out that these interviews tend to disturb, and interrupt, the perception of the film. We then decided on the more radical form as it's more appropriate for the way the footage was shot. The intention is to show actual working situations and provide enough space for thoughts and associations in long sequences. The viewers should just plunge into this world and form their own opinions.

There's no information about specific companies or data.

It's irrelevant for this film whether a company that produces baby chicks is located in Austria, Spain or Poland, or how many pigs are processed every year in the big slaughterhouse that's shown. In my opinion that's done by journalists and television, not a feature film. I also think that things are made too easy for me as a viewer when I'm spoon fed information. That moves me briefly, gets me worked up, but then it can be put into perspective quickly, and it works like all the other sensational news that bombards us day after day because that kind of thing sells newspapers - and it also dulls our perception of the world. In this film a look behind the structures is permitted, time's provided to take in sounds and images, and it's possible to think about the world where our basic foodstuffs are produced, which is normally ignored.

Was getting permission to shoot difficult?

In a few cases it was very easy, because the companies are proud of what they do, of innovations and work processes, product safety, and they wanted to participate in the making of a film. Being able to refer to previous works definitely made this easier. There were also some people at these companies who see the consumer's alienation from food production as a problem because consumers have no idea about their concerns. On the other hand lots of companies are afraid of publicity and what a film like this could show. After all, there are constant scandals, and they might think: If it's going to create a scandal, then they should do their shooting at the competition!

But the point of this film isn't to uncover scandals.

I wanted to collect and make accessible images from this branch, this world in as objective a manner as possible. What makes it fascinating are the machines and the sense of what's doable, the human spirit of invention and organization, even at close quarters with horror and insensitivity. Plants and animals are treated just like any other goods, and smooth functioning is extremely important. The most important thing is how the animals can be born, raised and held as efficiently and inexpensively as possible, how to treat them so they're as fresh and undamaged as possible when they arrive at the slaughterhouse, and that the levels of medications and stress hormones in the meat are below the legal limits. No one thinks about whether they're happy. If you want to call that a scandal, which is more than justified, then you have to take your thinking one step further. Then it becomes the scandal of how we live, because this economic, "soulless" efficiency is in a reciprocal relationship with our society's lifestyle. There's nothing wrong with saying, "Buy organic products! Eat less meat!" But at the same time it's a kind of excuse, because we all enjoy the fruits of automation and industrialization and globalization every day, which affect much more than just food.

Do you intend the film's title, OUR DAILY BREAD, to be understood with the religious association?

The title refers to our cultural history, and because of the religious association the effect's even more crass considering how people treat their resources and fellow living beings. I always take the thought further, and the next line would be: And forgive us our sins. But it also refers to earning our daily bread, the normality of this life, the question of how people do their jobs, and how this has changed. Who runs the machines, who controls the processes - and who digs in the ground with their bare hands or picks the cucumbers? How is our daily bread distributed in contemporary Europe?

Does the film also represent a bit of contemporary history?

I think so. I also regard my films as archival material, which people will dig out in 50 or 100 years, watch, and think, "They already did it like that back then," or "They were still doing it like that." That's how something started or stopped. Formally I try to be as timeless as possible, the intention isn't to say, that's what films looked like back then. It's important to me that a film captures a certain point in time, a little bit of history. That's especially true of this film.

Nikolaus Geyrhalter in an interview with Silvia Burner

## Interview with Wolfgang Widerhofer, editing

You've worked with Nikolaus Geyrhalter since his first film (WASHED ASHORE, 1994), having edited all of them. OUR DAILY BREAD is in one respect quite different from his previous films: There aren't any interviews or portraits, which were important elements in the others.

That was an exciting experience, when we discovered during the production process that that's the most suitable form for the images and the subject. The fact that places, as Nikolaus shows them, have a fictitious, utopian quality and are quite impressive and significant on their own. On the other hand the production process, the industrial architecture, the timetables and the amount of human labor which can be obtained before exhaustion sets in all determine the role played by men and women at these places. The images themselves already say all that, so no explanations or commentary in the form of interviews are needed. On the contrary: An interview would be an attempt to re-individualize the industrial process, which removes all individuality. You could say we chose the horror vacui of silence.

The film isn't held together by people or places, it follows a different logic.

It's more of an episodic kind of thinking, an inspection, in both a spatial and temporal sense. An inspection that also comprises various cycles. The film includes themes without mentioning them explicitly: repetitive labor, automation, industrial production, and the brutality that it involves, the morality which comes into play when animals are killed, and so on. A number of discourses and approaches are set up in the film, but not so that the audience can leave the theater and say, "I learned this and that and this is what I have to do." I find films that give instructions on how to act boring and presumptuous. I tend to be careful with analogies or concepts, and I try to edit so as to create an open space that a great many things can be projected onto. In that sense it's a risky film.

Which doesn't offer any simple answers.

No, it's about experience, a look which deals with the people first and then the machines, which can demonstrate enthusiasm and at the same time be critical, which doesn't differentiate into good and evil, but which can also be swept along in its astonishment. It would be wrong to say that OUR DAILY BREAD is just about the horror and spectacle of industrial food production. I think it's also a positive film about human existence: We like to invent and build machines that we can look at in wonder, or which suddenly pose a threat. I think there's something childlike about the whole thing, with surreal moments, almost like in a dream: an unnerving stream of images.

And how does sound fit in?

Each image has sound, I kept that in mind when selecting them. And, that, apart from the simple contrast of loud and soft, certain contrasts and patterns in sounds and acoustic atmospheres encourage association. The fact that the thump of a machine can at times resemble something organic, living. Or that sound can



indicate something outside the image: When an airplane lands in the asparagus field in the background, this brings in the larger outside world, something more global. At the film's beginning for example a claustrophobic atmosphere is created and, for some time, nothing outside, no sky is visible, but the humming and roaring tells us about the internal spaces.

And then this space suddenly opens up: Windmills become visible, and gradually you notice that they're standing in a potato field. An abrupt change from inside to out, a daring break, a number of associations...

The cut has to block off thought about the image and open up a new line of thinking. In my opinion you always have to consider what a certain cut might involve. Was that a link, an analogy, a total contrast, a contradiction? I think that must be an issue with every cut.

The many protracted shots of individuals having lunch represent extremely distinct, contrasting cuts.

Those are extremely important moments: Someone's just sitting there, eating. And that takes the viewer back to him or herself. In two senses: Not just because a person's sitting there and I'm looking into his face, and I can wonder what he's thinking and what he's doing and what role he plays in this system, but also in a filmic sense, that the narrative flow has been stopped during this break. And I have time to think. Without some information keeping me from it. These breaks, this peace makes something even clearer: the extent to which people are locked into this kind of repetitive work, how exhausting, loud, fast it is, like on an assembly line. That creates an important contrast.

You weren't there during shooting: Do you consider that a disadvantage, that you aren't familiar with the actual place, and how much freedom does that give you to tell a story with these images?

I don't consider it a disadvantage; I take as clear a look as possible at what's in the images and what I need for the story and the film, what's best for it. I, and later the audience, we must be able to orient ourselves in the images. We have to understand the point of view, where the camera's standing, how the image is composed, and the composition of Nikolaus' images is always clear and complex at the same time. But we don't necessarily have to understand what's happening. With this film I think it's very important that you don't understand a lot of things, so that associations are possible, you have your own thoughts and experiences and avoid preconceived, spoon-fed ideas and information about the world. I think that's one of the film's strengths: That it has plenty of moments which provide an opportunity for associations.

The film doesn't explain the world...

I would consider that a questionable intention anyway. I see this film as a place, a utopian place which we enter at the beginning and leave at the end - and the fact that this utopian place is our current reality becomes clear again and again in the course of the film. The fact that it provides the basis of our society's standard of living, with all the consequences. The fact that, as a viewer, you're at the mercy of the sequence of images and the ideas they trigger, and aren't taken by the hand, which I think is good. And this isn't meant to be educational, or moralistic or puristic, but an open encounter with the film and the possibilities and criteria it offers.

Wolfgang Widerhofer in an interview with Silvia Burner

## Credits

directed and cinematography by  
Nikolaus Geyrhalter

edited and dramatic structure by  
Wolfgang Widerhofer

script  
Wolfgang Widerhofer, Nikolaus Geyrhalter

research  
David Bernet, Ivette Löcker, Michael Kitzberger, Maria  
Arlamovsky

sound  
Stefan Holzer, Andreas Hamza, Hjalti Bager-Jonathansson,  
Ludwig Löckinger, Heimo Korak, Nicole Scherg

with

Claus Hansen Petz, Rydellek Arkadiusz, Barbara Hinz, Wypchło Renata, Wiktorska Alina, Kozłowska Ela, Anna Bethke, Nowak Małgorzata, Halina Kosiacka, Tibor Korom, András Szarvas, Lies Jacobs, Frédéric Quinet, Christoph Malherbe, Olivier Leboutte, Yves Jouant, Marc Lejeune, Pierre Quintin, Emile Hampere, Jean-Marie Wilmet, Henry Schernikau, Norbert Tonath, Harm Krüger, Thomas Löhle, Robert Milan, Pjotter Kobos, Witold Pawlak, Dariusz Bryk, Janusz Franczak, Rita Dunia, Angela Rotolo, Adif and Nevresa Mujanovic, Dana Sevakova, Milan Machlica, Lars Andreasen, Werner Müller, Heidi Ronnov, Bent Rothmeier (+), Pia Jill Hinz, Laszlo Szobota, Ferenc Berezvai, István Szamoskózi, József Fodor, József Ganil, Imre Kovács, László Kovács, Tünde Döme, Petra Grüneberg, Yarga Paté Valdé, Hammidu Valdé, Antonio Vergara, Khalifa Massoedi, Mohammed, Mahed Al-Latef, Eloy Barea Garcia, Quintin Sanchez Muchez, Dieter Voigt, Siegfried Endler, Carsten Reichelt, Kåre Nordbø, Ingrid Hehne, Mona Bohne, Gudrun Schulze, Horst Hehne, Klaus Godau, Lothar Paeschke, Sabine Wehlitz, Janett Müller, Matthias Glöckner, Ronny Schüller, Wolfgang Buro, Lajos Ujj, Sándor Sztaló, Sándorne Sztaló, Jens Christian, Jens Nielsen, Peter Olsen, Martin Jensen, Joanna Druzbin, Frédéric Pirson, Freddy Vandennycck, u.v.a.

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sound design Andreas Hamza	sound post-production/ film prints Synchro Film GmbH	Fabian Geyrhalter
assistant sound designer Heimo Korak	color correction Sepp Kloucek	production assistant Nicole Scherg
HD post-production Listo Videofilm GmbH	sound mixing Alexander Koller	production auditor Markus Glaser
HD online Geoff Kleindorfer	public relations Silvia Burner	production manager Michael Kitzberger
color grading Thomas Varga	translations Steve Wilder	producers Nikolaus Geyrhalter Markus Glaser Michael Kitzberger Wolfgang Widerhofer
film recording Herbert Fischer	stills Konrad Edelbacher graphic design	

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