

DIE UNERZOGENEN

THE UNPOLISHED

a film by Pia Marais

with
Céci Chuh
Birol Ünel
Pascale Schiller

press dossier
dated: January 2007

director
Pia Marais
writers
Horst Markgraf
Pia Marais

Synopsis

Stevie, a precocious 14-year-old girl must cope with the instabilities of her immoderate parents. When they decide to move to a small provincial town in Germany, Stevie attempts to slip into a normal life. Whilst her parents playfully escape their responsibilities, Stevie tries to make a good impression in town, spreading stories of grandeur and claiming to be the daughter of a diplomat. She makes progress. Yet the good weather doesn't last and before long, she discovers that her parents have once more resorted to illegal means, as a way of supporting their leisurely lifestyle. As friends and hangers-on of her parents fill their new home, the chaos continually mounts. It is in this atmosphere of physical and emotional destruction, that Stevie must now start to define herself and perhaps even break free.

THE UNPOLISHED/ DIE UNERZOGENEN tells the story of a girl caught up in a complicated adult world. A world in which the child/parent roles have been washed away and responsibilities are thrown back and forth.

DIE UNERZOGENEN

THE UNPOLISHED

by Pia Marais

a production by
PANDORA FILM PRODUKTION

in co-production with
WESTDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK & SÜDWESTDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK

supported by
FILMSTIFTUNG NRW
FILMFÖRDERUNGSANSTALT
MEDIA Programme of the European Community

world premiere
Tiger Awards Competition Rotterdam 2007

ARD-Treatment prize 2002 Max Ophüls Filmfestival Saarbrücken

Director's Comment

An ambivalent childhood.

My parents were hippies and the chaos of their lives has served as a continuous source of inspiration to me. Perhaps the first inkling of an idea for the *THE UNPOLISHED* was based on this theme of overwhelming chaos. Yet *THE UNPOLISHED* is situated in the here and now, which fundamentally changes the whole tone and the state of mind of the characters.

Lack of borders is an important theme in the story. Not only the lack of physical borders but also the lack of mental ones. Perhaps also reflected in the almost comic notion that the adults are so caught up in themselves, that they sometimes don't make the realization when fun has turned sour.

Like modern nomads, they drift, never staying long enough to get bogged down by responsibilities. Perhaps understandably, they simply want to remain young. But how do children define themselves or rebel against their parents, when the lines separating the generations seem to disintegrate?

For me this is the story of a child finding it's own way through what can be described as a reliably unreliable surrounding. Tangled up and confronted with adult vulnerabilities in a world, in which the idea of right and wrong and good and bad merge into irregular shades of grey.

Without passing judgement, it is an attempt to understand what lies behind this precocious young persons decision to finally defect or is it the other way around? Maybe, more essentially this is an attempt to examine the love- bond so intrinsic in child – parent relationships.

Pia Marais - January 2007

Technical details

duration	95 min, 2.694 meter
picture format	S-16mm, blow-up 35mm, colour, 1:1,85
sound format	Dolby Digital
original language	German
available subtitles	English
shooting	on original locations in Cologne (Germany) & Antwerpen (Belgium)
world premiere	Tiger Awards Competition Rotterdam 2007

Cast

stevie	CÉCI CHUH	
axel	BIROL ÜNEL	(Gegen die Wand/ Head On, Transylvania),
lily	PASCALE SCHILLER	(Schaubühne Berlin)
ingmar	GEORG FRIEDRICH	(Hundstage, Böse Zellen), europ. shooting star 2004
louise	JOANA PREISS	(Ma Mère, Clean)
eric	JOSEPH MALERBA	(The Statement)
dr. irm branzger	JOHANNA GASTDORF	(Das Wunder von Bern)
didier	DIEUDONNÉ KABONGA	(Trouble every day)
benny	DAVID KÖNEN	
edith	MADLENE NIESYT	
kim	LAURA HENTSCHEL	
kai	DOMINIQUE WEGNER	
micha	JANOSCH LITZINGER	

about the actors

Pia Marais about the actors

CECI CHUH - role STEVIE

Ceci appeared at a late stage in the casting process, when due to the mounting feeling of desperation at possibly not finding the right girl, we had made casting announcements in the subways of Berlin. These open castings were chaotic. Often anything between one hundred and two hundred girls would turn up. Ceci appeared on the 13 of April. We all noticed her, because she appeared to be much younger than the rest. Her freckled face and dark piercing young eyes watchfully observed every other girl being cast. At some point I felt obligated to tell her that 10 or 11 year old girls were just too young for the character we were looking for. Ceci wasn't too put off, she just replied that if she was too young for the lead, then she would play another part. Over a period of the next two months, Ceci had castings with all the adult actors, who like us were startled by how she would take charge of situations and often almost be the driving force in the improvisations, a quality she was not aware of. So why did I decide on Ceci? Her strong intuition and cleverness combined with her respect less behaviour especially towards the adults just made her the one most fitted for the character of Stevie. The funny thing is that during the few weeks of shooting, the coming of age of the main character coincided with that of Ceci. Or maybe it was the other way around.

PASCAL SCHILLER - role LILY, Stevie's Mother

I remember paging through some agency catalogue three years ago and stumbling on black and white pictures of Pascal. What struck me was that she looked like a 4 year old girl captured in a grown up body. Like a misunderstanding. When I finally got close to the process of casting, I described the character of LILY to a friend of mine and she mentioned two names, the one was the almost unknown Pascal Schiller. Unknown because although Pascal had done plenty of theatre, she hadn't done much film at that stage. Also since her arrival in Berlin she had been busy bringing up her two little girls. The funny thing was that in a particular way, Pascal just had the complexity of Lily, the rare combination of being attracted to the more self-destructive qualities whilst being a lady from a good family. Also, although she is of German origin, Pascal grew up and studied acting in France, which perhaps accounts for why there is something about her, which is neither of both. Completely fragile and nearly absent in one moment whilst being brutally present in the next. I knew immediately that she was the one. The problem was that we needed to find a girl that would convince one of the mother-daughter relationship. We were lucky. During shooting Pascal was incredibly dedicated and I knew that if I could explain why, she never backed away from any request. Pascal once said that in order to play the role, she avoided looking into mirrors. I remember asking Pascal if she could try and let her hands shake, it was for the very first scene of the film, I don't know how she managed but she did and I remember watching the rushes and feeling touched by the beauty of the gesture.

leading parts in theatre productions of Le Maillon Strasbourg, TJP Strasbourg, Le Filature Mulhouse, Thalia Theater Hamburg, Hellerau Dresden, Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz Berlin

BIROL ÜNEL - role AXEL, Stevie's father

I remember seeing Thomas Arslans film “Dealer” at the Berlinale years ago and all of a sudden there was this incredibly present actor playing a narcotics policeman. To me, in that film, he eluded any categorization, I wasn’t even sure of his nationality. Whilst we were writing, we had him in mind for a character called Dimitri. A character that landed up becoming redundant and finally was taken out of the story. Around that time I saw Fatih Akin’s “Gegen Die Wand” and thought “thank god” we took the character out because we would never get this notoriously self-proclaimed “enfant terrible” actor to have played it. Yet funnily enough, whilst casting lots of young girls without much luck, Birol got to hear of our plight and offered me his help for castings. I gave him the script for this purpose and at some point I was “informed” that Birol wanted to play AXEL, the father. I was uncertain, it was almost too obvious a choice. Still under the premise of helping us out and improvising with the young hopefuls, even Birol was becoming exhausted. Then came the meeting with Ceci. I remember Birol, on a Sunday morning, at first he wasn’t interested, but before long Ceci, like a dog going for the vein had made Birol completely vulnerable and unsure how to deal with this young 13 year old girl who was giving him such a hard time. That was the moment when I first saw the characters I’d had in mind, in front of me.

selected films: "Transylvania" (05), "Head-On" (04), "King Of Thieves" (04), "Not A Lovestory" (03), "Blackberry" (02), "Anam" (01), "In July" (00), "Dealer" (99)

German Film Award - Best Actor, Nominee European Film Award - Best Actor

GEORG FRIEDRICH - role INGMAR

Having seen Georg Friedrich’s incredible work in films like “Hundstage” and “Böse Zellen”, I really didn’t know what to expect but I had a feeling he was essential for this film. Upon seeing him in person, it was clear that he was Ingmar. Georg is like a medium, he slips into a role and possesses it. I remember when he came to Berlin, he thought he was being cast, but that wasn’t the case. He was the obvious choice. But it was the day we decided for Ceci. I remember Georg was nervous because the scenes were difficult, perhaps because there had to be an underlying erotic tension in order for it to work, a sensitive area when it comes to 13, 14 year old girls, who have little or no experience in these matters. Initially Ceci teased Georg, then when he got irritated, she changed course and seemed to guide him through the scenes. This lay a good grounding for the scenes they have together in the film. At times the shoot was hectic and the energy that arose out of the actors camp was similar to that of the characters in the story. It became almost strangely real. Georg remained oblivious to this, although he spent three weeks on location, he kept to himself and read or slept. He is the sort of actor, who exorcises any fear a director may have, of certain scenes because amongst other reasons he is so collaborative and has a profound intuition and sense for his own authenticity. When doing several takes, he often manages to bring finely different nuances or energy into each take. He is a truly intelligent actor.

selected films: "Eight Miles High" (06), "Import/Export" (05), "Tough Enough" (05), "Fallen" (04), "You Bet Your Life" (04), "Keller-Teenage Wasteland" (04), "Silentium" (03), "The Time Of The Wolf" (02), "Free Radicals" (02), "Dog Days" (01), "La Pianiste" (00)

Shooting Star Berlinale 2004

JOANA PREISS - role LOUISE

Geraldine Bajard, who did me a great favour and cast the film initially, suggested Joana Preiss for the role of LOUISE because of her ambivalent and striking energy. We collected photographs of Joana and pasted them on the wall. Yet it is not only her appearance, which has caused her to become the muse of designers, photographers and artists but her secretive and almost wild energy, so apparent in the Nan Golding photographs. We watched Oliver Assayas film "Clean", in which Joana has a small but good part and managed to get hold of a copy of Christoph Honoré's "Ma Mere". Geraldine's intuition had hit the nail on the head and we sent Joana a script, although we were almost sure we wouldn't hear from her. About two weeks later, I listened to the answering machine and this deep female voice resounded from it. Joana liked the script and wanted to meet. I couldn't believe it. Joana is a paradox. On the one hand she is this glamorous actress/singer/model and on the other she is a single mother, who whilst shooting must have spent a fortune speaking on the phone with her son. The energy Joana lends her character becomes like an erotically charged trigger, releasing what has simmered beneath the surface.

selected films: "Dans Paris" (06), "Paris, Je T'aime" (05), "Un Couple Parfait" (05), "Ma Mère" (04), "Clean" (03)

Crew

director	PIA MARAIS	
writers	HORST MARKGRAF PIA MARAIS	
producers	CLAUDIA STEFFEN CHRISTOPH FRIEDEL	
commissioning editor WDR	ANDREA HANKE	
commissioning editor SWR	SABINE HOLTGREVE	
production manager	ELKE SASSERATH	
director of photography	DIEGO MARTINEZ VIGNATTI	(Battle in Heaven, Jápon)
editors	DANIELA BOCH MONA BRÄUER	(Bella Martha, Der Freie Wille/ free will)
production designer	PETRA BARCHI	(Samsara, Hurricane Streets)
sound original & design	ANDREAS HILDEBRANDT	(Crossing The Bridge)
music	JOCHEN ARBEIT YOYO RÖHM HORST MARKGRAF	(Einstürzende Neubauten)
casting	GÉRALDINE BAJARD	
costumes	JULIA KOEP JULIANE BRANDES	
make-up & hair	CLAUDIA SCHAAF	

Pia Marais – «writer & director»

I was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. My father was a lunatic actor trained at RADA and a descendent of the French Huguenots and English colonials who had settled in South Africa. My mother is Swedish and was responsible for the sanity in my upbringing and the Waldorf School education. Part of my upbringing was spent in Southern Africa, except for a few years in Sweden and Spain. Initially I studied sculpture, then went on to photography before realising that due to the narrative character of what I was doing, film would be the appropriate medium.

Having studied art at Chelsea School of Art (London), The Rietveld Akademie (Amsterdam) and KunstAkademie (Düsseldorf), I went on to study film at the Deutsche Film- und Fernseh-Akademie (DFFB) in Berlin.

After several engagements in film business as casting director, assistant director and writer. DIE UNERZOGENEN (The Unpolished) is my first feature length film.

FILMS

Die Unerzogenen (The Unpolished) 35mm, colour, 95 min, (*treatment prize Saarbrücken 02*)

Good Hope, feature-documentary, ca. 90 min - in development

Eine Frau wie Ellen, feature film, ca. 100 min - in development

17(Seventeen) 35mm, colour, 20 min, short feature film

Tricky People 16mm, Farbe, 19 min, short feature film

Deranged 16mm, Farbe, 13 min, short feature film

Loop 16mm, s/w, 5 min

Horst Markgraf – «writer »

Although he was born in Stuttgart, Horst Markgraf's interest in music and the super-8 scene brought him to West Berlin in the early 80's. There his film *Cut Up* won the first prize in the Friends of the German Cinema's (Freunde der deutschen Kinemathek) S-8 Competition. He started the Multi-Media group *Craex-Apart*, then later the band *Mesrine* (Universal). Then collaborations on different film scores with amongst others Frank Tenge and Roland Wolf (of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds).

In the late eighties, he began his studies at the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB). His film "Elegie Bitterfeld" won the first prize at the Intern. Short Film Festival in Oberhausen. He casts Oskar Roehler as the lead in his feature film "Pochmann", later they collaborate, writing Horst's next feature project "Teichs Welt". His graduation film "Jenseits der Gleise" was nominated for the German Short Film prize (Bundeskurzfilmpreis)...

He still does camera work, amongst others for Christoph Dreher (Bass Guitarist from the German cult band Die Haut). The music documentaries emerging from this collaboration are *Beach Boys and the Devil*, *Sonic Youth*, *House of the Rising Punk*, *Chicago Connections*, *Beck*, *Psychedelic Revolution*, *Fantastic Voyages etc.*

As an author, the collaboration with Pia Marais has led to short films and the script for the feature film projects "Watching You"(script), "Good Hope" (in development), "Im Alter von Ellen" (in development) and DIE UNERZOGENEN (The Unpolished)...

Pandora Film – «Production»

(Claudia Steffen & Christoph Friedel - producers)

In 1982 the two Frankfurt based cinema operators Karl Baumgartner and Reinhard Brundig established Pandora Film Distribution. The name was inspired by G.W Pabst's film "Pandora's Box". With the first films that came out under this label, the thematic focus was clear: Films such as YOL by Yilmaz Günay, NOSTALGHIA by Andrej Tarkovsky or FAREWELL MY CONCUBINE by Chen Kaige all stood for highly ambitious International Art house Cinema. Before long, close working relationships were formed between Pandora and directors such as Aki Kaurismäki and Jim Jarmusch. But it was with Jane Campion's THE PIANO, that Pandora made its first big commercial breakthrough. The concept of presenting excellent cinematographic masterpieces by internationally renowned filmmakers to a German audience paid off, and Pandora Film became one of the most distinguished Distributors within this segment of the market.

Alongside the distribution, Pandora Film soon undertook an increasing amount of the actual production work. Gradually many projects were acquired early in the development phase. Soon co-productions began to emerge out of what had originally been a licence and distribution company. With Emir Kusturica's film UNDERGROUND, the transition to production was fulfilled.

In 1996 the production company was moved to Cologne. In 1998 the distribution department in Frankfurt was closed and the extensive library of distribution rights were sold to KINOWELT. The change in market conditions, especially the changed purchase policy of the television stations, and the massive structural changes that came about through the so called "New Market", were just two of many factors involved in this decision.

During the following time, Pandora Film's emphasis has been laying solely on producing and Co-producing films for the Cinema. The company has maintained its thematic emphasis and all the films have had a theatrical release. In addition, every project could be realised as a Co-Production. The international alignment of the projects is reflected in each and every film. Up to six films are realised per year. In 2002, the Film Funding Institution honoured the company with title "Branchentiger"["Tiger in the field"]. The same year the Distribution Company went back into business with the Co-production "THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST" by Aki Kaurismäki. Since 2005 the producers Christoph Friedel, Raimond Goebel, Claudia Steffen and managing director Rainer Teusner are also partners of Pandora Film Produktion.

Today Pandora Film presents itself as an Independent Production-, Marketing- and Distribution Company with the ambition of continuing to grow by means of quality rather than mass production. In the interest of all cinema enthusiasts, we constantly strive to work against the general media conformity, in order to secure the existence of film also as an art form. With the help of about 12 highly motivated colleagues, this challenging battle continues.

www.pandorafilm.com

FILMS & CO-PRODUCTION SELECTION 1995-2007

2007	DIE UNERZOGENEN (The Unpolished) MADONNEN HOPE TULPAN TEZA	Pia Marais Maria Speth Stanislaw Mucha Sergei Dwortsevoj Haile Gerima	D D/CH/BEL D/PL D/KAZ ETH/F/D	(Post-Prod.) (Post-Prod.) (Post-Prod.)
2006	FELTRINELLI VALLEY OF FLOWERS LIGHTS IN THE DUSK TO GET TO HEAVEN FIRST YOU HAVE TO DIE YOU AM I EL CUSTUDIO	Alessandro Rossetto Pan Nalin Aki Kaurismäki Djamshed Usmonov Kristijonas Vildziunas Rodrigo Moreno	ITL/D D/F Finl/D/F F/D/CH Lit/D Arg/D/F	
2005	FACTOTUM OBABA	Bent Hamer Montxo Armendanz	NOR/D SP/D	
2004	STRANGER LE CHIAVI DI CASA WHISKY FAMILIA RODANTE THE LAST TRAPPER PARADISE GIRLS	Malgorzata Szumowska Gianni Amelio Juan Rebella, Pablo Stoll Pablo Trapero Nicolas Vanier Fow Pyng Hu	D/PL I/F/D Urug/Arg/D Arg/D/F F/D/CAN NL/D	
2003	SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER JAGGED HARMONIES HAPPY END MARIA STRATOSPHERE GIRL	Kim Ki-Duk Dominique de Rivaz Amos Kollek Peter Nezer M.X. Oberg	Kor/D CH/D D/F/USA RUM/D D/F/CH/I/GB	
2002	THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST VIVRE ME TUE THE MAGIC GLOVES WHALE RIDER	Aki Kaurismäki Jean Pierre Sinapi Martin Rejtman Niki Caro	Finl/D/F D/F Arg/F/D Neuseel/D	
2001	MONSOON WEDDING SAMSARA BEAR'S KISS SHIK BRIDGET ABSOLUT WARHOLA	Mira Nair Pan Nalin Sergei Bodrov Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov Amos Kollek Stanislaw Mucha	USA/IN/D D/F/CH D/SP/F/I/SW D/F D/F/Jap D	
2000	FAST FOOD FAST WOMEN IN VANDAS ROOM AYURVEDA – ART OF BEING THE QUICKIE SUPER 8 STORIES MY SWEET HOME MOSTLY MARTHA	Amos Kollek Pedro Costa Pan Nalin Sergei Bodrov Emir Kusturica Filippos Tsitos Sandra Nettelbeck	USA/F/D P/D D/CH D/USA D/I D/G D/CH/A/I	
1999	ANNA WUNDER HIMALAYA	Ulla Wagner Eric Valli	D/CH F/D/CH	
1998	POLA X GHOST DOG KATJA'S ADVENTURE LUNA PAPA WINGED MIGRATION	Leos Carax Jim Jarmusch Lars Hesselholdt Bakhtiar Khudojnazarov Jacques Perrin	F/D/CH USA/D DK/S/N/D/I D/CH/F/Ö F/D/I	
1997	DANCE OF THE WIND OSCAR WILDE FULLMOON OS MUTANTES BLACK CAT, WHITE CAT	Rajan Khosa Brian Gilbert Fred Murer Theresa Villaverde Emir Kusturica	D/GB GB/D CH/D F/SP/D F/D	
1996	TANGO LESSON KAMA SUTRA GUY BAJO LA PIEL	Sally Potter Mira Nair Michael Lindsay-Hogg Francisco Lombardi	GB/F/D USA/D GB/D SP/D	
1995	UNDERGROUND DEAD MAN FLIRT	Emir Kusturica Jim Jarmusch Hal Hartley		

DIE UNERZOGENEN

THE UNPOLISHED

by Pia Marais

www.DieUnerzogenen.de
&
www.TheUnpolished.com

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