

Production notes

Being a visitor of the Viennale of long year's standing, I have seen many films and was in contact with a number of directors.

Most important for me was the encounter with James Benning and his Californian trilogy. When I told Benning of my film project, he said: "Just do it!". I saw „The Straight Story“ by David Lynch, "Grand Turismo" by Loredana and Günter Selichar who prompted my first screenplay version. And it was very important that Elisabeth Krejci and Michael Wolkenstein encouraged me, they too said: "Just do it!"

After five years and 15000 kilometres I had enough experience, as far as riding a handbike is concerned, to realize "handbikemovie" as a cinematic account of a further chapter in my life in the wake of the project "Bruchlandungen"/"Crash-landings" (the series of photographs immediately after the fall). As my state of health is not improving, it was a race against time that began. Initially I calculated 12 days of shooting to be accomplished within half a year. In fact, the time of filming extended over a year, with 36 days of actual shooting.

The prototype was created in the week from 24.12.2001 to 01.01.2002 in Paris. I used a video camera, (Sony DV 900)-controlled by a mirror and attached to a Russian soldier-cap on my head. This was the basic conception for the further shooting with a Toshiba 3-Chip mini-camera attached to a skiing helmet, and two Schoeps microphones.

Every particular shooting section and shooting location depended on when and where somebody was available. Shooting took place in all weathers. If you can see water on the lens, you might imagine that everyone of the team was completely drenched.

My shooting team consisted of two up to five persons (me, my always changing personal assistant looking after everything – every new one had to be instructed from scratch, and other persons for the necessary closings off).

I am neither allowed to ride on cycle-tracks and motorways, nor on the sloping ramp in the General Hospital in Vienna. Nevertheless I must go from A to B, and into this hospital. The film communicates how dangerous it is riding on a handbike in busy city-streets and on winding mountain roads.

Crossing bridges particularly attracts me.

George-Washington-Bridge leading to Manhattan is a highway. In New York filming bridges is strictly forbidden. I ignored these regulations in order to be able to document the desired adventure of crossing the bridge. In the middle of the bridge I was stopped and threatened to be arrested: "No pictures on the bridge; you are crazy and I should put you into jail" said the cop.

When I crossed the Bosphorus Bridge I was possibly the first handbike driver to drive from Europe to Asia. Obtaining the governor's authorization was amusing and adventurous and cost me one precious day of shooting. Crossing the Vienna Reichsbrücke and Floridsdorfer Brücke was possible without permission of the authorities.

Cobblestones and gravel caused spasms, which hindered me when shooting and made the images shaky.

The rally car in the beginning and in the end of the film is a metaphor for the general traffic folly I experience day in, day out, turning the handle of my handbike...