



FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon May 2 | 8:30 pm

Jack H. Skirball Series

\$9 [students \$7, CalArts \$5]

Specks of Existence: Hartmut Bitomsky's *Dust*

Through a web of interviews, poetic ruminations and cinematic investigations, Hartmut Bitomsky's *Dust* (2007) serves as a philosophical, factual and fanciful examination of the smallest objects that can be perceived, particles that permeate every aspect of life. Of the titular subject of this work Bitomsky notes, "Wherever we go, it has already beaten us; wherever we turn it follows us. It is our past, our present and our future... It gets inside us, we shed it... It nestles right into the despair of its own existence." Known for his theoretical depth and originality, Bitomsky has produced a major body of documentary essay films and critical writing on cinema for 40 years, is an influential teacher and served as the Dean of CalArts' School of Film/Video from 1993 to 2002. *Dust* and his earlier films have been shown at festivals throughout the world.

In person: Hartmut Bitomsky

"An unlikely but erudite documentary... philosophical depth, healthy good humor and wry intellectual poetry make this journey from to macrocosmic a meditation on the splendor of the futility of existence." —*Film Comment*

"Over the past three decades, the German cine-essayist Hartmut Bitomsky has staked out a position at once lofty and material—making coolly detached documentaries that address subjects like the history of the autobahn or the nature of the wind in cinema. Devoting itself to the tiniest "visible subject" that a film can have, Bitomsky's *Dust* manages to be philosophical without seeming pedantic... In a sort of deadpan parody of the German obsession with schmutz, a cross-section of Bitomsky's countrymen hold forth. Bitomsky introduces the notion that his own medium is both dependent on

dust—what else is film grain?—and destroyed by those stray particles that adhere to a projector or celluloid. Paintings are similarly produced by the "good" dust (pigment) and threatened by the "bad" that museumgoers track into the gallery. Over the course of 90 minutes, he elevates the mundane to a cosmic struggle against unwanted material as manifest in factories, quarries, and apartments—and confounding one *hausfrau* (whose weekly regimen includes cleaning the inside of her television set) with the factoid that 95 percent of household dust comes from people... Dust is not only universal, but the stuff of the universe, as it breaks apart and reconstitutes itself.

Dust—the movie—is characterized by its clean cinematography, uncluttered compositions, and unceasing dialectic. At one point, Bitomsky offers the spectacle of a Hollywood wagon train trudging through the wilderness, accompanied by the Sons of the Pioneers singing "Rolling Dust." The grainy black-and-white image is intercut with color shots of majestic cloud formations. Without dust, we've already learned, there would be no blue skies." – Jim Hoberman, *The Village Voice*

Hartmut Bitomsky (b. May 10, 1942 in Bremen) is a writer and essayist, film director and producer. He received his education at the Free University Berlin, where from 1962 to 1966 he studied German Philology and Theater. He completed his studies at the Berlin Film Academy in 1968.

For more than ten years, beginning in 1973, he was co-publisher and co-editor of the renowned German magazine *Filmkritik*. He has written books and articles on film theory and film history, including *The Kind of Red of Technicolor* (1972) and *Cinema Truth* (2002). In 1972 he edited and wrote the introduction to Belá Balázs's *The Spirit of Film* and in 1975 edited the German translation of André Bazin's *What is Cinema?*

In 1975 he founded his film production company, Big Sky Film. To date Bitomsky has directed and to some extent also produced more than forty films, primarily documentaries. His work has been shown in festivals in Amsterdam, Berlin, Edinburgh, Hong Kong, Leningrad, London, Marseille, Melbourne, Montreal, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Rotterdam, Seoul, Singapore, Tokyo, Venice, and Vienna, among others. He has received many awards, including the "Grimme Award in Gold" for *Reichsautobahn: Highways of the Third Reich* (1986). His work was honored in 2000 by the retrospective "A Tribute to Hartmut Bitomsky" at the Vienna International Film Festival.

Since 1975, Bitomsky has held a number of teaching positions, starting with the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, München, at the Free University, Berlin, and at the Film Academy, Berlin. In 1993 he moved to Los Angeles and served at the California Institute of the Arts as Dean of the School of Film/Video until 2002. From 2006 to 2009 he headed the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin.

His previous film, *B-5* (2001) shot in the U. S., Germany and Vietnam, premiered in February 2001 at the Berlin Film Festival and has had theatrical distribution in Germany, Japan and the U.S.

Curated by Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud.
Funded in part with generous support from Wendy Keys and Donald Pels.

###