FLEISCH

International title: MEAT

Hybrid feature film · Germany 2026 · 85 min · Festival submission texts

Logline

36 words · 200 characters incl. spaces

Forced into Germany's meat industry to provide for his sick wife and son, Romanian worker Adrian begins to fight back against a system of exploitation – a story staged by the very people who lived it.

Synopses

Short synopsis

68 words · 384 characters incl. spaces

When Adrian loses his job in Romania, he leaves for Germany to work in a slaughterhouse and support his sick wife and young son. What looks like a way out turns into a trap of overcrowded housing, dangerous shifts and mysterious wage deductions. Two former meat workers and a union organiser direct his story – and bear witness to a reality that is usually hidden behind closed doors.

Medium synopsis

142 words · 877 characters incl. spaces

FLEISCH is a hybrid feature film about the dark side of Germany's meat processing industry.

Adrian loses his job in Romania and sees no other option than to go to Germany, so that his sick wife and nine-year-old son are taken care of. What seems like a way out leads him into the brutal reality of the meat industry: overcrowded accommodation, hazardous working conditions, opaque wage deductions, exploitation. He finds comfort in an affair with the care worker Paolina. When the injustice threatens to crush him, Adrian takes his fate into his own hands and starts to resist.

The fiction is directed by former workers Dragos and Petrica and union organiser Raluca. On a documentary level, the three develop and stage Adrian's story together with directors Eike Weinreich and Alexej Hermann – testifying to the conditions they themselves experienced in German slaughterhouses.

Long synopsis

277 words · 1636 characters incl. spaces

Adrian loses his job in Romania. With a sick wife and a nine-year-old son to support, he sees no option but to follow the promise of work in Germany. What looks like a way out leads him straight into the brutal reality of the German meat industry: overcrowded housing, dangerous working conditions, wage deductions nobody can explain, and a chain of subcontractors that leaves workers without rights or representation.

Isolated by language and dependent on his employers for both his job and his bed, Adrian finds orientation and comfort in an affair with Paolina, a care worker who knows the system from the inside. But as the injustice around him grows unbearable, Adrian decides to take his fate into his own hands and stand up against the system that is grinding him down.

Adrian's story is not invented at a writer's desk. It is told by those who know it best: Dragos and Petrica, two former slaughterhouse workers, and Raluca, a trade union organiser, take on the direction of the fictional part. On the film's documentary level, we watch them – together with directors Eike Weinreich and Alexej Hermann – develop Adrian's story as a prototype for countless others, drawn from their own experience. They explain concrete situations, describe the hierarchies, dependencies and dangers of work on the cutting line, and brief the actors on how power really operates on the slaughterhouse floor.

Not everything can be said openly in front of the camera – the fear is too great. But it can be told through fiction. FLEISCH weaves both levels into one film, revealing what happens every day behind closed doors in the middle of Germany.

Director's Statement – Eike Weinreich

221 words · 1256 characters incl. spaces

We encounter this subject every day at the supermarket. But the neatly cut slices of salami and the rosy minced meat with its quality seal make us forget how these products are made.

Many people give up meat out of love for animals. We know the exposés from the factories. But that thousands of people in the middle of Germany are still being forced into an exploitative system – people who, lacking language skills and any representation of their interests, are effectively without rights – is something we choose not to see.

Over many months I met again and again with workers from the meat industry to develop the concept for a film together. Without fixing directly on their fate, on the process of slaughter or on the exploitative system, my first question to each of them was: What kind of film would YOU make? I was interested in the images, the forms and the stories that would emerge from them. The Romanian workers I worked with were remarkably unanimous: they did not want a documentary. They wanted fiction.

A film that gets closer to reality precisely because it does not depict it one to one. A film that uses artistic freedom to make visible what otherwise stays hidden. What happens behind closed doors. In the middle of Germany. Every day.

About the Approach

136 words · 826 characters incl. spaces

Directors Eike Weinreich and Alexej Hermann repeatedly work with people who have a great deal to tell but no access to the means of storytelling. In FLEISCH, they step back behind the real experts of the milieu and support former meat industry workers in making a revealing film about their own industry.

The result is an authenticity and precision in depicting power dynamics, dependencies and open exploitation that could not be achieved any other way. As in agriculture and care work, the meat processing industry relies on a shadow economy that keeps prices low for consumers while

denying hundreds of thousands of foreign workers their basic labour rights. FLEISCH shows how productively fiction and documentary can interlock – and what becomes possible when those who truly know a reality are given the tools to tell it.

Biographies

Directors – short version (duo)

64 words · 416 characters incl. spaces

Eike Weinreich and Alexej Hermann have worked together since film school and form the directing duo FreudeFilm. Their films – including VON KOMISCHEN VÖGELN and SCHWERELOS, both premiered at the Hof International Film Festival – are often made with people who have much to tell but little access to storytelling: participants with disabilities, young people, and, in FLEISCH, Romanian workers from the meat industry.

Eike Weinreich (writer, director)

144 words · 989 characters incl. spaces

Eike Weinreich (b. 1985, Oldenburg, Germany) is an actor, screenwriter, and film and theatre director, and a fellow of the Claussen-Simon-Stiftung Hamburg. He studied acting at the University of Music and Theatre Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Leipzig (2007–2011), during which he was part of the acting studio at Staatsschauspiel Dresden, and subsequently became a permanent ensemble member at Theater Oberhausen. In parallel he studied film directing at the HFBK University of Fine Arts Hamburg, graduating in 2018 with VON KOMISCHEN VÖGELN (co-directed with Alexej Hermann), which screened at the Hof International Film Festival. In cooperation with Staatstheater Saarbrücken and local students he made the film project MORGEN ALLES ANDERS; after several films in the intercultural field, ENDLICH FREI was broadcast on SAT.1. He wrote FLEISCH for ZDF/Das kleine Fernsehspiel and directed it together with Alexej Hermann. He is currently developing the series DAS UNORGANISIERTE VERBRECHEN.

Alexej Hermann (director)

174 words · 1171 characters incl. spaces

Alexej Hermann (b. 1985, Kazakhstan) grew up in northern Germany and lives and works in Halle (Saale) and Berlin. During his studies he made numerous films as director, cinematographer and editor that screened at renowned festivals. His graduation film VON KOMISCHEN VÖGELN (co-directed with Eike Weinreich) premiered at the Hof International Film Festival in 2017 and was released in cinemas in 2018; his mid-length feature DIE ÜBRIGGEBLIEBENEN also premiered in Hof in 2018. Together with Eike Weinreich he forms the directing duo FreudeFilm, under whose label they have developed and made four feature films, three mid-length films and several shorts. He has also realised numerous participatory film projects with children and young people. In 2018–2019 he took part in the TP2 Talent Pool of Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM), and in 2020 he received a working grant from Kunststiftung Sachsen-Anhalt. His feature SCHWERELOS (co-directed with Eike Weinreich) premiered in Hof in 2021, and his essayistic short documentary VATERBILDER was funded by Kunststiftung Sachsen-Anhalt in 2022. FLEISCH (ZDF/Das kleine Fernsehspiel) is his latest film with Eike Weinreich.

Stefan Gieren (producer)

74 words · 508 characters incl. spaces

Stefan Gieren produces arthouse features, TV films and hybrid documentary-fiction projects through his Hamburg-based company The StoryBay. His work includes the Academy Award-nominated short RAJU and FORTSCHRITT IM TAL DER AHNUNGSLOSEN, winner of the German Film Award (Lola) for Best Mid-Length Film. Three of his productions – TOZ BEZI, WHATEVER HAPPENS NEXT and FORTSCHRITT IM TAL DER AHNUNGSLOSEN – premiered at the Berlinale. He is a Berlinale Talents alumnus and active in international co-productions.

Credits

Written by	Eike Weinreich, in collaboration with Romanian workers from the meat industry
Directed by	Eike Weinreich and Alexej Hermann, in collaboration with Romanian workers from the meat industry
Cinematography	Alexej Hermann, Giulia Schelhas
Editing	Sebastian Winkels, Alexej Hermann
Production design	Dorothee von Bodelschwingh
Costume design	Ines Köhler-Klünenberg
Producer	Stefan Gieren
Production	The StoryBay, in co-production with ZDF/Das kleine Fernsehspiel
Commissioning editor	Lucia Haslauer (ZDF/Das kleine Fernsehspiel)
Funded by	Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM)

Cast

Dragos Tomescu	Dragos
Petrica Onofrei	Petrica
Raluca Gheorghe	Raluca
Axel Moustache	Adrian
Oana Solomon	Paolina
Alina Serban	Marina
Eugen Pirvu	Foreman
Madalin Mandin	Eugen
Theodor Ioan Dobrescu	Sorin
Nathalie Oros	Breda

Technical Data

Original title	FLEISCH
International title	MEAT
Genre	Hybrid feature (drama / documentary)
Country / Year	Germany, 2026
Running time	85 min
Language	Romanian, German
Subtitles	English

Format	HD, colour
Premiere status	TV premiere: ZDF, 8 June 2026; available on ZDF streaming from 5 June 2026 for one year

Contact

Production	Story Bay Media UG (haftungsbeschränkt) Friedensallee 9, 22765 Hamburg, Germany
Producer	Stefan Gieren