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EUROFILM STUDIO, AMOUR FOU, MEMENTO FILMS & LA CINEFACTURE
in co-production with ARTE FRANCE CINEMA

Present

TAXIDERMIA

a film by
GYÖRGY PÁLFI

Official selection



FESTIVAL DE CANNES

OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD

Screenings

Thu	18/5	13:00	Salle André Bazin	Press
Fri	19/5	16:30	Salle Claude Debussy	Première
Sun	21/5	18:00	Olympia 2	Market
Mon	22/5	14:00	Palais K "Bory"	Market
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TAXIDERMIA by György Pálfi

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

<i>Country of Production</i>	Hungary
<i>Year of Production</i>	2006
<i>Running time</i>	91 minutes
<i>Format</i>	35mm
<i>Ration</i>	1:2,35
<i>Sound</i>	DTS
<i>Language</i>	Hungarian Color

CREDITS

<i>Director</i>	György Pálfi
<i>Producers</i>	Péter Miskolczi, Gábor Váradi Gabriele Kranzelbinder, Alexander Dumreicher- Ivanceanu Alexandre Mallet-Guy, Emilie Georges
<i>Co-Producer</i>	Arte France Cinema
<i>Production Companies</i>	Eurofilm Studio, Amour Fou Filmproduktion, Memento Films Production, La Cinéfacture
<i>Screenplay</i>	Zsófia Ruttkay, György Pálfi
<i>Based on stories by</i>	Lajos Parti Nagy
<i>Cinematography</i>	Gergely Pohárnok
<i>Production Designer</i>	Adrien Asztalos
<i>Editor</i>	Réka Lemhényi
<i>Costumes</i>	Júlia Patkós
<i>Makeup</i>	Hildegard Haide
<i>Designer</i>	Géza Szöllösi
<i>Music</i>	Amon Tobin
<i>Sound</i>	Tamás Zányi
<i>Casting</i>	Attila Réthly

CAST

Csaba Czene	Vendel Morosgoványi
Gergő Trócsányi	Kálmán Balatony
Marc Bischoff	Lajos Balatony
Adél Stanczel	Gizi Aczél
István Gyuricza	Hadnagy / young lieutenant
Piroska Molnár	Hadnagyné / lieutenant's wife
Gábor Máté	Old Kálmán
Géza Hegedzs D.	Dr. Andor Regőczy
István Hunyadkürti	Jenő Bá
Zoltán Koppány	Béla Mislényi

SYNOPSIS

TAXIDERMIA contains three generational stories, about a grandfather, a father, and a son, linked together by recurring motifs. The dim grandfather, an orderly during World War Two, lives in his bizarre fantasies; he desires love. The huge father seeks success as a top athlete — a speedeater — in the postwar pro-Soviet era. The grandson, a meek, small-boned taxidermist, yearns for something greater: immortality. He wants to create the most perfect work of art of all time by stuffing his own torso.

Historical facts and surrealism become intertwined as magical realism, like in the works of Gabriel García Marquez or the Hungarian writer Lajos Parti Nagy; the script is based on two of the latter's stories. Palfi added the third story, that of the grandson the taxidermist.

The first section begins with a disembodied voice pontificating obliquely about creation and three generations, explaining that if something has to end, the beginning has to be important. Immediately we see the grandfather, Vendel Morosgoványi (Csaba Czene), who is berated by his lieutenant in a remote outpost, with only the lieutenant's fat wife and two beautiful daughters around. He retreats into the realm of gratification, no matter how extreme. He peeps in the daughters' bath, drinks the girls' dirty bathwater, masturbates until his penis emits flames of fire, and sleeps with the lieutenant's wife. She becomes pregnant and the lieutenant blows off Vendel's head — but raises his child, Kálmán.

In the second part, Kálmán (Gergő Trócsányi) has become obese and competes for Hungary in eating competitions that their backers hope will be recognized by the International Olympic Committee. Against a backdrop of empty Communist spectacle and military poseurs, Kálmán strives to win. He meets up with an oversized woman, Gizella (Adél Stanczel), another speedeating competitor, and the two get married, although she has sex with his teammate during the wedding party. She and Kálmán embark on a long honeymoon, returning to their respective factories to practice. Gizella gives birth to a tiny, tiny son, Lajos.

Section three, which is contemporary, is calmer, less manic than the previous two. Lajos (Mark Bischoff) has become a quiet taxidermist who has no prospects in love; he is rejected by the supermarket cashier, for one. He is as frustrated in his way as his grandfather was in his, but Lajos's fertile imagination will prove to work in a very different way. His father, Kálmán, has reached enormous proportions and can no longer move. Kálmán's wife has long ago left him, so Lajos brings food and cleans the apartment where Kálmán (now Gábor Máté, in a fatsuit) sits amidst boxes of food and the three cats he pushes to overeat. One day Lajos finds Kálmán dead, possibly having exploded from overeating or having been mauled by one of the cats. He stuffs him, and immediately after, begins stuffing himself by locking his body onto a board surrounded by perfectly attuned machines. At the end of the procedure, a glass blade he has set up decapitates him and an electric saw severs his right arm. The two men are found by a customer, Dr. Regőczy (Géza Hegedzs D.), who puts them on display at a chic art exhibition. Dr. Regőczy, whose lecture is a continuation of the voiceover at the very beginning of the film, maintains that one can mount one's father and oneself but can not mount the essence, that being what Lajos felt at the moment the blade cut off his head. The camera moves into the black void beyond Lajos's bellybutton.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

TAXIDERMIA is like a family novel, but it's a film — yet not a family film; it is an auteur film. My aim was to create not just an auteur film but an enduring, personal auteur film.

The concept of a family novel would suggest a saga structured like the work of Thomas Mann. In this vein, TAXIDERMIA is comprised of three generations: grandfather, father, and son. The grandfather creates the foundation of the family; he is a primeval force, or primal originator, who sets the world in motion. With much effort, the father takes what he has inherited to its peak. On the other hand, the son rejects the values of both his father and his grandfather.

I treat the story of the three generations as a sketch created by a single artist, hence its uniformity. Yet, unlike in conventional sketches, a feature-length narrative emerges about three different lives. Spectators fill in the gaps between the stories with their imagination.

There are no formal transitions. Yes, there are three different stories, three historical periods, three different worlds. Yet the underlying system of motifs — repeated images, movements, and symbols — plus a single team of artists combine to create a singular work and therefore a uniform experience for viewers.

I found a world in Lajos Parti Nagy's short stories which could be mine as well. Two of them are the basis of this tale of a family. I added the third, that of the grandson Lajos.

At the center of each of the three stories stands the body, naturalistic yet with surreal desires. Just as the body is overcome by desire, so naturalism is overcome by surrealism, which organizes the variations of physicality into a single aesthetic system. Every element of the film is highly specific, as is every shot. Yet the juxtaposition of two disparate elements produces something new, magical. The cruel and constant storytelling has an emotional brutality that is even stronger than the images of brutality. The film explores the extreme boundaries of human life and their limits.

I wanted to break a filmmaking taboo and show the erect phallus in Vendel's sex scenes. After all, forced into a lowly existence, he hopes to attain pleasure and liberation by means of this organ. At the same time, I wanted to add an air of gentle playfulness to these "pornographic" scenes, the feeling contemporary viewers get when they see sex photographs from the early twentieth century.

The sport in which Kálmán competes is no different from other sports that require extreme physical achievement, those that are considered normal in many parts of the world. His huge volume is the equivalent of a sumo wrestler's enormous build, the gigantic muscles of a weightlifter, the great height of a basketball player, even the emaciated frame of a fakir. Kálmán's sport, however, has never been featured in any official competition. Given the values of the period, it could have been. This is not revolting, animal-like behavior, but a natural part of the competition, a feat expected of a champion and worthy of envy.

When his body becomes a sculpture, Lajos the person vanishes. He leaves behind only a torso made out of material that no longer bears a name. His profane project — attempting to imitate the work of God, creating a "perfect piece of art" — makes him immortal not only as artist but as body. The body — which nature makes perfect though it is condemned to decay — becomes here a display for exhibition halls. It lies somewhere between Duchamp's FOUNTAIN and Michelangelo's DAVID.

CREW

György Pálfi (director) first picked up a Super 8 camera at the age of 13 and decided to become a filmmaker. He studied directing from 1995-2000 at the Theatre and Film Academy in Budapest under Sándor Simó. His latest film, TAXIDERMIA, which he co-wrote with his wife, Zsófia Ruttkay, won the award for Best Film and the Gene Moskowitz Prize of Foreign Critics at the 37th Hungarian Filmweek. Their screenplay won the Sundance/NHK award for Best European Film Project in 2004.

Palfi's first feature, HUKKLE, won the Fassbinder Award of the European Film Academy in 2002, and Best First Film, the Gene Moskowitz Prize of Foreign Critics, the Student Award, and the Hungarian Critics Award at the 33rd Hungarian Filmweek. He shared the Best Collective Creators prize, and also earned the Best Producers prize at the 34th Hungarian Film Week for his segment "SHAMAN VS. ICARUS" in the omnibus film A BUS CAME... Before that he directed several shorts, including BREAK AND CSEKK II (1995), THE FISH-ICHTYS (1997), DEVIL'S KNOT, THE 7TH ROOM IN THE KNOCK-KNOCK (1999), and ROUND AND ROUND (1999), the last of which played at numerous international festivals.

Zsófia Ruttkay (screenplay) co-wrote TAXIDERMIA with her husband, director György Pálfi, as well as his segment "SHAMAN VS. ICARUS" in the omnibus film A BUS CAME..., and was dramaturg on his first feature, HUKKLE. She graduated from Elte University, Department of Hungarian Language and Literature, and the University of Theatre and Film, Department of Dramaturgy. She has been dramaturg on numerous plays, including Büchner's WOYZECK and Miklós László's THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER, and has translated many plays from English to Hungarian, including works by Caryl Churchill, Tony Kushner, and Neil Labute.

Lajos Parti Nagy (short stories) studied Hungarian literature and history in Pécs. He was an editor of Jelenkor magazine from 1979-86. He has published several books of poetry and novels, among the latter HŐSÖM TERE in 2000 and SÁRBOGÁRDI JOLÁN: A TEST ANGYALA in 1998. His collection of short stories, A HULLÁMZÓ BALATON (WAVING BALATON), from which some of TAXIDERMIA is adapted, came out in 1994. His plays include MAUSOLEUM and IBUSÁR, first produced in 1995 and 1992, respectively. Among the numerous awards he has earned are the Laurel Wreath Prize of the Hungarian Republic in 1997, the Soros Prize in 1995, and the Bölöni Prize in 1982. He is a member of the Digital Literary Academy.

Gergely Pohárnok (director of photography) shot György Pálfi's films HUKKLE and "SHAMAN VS. ICARUS," a segment of the omnibus feature A BUS CAME... Since 1999 he has been cinematographer on several Hungarian films, among them BLACKBRUSH, I LOVE BUDAPEST, and SUGARBLUE. Among his many prizes are the HSC-Kodak Golden Eye Cinematography Festival's Cinematographer of the Year in 2005, the Hungarian Film Critics award for Best Cinematographer in 2002 and 2003, and the Cottbus International Film Festival's Special Prize for Outstanding Artistic Contribution in 2002.

TAXIDERMIA by György Pálfi

Adrien Asztalos (production design) studied architecture at Budapest Technical University. She has designed sets for numerous Hungarian theatrical productions, television programs such as BANANA SKIN and BARBARA, and films, the latter including early shorts by György Pálfi. In addition, she has worked on the television program MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING and the film TREMORS in the U.S., and the features IN THE BEGINNING in Morocco, and SQUARE CIRCLE in Romania. Asztalos also designs objects and interiors.

Réka Lemhényi (editor) studied at the College of Fashion Design in Kolozsvár, Romania, and, at Budapest's Academy of Film and Theatre, editing. Since 1996 he has edited experimental films, such as ANACHRONIST, by Bodolay Géza; documentaries, including BAKLÁN BAJNOK, by Réka Kincses; and numerous feature films, among them TAXIDERMIA, by György Pálfi, DALLAS PASHAMENDE, by Robert Adrian Pejo, and STICKY BUSINESSES, by Szabolcs Hajdu, for which he won the Golden Scissor Prize at the 32nd Hungarian Filmweek in 2001.

Júlia Patkós (costumes) was born in Hungary and currently lives in London. She graduated from Eötvös Loránt University in Budapest with a Masters in French literature and the Parsons School of Design in New York with a Bachelors of Fine Arts in fashion design. She worked as costume designer on commercials for Mobilcom and T-Online. She was assistant costume designer on such films as ALFIE and VANITY FAIR, and has been a fashion designer for Vivienne Westwood Gold Label.

Hildegard Haide (makeup) has worked on numerous films, including SNIPER 2, by Craig Baxley, and WORLD WITHOUT WAVES, by John Mitchell Johnson. She has done makeup for dancers in the Compagnie Yvette Bozsik. She has also worked in the theatre on such plays as Tom Stoppard's ARCADIA and García Lorca's HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA, on commercials for Honda and Nissan, among other companies, and on several music videos. Haide has also done makeup for many fashion magazines.

GÉZA SZÖLLÁSI (art director) studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Jannus Pannonius University, Budapest, the Kent Institute of Art and Design (England), and the Academy of Applied Arts, Budapest. He has been art director on A MADWOMAN DIARY, by János Szász, STILL LIFE WITH FISH AND OTHER TRAGIC MOMENTS, a short by Natália Jánossy, and TAXIDERMIA, by György Pálfi, for which he shared the Best Design prize at the 37th Hungarian Film Week this year with Hildegard Haide, Adrien Asztalos, and Júlia Patkós. He has held exhibitions at Menü Pont Gallery and Lumen Gallery, Budapest, among other venues.

AMON TOBIN (music) is a Brazilian-born composer/musician who relocated to Montreal after living for years in the U.K. Known professionally as Cujo for a while in the '90s, before working with Ninja Tune, he is known for mixing beats, genres, and tracks, as could be seen on his debut album, BRICOLAGE. His work took a darker turn with albums like PERMUTATION and SUPERMODIFIED. He did OUT FROM OUT WHERE in Montreal, as well as develop a track for Ubisoft for the Splinter Cell series, called CHAOS THEORY: SPLINTER CELL 3 SOUNDTRACK. His albums also include SOLID STEEL PRESENTS AMON TOBIN: RECORDED LIVE. He has also composed a number of singles, including PIRANHA BREAKS and VERBAL, as well as remixes, and has made appearances on numerous soundtracks.

TAXIDERMIA by György Pálfi

GÁBOR VÁRADI (producer) is a co-founder of Eurofilm Studio. He graduated from the University of Economics in Budapest. He began working at Mafilm Studios in 1976 in an assortment of capacities on such films as MUSIC BOX, RED HEAT, AND HANNAH'S WAR. At Eurofilm he has been producer or coproducer on such features as PATHS OF LIGHTS, COPYING BEETHOVEN, SNIPER 2, LAST RUN, CONTAMINATED MAN, THE BREED, DEN OF LIONS, AU PAIR, RED LINE, TACTICAL ASSAULT, 8MM 2, and CRIME AND PUNISHMENT.

Peter Miskolczi (producer) is a co-founder of Eurofilm Studio. After attending the Karl Marx University of Economics, he worked at Mafilm International Studio until 1991. He has taught at the Academy of Film and Theatre, where he had received a degree in producing, is chargé d'affaires of the Hungarian Independent Producers' Association (HIP), and was program director of the Central European Sundance Screenwriters Lab.

Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu (producer) co-founded Amour Fou Filmproduktion with Gabriel Kranzelbinder in Vienna in 2002. He studied philosophy and film theory at the University of Vienna, then worked as a film critic, distributor, and programmer. Before starting Amour Fou, he produced such films as DÉJÀ VU, by Lisl Ponger, and NEBEL, by Matthias Müller. In 2005 he was elected to the Federal Board of the Audiovisual and Film Industry at the Austrian Chamber of Economics.

Gabriele Kranzelbinder (producer) co-founded Amour Fou Filmproduktion with Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu in Vienna in 2002. She graduated in law from the University of Vienna and then studied at the Vienna Film Academy for Production. Before starting Amour Fou, she worked in a variety of capacities on such films as COPY SHOP and HELLER ALS DER MOND, both by Virgil Widrich, and DON ESPEJO, by Martin Krenn.

Alexandre Mallet-Guy (producer) is the head of Memento Films Distribution in Paris and, with Emilie Georges, co-head of Memento Films Production, both founded in 2003. He also co-founded with Emilie Georges the sales company Memento Films International and the production company La Cinefacture. He has distributed eight films, including György Pálfi's HUKKLE, and has produced Hiner Saleem's KILOMETER ZERO, Pálfi's TAXIDERMIA, and Emanuele Crialese's upcoming THE GOLDEN DOOR. He was chief financial officer at Pan Europeene Production and head of theatrical distribution at Pan Europeene Distribution.

Emilie Georges (producer) heads the production company La Cinefacture in Paris and the sales company Memento Films International, both co-founded in 2003 with Alexandre Mallet-Guy. She and Mallet-Guy also founded Memento Films Production, which they both head, and Memento Films Distribution, headed by Mallet-Guy. She produced Hiner Saleem's KILOMETER ZERO, György Pálfi's TAXIDERMIA, and Nils Tavernier's AURORE. She worked for the Council of Europe, Department of Culture and Education; Flach-Pyramide International, in legal affairs and sales; and Pan Europeene Production, developing film projects and securing international partners.

C A S T

Csaba Czene (Vendel Morosgoványi) received the award for Best Supporting Actor at the 37th Hungarian Filmweek for his roles in György Pálfi's TAXIDERMIA and Csaba Bollók's MIRAQ. He joined the Monteverdi Wrestling Circle Theatrical Company in 1985, and subsequently performed in such plays as Ferenc Molnár's BODYGUARD and András Jeles's SERVUS TOLSTOJ. Among the other films in which he has performed are TAMÁS AND JULI, by Ildikó Enyedi, JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS, by András Jeles, THE PATHS OF LIGHT, by Attila Mispál, and STILL LIFE WITH FISH AND OTHER TRAGIC MOMENTS, by Natália Jánossy.

Gergő Trócsányi (Kálmán Balatony) is lead vocalist of the Budapest-based rock band Hollywoodoo. He attended Dohnányi Ernő Professional Music School in Veszprém from 1996-98. He has worked in a variety of odd jobs over the years while committing himself to music. Hollywoodoo is currently working on its third album and has also created several music videos as well as the soundtrack for commercials for such companies as Vivendi Telecom and Bankcard Switzerland. TAXIDERMIA marks Trócsányi's third film appearance.

Marc Bischoff (Lajos Balatony) lives in Berlin. He acts in German tv movies, commercials, and feature films, which include RUN, LOLA, RUN, by Tom Tykwer, AIMEE AND JAGUAR, by Max Färberböck, and GOODBYE, LENIN, by Wolfgang Becker. He has also worked with Jean-Jacques Annaud and the Quay Brothers. He originally studied cello, but, interested in radio drama, decided to study acting. Beginning in 1991 he attended what had been known as the Meisterklasse der Akademier der Künste der DDR. He then began to perform and direct in theatres in Celle, Zittau, and Dresden before switching to film acting in 1999.

Adél Stanczel (Gizella Aczél) had never acted before appearing in TAXIDERMIA, for which she won Best Supporting Actress at the 37th Hungarian Filmweek. The casting director had approached her in a cafeteria. She studied social work at the Bárczi Gusztáv Training College for Teachers of Handicapped Children. In 1995 she began studying social politics at Eötvös Lóránd University, where her thesis was entitled "Prostitution in Hungary at Present." The same year she helped set up the foundation Rés, which assists homeless people and where she has served as a social worker, project manager, and currently managing director.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Eurofilm Studio, founded in 1992, is a film production company based in Budapest, Hungary, which focuses on Hungarian feature films and international coproductions. Owned by Péter Miskolczi and Gábor Váradi, it is a founding member of the Hungarian Independent Producers Association (HIP). It organized the first five Screenwriters Labs for participants from Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, which was supported by the Sundance Institute. Among the films Eurofilm Studio has produced or coproduced are TAXIDERMIA, by György Pálfi; PATHS OF LIGHT, by Attila Mispál; THE HEADSMAN, by Simon Aeby; AFTER THE DAY BEFORE and LONG TWILIGHT, both by Attila Janisch; SIMON MAGUS and TAMÁS AND JULI, both by Ildikó Enyedi; SNIPER 2, by Craig Baxley; DEN OF LIONS, by James Bruce; THE HEADSMAN, by Simon Aeby; ROSEHILL, by Mari Cantu; GOODBYE TOMORROW, by Reis Celik; THE ALCHEMIST AND THE VIRGIN, by Zoltán Kamondi; THE MAN OUTSIDE, by Anthony Hickox; COPYING BEETHOVEN, by Agnieszka Holland; and 8MM 2, by Joe Cardone.

Amour Fou Filmproduktion Gmbh was co-founded in Vienna, Austria in 2001 by Gabriele Kranzelbinder and Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu. Before TAXIDERMIA, the company had four films selected for the Cannes Film Festival: STRUGGLE, by Ruth Mader; IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE EYE, by Bady Minck; NO REST FOR THE BRAVE, by Alain Guiraudie; and FAST FILM, by Virgil Widrich, GIRLS AND CARS by Thomas Woschitz (Cannes 2004 – Semaine de la Critique), CRASH TEST DUMMIES by Joerg Kalt (2005 at the Forum in Berlin).

Memento Films Production, founded in 2003 by Alexandre Mallet-Guy and Emilie Georges, is an independent arthouse film production company based in Paris. TAXIDERMIA, by György Pálfi, is its second production, following KILOMETER ZERO, by Hiner Saleem. The company's third project is the upcoming THE GOLDEN DOOR, by Emanuele Crialese (RESPIRO).

La Cinefacture, headed by Emilie Georges, is an independent arthouse film production company based in Paris. It was founded in 2003 by Georges and Alexandre Mallet-Guy. The company's first production was KILOMETER ZERO, by Hiner Saleem. Its following two productions, TAXIDERMIA, by György Pálfi, and AURORE, by Nils Tavernier, are both premiering at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival.