

MEIN
FREUND



DER
PORNOSTAR

DE
*MEIN FREUND
DER PORNOSTAR*

EN
*MY FRIEND
THE PORN STAR*

Directed by Rosa Friedrich
Hybrid documentary

Austria | 2026 | 94 min | German & English



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Proxima Competition

World premiere
Karlovy Vary 2026 – Proxima Competition

Tue. 7.7. 19:00 Karlovy Vary Theatre
Wed. 8.7. 15:00 Čas Cinema
Thu. 9.7. 13:00 Lázně III
Fri. 10.7. 14:00 Cinema B

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Logline

Director Rosa doesn't watch porn. But her friend Timo wants to star in a sex film. So she helps him make his dream come true. As Timo freaks out, Rosa, a dominatrix, three trans women, a non-binary food-porn creator, a stylist, an actress, a sex coach and a cook team up to shoot an erotic film.

PRESS CLIPPINGS



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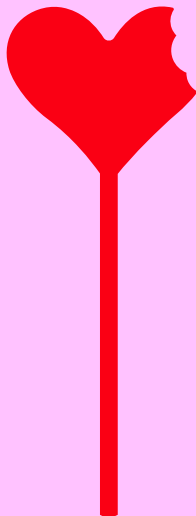
TRAILER



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Short Synopsis

Rosa's friend Timo dreams of making an artistic sex film – with himself as the star. Rosa doesn't usually watch porn. Yet she agrees to help him find a co-star and starts documenting the process along the way. But as the shoot draws closer, Timo starts to have doubts and her friendship is breaking apart. At the last moment, he backs out entirely, leaving Rosa with a camera full of footage and a lot of questions. Using AI to replace Timo's face, she turns his withdrawal into the film's central theme: the desire to be seen versus the urge to hide. Rewatching her material, it becomes clear that this conflict isn't Timo's alone. The participants in the auditions for Timo's sex film also move between curiosity, self-determination and doubt. Rosa invites them to reshape the film together. What follows is a collective experiment: a dominatrix, three trans women, a non-binary food-porn creator, a stylist, an actress, a sex coach and a cook each bring their own vision of eroticism to the project. Moving between playful enactment and intimate documentary, a humorous film emerges that constantly reinvents itself – just like its protagonists.



Long Synopsis

Director Rosa doesn't watch porn and yet somehow ends up right in the middle of one. All she wants is to help her friend Timo, who dreams of making an artistic sex film with himself as the star. So she joins him in searching for a co-star for his film and starts documenting the process along the way.

What begins as a clear plan quickly turns chaotic. The closer the shoot gets, the more uncertain Timo becomes. Castings go nowhere, decisions get postponed, tension between the friends grows. Only the film fails to materialize. Then, just before things get serious, Timo suddenly drops out. He claims he's already found the perfect co-star for his sex film outside the project. Rosa is left behind: with a camera full of footage, a lot of questions and no lead actor for her documentary film.

Quitting her film is not an option. So she keeps going, but differently. She replaces Timo's face using AI and turns his withdrawal into the film's central theme: the desire to be seen versus the urge to hide.

Rewatching the casting tapes for Timo's sex film, she realizes: this balancing act between the desire to show yourself and the fear of being judged for it doesn't only apply to Timo. The casting participants, too, navigate between curiosity, self-determination, and doubt. Rosa invites them to co-develop the film together.

What follows is a collective experiment: a dominatrix, three trans women, a non-binary food-porn creator, a stylist, an actress, a sex coach, and a cook each develop their own images of eroticism. Moving between playful enactment and intimate documentary, a humorous film emerges that constantly reinvents itself.

In the end, it's less about the perfect sex film and more about something else entirely: Why do we want to be seen? And why, sometimes, would we rather not?

Director's Note

I never expected to find myself caught up in the making of a porn film. But as chance would have it, a friend told me about his long-held dream of making an artistic sex film with himself in the lead role. The story wouldn't let me go, and so I decided to help Timo – his stage name – make it happen.

While documenting our shared process, I quickly realized that what interested me wasn't so much the destination but the journey. Not whether Timo's film would actually get made in the end, but what would happen along the way. Because how do you translate such a personal, intimate desire into something public?

What stayed with me above all was this contradiction in Timo: a strong desire to be seen and at the same time, a deep fear of being judged or condemned for it. That tension became, for me, increasingly the heart of the film. And perhaps it was precisely this contradiction that prevented Timo's dream from fully crossing over into reality. Because the closer we got to actually making it, the more he distanced himself from me.

When Timo dropped out and I suddenly had to ask myself whether and how to continue, I went through a period of crisis before ultimately deciding to stay with it and find a new way in: I anonymized his material and replaced his face using AI.

For me, the concealment of his face makes his inner conflict visible in a wonderful way: here is a person who opens up enormously – physically and emotionally – while simultaneously protecting his identity. That, to me, is a perfect reflection of his contradiction between visibility and fear.

Looking back at the footage I had already gathered, I realized that this tension didn't apply to him alone. The participants in the castings for Timo's sex film also navigate between desire, curiosity, uncertainty,

and self-protection. From this insight emerged the idea to continue the film as a collective process. I wanted to create a space in which very different persons could develop their own perspective on eroticism.

Because of this journey, MY FRIEND THE PORN STAR is no longer a conventional documentary but rather an open investigation of the contradiction that had captured me. It moves deliberately between documentary and staged moments – also as a way of offering the participants a degree of protection.

I don't think of the film as a provocation, but as an invitation. To look differently at a subject that is so present in our lives and yet so often remains bound up with shame. The people I was privileged to accompany approach it with seriousness and dignity but also with contradictions and uncertainty. It is precisely in their ordinariness that I see the potential for a more open relationship with a subject so often burdened by fear.

In my work, I strive for a certain lightness when dealing with serious themes. Not to trivialize them, but to create spaces where openness can emerge. With humor, playfulness, and a willingness to embrace color.

In the end, one simple question remains: What does it actually mean to reveal yourself intimately in front of a camera? And why would we do it or choose not to?





Interview with Director Rosa Friedrich



INTERVIEW BY MERLE GRONEWEG

*Your film **My Friend the Porn Star** follows Timo as he tries to fulfill a long-held dream: conceiving and starring in a porn film himself. How did you come up with the idea of accompanying him with a camera?*

For many years, Timo had told me about this dream of his. I was always fascinated by it; it never struck me as unrealistic or preposterous. On the contrary, I could easily understand where it came from and always felt that he had what it takes to make it happen. At the same time, I witnessed how the project kept stalling again and again.

Eventually, the opportunity arose for me to turn it into a film, and I asked him whether he would like to embark on this journey together with me. I was interested in what happens when a dream that someone has talked about for so long suddenly begins to become reality. In a way, I also hoped that making the film might provide the initial momentum needed to get things started.

At first, that momentum was definitely there. Nevertheless, the process unfolded quite differently from what we had expected. But that, too, is part of documentary filmmaking.

Your film deals with sexuality both in front of and behind the camera. You have already mentioned that the subject matter of your film remains controversial. What do you see as the ongoing challenges in how society approaches sex and pornography?

Sex – and pornography in particular – remains an area that few people are willing or able to discuss openly, confidently, and without discomfort. Because of prevailing social norms, much of it is still surrounded by shame or looked down upon. The thoughts and feelings of Timo repeatedly reminded me of these norms. I saw how challenging it was for him, and how much courage it took, to go public with his desire and stand by it. It made me realize just how powerfully social norms continue to shape this area of life.

On a personal level, I also have enormous respect for his openness. While I am visible in the film as well, I am far less exposed by comparison. The courage and openness shown by him and the other protagonists impressed me deeply. Through the filmmaking process, I came into contact with a community that had previously been unfamiliar to me – for example, the Porn Film Festival in Vienna, a porn producer, and several performers. To this day, I often find myself thinking about things they said. ***What mindset did you bring to the preparation and shooting of the film?***

It was important to me to make a film that does not alienate people or put them off, but rather invites them to engage with the subject. The title may seem provocative at first, but at its core, the film tells a deeply human story. After all, it is not just about pornography; it is about fundamental questions of shame, desire, intimacy, and the wish to be seen and accepted.

It was also important to us not to present ourselves as experts. Timo and I move through the film like two beginners exploring a world that is initially unfamiliar to us – both the sex and pornography industry and what might be called »alternative« communities, such as porn film festivals and sex parties, if one wants to draw that distinction. Before making the film, I had very little contact with these communities, and even today I would not claim to know everything about pornography. What mattered to me was making that openness and lack of preconceived certainty visible.

Timo and I are guided by a sense of curiosity. In some ways, that is why the film resembles a buddy comedy: two people stumbling together into unfamiliar territory and trying to find their way. I hope that this perspective is part of what makes the film accessible to audiences.



Timo speaks openly in the film about his desire to create and star in a porn film, but he also talks about loneliness and insecurity throughout the process. In what ways does your film challenge dominant ideas of masculinity – particularly in relation to sex and pornography – and reveal a more vulnerable perspective?

In many ways, Timo does not fit conventional ideas of masculinity – and that is something he struggles with himself. The film shows how he is repeatedly confronted with expectations and gender roles in which he does not recognize himself.

He wants to be vulnerable, to talk openly about his feelings, and at the same time to expose himself sexually. Yet he is also afraid of the judgment that may come with that. This tension runs throughout the entire film. Timo was well aware that he could face criticism or hostility for pursuing his desires, not least because fulfilling a male fantasy is hardly considered »state of the art« today.

We became aware of these dynamics even during the funding process. Many people seemed to find the project less compelling because it was Timo, rather than me, who was stepping in front of the camera to make a porn film. Yet I never saw Timo as a stereotypically dominant or macho male figure. First and foremost, he was a person with whom I had a personal relationship. What interested me was his psychology, his vulnerability, and his inner contradictions.

My Friend the Porn Star moves between documentary observation and staged moments. Why did you choose this hybrid form of storytelling?

The film emerged from what was, in a sense, a documentary situation rooted in my own life: Timo, whom I had known for many years, had always dreamed of performing in a porn film. As the project evolved, it became clear that a hybrid form could create a kind of protected space. You never know exactly how much of a scene or a character is staged and how much is documentary. Ultimately, most of what we see is based on real experiences, but there is always the possibility that certain elements may have been invented. Especially when dealing with a subject that remains controversial, this ambiguity can offer an important layer of protection for the protagonists.

At the same time, many documentaries today are already heavily shaped by dramaturgy. To secure funding, filmmakers are often required to submit detailed concepts and anticipate much of the narrative structure in advance. In that sense, many documentaries are already hybrid works. What we decided to do was make that aspect transparent and consciously embrace its creative potential.

How did you build trust with Timo and the other protagonists, and how did you ensure that their boundaries were respected throughout the process?

From the very beginning, we established clear agreements, including which topics should remain off-limits. The editing process also played an important role. We spent a great deal of time considering how individual scenes might affect the protagonists and how they would feel about their portrayal. All of the protagonists saw the film before its release, and together we made sure that they were comfortable with how they were represented. We also tested audience reactions in several feedback screenings and responded to the concerns that emerged. It was important to us to treat with care and respect the people who had placed their trust in us.

My personal way of approaching this stigmatized subject was through humor. Humor creates openness and makes it possible to talk about difficult or intimate topics. That is why my role in the film is deliberately somewhat naïve and direct. I make jokes, ask seemingly simple questions,

and do not take everything too seriously. Paradoxically, that often allowed me to get closer to the heart of the conversations.

What did you learn during the filming process about the oftentimes difficult relationship between directors and protagonists in documentary filmmaking?

We had many conversations – and some disagreements – about precisely that relationship. In the end, it was my decision to address this issue openly within the film itself and to include those moments on screen. I find the power dynamics between directors and protagonists in documentary filmmaking fascinating, because both sides depend on each other in different ways. The tension between trust, control, and self-determination is particularly interesting to me. It is not only relevant to our film; it is a topic that is being widely discussed throughout the documentary and film industry as a whole.

Of course, the director carries a special responsibility because, in the end, they make the decisions about the images, the sound, and the final edit. That inevitably creates a power imbalance. Over the course of the project, I became aware that this situation can also generate uncertainty. Although I never felt that I was handling the material irresponsibly, the protagonist had no way of knowing that in advance. Only the finished film can ultimately provide certainty about how someone's story has been treated.

At the same time, this relationship is by no means one-sided. Protagonists also have agency: they decide what they want to share, how they present themselves, and whether they allow a film crew to continue accompanying them at all. Timo was very reflective in this regard. He had a clear understanding of how media representation works and actively brought these questions into the process.

Timo's »real« face is altered in the film, while his actual body remains visible. Using artificial intelligence, you gave him a new face and a new voice, while his facial expressions and intonation are still based on the footage you shot with him. How do you look back on this process of transformation?

The decision to alter his appearance provided protection for the protagonist while also fitting very well with the themes the film explores.

At its core, the film is about the desire to be seen – to perhaps reveal even the most intimate parts of oneself – while simultaneously fearing judgment and visibility.

At the same time, the transformation raises broader questions about digital image cultures and the possibilities created by new technologies. In the context of pornography in particular, issues such as deepfakes and AI-generated imagery are becoming increasingly important. It was important to us not to conceal the manipulation but to make it visible. That is why it remains recognizable as a deliberate artistic intervention in every shot.

It was also fascinating to witness firsthand how advanced the technology has become. It allowed us to preserve much of Timo's original facial expressions and vocal intonation. They are not transferred one-to-one, but the emotions remain surprisingly recognizable. During the editing process, we became accustomed to the altered face and voice rather quickly. There were moments in which we even felt that the transformation was not pronounced enough. It was only when we returned to the original footage that the extent of the difference became clear. That experience demonstrated both the possibilities offered by today's technology and how quickly AI-generated faces, expressions, and voices can come to feel quite »natural«.





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Director's Biography

Rosa Friedrich, born in 1989 in East Berlin, studied under Michael Haneke and Jessica Hausner at the Film Academy Vienna, where she developed a playful, vibrant and emotional approach to cinematic storytelling. Before dedicating herself entirely to film, she studied philosophy, psychology, and film studies at the Freie Universität Berlin and led various dance and theatre groups.

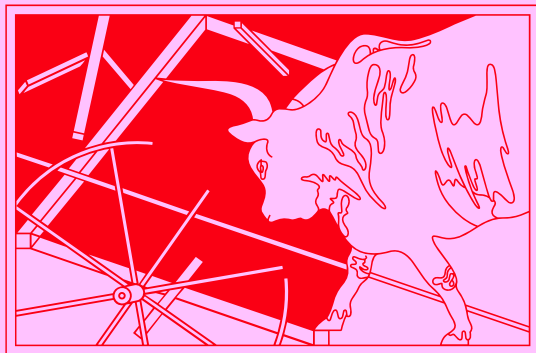
Friedrich's graduation film *TOPFPALMEN* (2020) was screened at, among others, Karlovy Vary and Nouveau Cinéma Montréal, and was nominated for the First Steps Award. In 2021, she was selected for Berlinale Talents. Her experimental no-budget film *WANDER* was invited to the Max Ophüls Festival in 2023. Currently she is working on her debut feature *WHO IS AFRAID OF GOD*, developed at the Torino Script Lab. *MY FRIEND THE PORN STAR* is her documentary debut. She lives and works in Vienna.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2026 *MY FRIEND THE PORN STAR* – Hybrid documentary, 94 min
Karlovy Vary – World premiere, Proxima Competition
- 2023 *WANDER* – Experimental film, 86 min
Max Ophüls Festival – Official selection
Diagonale – Official selection
- 2020 *TOPFPALMEN* – Short fiction film, 20 min
Karlovy Vary – World premiere, Future Frames
Tel Aviv International Student Film Festival – Best screenplay
Reaktor International Film Festival – Best director
First Steps Award – Nomination, Best short
Acquired by ARTE

Producer's Biography

Founded by Dominic Spitaler, KACEROVSKY (formerly OSTBLOK) has produced shorts that screened at Karlovy Vary, PÖFF Black Nights, and Max Ophüls, such as TOPFPALMEN (D: Rosa Friedrich), nominated for the First Steps Award. Its first feature co-production JIMMIE (D: Jesper Ganslandt) opened Rotterdam, while its debut documentary ROBIN'S HOOD (D: Jasmin Baumgartner) won at DOK Leipzig. Most recently BYE BYE, BOWSER (D: Jasmin Baumgartner) screened at Sundance. Dominic joined Berlinale Talents 2022 and Ji.hlava Emerging Producers 2025. He cares about colorful young voices, artistic expression with broad appeal, and subversive social commentary. Kacerovsky's feature debut SENTIMENTAL FAIL CLUB (D: Jasmin Baumgartner) is currently in production.



Kacerovsky

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2027 **SENTIMENTAL FAIL CLUB** – Feature, 100 min
D: Jasmin Baumgartner
In production – Berlinale Talents Co-Pro Market 2025
- 2026 **MY FRIEND THE PORN STAR** – Documentary, 94 min
D: Rosa Friedrich
Karlovy Vary – World premiere, Proxima Competition
- 2023 **BYE BYE, BOWSER** – Short, 20 min
D: Jasmin Baumgartner
Sundance 2024 – International Competition
- 2020 **ROBIN'S HOOD** – Documentary, 90 min
D: Jasmin Baumgartner
DOK Leipzig – World premiere, Gedanken Aufschluss Prize
- 2018 **JIMMIE** – Feature, 90 min
D: Jesper Ganslandt (co-producer)
Rotterdam – World premiere, Opening film





CREDITS

WITH Timo, Hanna Teglasy, Alex, Jane Kosto, Alice Eric BigClit,
Janina Vivianne Carmen Schrenk, Sofie Federspiel, Emma Striche,
Sam Hailey, Adrineh Simonian, Aaron Karl

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