



## Original Bliss: A powerful psychological drama

by Birgit Heidsiek

04/07/2016 - The new film by German director Sven Taddicken, presented in competition at Karlovy Vary, gives an insight into the spiritual abyss



After his adventurous foray into the pirate-film genre with *12 Paces Without a Head*, in his latest drama, *Original Bliss*, in competition at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, German writer-director Sven Taddicken addresses issues such as unusual romantic encounters, as well as discovering one's sexuality. While his debut feature, *Getting My Brother Laid*, was about an intellectually disabled young man who was looking forward to having his first sexual encounter, in his romantic tragicomedy *Emma's Bliss*, Taddicken focused on the touching love story between a pig breeder and a terminally ill man.

Relationships, religion and sex are also key topics in *Original Bliss*, which starts to unfold through a profound discussion between a middle-aged couple at the dinner table. While the wife is depressed that she has lost her connection to God, her husband gets increasingly aggressive and ends up beating her up so brutally that she needs medical treatment. Lead actress Martina Gedeck (*The Lives of Others*, *Night Train to Lisbon*) takes the blows devoid of any emotion, while Austrian actor Johannes Krisch (*Revanche*, *Labyrinth of Lies*) spirals into a violent fit of rage.

But the housewife is quite hopeful that she will find the key to her liberation by contacting a renowned psychologist, who seems to know the secret of the formula for happiness. Despite the fact that their first encounter is somewhat unfulfilling, a subtle attraction starts to blossom between the contrasting characters. In this role-playing game, there is a constant switching: who is it that actually needs more help from the other? While the woman is suffering because of her loss of faith and her broken marriage, the brilliant brain researcher has his own

problems to deal with. Completely obsessed with pornographic images, his mind is fixated on a sexual vision that determines his everyday life.

DoP Daniela Knapp, who already worked with Taddicken on Emma's Bliss and 12 Paces Without a Head, chose colour concepts with dark tones for the home of the unhappy couple, while life seems more joyful and vibrant whenever the wife leaves the house.

Based on the short story of the same name by Scottish author Alison Louise Kennedy, on the surface, the film adaptation of Original Bliss shows a glimpse into the spiritual abyss in humans, which can result from a lack of love and a longing for lust, but also anxiety, jealousy and desperation. Apparently devastated without any spiritual guidance, the main character makes a psychological and physical exertion over the course of the story while learning a life lesson – a journey that is portrayed extremely convincingly by German actress Gedeck.