



## Media Information

### **BETWEEN DUST AND STARDUST**

**Knowledge about the universe continues to grow, but human existence is becoming ever more doubtful. This paradox is the leitmotif of *A Handful of Dust*, a photographic research project by Florian Schwarz. He spent four years traveling to observatories in the most remote places on Earth. With sensitivity he combines a far distant view into space with a close-up of the people who live in the areas around these institutes. He spans the arc from the dusty, barren ends of this world to the center of the universe, where our center also lies—after all, as the latest research shows, we are ourselves ninety-seven percent stardust.**

Bielefeld, August 13, 2019

“Have you ever looked at the night skies?  
What have you seen?  
Is it the same thing I see?”

With these lines, the astrophysicist Dr. Martin Dominik begins the essay he wrote for the book *A Handful of Dust*, and they might have even inspired Florian Schwarz in his work: “We share a world, but does it mean the same thing to us?”

The multi-award-winning photographer/artist Florian Schwarz (\*1979 in Konstanz) has traveled around the earth to photograph the areas surrounding six very special observatories. They are operated by the Las Cumbres Observatory Foundation (LOC) in Santa Barbara and together they form two sets of observatories spanning the globe, allowing for uninterrupted viewing of the night skies in both hemispheres.

Schwarz did not photograph the imposing technology at the facilities at the observatories' remote locations in South Africa, Chile, Australia, Hawaii, the United States, and Spain. Nor did he point his camera at the stars, far away from air and light pollution. Instead, he focuses on life far distant from civilization, its ideas and emotions, but close to the highly technological sight lines of the universe that are linked to each other through artificial intelligence.

Schwarz leaves the creation of astronomical pictures to the telescopes and webcams. For example, although the famous photos from *Voyager*—which look back at the earth from over its shoulder, as it were, from the edge of our solar system, revealing the planet we live on to be nothing more than a tiny, pale blue dot—appear in his group of photos, Schwarz himself points his camera at all things terrestrial, which seem to him as mysterious and unfathomable as everything in outer space. This pale blue dot, hardly bigger than a speck of dust in the immensity, does not relativize the significance of the earth, but increases it, demonstrating it to be a fragile jewel. “The closer you look at a word, the further it retreats,” wrote Karl Kraus. In his photographs Schwarz seems to be exploring the issue of whether or not this assumption also applies to pictures.



## **Florian Schwarz | A Handful of Dust**

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