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Glorious chaos

They are known locally as “messies” – people who succumb to a boundless passion for collecting things. They are regarded as having an illness, relatives find them difficult to put up with and their behaviour turns them into isolated loners.

The media like to feature particularly obscure cases because in tidy Switzerland they fly in the face of normal perceptions of orderliness with their obsessions. The film “Messies, ein schönes Chaos” (Messies – glorious chaos) takes a different approach. Bernese filmmaker Ulrich Grossenbacher portrays four people with collection compulsions in a film just under two hours long: Thomas, Arthur, Elmira and Karl. They collect scrap, tractors, excavators, cars, newspapers, film magazines or simply anything that might be usable. He discusses with them their passion for collecting, their compulsions, their suppression strategies and explanations for their behaviour. Grossenbacher shows great respect for these people, revealing a comical side to the “messies” that will amuse audiences without ridiculing them.

The film premiered in August 2011 at the Locarno Film Festival. It has since been on show at cinemas. The DVD can be ordered from: Fair & Ugly, Filmproduktion, Lorrainestrasse 15, CH-3013 Berne, fair&ugly@lorraine.ch

