

# HANNES SCHMID

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## Dr. (Hon.) Hannes Schmid

Born in Zurich, Hannes Schmid is today one of the most important photo-artists in Switzerland. His travels took him around the world, where he developed his own characteristic visual language as an advertising, fashion and freelance photographer, characterized by personal ties to the objects.

Hannes Schmid achieved worldwide fame with his staging of the iconic cowboy - the Marlboro Man. He toured with some of the world biggest rock stars such as Queen, AC/DC, ABBA, Status Quo or Boomtown Rats who he portrayed in over 70,000 photos. He also was a leading creative for the Formular One Racing Team of BAR Honda with whom he realised spectacular media stunts such as the land speed world record attempt at the Bonville Salt Flats.

Since 2012, Hannes Schmid has been dedicated to humanitarian work in Cambodia, one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, through the NGO Smiling Gecko, which he founded. Unlike traditional aid organizations, Smiling Gecko follows a holistic approach based on the conviction that education and investment in human capital are key to sustainably improving living conditions.

In 2014, he established the Smiling Gecko Campus approximately 60 kilometers northeast of Phnom Penh to support children and families from urban slums and surrounding rural areas. What began on nine hectares has since grown to 150 hectares and has developed into a model for a self-sustaining rural community.

The campus includes a school with kindergarten, vocational training facilities, agricultural operations, craft workshops, and the Farmhouse Resort & Spa. Children receive education aligned with international standards, while young adults gain practical skills that enable them to build independent livelihoods. Agricultural and artisanal products are used locally or marketed externally, contributing to the project's economic sustainability.

The overarching goal is to create a scalable blueprint for a functioning, autonomous rural community that can be replicated in other regions of Cambodia.

In 2018, in recognition of his exemplary and tireless commitment to the people of rural Cambodia and the slums of Phnom Penh, Hannes Schmid received the Lifetime Award at the Swiss Prix Courage and was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Zurich.