

SEE NL

Devil's Pie - D'Angelo

Tribeca world premiere

Cannes L'ACID selection:

Take Me Somewhere Nice

Animation from

*The Netherlands in
the ascendant*

**Celebrating the New Wave
of Dutch talent**

Kentridge is back

at Eye

#Talent Issue

Issue #35 May 2019 Cannes / Annecy issue
(incorporating Tribeca / CPH:DOX / Visions du Réel)

**NL FILM
FONDS**



Index

4-5 Investment in Magic Minority co-pro *Sick Sick Sick* by Alice Furtado is selected for Quinzaine. BALDR's Frank Hoeve talks to See NL

6-7 Reason to get serious Single shot Tuvalu-based minority co-pro *That Which Is To Come is Just A Promise* selected for Quinzaine Shorts

8-9 Homeward bound Ena Sendjarević's *Take Me Somewhere Nice* is selected for Cannes L'ACID

10-11 Amsterdam, Paris... Kabul Aboozar Amini has been developing his dynamic drama *Ways to Run* in Paris during his Cinéfondation Résidence

12-13 Baked Alaska Jaap van Heusden's Arctic drama *In Alaska* will get the Cinéfondation Atelier treatment at Cannes 2019

14-15 Willink and able Producer Joram Willink is the Dutch Producer on the *Move* at Cannes 2019

16-17 Cutting edge talent See NL talks to four of our finest Dutch editors

18-19 Renouncing terror Robert Oey's latest (possibly final) film *The Good Terrorist*, selected for CPH:DOX, tackles the issue of homegrown terrorism

20-21 Man and rhino At CPH:DOX Floor van der Meulen world-premiered *The Last Male on Earth*, her emotional study of the last remaining northern white rhino

22-23 A fondness for absence Maartje Nevejan's feature doc *Are you There?*, about absence epilepsy, was rapturously received at CPH:DOX.

24-25 Nyon dreams No fewer than eight Dutch docs, including Willem Baptist's new feature *Ring of Dreams*, were selected for the 50th edition of Visions du Réel

26-27 Return of the messiah *Devil's Pie - D'Angelo*, Carine Bijlsma's profile of the reclusive pop icon, world-premiered at Tribeca

28-29 Tribeca times three Profiling three more diverse, imaginative and daring Dutch projects selected for NYC's premier film event

30-33 Nouvelle vague: Dutch style Celebrating the talent that is looking to redefine Dutch cinema

34-35 Go with the Flow The best of new Dutch animation in selection at Anecny, Europe's leading animation fest

36-37 Singing a merry toon The Dutch animation industry was in the spotlight at the Cartoon Movie co-production forum in March 2019

38-39 Post delivery A profile of leading Dutch audiopost facility WarnerPosta

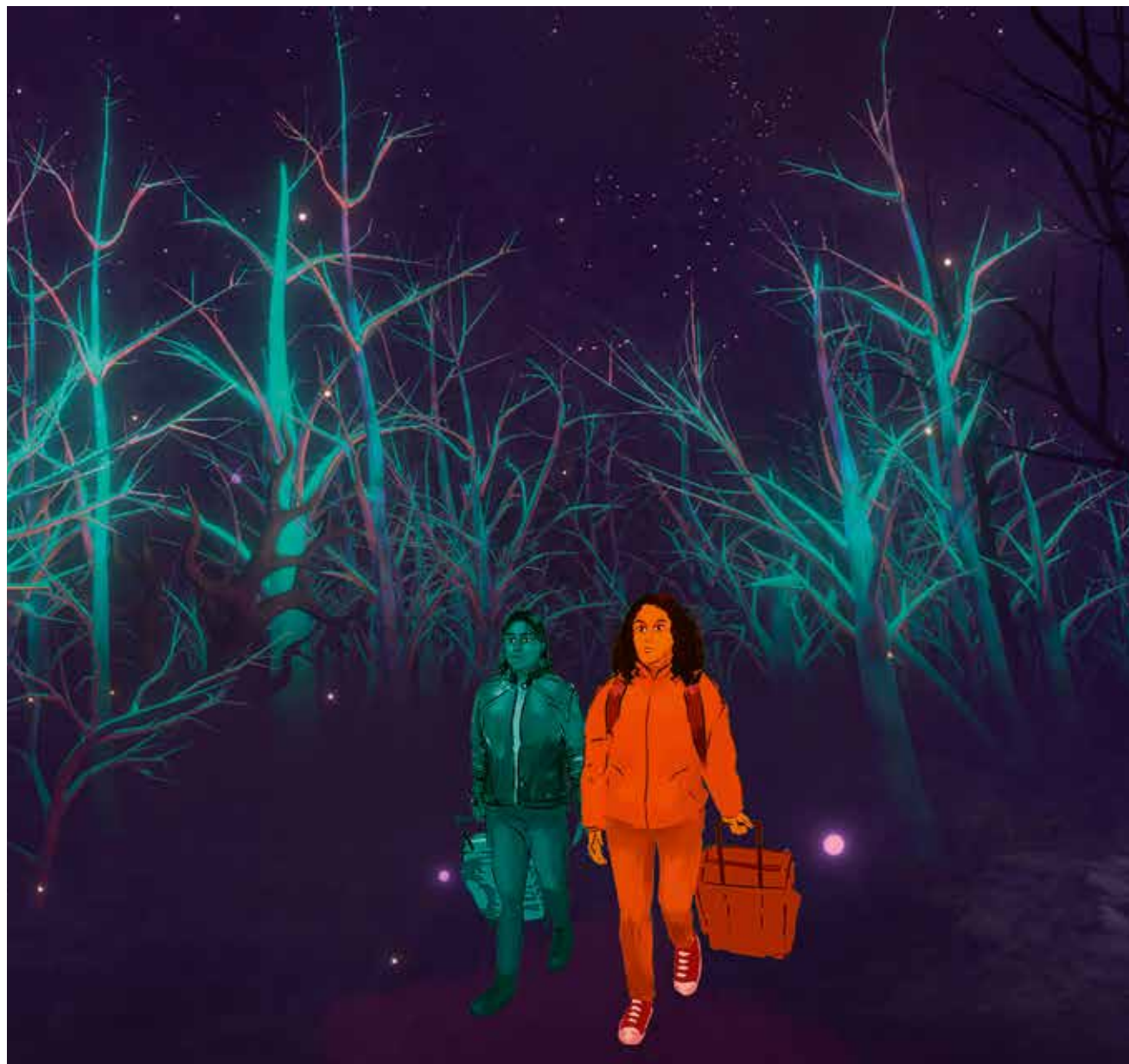
40-41 Eye on Kentridge on Eye The great South African artistic polymath is back at Eye with *10 Drawings for Projection*

42-43 Building family ties A report on the Sino-Dutch family films summit that took place in Beijing April 2019

44-45 Eye on the prize NY-based Moroccan artist Meriem Bennani won the 2019 Eye Art & Film Prize

46-47 Short Cuts News from the Dutch film industry

Back cover: Sara Luna Zoric, star of *Take Me Somewhere Nice*, selected for Cannes L'ACID



COLOPHON

See NL is published four times per year by Eye International and The Netherlands Film Fund and is distributed to international film professionals.

Editors in chief: Marten Rabarits, (Eye), Jonathan Mees (Netherlands Film Fund) **Executive editor:** Nick Cunningham **Contributor:** Geoffrey Macnab **Concept & Design:** Lava.nl **Layout:** def., Amsterdam **Printing:** mediaLiaison Printed on FSC paper **© All rights reserved:** The Netherlands Film Fund and Eye International 2019

CONTACT

Sandra den Hamer
CEO Eye
E sandradenhamer@eyefilm.nl

Marten Rabarits
Head of Eye International
E martenrabarits@eyefilm.nl

Eye International
PO BOX 74782
1070 BT Amsterdam
The Netherlands
T +31 20 758 2375
W www.eyefilm.nl

Doreen Boonekamp
CEO Netherlands Film Fund
E d.boonekamp@filmfonds.nl

Jonathan Mees
Communications
Netherlands Film Fund
E j.mees@filmfonds.nl

Netherlands Film Fund
Pijnackerstraat 5
1072 JS Amsterdam
The Netherlands
T +31 20 570 7676
W www.filmfund.nl

ISSN: 2589-3521

NL FILM
FONDS



Cover: Devil's Pie – D'Angelo
◊ Carine Bijlsma See page 26

Another Dream ◊ Director: Tamara Shogaolu page 28

A tale of love and death

Cannes Directors Fortnight
Sick, Sick, Sick ◊ Alice Furtado

QUINZAINE
DES RÉALISATEURS



When Frank Hoeve listened to the pitch for Brazilian Alice Furtado's debut feature *Sick, Sick, Sick* he was immediately hooked, writes Geoffrey Macnab.

The Dutch producer (co-owner of BALDR Films) has always admired Latin American magical realism and Furtado's film (presented at CineMart in 2016) was a story that fascinated him. It's a tale of teenage love and death – and of a young woman's obsessive desire to bring her sweetheart back to life after he bleeds to death. "It was a good pitch. I thought it was a film about teenagers, about love but also about mourning," Hoeve remembers of the romance which also has horror elements. "I really liked the young, driven team behind it."

Hoeve's BALDR first burst onto the international scene with its Morgan Knibbe documentary *Those Who Feel The Fire Burning*, which competed at IDFA in 2015. BALDR has always been an outward looking company but had never co-produced with Latin America before. Any wariness quickly vanished when Hoeve realised that his new partners, Brazil's Estudio Giz, were both open

and professional. "They knew what they were doing, They were guiding Alice (the director) very well."

The film, selected for Quinzaine and supported by the NFF+HBF co-pro scheme, was partly shot on an island in Brazil. Visual effects and colour grading were done in the Netherlands and play an important role in the film. This may be an arthouse title but it's one that Hoeve hopes will have appeal for younger Dutch cinemagoers as well as for older cinephiles. BALDR also took on the task of designing the film's poster.

Hoeve has always combined fiction and documentary. When he launched the company in 2012 with Katja Draaijer, it was "faster" to secure funding for docs than for dramatic features. "We don't tend to talk about either fiction or documentary...we talk about films. Our documentaries are very hybrid," Hoeve explains.

The company's current slate is typically varied. There is a very ambitious Dutch-German-Danish co-production *Mitra* about an Iranian academic based in Amsterdam who discovers disturbing new evidence about the traitor who may have been responsible for her daughter's death many years before. BALDR is also working on *The Stranger*, a Chinese co-pro with Shengze Zhu, winner of IFFR Tiger competition this year with her film *Present.Perfect*.

Meanwhile, the company is working on another Latin American project,

Alex Piperno's *Window Boy Would Also Like To Have A Submarine*. Made with Brazilian and Argentinian partners, this is currently in post-prod. BALDR also has a new project with Knibbe, *The Garden Of Earthly Delights*, set in Manila.

Hoeve acknowledges the paradox that the Dutch are regularly involved with films chosen for Cannes – but more often as minority co-producers. "But I am happy that I see so many Dutch films lately getting recognised internationally [at other major festivals]," Hoeve notes of features like *Dirty God* that have been feted on the international circuit. As long as young Dutch directors continue to make "innovative, challenging" films, he is confident that they will also secure top slots at events like Cannes.

Sick, Sick Sick is represented by Alpha Violet, and is bound to be picked up by many international buyers. Hoeve has deliberately delayed bringing on a Dutch distributor in advance of Cannes. He wanted the Dutch to see the completed version of the film in the best possible circumstances with the Cannes festival audience.

"We make international films, both for the Dutch and for the international audience," Hoeve declares as if it is a mission statement. He also acknowledges the role of the Production Incentive. "It is fantastic we have been opening up for co-production possibilities. We've gained so many more opportunities."



"It was a good pitch... a teenage love story about desire but also about mourning"

Director: Alice Furtado **Scriptwriter:** Alice Furtado & Leonardo Levis
Production: Estúdio Giz (BR) **Co-production:** Ikki Films (FR), BALDR Film (NL)
Sales: Alpha Violet



*Extensive post-production,
most of it done in The
Netherlands, was needed to
lick the project into shape*

Director: Platform **Scriptwriter:** Platform
Production: Dugong Films (IT)
Co-production: seriousFilm (NL)

Reason to get serious



Geoffrey Macnab talks to seriousFilm's Marc Thelosen about his decision to board the ecologically-themed *That Which Is To Come is Just A Promise*, screening in the Quinzaine short programme.

That Which Is To Come is Just A Promise, supported by the Netherlands Film Fund, is an astonishing formal achievement and seems to unfold in a single, unending shot. The camera moves from right to left in slow motion across the waterlogged landscape of Funafuti, in the Tuvalu archipelago, showing the tides (affected by climate change) and the island's inhabitants. Studies suggest that the countryside we see filmed so evocatively in the film will be completely under water within three decades.

Innovative Dutch production company seriousFilm was approached by Platform, the Milan and Berlin-based artists' collective, to join the project. *That Which Is To Come* is a complex co-production, also involving Dugong Film in Italy and Blueskin Films in New Zealand. The different partners, many miles apart, prepared for the production

by making endless Skype calls. Marc Thelosen was the Dutch producer. No, he didn't get to go to Tuvalu in the South Pacific for the shooting of the film. That would have taken too much time and money. Nonetheless, he was heavily involved in the planning and post-production of the film.

Reinier van Brummelen, the Dutch cinematographer and visual effects artist famous for his work with Peter Greenaway, advised on the shooting of the film and took care of compositing and VFX. Blueskin Films in New Zealand organised the "micro crew" of just a few people who travelled to Funafuti, the main island of the Tuvalu archipelago, to make the film. It wasn't easy.

"It proved to be technically very challenging because they had to cover a very long distance and they were close to an airstrip," Thelosen remembers. Every time a plane landed or took off, the shooting would be interrupted. In the end, the filmmakers decided to shoot the entire film with the camera on a drone. They filmed the same identical sequence twice, once when the tide was high and the weather was "not so good" and then, two weeks later, when conditions were much better.

The material they captured was rich but flawed. Extensive post-production, most of it done in The Netherlands, was needed to lick the project into shape. "It was not simply a matter of overlaying the

two shots. There was a lot of extra compositing in there and corrections of parallax and perspective, the producer points out, making the documentary seem almost as complicated as a sci-fi epic. The process, including the sound editing, took well over a year. But of course, audiences won't have any sense of the struggles behind the scenes when they see the film with its exquisitely stylised slow motion cinematography.

seriousFilm has now been in existence for 15 years. Thelosen runs the Rotterdam-based outfit with producer Koert Davidse. Specialising not just in documentaries but in installations, animation, interactive work and sometimes fiction, they have some intriguing new projects in the pipeline. One film soon to shoot is Tim Leyendekker's doc-drama *Feast* which will reconstruct a notorious HIV case in Groningen.

"In the 80s, there were people in Groningen who organised gay parties. The people attending these parties, some of them were drugged and infected with HIV-contaminated blood," is how Thelosen describes the case which the film will address.

While preparing for this production, Thelosen is planning to travel to Cannes for the premiere of *That Which Is To Come*. He is also delighted by the news that Wallie Pollé's Windmill Film Distribution will release the film theatrically in The Netherlands.

Homeward bound

Take Me Somewhere Nice
◊ Ena Sendijarević **aCid**
CANNES 2019



Ena Sendijarević

“It was a disaster...a complete disaster!” Ena Sendijarević jokes about the challenge of trying to shoot *Take Me Somewhere Nice* in three different languages, writes Geoffrey Macnab.

A road movie about a young woman, Alma, who returns to Bosnia from the Netherlands to visit her sick father, Sendijarević's debut feature, which won the Special Jury Award for Exceptional Artistic Achievement at IFFR 2019, was made in Dutch, Bosnian and English. The young director, who came to the Netherlands from Bosnia when she was seven years old, says there were times when her head felt “it was about to explode” as she tried to deal with her Dutch and Bosnian crew. “It was at this point I told them I was only going to communicate in English.”

Sendijarević describes the film, supported by the Netherlands Film Fund, as “a bit of a follow-up” to her well-received short film *Import* (2016), about a day in the life of a Bosnian family living in the Netherlands, which premiered in Cannes before picking up the Best

Fiction Short Film at Dokufest and the NTR Go Short Award at Nijmegen. This time, though, the emphasis was on the Bosnian returning to her homeland.

“I just felt the desire to explore the relationship between the migrant and the country of origin,” the writer-director says of *Take Me Somewhere Nice*. As soon as she conceived the film, Sendijarević was also aware of the potential for cliché. She wasn't the first director to have dealt with this theme. Cheap nostalgia and sentimentality could easily have crept into the storytelling. So could a deadening feeling of political correctness.

When it came to casting Alma, Sendijarević looked at first for a Bosnian-Dutch actress from within the Bosnian community in the Netherlands. “We had a lot of reactions,” the director remembers of the response to the casting call. Some actors were suspicious about the film's exploration of the sexuality of the girl and its occasional explicit scenes. “There were a lot of girls who were not comfortable with that.” Sendijarević's eventual choice Sara Luna Zorić, however, had no trepidation about the role.

“She has this great intensity. She is a true rebel,” the director says of her young lead. “On the set, her rebellious spirit gave me a lot of strength. I felt that through her, I could be in touch with my inner teenager,” says Sendijarević.

Sendijarević describes the film as being about girlhood and the journey to womanhood. “She (Alma) goes from one side to the other. Also, it was not only her exploring *her* sexuality. It was also me exploring *my* sexuality through her. Writing certain scenes, it was a challenge directing them and sharing them with other people.”

The film isn't just about a girl becoming a woman. It is also about east-west relationships. Sendijarević was keen to express Alma's feelings of alienation from her Bosnian roots and to show that after all her time in the Netherlands, Alma had “different cultural views” to those of her relatives in the Balkans.

The director has been back to Bosnia many times since she first left the country as a child. Returning to make a film was “completely different” to being there as a visitor and meeting relatives. “I felt a huge responsibility. For me, it's not a film necessarily about Bosnia. It's a film more about being between cultures,” Sendijarević reflects.

Even so, she asked herself on a daily basis if she had the right to be back in the country, which became part of the story. She wanted to be respectful without being reverential. After all, this is a film about alienation, and the different languages added to the tension and mood of unease that she was trying to capture.



“She had this great intensity. She is a true rebel,” the director says of her young lead

Director & script: Ena Sendijarević Production: Pupkin
Co-production: VPRO Sales: Heretic

Amsterdam, Paris... Kabul

Cannes Cinéfondation Résidence
Ways To Run ◊ Aboozar Amini



Aboozar Amini

Afghan-Dutch director Aboozar Amini has spent much of the early part of 2019 living and breathing cinema in Paris, he tells Geoffrey Macnab.

Amini has been developing the screenplay for his first fiction feature *Ways To Run* at the Cannes Cinéfondation Résidence. This has entailed being in a house with five other filmmakers from all corners of the globe. “We spend day and night together writing our scripts – which means we are also discussing cinema day and night,” the director explains.

In such a hothouse environment, it is impossible to stick to a “provincial” mindset. Because his housemates are so globally diverse he has to describe his project in terms that they can understand. This, he suggests, “opens a different door to your own perspective.”

They are all staying together in a big baroque style building where names of previous directors who’ve been part of the Cinéfondation are still stuck on the doors. Amini’s predecessors in the house include such renowned attars as Nadine Labaki, Wang Bing and Lucrecia

Martel. The filmmakers from the Résidence will all attend Cannes where they will watch films, network and pitch their projects. They will also visit the Locarno Festival later in the year.

In Amini’s film, *Abas*, a scrupulous bus driver, notorious hashish smoker and gambler, wants to maintain law and order in the only place under his jurisdiction, his bus. He does this with the help of his apprentice, Afshin (16).

Amini plans to shoot *Ways To Run* guerrilla-style with a small cast and crew in Kabul during the Afghan Presidential election, due to take place later in the year. “The election is one of the most important in the recent history of Afghanistan,” the director explains, underlining that it is crucial he is ready to shoot as the people go to the polls. “Every corner of the city is going to be exploding with propaganda and campaigning for one party or another. This feeling of transition is the most important inspiration for my film. People lead lives that are flung back and forth between one government/regime to another, life and death, good and bad, staying and leaving ... Nothing is for sure and nothing lasts.”

The new film may be fiction but it has obvious overlaps with his documentary, *Kabul, City in the Wind* (which opened IDFA last November and followed two kids and a bus driver struggling to survive in a society in upheaval). *Ways To Run* also features youngsters but, as the

director points out, “kids in Kabul grow up very quick, actually. During my documentary, I experienced this. First, I saw my protagonist as a 12-year-old boy, then I went back to Amsterdam. After six months, I went back to Kabul and he wasn’t the same kid. He was totally grown up, His father had left and he was in charge of the family.”

Co-producers from Germany, Japan and France are aboard and Amini has already recruited young Afghan filmmakers to help with the production. He will be using non-professional actors. The film is being made through Silk Road Film Salon, the company Amini runs with Holland-based Chinese producer, Jia Zhao, Joost de Vries’ An Original Picture and through Kino Kabul, Amini’s Afghan company. Chinese outfit Radiance is handling world sales.

It’s no surprise to learn that Amini (who divides his time between the Netherlands and Afghanistan) is a passionate fan of Italian neorealist cinema. He admires filmmakers like Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica who worked in similar circumstances to those facing him today. “I don’t look for easy jobs,” he declares. “There are two different kinds of filmmakers – the ones who work five days a week and are really eager to go on holiday, and then there are the other ones whose life is cinema... I am close to the second group. It’s the need to tell stories that gives you power and influence.”



“This feeling of transition is the most important inspiration for my film.”

Director: Aboozar Amini **Scriptwriter:** Aboozar Amini
Production: Silk Road Film Salon (NL), An Original Picture (NL)
Co-production: Color of May (DE)

Baked Alaska

Cannes Cinéfondation At elier

In Alaska ◊ Jaap van Heusden



Jaap van Heusden

Jaap van Heusden's film project *In Alaska* will bask in the heat of Cannes following its selection for Cin fondation At elier 2019. He talks to Nick Cunningham.

Ten years ago Jaap van Heusden met a teenage boy from a small Alaskan village. According to the director, "nothing was going on, and his whole youth was devoid of light and the possibilities to make music or to express himself, and there were no girlfriends of a suitable age." But he had a tale to tell, that of a man who, a few years previously, did the one heinous, unpardonable thing you must never even contemplate in Alaska. He took a rifle to the oil pipeline, and then went on the run both from the FBI and the very long arm of the Alaskan law.

This story is the inspiration for *In Alaska*, the  4.1 million film produced by Marc Bary and Steven Rubinstein Malamud for Ijswater Films. In the 90% English-language/10% Inuit production Woody, a seventeen year old boy from a similar Alaskan village, is so depressed he wants to end his life. Instead he replicates the self-same monumental act of sabotage

and overnight becomes Public Enemy No.1, hunted by special agent Susan Tarheel. But as he runs for his life, he learns for the first time what it truly means to be alive.

"At some point I also decided that part of what attracted me to the story is this other person, the seasoned agent Susan, and how there seems to be a connection between the two of them although they only meet at the very end," comments Van Heusden. "Throughout the film you cut back to see the chase from her perspective. It's a tricky thing but I chose to run with it."

"A landscape that makes you feel replaceable, of no significance whatsoever as a human being"

The Arctic backdrop will play a meaningful role but not in an aesthetically pleasing "National Geographic" kind of way. It will be less an awesome spectacle, deployed more to underline the extent of Woody's psychological dilemma. "When I went there for the first time I was overwhelmed by how depressing it was. It's really a landscape that makes you feel replaceable, of no significance whatsoever as a human being. If you remain alive or if you die, nothing matters. There is a vast amount of rock that has been there forever and will continue to be there forever,

and the only thing that is a little bit out of place is you."

Despite being Dutch and receiving development support from the Netherlands Film Fund, the film will shoot in Canada with Inuit and North American leads. "I still have this boyish belief that it is a great story that was given to me already a long time ago. I have been with it for over 10 years and looking for the right way to tell it, but also the right way to finance it," Van Heusden stresses.

He further tells of the enthusiasm he has thus far encountered among indigenous Canadians. "Last year I travelled to Nunavut in the very north of the country where there is an Inuit community called Cambridge Bay. I went there to see how they lived and to share about their lives and to talk about the film and tell them about Woody. It was really a great experience, and people were like 'oh I want to see that film' and 'we'll put you guys up' and 'I know a good location for this'..."

Van Heusden is confident that the At elier will offer creative support as well as promotion and opportunities to raise further finance. "If it was just to fill the gaps in the financing then... (he trails off). But during the selection process there were all these questions on the creative side, about the heart of the story and the way I want to tell it. I am looking forward to continuing that conversation in Cannes."



  Peter Parkosch (GRID-Arenda)

Director: Jaap van Heusden **Scriptwriter:** Jaap van Heusden
Production: Ijswater Films (NL)
Co-production: Caviar (BE), Volterra Group (NL)

Willink and able



Joram Willink, Dutch Producer on the Move 2019, talks to Nick Cunningham about forging long-lasting relationships with his writers and directors, and films that inspire social change.

Joram Willink led a hectic student life, but one continually defined by a curiosity on all matters cinematic. He studied art management, moonlighting across a number of film sets where he observed at first hand the necessary blend of craftsmanship, inspiration and creativity. Then in the evenings he worked as a film projectionist. Significantly, at university he shifted focus from music to film, assessing the impact that good marketing would have on the industry he would later join. All the time, he knew and understood the kind of cinema that engaged his interest and that he may one day produce himself.

“I always liked films that addressed socially relevant topics, and I saw very clearly film’s power to communicate, how as an artform it can move large audiences.”

In 2007 Willink launched his company BIND with partner Piet-Harm

Sterk. Since then, BIND productions have won numerous gongs that include an International Emmy and TIFF Award (*Anything Goes*, and *King’s Day*, Steven Wouterlood), the Prix Jeunesse (*Mimoun*, Tallulah Hazekamp Schwab) and a slew of Golden Calves, including Best Film for *Gluckauf* (Remy van Heugten). BIND’s latest film, Steven Wouterlood’s *My Extraordinary Summer With Tess*, was awarded the Special Mention by the Generation Jury at Berlinale 2019 and the Grand Prize at the NY Int’l Children’s Film Festival.

Yet despite all the awards, nothing beats the positive reaction of an audience, he concedes. “When we showed the short children’s film *Anything Goes* at a festival in Germany the kids were standing on their chairs... The best thing for me is that it communicated with the audience.”

At *Producers on the Move* Willink will present *Mascot*, the new feature by Remy van Heugten, as well as Sander Burger’s thriller *The Judgement* starring Fedja van Huêt (*Character*) and Yorick van Wageningen (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*). *Mascot* follows a man who resorts to far-right ideology to vent his frustration. It is described by the producer as a socially engaged, psychological drama in which temptation, love, loneliness, frustration and transformation are key themes. In *The Judgement*, a journalist sets out to counter ‘trial by media’ with a clear presentation of the facts, only to find that the image is more

powerful than the truth. Willink argues that these films, as well as *My Extraordinary Summer...*, to be released in The Netherlands July 2019, “are completely different but have our DNA in the sense that they address relevant social topics in a fundamentally different way.”

“In Cannes I will meet other producers from countries who will have a different practice of financing and making sales,” Willink adds. “I had that same experience at EAVE and especially at the Binger Filmlab. It was eye-opening and inspiring to see how a producer friend from Uruguay (Sandino Saravia Vinay) could make films with the Spanish-speaking countries. He later became the associate producer of *Roma*. He had to come a long way, but now he is on top of it all.”

Willink’s work with directors Van Heugten, Burger and Wouterlood underlines his belief that promotion of (as well as investment in) *auteur* talent is the best way to grow audiences for the type of cinema he wants to deliver. In this he is a great admirer of Dutch master Alex van Warmerdam, noting how “when he comes with a new movie, even if you don’t know the title, you just buy a ticket.”

This is what Willink seeks to replicate with his co-creatives. “What we do at BIND is to make a close connection, a close relationship, with the directors, not only on one film but across their whole career. They invest in us and we invest in them.”



My Extraordinary Summer with Tess
Director: Steven Wouterlood Scriptwriter: Laura van Dijk
Production: BIND (NL) – Joram Willink, Piet-Harm Sterk
Co-production: Östlicht (AT) Sales: Picture Tree International

Cutting edge talent



Job ter Burg

See NL profiles four top Dutch editors whose work both shapes and defines the films of leading Dutch and international auteurs.

Job ter Burg

The list of directors Job ter Burg has worked with over the past decade reads like a who's who of European arthouse and crossover cinema. He cut Paul Verhoeven's Academy Award-nominated *Elle* and is currently working with the renowned Dutch auteur on another French-language film, *Benedetta*. Ter Burg edited Alex van Warmerdam's last three films, including *Borgman*, which was nominated for a Palme d'Or at Cannes 2013, and has cut all the films of Martin Koolhoven, including the powerhouse Euro-western *Brimstone* in 2016. Recently he worked with renowned Dutch actor Halina Reijn on *Instinct*, her directorial debut.

"I find that the more experienced the directors are, the more they know their vision and their material, but that they are very open to whatever their collaborators, be it their DOP or their editor or actors bring to the table," Ter Burg underlines. "They know

immediately whether something is right but are very open to considering whether they themselves may be wrong. But it is only because they are so *sure* that they are ready to be *unsure* and explore what maybe they hadn't thought of in advance. [The process] doesn't throw them out of balance."

Ask him how he defines his style and he puts his hands in the air. "To be honest I don't know and I don't want to know. I think there is a risk if you're doing any kind of creative work that if you start defining what defines you, then you are no longer able to do whatever creatively you feel should be done."

Mieneke Kramer

Mieneke Kramer is relatively new to the industry but already has four international features under her belt, the most prominent being Sam de Jong's *Prince*, selected for Berlinale Generation 2015 where it garnered a Special Jury Mention. She is currently in Bali editing Jim Taihuttu's *The East*, about Dutch colonial involvement in Indonesia.



Mieneke Kramer

"I still think with my little experience as an editor I have the luxury of being able to apply new approaches to new projects. I don't have a trick yet, a way of working, I am inventing it over and over," comments Kramer, adding, "I hate being on set. I don't like large groups of people, I like one-on-one contact and I like to crawl inside the character, the personality of the film, and into the head of the director and try to figure what is their vision and how to translate that as best as I can."

Kramer tells of her experience on *Ja teraz klamie*, directed by Pawel Borowski, shot 100% in Polish. "He wanted the film to be universal and cut by somebody who didn't know the language, so I had to cut it and still judge the acting, the credibility



Dorith Vinken

and the tempo of the story – that was kind of special. If you have a little feeling for language and intonation then it is not that difficult. I got to understand a little bit how the Poles used their language despite being unable to understand it."

Dorith Vinken

Dorith Vinken, likewise, prefers the intimate atmosphere of the cutting room to the organised chaos of the set. "I like it more on the sidelines, that is my character. Ok, when you are making a big film you are never on the sidelines, but in the editing room you are able to write the film again."

Vinken is most closely associated with auteur Mijke de Jong with whom she worked on the likes of *God Only Knows* (2019, IFFR Limelight), *Layla M* (2016, Dutch submission for Foreign-language Academy Award) and *Brozer* (2014). "At this point in our professional relationship we don't have to talk so much anymore, we really feel the same about things," she says, but is nevertheless wary of complacency. "The most important thing is to really challenge each other to get to another level, and not take the easy way."

Profiling the Netherlands' leading editors



Peter Alderliesten

She speaks of their work on the fiction/documentary *Brozer*, during which actress (and friend) Leonoor Pauw died. "We had to finish the film after she was dead, for the family and the other people involved, but also for ourselves. At one point we cancelled everything to work on *Brozer* until it was finished. ... We said we would never do something like this again, but we also said it was maybe the most impressive thing we have ever done."

Currently editing two feature docs and slated to cut Isabel Lamberti's *El Azul* for IJswater Films later this year, Vinken offers sage advice to new directors and editors. "Even if you have been working on an edit for 3 months, never forget the impression you had the first time you saw it."

Peter Alderliesten

Peter Alderliesten started out as a physics student but became so active in (and good at) amateur filmmaking at university that he was invited to cut professional films on the side. When he eventually attended film school he also found that editing suited more his character and strengths.

"I thought that the energy I put into the production while editing was much more creative than being on a set with 30 or 40 other people doing their parts. I am much better at putting stuff together and seeing a one-on-one result of what I do. I am

not very good at making stuff from nothing, but I am very good at making something from the pile of creative processes. I make strong choices to drive the story-telling, and my choices reflect my character in that."

He adds: "Whenever I get the material I see it all and have my opinions about what will work and in what order, and how we can grab the audience and push them in a certain direction. We as editors are in the place to make those choices, and that choice is 24 frames per second when we choose what the next frame will be. That might be [by using] a different take or angle or sentence, or we may apply stuff out of context."

Alderliesten cut Vincent Bal's Dutch kids classic *Miss Minoes* and has enjoyed a close working relationship with Joram Lürsen for whom he edited, among others, *Love is All* (2007) and *The Resistance Banker* (2018, Dutch submission for Foreign-language Academy Award). In June 2019 he will commence editing on Lürsen's eagerly-awaited hi-spec *Flying Dutchmen* TV series, about the aviation pioneers of early 20th Century Holland. NC

Renouncing terror

F:ACT Award Competition

The Good Terrorist ◊ Robert Oey

CPH:DOX*



Robert Oey

The Good Terrorist is quite possibly Robert Oey's final feature as a director. The veteran documentary maker is now in charge of non-fiction for leading Dutch production company Topkapi Films, working primarily as a commissioner and producer.

Terror is clearly a subject which fascinates Oey. At Topkapi, he has recently produced a six-part series looking at the effect terrorism has on the lives of victims and perpetrators alike. In *The Good Terrorist*, supported by the Netherlands Film Fund and which premiered recently at CPH:DOX, he speaks to Dutch homegrown terrorists who spent time at the Terrorist Wing of Vught Prison between 2006 and 2011.

"The TV series is a much more a historical perspective on terrorism," Oey explains. The film, by contrast, is very tightly focused. One of its main subjects is the former Islamic terrorist Jason Walters, arrested by Dutch Special Police after a near two-week siege after the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in 2004.

During his imprisonment, Walters, who was released from prison in

2013, underwent a Damascene conversion. He renounced his old violent ways.

Oey had interviewed Van Gogh for his TV series *Wonderland*, about the effects of politically correct thinking in the Netherlands, shortly before Van Gogh was murdered. "But what made me more interested and gave me the energy and inspiration was that I did a couple of films on the military. In my opinion, the military, the secret services and the security services are closely linked to terrorism in general. It was because I had more insight into how the military and secret services operate that I wanted to make the film."

As he deradicalised and distanced himself from his Islamic past, Jason Walters wrote a letter to leading Dutch politicians. One of the recipients was Femke Halsema, currently Mayor of Amsterdam...and who also happens to be Oey's wife. Oey read the letter with some scepticism. He found it strategic, self-justifying and doubted whether it was really sincere. However, when he subsequently met the former terrorist, he was struck by Walters' intelligence and openness. "He sort of allowed me to get up close and personal. I trusted him and I think he trusted me. We spoke and we dined and we went to movies."

Walters turned out to be a cinephile. He preferred films like the arthouse *Leviathan* to action movies. Walters' attitude toward his own past was equally reflective and philosophical.

The film, supported by the Film Fund and Production Incentive, will have a limited release in Dutch cinemas by Cinema Delicatessen later this summer. Oey describes it as being as much a film about communication (and miscommunication) as it is one about terrorism.

During production, the director and his subject enjoyed a strong rapport. Oey describes Walters as being "surprisingly more flexible, more intelligent and more capable of seeing different strands and ideas" than Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the outspoken author and politician who was the subject of his 2010 film *The Lie*. However, Walters has reservations about how Oey has portrayed him.

"At the moment, we have a very difficult understanding. He has sent a letter from his lawyer," the director notes of the bad feelings which have developed. "I know that this (film) is very confrontational and might be difficult for him as well. I think all documentaries should do that. If I had made a propaganda film saying, 'oh, Jason is a most terrific guy', I would have done him a disservice." Yet Walters feels otherwise.

As for his decision to quit directing, Oey has no regrets: he believes that his experience and talents better qualify him to work now as a producer. "I feel much more in my place as a producer," Oey reflects. "I love doing it, I am thoroughly enjoying it and I think am capable of taking the talents that we have in the Netherlands abroad." GM



"I trusted him and I think he trusted me"

Of rhinos and men



Floor van der Meulen's debut doc feature *The Last Male on Earth* world-premiered at CPH:DOX 2019. The director talks rhinos, climate change and the human condition.

The picture that Dutch filmmaker Floor van der Meulen saw in a Dutch newspaper four years ago seemed so odd, and somewhat disconcerting. One of the most powerful and imposing of animals, a northern white rhino, was standing in a field protected from poachers by four armed rangers. "It was an iconic image, that one of the most dangerous animals in the world needed 24/7 protection from mankind. It was like the world was turned upside down. It fascinated me."

In the doc, produced by Een van de Jongens and supported by the Film Fund, 45-year-old Sudan is the last remaining male of his rhino species. Residing in the Ol Pejeta reserve in Kenya, he is semi-tame and his 24/7 protection is essential. Rhino horn, we are told, reaches prices of up to \$71,000 dollars per kilo – and each rhino carries 15k of horn. This means every animal is worth more than a million dollars to poachers.

As soon as she read the article, Van der Meulen was on a plane to Kenya. Originally she was going to shoot a 15-minute documentary but she soon saw the wider potential of the story, especially when she encountered hundreds of the world's media and hordes of tourists there to embark on an 'endangered species tour' and have their picture taken with Sudan. "In the beginning I thought I wanted to make a film about Sudan and his caretaker and their special bond, but then it became a tragicomedy about us humans." The director was impressed by the CPH:DOX observation on how, even though the irony of man's (self)destructive dominance on earth has become clear to most people, Sudan stands heavily and majestically in the midst of it all, like a mirror image of our human megalomania.

In her film Van der Meulen interviews a host of characters, from James the ranger/guardian – "he is the reason I am here, the reason I wake up," he says of Sudan – to the reserve's head of security, tourists, staff and scientists working in the field of artificial insemination. And by way of punctuation, a clock ticks off the days as Sudan's health diminishes and a sense of the inevitable descends.

"We started with no budget, just research money," stresses Van der Meulen on how the production increased in scale and scope over the four years. "First it was 15 minutes, then broadcaster EODocs

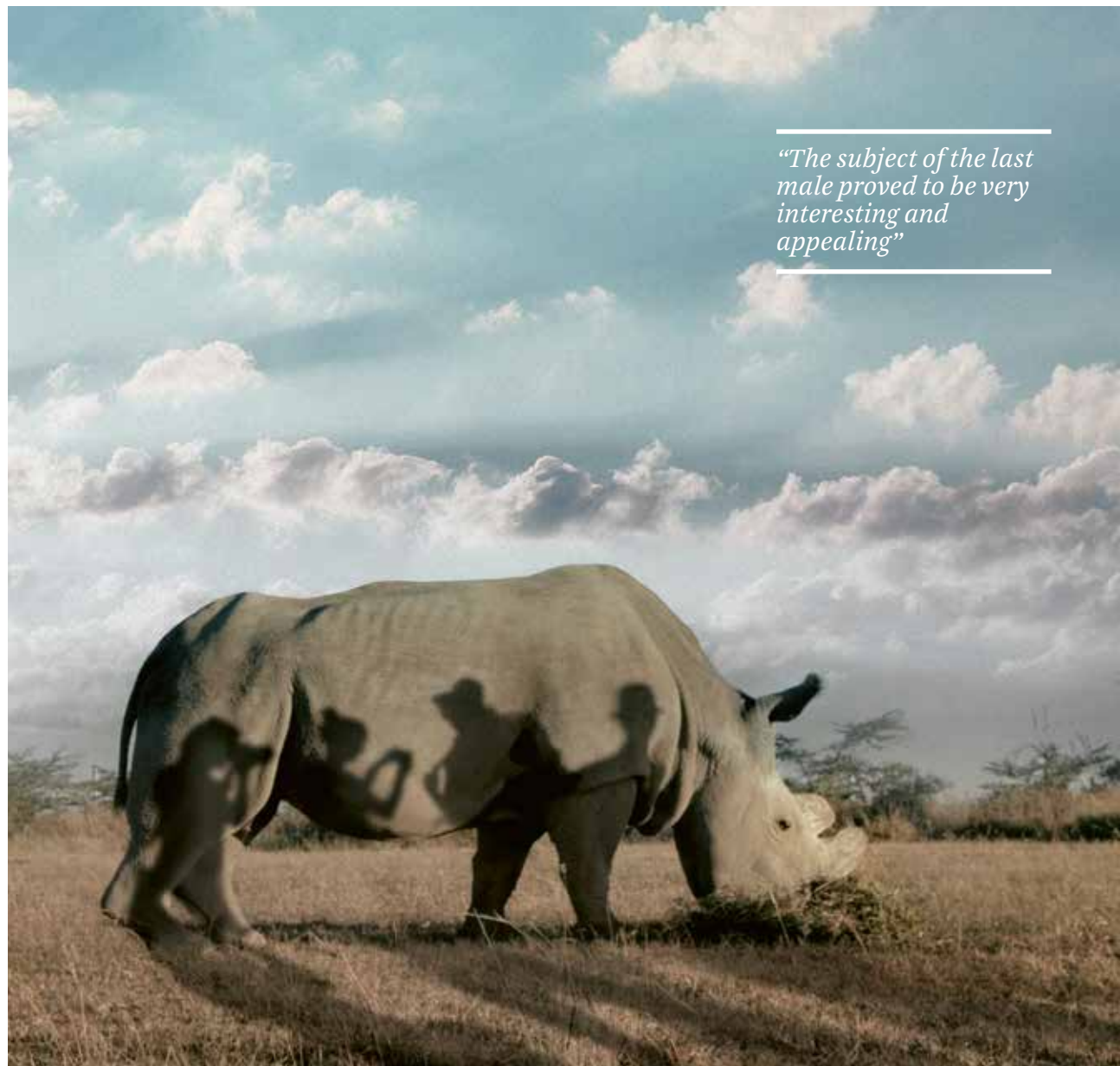
came on board and it got bigger, then we received development money, and then we thought... we should apply to the Film Fund to make it a legit film. The subject of the last male proved to be very interesting and appealing." The film will be released in the Netherlands Sept 2019 by Cinema Delicatessen.

Van der Meulen is currently developing her fiction feature debut *Methusalem*. During a family gathering a young woman is unexpectedly told by her father that he has had enough of life at which point she is forced to deal with the absurdity of the situation. "It is kind of derived from the rhino story, about death and how we deal with death in society. The two stories influence each other. I am greatly interested in humans and the human condition in every story I tell."

She further describes how fiction and doc storytelling forms converge in her work, and how which her creative processes are recalibrated in the process. "With documentaries you never know what you will come home with after a day of shooting, and after a day of shooting on a fiction set you are always a bit depressed because you didn't get everything that you thought you would get. So I like to work on my fiction in a more documentary way and go into it a lot more open-minded. There is a structure and the script is the backbone, but then it is all about letting go and also trying to be honest and really vulnerable. If we can be like that on set then the experience can be magic, I believe." NC

CPH:DOX premiere
The Last Male on Earth
Floor van der Meulen

CPH:DOX*



"The subject of the last male proved to be very interesting and appealing"

A fondness for absence



Maartje Nevejan

Maartje Nevejan's new feature documentary *Are you There?* is a journey deep into inner space, its subject: absence epilepsy.

As a child, Nevejan herself had seizures during which she experienced the uncanny sensation of non-being. For a few moments, it was as if she was no longer present in the world. The strangest thing was that she could remember the sensation even though she was experiencing what might best be described as cosmic nothingness.

This is much more than just a documentary film. The project is based around scientific research and has involved public lectures, meetings with artists and academics, exhibitions, Virtual Reality events and a book. "Basically, I wanted to go into the...unknown!" Nevejan explains of her intentions when she started out on the film.

How do you film an inner experience that is well-nigh impossible to describe? The director's solution was to bring artists and scientists together with children who've had these absence seizures. In the run up to making the film, she also

consulted shamans (apparently, there are plenty of these in the Netherlands). She quickly realised that they had a lot in common. They all shared the same fascination with human expression and consciousness.

"They loved to learn about each other but they also had prejudices," the director recalls. The project was "challenging a scientific paradigm" by suggesting it was possible to experience nothingness...and to talk about it afterwards. Some sceptics accused the filmmakers of pseudoscience. However, most were intrigued by the existential question the filmmaker asked them: "if you are not there, where are you?" Thanks to the "psychedelic renaissance" that is currently going on, experts tend to be less doctrinaire than in the past about the mysteries of human consciousness – about dreams, fantasies and chemically-induced visions.

Sir Anish Kapoor, the celebrated British artist, invited Nevejan to his studio in London. He spoke to her of his fascination with black ("not a colour but a space") and with the very thin line between life and death, consciousness and oblivion.

When *Are You There?*, supported by the Netherlands Film Fund, world-premiered at CPH:DOX in Copenhagen in the spring, audiences responded with huge enthusiasm. "People are enormously touched by the movie and they don't know exactly why," the director says. "Most

people had never heard of absence epilepsy but still they connected with all the layers in the film."

Some of the children who fall prey to seizures attended the premiere. This was an emotional event for them. Most had never told their stories before. They felt they were sharing something deeply private with the audience. "I feel the same, of course, that there is some kind of trespassing into a very intimate space. You feel like 'can I talk about this.' And if you are in a cinema, it is very open, more open than your face," Nevejan says of her subjects' wariness about exposing their innermost secrets in front of an audience. Afterwards, they were very relieved that people were so kind to them.

The artists, mystics and scientists brought together by Nevejan often formed close bonds ("great kinships" as she puts it). Some have continued to work together. Meanwhile, a children's hospital in London has contacted Nevejan to see if she can take her project there. "They (the hospital) also have a lot of (epileptic) kids who are depressed because they don't find the language to express their inner feelings."

Her work on the film, which opens in Dutch cinemas June 20 with an associated exhibition and VR experience, has convinced her that it is impossible to "map the inner world without a collaboration between art and science. We can map the outer world without art but for the inner world, we need it." GM



Director: Willem Baptist **Scriptwriter:** Willem Baptist
Production: Tangerine Tree

Nyon dreams

Eight Dutch docs were selected for the 50th edition of Visions du Réel (Nyon, Switzerland), including the world premiere of Willem Baptist's feature documentary Ring of Dreams. Nick Cunningham reports.

For many kids of Willem Baptist's generation, the weekly dose of all-in wrestling was must-watch television. He was just ten years of age, but together with his grandma he would sit glued to the box, watching an array of colourful characters perform their muscular, if highly choreographed, routines.

Thirty years later, Baptist read an article about Dutch wrestling and decided to revisit his passion. He admits that his attitude before attending a fight was one of profound scepticism. Hulk Hogan and WWE it certainly wasn't, and the crowds were pretty sparse. But after five minutes he was hooked again, at which point he decided that this subject would make a great documentary.

The Tangerine Tree production *Ring of Dreams*, supported by the Netherlands Film Fund and screening in Grand Angle section, revolves around the masked wrestler Tengkwa and a band of brothers that include the terrifying Mexican El Chico who cries at the memory of his mother, the baddie (and well-oiled) Emil and Dirty Dragan, from the Balkans. Tengkwa also runs an academy for aspiring fighters, where we meet poor fall

guy (in all senses) Kristian whose desperate calling is to make it big between the ropes.

"That was the funny thing about Kristian. What you see on screen is a mixture of multiple realities. On the one hand he is this real life underdog who gets the shit kicked out of him, but in wrestling terms it is *his job* to be the innocent victim in the scene. So there are instances where those things collide, like when he gets slapped hard in the face and you can see him thinking "this shit is getting real". He plays himself, but in his mind he sees himself very differently."

The wrestlers appreciated how Baptist treated them with respect, unlike previous fly-by-night programme makers out to exploit or make fun of them. "Actually they didn't know entirely what I was doing but this is pretty normal when you are making documentaries," Baptist concedes. But he also did his homework, putting in the hours to attend numerous bouts in The Netherlands and Belgium, getting to know all the characters within this small and loyal wrestling community.

"It took me a long time to gain their trust but I treated them like colleagues. In my opinion, they do the same as filmmakers, only they tell their stories with their bodies."

Three other Dutch docs were selected for Nyon's Grand Angle section. These were Aboozar Amini's

Kabul City in the Wind (prod. Silk Road Film Salon, also see page 12), Hedy Honigmann's canine-themed *Buddy* (prod. Appel&Honigmann) and the impressively cinematic ovine-themed *Sheep Hero* by Ton van Zantvoort (prod. NEWTON Film), about one of The Netherlands' last remaining shepherds.

In the International Medium Length and Short Film Competition, three Dutch documentaries were selected. Clarice Gargard and Shamira Raphaëla's *Daddy and the Warlord* (prod: De Familie Film & TV) tells the story of Liberian Clarice who, when forced to evaluate her beloved father's political legacy, gets entangled in a web where good and evil are desperately interweaved. The short doc *Toni and Bleri* by Katja Verheul (world-premiere) takes place in Kosovo, where two young men evoke memories of a scarcely joyful past, telling of their dream to leave the country for a better life. In *Above Us Only Sky*, director Arthur Kleinjan uses free association and incidental traces to create a magical realist story about a flight he once missed.

Acknowledging the great Dutch documentary legacy, the 1978 doc *Flat Jungle*, directed by Johan van der Keuken, screened in Cinquante section. Van der Keuken shows us life on the Wadden Sea shores, and includes portraits of people whose lives have been fundamentally altered by the developments taking place in the area.



Director: Carine Bijlsma **Scriptwriter:** Carine Bijlsma
Production: Interakt Productions (NL) **Co-production:** NTR (NL)

Return of the messiah



Carine Bijlsma

Look at the list of albums released by American singer-songwriter D'Angelo and you can't help but notice the 14-year gap between his second album 'Voodoo' (2000) and his comeback 'Black Messiah' (2014), writes Geoffrey Macnab.

Back in the early years of the new millennium the Grammy award-winning musician seemed to disappear off the face of the earth. Dutch director Carine Bijlsma's new documentary *Devil's Pie*, which premiered recently at Tribeca, prides this enigmatic and very charismatic figure out into the light.

"D'Angelo to me is a musical genius. He likes to refer to himself as a music nerd. He has studied all the greats, such as Prince, Earth Wind and Fire and The Isley Brothers and has been able to take all of these influences and turn them into his own sound. Questlove calls him, 'the last pure singer on earth.' His music penetrates your soul," is how Bijlsma sums up what drew her to her subject.

He is not an easy figure to categorise in either his personal or professional

life. His music has elements of jazz, funk soul, R&B, and rock. The director has been listening to him since she was a teenager.

In the film, supported by the Film Fund, Bijlsma explores D'Angelo's gospel roots. She somehow managed to get hold of original archive footage of him playing at his grandmother's church in Virginia. *Devil's Pie* then follows its subject as he emerges from his self-imposed exile. She follows him on tour as his third album finally comes out after all those years during which he had vanished from the music scene.

"Loss, addiction, family, success, friendship, artistry..." the director ticks off the many different subjects her film touches on. Bijlsma was fascinated that someone with such power and presence as a performer would hide himself away. "I had developed an initial idea for the film before seeing him perform in Amsterdam. I actually wrote a letter introducing myself and asking for the opportunity to make a film about his music and ultimately about his journey. I emailed it to one of his band members and, after much patience over many months, he called to say he was excited about the film and we took it from there."

Oscar-winning actor Forest Whitaker helped finance the film through his Significant Productions.

Bijlsma sees similarities between *Devil's Pie* and some of her earlier documentaries such as *The Secret*

of Boccherini (2008) in which she explored her cellist father's fascination with composer Luigi Boccherini, or *Never A Dull Moment*, about composer Louis Andriessen. "My best filmmaking comes from a place of deep respect and love for the artistry of my subjects," she says. "There are many similar themes in each of these films as they all speak of the highs and lows of artistic achievement. These films each pick a moment in time where we stand beside these artists as they enter a pivotal [period] in each of their careers."

The director's love of music and the arts dates back to earliest childhood – and even beyond that. She toured with her musician parents "as far back as when my mother was pregnant with me." Carine's mother, renowned violinist Vera Beths, went into labour and gave birth to her while *en route* to a concert in Utrecht.

Her father Anner Bijlsma is acclaimed as a great cellist but she suggests his influence on her isn't just directly through his music but, as importantly, through his philosophy on art and life. "I am able to translate his thoughts on musicianship and musical structure into the structure of my films, and with that create, as he calls it, a visual symphony," the director declares.

Fresh from its premiere at the Tribeca Festival in New York, *Devil's Pie - D'Angelo* will be released in Dutch cinemas in mid-May by Interakt Prods and Amstelfilm.

Tribeca times three

Three more highly diverse Dutch projects were selected for Tribeca 2019, the queer online drama series *ANNE+*, the VR *Another Dream* about a lesbian couple who are forced to flee post-Revolution Egypt, and *Mind My Mind*, about life inside the head of an autistic man discovering love for the first time.

The 6 x 10-minute series *ANNE+*, directed by Valerie Bisscheroux and developed with creator/writer Maud Wiemeijer, was made in response to what the pair felt was a disappointingly obvious depiction of LGBTQ characters on Dutch television and online. "Storylines are always about coming out or the struggles of being an LGBTQ character instead of just a person living his or her or its life," explains Bisscheroux. "There wasn't a series with a lesbian main character without problematising the whole fact that she is gay."

Tribeca selected episodes one and four for its Tribeca N.O.W. section, the latter episode dealing with the thorny issue of falling for your boss. Starring the highly talented Hanna van Vliet as the eponymous heroine, Bisscheroux and Wiemeijer will go into production on a second series for broadcaster NPO in Summer 2019, this time fleshed out to 8 x 25 mins. "Maud and I want to make longer scenes and longer dialogues, and create more filmic moments," comments Bisscheroux, adding how "a very important aspect of the whole project is that 80% of the cast and crew are queer... I hear people

saying that it is revolutionary, and I feel that for myself and for the queer community. I guess we will know in a few years what it will do for the television industry in the Netherlands."

The VR *Another Dream*, written, directed and produced by Tamara Shogaolu of Ado Ato Pictures, is the second instalment of the three-part transmedia series *Queer in a Time of Forced Migration* and brings to life the gripping, true story of an Egyptian lesbian couple who, faced with a post-Revolution backlash against their community, must choose between love and home. *Another Dream* is supported by the Netherlands Film Fund and world-premiered in Tribeca's Storyscapes section.

"I feel that it is revolutionary for myself and for the queer community"

"I had over ten years of material, stories and characters' lives, and I felt that putting all that just into a film was limiting," explains Shogaolu. "Each stage, such as believing there was going to be a better future for the country, then contemplating whether or not to leave, taking that decision to leave and then how to make a new place your home, deserved its own way of being told. [For *Another Dream*] I thought VR allowed you to connect more to the story, and really step

ANNE+ (series), *Another Dream* (VR),
Mind My Mind (Animated Short)

TRIBECA
FILM
FESTIVAL

into someone's memories and thoughts to see what it means to have to take these decisions, that it is not something done lightly and that it does not come without challenges."

Floor Adams' animated short *Mind my Mind*, produced by Cineté and Belgian animation house Fabrique Fantastique, had already picked up audiences awards at Go Short and Anima (Brussels) before it was selected for Tribeca's Animated Shorts section by none other than Whoopi Goldberg.

In the film, the humanoid controller inside the brain of a young and aircraft-obsessed autistic man must deal with the disruptive sensation of him falling in love. Director Adams previously taught animation to autistic students but the main driver for the film was dating a man with autism herself. "People with autism have another way of processing information, seeing contexts differently or with difficulty, or are sometimes a bit delayed in answering a question. Also, a lot of them experience sensory overload. [Via the character of the brain controller] I wanted to make this visible, a personalisation of this process," explains Adams.

The film is English-language, and distinctly London at that. "I intended to tell a universal story to reach a broad audience. Therefore I chose to make the film English spoken. And I personally prefer British English; it is closer to home."



Nouvelle vague: Dutch style



Kala-a-zar
Director: Janis Rafa **Scriptwriter:** Janis Rafa
Production: SNG Film (NL) **Co-production:** Heretic (GR)

Geoffrey Macnab talks to the emerging talent who are looking to redefine the look and feel of Dutch and European cinema.

Young Dutch director Mees Peijnenburg sums it up well when he enthuses about the new wave of talent currently emerging from The Netherlands. “I feel there is this energy around with people really trying to tell their own stories,” Peijnenburg declares. “People are broadening their horizons and thinking more globally instead of nationally, which I find super interesting.”

Peijnenburg is part of the new wave himself. His debut feature *Paradise Drifters*, supported by the Film Fund, will be released this summer. It’s about three homeless young adults who manage to retain their hunger for life despite the considerable odds they face trying to keep themselves alive, all the time trying to build a future in southern Europe. The film, which takes place in Amsterdam, Marseilles, Belgium and Barcelona, is one of a number of intriguing projects from a new generation of Dutch filmmakers. These films come in every conceivable form. There are rites of passage movies, experimental art house dramas and satirical comedies among them.

Young Dutch-based Greek artist Janis Rafa is following up on her first solo exhibition (‘Eaten By Non-Humans’, held recently at the

Centraal Museum in Utrecht) with her debut feature film *Kala-a-zar* which has more than a hint of David Lynch about it. With virtually no dialogue, this is a brooding, atmospheric drama about a couple living on the outskirts of a city in southern Europe who collect dead animals and abandoned roadkill, bringing them to a pet crematorium. Looking after these animals gives meaning to the couple’s lives.

“It is completely cinematic, a fiction film with a beginning and a clear end,” Rafa explains. “It is a work obviously made to be exhibited in a cinema context, a festival context and not to be screened in a museum.” The main actors are Penelope Tsilika and Dimitris Lalos. Digna Sinke’s SNG Film is the producer on the project. The Greek co-producer is Heretic.

“I feel there is this energy around with people really trying to tell their own stories”

How did Rafa assemble the carcasses of the dead animals which feature so prominently in the film? (And no, these aren’t dummies or props.) “For me, it was interesting to acknowledge the animals. The best way I could do that was by finding them in the landscape,” the artist explains. “They are actual animals that were found dead. Of course, they were not killed for the film. It is

Dutch talent to get excited about

like a tribute to these animals, incorporating them in the film.” The fact that the Netherlands Film Fund and the Mondrian Fund supported *Kala-a-zar* points to Rafa’s growing reputation in both the cinema world and the art world.

One young writer-director whose profile is fast rising is the Surinamese-Cape Verdean Ashar Medina. He was the screenwriter on Gonzalo Fernandez’s Golden Calf-nominated short *Tom Adelaar*, made for Topkapi. His screenplay, about a young black telemarketer who changes his name and accent in order to avoid racism and succeed better in his job, is partially inspired by Medina’s own experiences.

By chance, US filmmaker and actor Boots Riley enjoyed a big hit at Sundance with his feature *Sorry To Bother You*, also about a black call centre worker passing himself off as white. “It was a bizarre coincidence which at first I was scared about because I thought people were going to say you ripped this off,” Medina remembers. However, he quickly found out that it was “incredibly universal” for Dutch call centre workers from minority backgrounds to pass themselves off to customers as white.

Medina first met Fernandez when they were students at the Netherlands Film Academy. “He studied directing, I studied screenwriting. We found each other pretty fast,” Medina recalls. They shared a love ▶

Nouvelle vague: Dutch style

Continued from page 31

of genre filmmaking of the 70s and 80s. Both had a passion for making entertaining films which also had something provocative to say about contemporary society. “As far as the genre and the drama (is concerned), we worked completely together.

Tom Adelaar is about being alienated, about searching for your identity, about family ties and how they can be suffocating and sometimes liberating. These are things that everyone can understand.”

Medina (also the writer on TV drama *Mocro Mafia*) has directorial projects of his own but aims to work with Fernandez again on the new feature project *The Island - A Tale of Narcissus*. This is a tragicomedy about a hedonistic young black poet who sees himself as a new Arthur Rimbaud and refuses to be bound by social conventions. The first TV film he wrote was *Jungle (2017)*, a drama about two young Syrian refugees who try to survive in a notorious refugee camp in Calais. It was directed by Dutch director Hetty de Kruijf and nominated for two Golden Calves.

Both Medina and Fernandez look set to establish themselves as leading names in Dutch cinema culture over the coming years. Echoing Peijnenburg’s remarks about the emergence of a new wave of Dutch writing and directing talent, Medina points out that there is “a lot of talent that is beginning to run and go with these new types of stories that we have in this day and age.”

A challenge for the young filmmakers is maintaining their own visions even as broadcasters, commissioning editors and funders give them feedback and script notes. “Sometimes, with our system, it can happen that you get too many cooks in the kitchen,” Medina warns.

One young writer who clearly doesn’t ever compromise to please his backers is Jeroen Scholten van Aschat, the screenwriter of Viktor van der Valk’s IFFR hit *Nocturne* and co-writer of Shady El-Hamus’ soon to be released rites of passage debut feature *De Libi* (aka *About That Life*), backed by the Film Fund.

Directors who’ve worked with him talk about Van Aschat’s discipline and his understanding of story structure. “He has a strength that I was looking for. He is very analytical. He is a very different writer than I am and that really helps me with my projects,” El-Hamus says of his co-writer (with whom he also collaborated on the 2017 short *Nightshade*).

El-Hamus wrote first drafts of the screenplay which he sent to Van Aschat who in turn reshaped the material before returning it to the director. Towards the end of the process, they spent more and more time “together in a room, talking it through and making notes.”

One of the fascinations about *De Libi* is that this is a film influenced in style by all those Hollywood-made *Cooley High* and *American Graffiti*-

style movies but made with a distinctly European aesthetic, about youngsters on the verge of adulthood, driven by a lust for life. The filmmakers talk about the energy and open-minded quality they want *De Libi* to have.

El-Hamus studied at the National Film School in the UK where he was tutored by the likes of Stephen Frears, Paul Greengrass and Michael Mann. “The NFTS opened up a new world to draw inspiration from and it would be interesting to find our own middle ground.”

For Van Aschat, *De Libi* was a complete change of direction after *Nocturne*, which was strongly influenced by Jean-Luc Godard and the French New Wave. That was the attraction. As Van Aschat says, “I want to try as many things as possible. I always find (myself working with) directors looking for their voice and I thought, hey, I can work with different directors and try different things – I am schizophrenic and paradoxical in my tastes. I like *American Graffiti* just as much as I like Godard.”

Van Aschat hopes to work with both El-Hamus and Van der Valk again – and is sure that no two films either of them make will ever be the same as its predecessor. The writer and his two director collaborators are part of a Dutch cinema culture which looks fresher and livelier at the moment than at any time in the past 20 years.

“He studied directing,
I studied screenwriting.
We found each other
pretty fast”



About That Life (De Libi)

Director: Shady El-Hamus

Scriptwriter: Jeroen Scholten van Aschat, Shady El-Hamus

Production: The Rogues **Sales:** Some Shorts

Go with the Flow

Flow, Intermission Expedition,
Fox and Hare



The prestigious Annecy International Animation Film Festival (June 10-15 2019) gives the nod to three new vibrant Dutch projects.

Adriaan Lokman's beautiful and extraordinary short animation *Flow* (Special Events), made for Valk Productions and supported by the Netherlands Film Fund, looks to present in dramatic and physical form the shape and power of the air that surrounds us. He does so by linear-tracking the movement of wind around solid objects (humans, buildings, a turbulent sea, even a lazy hand languidly extended from the window of a sports car) and then removing those objects from the frame. "Everything that is invisible I turn visible. Everything that is visible I turn invisible," Lokman points out.

"Firstly I built the film in 3d, in terms of real physical objects. All those objects are needed for a [SFX] particles fountain to react to. It is like a water hose, if it touches another object it goes in all directions. You can then turn these particles into whatever you want – smoke or water or fire, or also very thin lines."

"I like to look in another way at things that are kind of ordinary, in this case the wind that is around us all the time" he adds. "We can't see it but it has a huge influence on our lives... It is a beautiful and fascinating thing but you don't see it, you only see the effects of what it does."

Another Valk Productions selection is Wiep Teeuwisse's minimalist but highly expressive *Intermission Expedition* in Short Film Competition.

In the work, supported by the Film Fund, a group of vacuous and unimaginative tourists become indistinguishable from the sea-froth that washes up onto the seashore. Teeuwisse, who graduated from HKU Utrecht in 2015 and is currently studying at the UK National Film and Television School, got the metaphorical inspiration for the film when observing holidaymakers when she was travelling post-graduation.

"I saw how the foam moved on the beach in a really strange way, and it really fascinated me and I wanted to do something with its texture and lightness. Then one day I was kayaking and I had this sense of confusion when I saw stones floating by that turned out to be volcanic rock that is so light and airy that it can float. I found it really interesting that you have the sea foam that is made within a few seconds and dies immediately and then there is this rock that feels really really old and comes from the earth (and is equally light)."

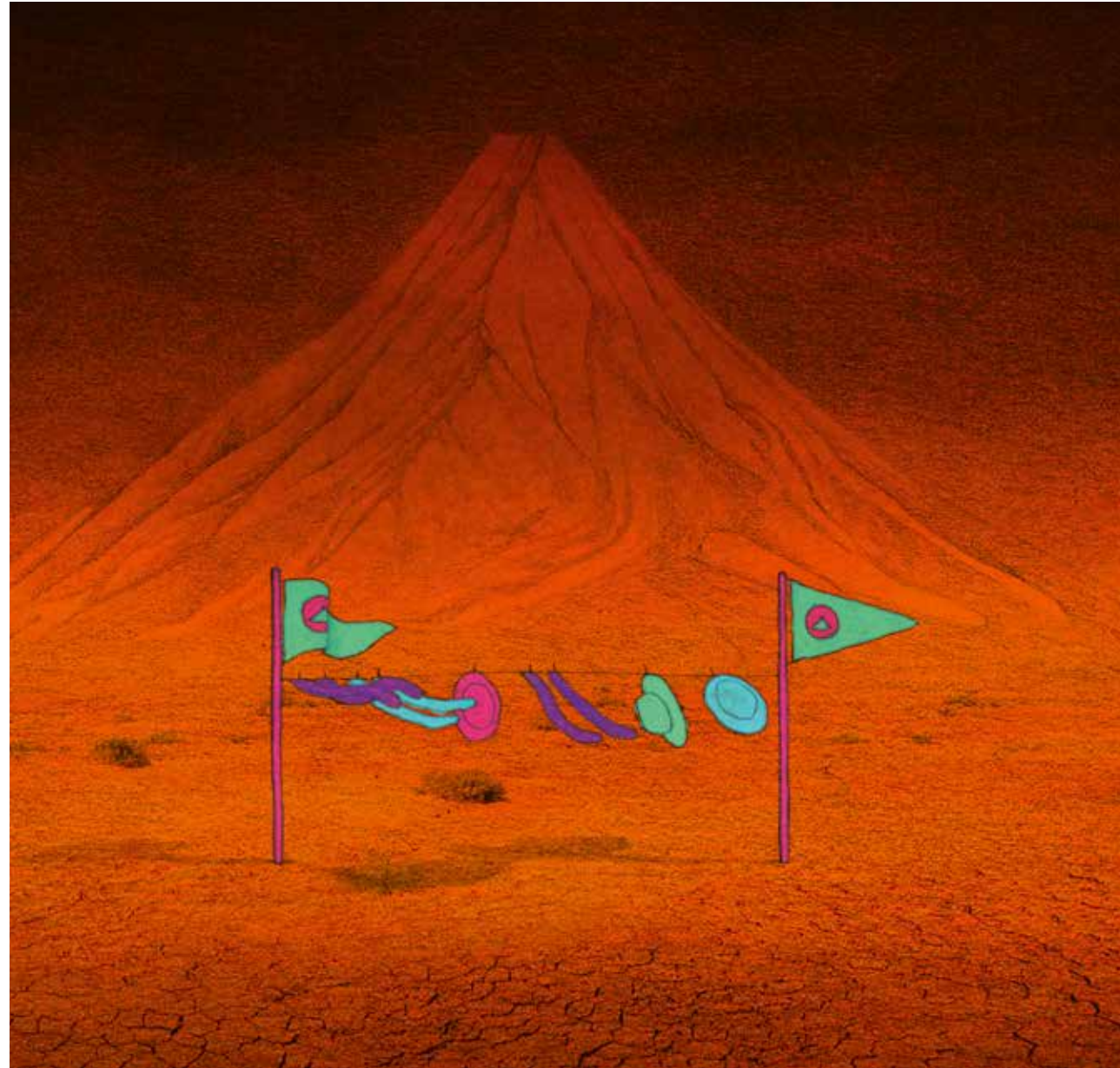
Fox and Hare, directed by Mascha Halberstad and Tom van Gestel and produced by Submarine, is a 26 x 11-minute pre-school series that follows a group of animal friends in the forest. Annecy chose the episode entitled 'Birthday', in which

Fox is desperate to celebrate Hare's birthday despite the ineptness of disco-loving Tusk (a boar) and Owl. The series is based on the celebrated books written by the Belgian Sylvia van den Heede and illustrated by Dutch animator The Tjong Khing.

"I like to look in another way at things that are kind of ordinary"

Halberstad explains how her strengths are in character development/direction and audio while co-director Van Gestel is very strong visually. "We are a very good team together because we have the best of both worlds," she comments, adding how the first part of the process is to record the actors in the sound studio, before the animatic and subsequent animation. "When I put all the actors in the studio together they could really interact, because that is where you get the humour. I gave them a lot of space to improvise. I really let Tusk loose, and he came up with all these hysterical things."

While the original animations were 2D, the series is distinctly 3D. "Yes, Tom and I had this discussion about 2D, but we decided that would compare too closely with the original book. We thought that if we make an adaptation it will become something you recognise but also something completely new." NC



Intermission Expedition
Director: Wiep Teeuwisse Scriptwriter: Wiep Teeuwisse
Production: Valk Productions Sales/Festivals: Some Shorts

Singing a merry toon

At Cartoon Movie in Bordeaux (March 2019) the spotlight was placed on the burgeoning Dutch animation industry both in terms of top quality content and the Netherlands as a dynamic co-production partner. Nick Cunningham talks to leading players from the sector.

Submarine's Bruno Felix remembers his first time at Cartoon Movie, the leading co-production event for the global animation industry. It was at Llandudno in Wales at the beginning of the new millennium and he was one of five Dutch attendees with precious little to boast about in terms of a domestic animation industry.

Seventeen years later, Felix headed up the Dutch contingent in Bordeaux that included scores of producers, filmmakers, distributors and funders, representing ten new projects. The producer himself walked away with the Producer of the Year Award and saw the Director of the Year award presented to Salvador Simó for *Buñuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles*, which he co-produced.

"A lot has changed in the Lowlands over these past 17 years," he stresses. "The Netherlands Film Fund has created a cash rebate system (Production Incentive) which pays back up to 35% on all euros spent both in the Netherlands on animated series and features which makes us a viable co-producing country. The



Production incentive is instrumental in getting Dutch producers involved in these international co-productions. It is only when you do co-productions that you become part of this network, and that will help you make your own films."

"In addition, we have a growing number of theatrical distributors who are bringing more animated features to satisfy the growing appetite of Dutch audiences. And the enthusiasm for animated films is also evident in the growing number of graduates that flow out of the Netherlands."

Submarine is developing/(co) producing many other animated projects including Ari Folman's *Where is Anne Frank?*, the audacious *My Grandfather Used to Say He Saw Demons* (Nuno Beato) and the eagerly-awaited 8 x 22 minute Amazon series *Undone*,

directed by Dutch animation maestro Hisko Hulsing.

Dutch producer Richard Valk concurs with Felix, arguing that an international dimension is the only way to secure the higher budgets that feature animation demands (stressing at the same time that we must continue to place funding emphasis on shorts and VR/AR as well). He also underlines the need to dovetail co-production rules with those of other animation-friendly international funds.

"Until now we have been very careful with budgets, but to have international success you need higher budgets and you need content. That is doable only within international co-production," he stresses. "The first thing I always say [when approached to produce a short animation project] is 'let's try to think international', so I have good connections with Belgium,

France and Germany'. My films are almost all international co-productions."

"Features and shorts are developing fast in the Netherlands and there is a lot to gain," he adds. "But we must be more open to the rules of other countries. We are in a very good place, and thank god for the Film Fund, because Germany for example is less flexible, but there is always room for improvement in terms of co-operation."

Valk produced two films selected for Annecy 2019. These are Adriaan Lokman's *Flow* and Wiep Teeuwisse's *Intermission Expedition* (see page 26).

The Film Fund's Dorien van de Pas underlines her organisation's commitment to the sector, stressing how the Production Incentive has generated €13.8 million in animated feature spend, and €9.7 million in animated series spend, since its introduction in 2014. "What we saw at Cartoon Movie is that we are now part of this European animation co-production industry, not only as a majority producer but as a minority partner too. There are really strong animators, producers and more and more studios in the Netherlands, excellent levels of education at the film school and greater funding possibilities."

She adds: "On one hand you have animation production houses like Submarine and il Luster and Valk

The renaissance of Dutch animation



Productions, and on the other hand you have live-action producers who are entering the sector, such as Viking Film who is working with talent such as Mascha Halberstad (*Fox and Hare*, producer Submarine, p26) and Job, Joris and Marieke (*A Single Life*, nominated for an Academy Award 2015 for Best Animated Short Film, see p46). And established producers of live-action content for children, like BosBros. With the Netherlands, you can see that the quality is there, the people are there, the studios are there and the investment is there."

Director Vincent Bal (*Miss Minoes*, *The Zig Zag Kid*) is developing the animated feature *Miss Moxy*, about a snooty cat who must learn the value of friendship, with BosBros' Jolande Junte. Bal illustrates how the Dutch animation sector has developed over recent years. "Ten years ago I did an animation series called *Kika and Bob* with Submarine

and we had to outsource all the animation to China because there was just no way we could do that just in Holland. But that gave us a lot of problems as there were a lot of cultural issues in that they didn't understand certain jokes, and it was really hard," he remembers. "Now we can do all of that work here in Europe, in Holland, in a way you wouldn't have expected a decade ago. It is a very positive evolution."

Junte adds: "We don't have a huge (feature) tradition compared to the countries around us, but we are catching up very fast. Also the broadcasters don't have so much experience in producing animation, but they are quickly getting the sense of it. And what they are doing at the Film Fund is light years away from what happened there five years ago. We will all get there together in the end."

.....
A very sad footnote to Cartoon Movie was the announcement on the final day of the passing of the great Dutch animator Rosto. Lauded by festivals across the world, especially Clermont Ferrand, Rosto made the masterly *Wreckers Tetralogy* which consisted of *No Place like Home*, *Lonely Bones*, *Splintertime* and *Reruns*, all of which were satellites around what he called the mothership 'Mind My Gap': an online graphic novel of 26 episodes that illustrated his bizarre, unique, stylish and highly idiosyncratic universe.



Pari
Director: Siamak Etemadi **Scriptwriter:** Siamak Etemadi
Production: Heretic (GR) **Co-production:** Topkapi Films (NL),
Le Bureau (FR), The Chuouchlov Brothers (BU) **Sales:** Heretic

Post delivery

Right now WarnierPosta is frantically busy. The leading Dutch audiopost facility for film and high-end TV is finishing work on one of its most ambitious projects yet, Burhan Qurbani's epic new version of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, writes Geoffrey Macnab.

In addition, the company has just completed post- on Iranian director's Siamak Etemadi's Greek-set feature *Pari*. Through its Belgian studio, Cinenumerique in Antwerp, it has been working on Michalis Konstantatos' *All The Pretty Little Horses*. Meanwhile, the company has been mixing Halina Reijn's debut drama *Instinct*, starring Carice van Houten, and *The Tree* by South-African director Louw Venter.

On the face of it, it appears as if business is booming for the company that studio musician and bass player Peter Warnier formed back in 1993. Thanks to the Netherlands' Film Production Incentive introduced in 2014, the country's post-production sector has been enjoying a sustained revival. With a 35% cash rebate as a potential dowry, the Dutch are again attractive as potential co-production partners.

The company splits its work three ways: a third is Dutch projects, a third is high-end TV and a third is international co-production. Although the order book is full, Warnier expresses concern about the size of the movies the company

is attracting. Big Hollywood films like *Dunkirk* and *The Goldfinch* were attracted to the Netherlands but didn't complete their post-production in the country. While high-end TV dramas are being made, the feature films that WarnierPosta is servicing tend to be smaller art house films. As Warnier notes, not so many features with budgets over €5 million are either shooting or doing their post- in the Netherlands. Projects of the size of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* are the exception, not the rule.

But there is a silver lining. Warnier was one of the founder members last year of the Netherlands Post Production Alliance (NPA), the new trade body bringing together 15 Dutch digital imaging, sound design and visual effects studios. The NPA recently commissioned a report from research company, Olsberg SPI. Due to be published later this summer, the report is expected to confirm a lowering of budgets on films shooting in the Netherlands but a significant increase in the volume of production.

"The Netherlands used to be a television country but we are making more and more good films," Warnier says. "We learn a lot from all these co-productions and from working with foreign talent."

Alongside the audiopost facility, Warnier also has his own production company, Wild at Art. He is involved as a co-producer in most of

Sergei Loznitsa's films, co-produced David Verbeek's *Full Contact* and came aboard as one of the minor investors in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. This ensures filmmakers are given all the time they need to their audiopost – and that the other producers won't try to cut corners during this part of the process.

WarnierPosta has invested heavily in its Dolby Atmos mixing stage and studios. It's now a far bigger business than it was when Warnier launched it in the early 1990s. Back then, it was a one man band.

Early in his career, he worked with director Mike van Diem on sound design for the Oscar-winning student short *Alaska*, and also worked with Van Diem on the feature *Character* (1998), again an Oscar winner. Since then, he has been involved with Golden Calf, Golden Bear and Golden Lion winners. Whatever wariness he feels about the lack of big budget projects shooting in the Netherlands, he is more optimistic now about the state of the local industry than he has been for a long time.

He credits Doreen Boonekamp, CEO of the Netherlands Film Fund, as one of the figures who has transformed the sector. "I've known her for a long time and she has always been very open to the position of the post-production companies in the Netherlands. She was very involved in getting the cash rebate done...we owe her a lot!"

Eye on Kentridge on Eye

Jun 3 - Sept 1 2019  Eye Exhibition

William Kentridge - 10 Drawings for Projection

Four years ago, William Kentridge donated 10 Drawings for Projection (1989-2011) to the Eye Filmmuseum. These are considered to be among the visionary South African artist/filmmaker's most important animated films.

Speaking from his studio in Johannesburg in early May, Kentridge explains just why he made the donation. "I was very happy to have a collection of the films in a place that is both a museum but also a portal to a film archive," he says. He knew that the films would be properly preserved and looked after – that they would find what he calls a safe repository. "It is not as altruistic a gift as it might appear!"

Kentridge adds that he relishes the atmosphere at Eye and speaks of his delight that the films are not only part of the Eye collection but will soon be shown again as part of a major installation taking place during the Holland Festival, for which Kentridge acts as Associate Artist. The great man will be there in person to introduce the work.

At the start of his career, Kentridge looked as likely to become an actor as an artist. He had been fascinated by performance as well as drawing from a very early age. "They were both natural activities to continue with. After university, I studied fine arts at a private school and then decided I had nothing to say as an artist and gave it up – and then

thought if I can't be an artist, I suppose I had better be an actor."

He had been acting at a theatre company in Johannesburg but decided he needed to study the craft properly. He was interested in mime and improvisation - and this led him to the renowned École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris. This was not a psychological or text-based school. The emphasis here was on movement – acting "from the neck downwards." However, as Kentridge puts it with typical self-deprecation, "after three weeks, I discovered I should not be an actor. The range of what I could do was very limited." Rather than quit immediately, he completed the year of the course. This may not have turned him into a performer but he credits his time at Le Coq with teaching him a huge amount about directing and making art in general.

Kentridge is a polymath, known for animation, tapestry, sculpture and print making. He talks of his pleasure in drawing, sometimes in ink and sometimes in charcoal. He also loves the "provisionality" of animation. "One can either see the world as a series of facts, like photographs, or you can see it as something that is constantly unfolding... where one thing can be transformed into something else."

Ask him what he most likes and dislikes about his native South Africa and Kentridge sighs. "Oh boy...you could have a two hour

conversation. In brief, one could say there is a pessimistic future unfolding where things are growing worse and worse and worse. And there is an optimistic future unfolding at the same time of astonishing projects and initiatives and enthusiasms and people to work with." He acknowledges that his work doesn't reach every sector of society in South Africa. Art is an activity that is "essentially for the middle class" and that there are a "disproportionate number" of white to African visitors to museums and galleries.

"VR is the closest we've come to the sensation of dreaming"

Yes, new technology has had a major impact on his work. VR seems a source of particular fascination. "I am intrigued by the way in which Virtual Reality is the closest artistic form we've come to the sensation of dreaming - and dreaming is always a disaster in art when it is described in a novel or a painting of a dream... they're always terrible. It may well be the case that after the initial infatuation with VR, it turns into the same but I am certainly astonished at the sensation of floating over the world... while sitting in a chair with a headset." GM



© Stella Olivier

William Kentridge

Photograph taken during the workshop for More Sweetly Play the Dance, Johannesburg, 2014.

Building family ties

A delegation of Dutch professionals specialising in films for family and young audiences attended the Beijing Int'l Film Fest in April 2019 to firm up collaboration with their Chinese counterparts.

In 2015 China and the Netherlands signed a treaty to facilitate the co-production of films between the two countries, with emphasis placed on the development of cultural and economic exchange. It was noted early on that the sector that may benefit most from this collaboration would be the kids sector.

Dutch output for young audiences is internationally recognised for its quality and the seriousness with which it treats its core audience – and there is a lot of exportable professional expertise in terms of production, screenwriting and technical. On the other hand, from a Chinese perspective there seems to be a new determination to make films for its child population, estimated at around 250 million. The fit between the two industries therefore seems pretty obvious.

The 2019 Beijing visit comprised screenings of recent Dutch films and the presentation of Dutch and Chinese projects for co-pro consideration. During the professional Shared Stories summit, the discussion was widened to address the specific needs of both Dutch and Chinese audiences, realistic goals and the transposition

of content between cultures. As importantly, the summit addressed the practicalities of censorship/ ratings, rules regarding child actors and the exploitation of key locations.

Leontine Petit of Lemming Film presented her hit film *My Giraffe* and pitched her animation feature project *Pat & Mat – The Movie*. “We can see that there is very strong collaboration potential, such as a Dutch scriptwriter working together with a Chinese team, or there can be Chinese remakes of Dutch films. Our animation studios can work closely together and there are Chinese projects that could fit well with locations that we have in the Netherlands, maybe within a cross-cultural type story. There are many mutually beneficial ways to co-operate.”

Screenwriter Tamara Bos (BosBros) discussed the success and “power” of the Dutch family sector (“which is only 20 years old”) and how it all started with her father Burny Bos’ *Abeltje* in 1998. The company’s *Wiplala* was selected for the 2019 Beijing festival and she presented the co-pro project *Junior Firing Squad* with co-writer Robert Alberdingk Thijm.

Bos noted how, within some of the Chinese projects, many of the dilemmas were felt “outside the child” whereas in Dutch films the desires and goals of the child are paramount. “This was quite difficult to explain, but I met with the

director of the Children’s Film Festival in Beijing and he asked me how we can co-operate in the future. I told him that good children’s films start with the script so maybe it is a good idea to invite me and Robert to come and do a workshop and invite Chinese writers to attend with ideas. The director was very positive to this suggestion.”

Netherlands Film Fund CEO Doreen Boonekamp was delighted with the Beijing event where she discussed at length a working framework for exchange of knowledge and skills between Chinese and Dutch counterparts. One key proposal for future collaboration is to develop a writers training lab. “What is special is that in many countries co-production initiatives start when a script has been finalized, but with projects in China we are talking about collaboration from the very start,” she pointed out.

Boonekamp recognised a palpable sense of willingness on all sides to get down to business. “We have defined both the differences and common ground and are talking about concrete projects now. The close collaboration with the China Children’s Film Association for the Shared Stories Summit further increased the interest of filmmakers and producers, and is a clear sign that the market is ready for more children’s films. We are confident that through co-productions we can make an impact on this quickly developing sector.”

Beijing International Film Festival April 2019
Sino-Dutch meeting: kids and family films

NL FILM
FONDS



Eye on the prize

Meriem Bennani freely admits her delight at winning the Eye Art & Film Prize earlier this spring. “I am a young artist. I haven’t had that many exhibitions and I’ve actually never won a prize,” the artist (née 1988) tells Geoffrey Macnab. “I was extremely surprised, humbled and excited.”

The Moroccan Bennani, now based in New York, will use the proceeds from the award (£25,000, donated by the Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor Arts Foundation) to underwrite her latest project. It’s a science fiction piece which she started last year and which is set on an island in the future. Each neighbourhood is populated by people from a different African country. The first chapter focused on Morocco. Now, she will explore other African cultures.

Bennani is best known for her big studio video installations, often celebrating Muslim culture and satirising western attitudes toward it. They skilfully use elements from documentary, cartoons and reality TV. This is the not type of work that she can make on her own in a garret – and so the Eye prize money will be particularly useful.

Bennani returns often to Morocco and her work is clearly inspired by aspects of Islamic culture. She points out, though, that in an internet-connected world, national boundaries don’t seem as significant as they once did.

Journalists always ask her how important social media is to her artistic practice. For Bennani, using digital elements and putting videos on Instagram is second nature. She doesn’t use Instagram as much as she once did but points out that it’s a useful tool for communicating. “I don’t think it (social media) is even a subject that is interesting anymore,” she declares.

“Humour frees audiences and enables them to connect in a less inhibited way”

Art critics rhapsodise about her work. Andrea Lissoni, Senior curator of International Art (Film) at the Tate Modern, first saw her work three years ago in galleries in New York and Los Angeles. “On both occasions, I was really blown away,” he says, enthusing about her “freedom, her high level of commitment, the background, energy and keenness on developing intricate narratives.”

Bennani uses absurdist humour in her work. “The humour has two aspects,” she explains. On the one hand, it is just the way she expresses herself. She likes to make people laugh. On the other, she feels that humour frees audiences and enables them to connect in a less inhibited way with a piece which may be dealing with complex social and political ideas.

Yes, she says, as a Muslim woman in Trump’s America, she can’t help but notice the prejudices and hysteria in certain sections of the society. New York may be very open and welcoming for a young artist like herself but she sees the tensions elsewhere.

“I mostly suffer from it when it comes to my passport, when I have to travel places and get a visa,” the artist says of the suspicion with which outsiders are treated in the US. “But when you say ‘Morocco,’ they don’t really go into the identity politics. For most people, it is more of a vacation spot!” She also adds: “I am an artist dealing with some of these issues but I don’t walk around being a Muslim woman. Things are way more complicated in everyday life. I actually only think about that [her identity as a Muslim woman] when I am asked the question.”

Like other artists specialising in video, Bennani exists in a space between fine art and cinema. She is a passionate fan of the work of Paul Thomas Anderson but cherishes the freedom that she has as an artist rather than as a filmmaker. “For me, it was really exciting to get the Eye prize (in Amsterdam). I went there and I saw the museum and its programme. I realised it was one of the only places I’ve ever seen where there is a complete intersection of art and cinema.”

Eye Art and Film Prize Winner
👁 Meriem Bennani



Ingrid van Engelshoven (Minister of Education, Culture and Science) with Meriem Bennani (Winner Art & Film Prize 2019) and Sandra den Hamer (Director Eye)



Sad departure

Eye International chief Marten Rabarts will be leaving October 2019 to take up the post of director of the New Zealand International Film Festival. The festival board were particularly impressed with his passion for creating international opportunities for homegrown talent and amplifying unique voices in cinema, across all his work in sales, production, development and promotion.

Before joining Eye, Marten (a New Zealander himself) was Artistic Director of the renowned Binger talent lab, a position he held for 12 years. He was then appointed Head of Training and Development at the NFDC, the national film fund of India from 2012-2015.

Sandra den Hamer, Director of the Eye Film Museum: "The New Zealand International Film Festival has made a brilliant decision in appointing Marten Rabarts as Festival Director. But it will be difficult to see Marten leave the Eye family, and the Dutch film industry where he has spent more than 20 years as a key member of our community."

Heads Together Wins Emmy Kids Award

The Dutch animated short *Heads Together*, directed by Job, Joris and Marieke and produced by Viking Film won the *Emmy Kids Award for Best Animation* at the 7th International Emmy Kids Awards ceremony held on 9 April 2019 in Cannes.

In the film, three friends exchange heads by accident and are forced to adapt to the lives of one another. Will they be able to keep it secret? And will they ever get their own head back?



Father Figure to strike a pose at Sheffield

The short doc *Father Figure* by Bibi Fadlalla has been selected for the Doc/Rythm section of the Sheffield International Doc Festival (6-11 June 2019).

Produced by Amsterdam-based Hazazah, the film explains how for young black gay men, navigating the world can be a disturbing experience. 'Being black and gay means being two steps behind in life,' comments

Heads Together previously won prizes that include *Best Short Film* at the New York International Children's Film Festival (2017), *Best Kids Film* at the Seoul International Cartoon & Animation Festival (2017) and *Best Animation* at the Snake Alley Festival of Film (USA, 2017). The animators were previously nominated at the 2015 Oscars for their animated short *A Single Life*.

Guilliano, the founding father of vogue dance community The Kiki House of Angels.

In this narrative collage film, Guilliano and his friends share personal experiences of homophobia, racism and marginalization in everyday life. Voguing provides a temporary escape from the outside world as well as a sense of community.

Hot Dutch Docs

Four Dutch (co)productions were selected for Hot Docs (25 April - 5 May), North America's largest documentary festival that presents over 200 films from around the world each year.

The feature documentary *Daymohk*, directed by Masha Novikova and produced by Cerutti Film and Zeppers, world-prem'd in International Spectrum section. The film tells the story of Chechen star dancer and choreographer Ramzan Achmadov, whose dance group Daymohk is granted shelter by the president in the aftermath of the second Chechen war. This saves the century old traditional folk dance from extinction, but comes at a price for Achmadov.

Also in Hot Docs selection was *The Miracle of the Little Prince* (ArtsScapes), directed by Marjoleine Boonstra, which reveals the journey of the third most translated book in history and the passionate translators attempting to preserve their languages.

Making Believe programmers selected two Dutch docs. *Daddy and the Warlord*, directed by Clarice Gargard and Shamira Raphaëla and produced by De Familie, is the story of Liberian Clarice who, when forced to evaluate her beloved father's political legacy, gets entangled in a web where good and evil are desperately interweaved. Submarine's *Bellingcat: Truth in a Post-Truth World*, directed by Hans



Pool, tells us the story of Bellingcat, a citizen journalist organization that uses open source investigative tools to reveal the falsehood of some international news stories.

Dutch VR in SXSW Comp

The VR projects *Ahorse!* by Wendy Gutman, *Diorama No.4: Die Fernweh Oper* by Daniel Ernst and Wiebe van der Ende's *Incitement* were selected for SXSW's Virtual Cinema Competition in March 2019.


The cinematic VR installation *Ahorse!* takes us from prehistoric times to a future in which the physical world is replaced by a virtual paradise. *Die Fernweh Oper* is an original virtual reality opera in which a star sings about the astronomical distance between her and her lover and at the same time between her and the visitors of the opera. In *Incitement*, when Sara admits that she's going to have a go back to Paris for more meetings, Luis sees a window of opportunity. He gets a big confession off his chest...with a very peculiar motive.

SXSW also selected the docs *Bellingcat: Truth in a Post-Truth World*, directed by Hans Pool (Doc Spotlight section) and Ben Asamoah's *Sakawa* (Visions section), co-produced by Pieter van Huystee Films, in which unemployed youth in Ghana practice internet fraud with the help of voodoo.

ACE series workshop

Netherlands-based ACE is organising a 6-day hands-on workshop in Brussels for experienced producers looking to integrate a series division into their company, or to develop their knowledge of producing drama series for an international audience. Topics will include story development within the series structure, the creative dynamics of the writers room, and budgeting/financing/production planning within an international context. The workshop dates are Nov 4-9 2019 with an application deadline of June 1.

ACE director Jacobine van der Vloed underlines the importance of this new initiative: "Series production is a crucial part of the audiovisual industry and we've noticed its strong impact on producers and their companies. We are seeing, more and more, the urge of established film producers to widen their perspective towards series and are happy we can offer them the tools to do so."

A close-up portrait of a young woman with long, dark, wavy hair. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a dark-colored jacket with visible silver-colored metal eyelets on the collar. The background is a soft, out-of-focus greyish-blue.

Sara Luna Zoric

The life of brilliant young actor Sara Luna Zoric (2000) was turned upside down in 2018 when she landed leading roles in two films, the short film *Yulia & Juliet* by Zara Dwinger (selected for the Berlin Generation 2019) and *Take Me Somewhere Nice* by Ena Sendjarević, which premiered at the IFFR and is now selected for Cannes L'ACID 2019 (see p4). Sara is currently finishing high school and auditioning for Dutch and international films and series.