

AREN'T YOU HAPPY?

a Film by Susanne Heinrich



Cast & Crew

The Melancholic Girl : **Marie Rathscheck**

Director & Scriptwriter : **Susanne Heinrich**

Editors : **Susanne Heinrich, Benjamin Mirgue**

Cinematography : **Agnesh Pakozdi**

Music : **Moritz Sembritzki & Mathias Bloech**

Production Design : **Jeanne Louet, Miren Oller, Nora Willy**

Costume Design : **Laura Schäffler, Lisa Poethke**

Make-up & Hair : **Lena Englert**

Sound Design : **Wiebke Köplin, Niklas Kammertöns,**

Silvio Naumann

Production

Production Company :

Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin

In coproduction with : **Susanne Heinrich, Jana Kreissl,**

Essential Films

International sales : **Coproduction Office**

With the support of: **The Media Programme of the**

European Union



AREN'T YOU HAPPY?

by Susanne Heinrich

2018, colour, Germany, France, Denmark



SYNOPSIS

A girl roams through the city looking for a place to sleep, but between yoga studios, art galleries and the beds of strangers there is no space for her. A post-modern comedy in pink and blue

A girl roams through the city looking for a place to sleep. Along the way she meets young mothers who celebrate motherhood religiously, goes home with an abstinent existentialist for whom sex is “just another market,” and waits for the end of capitalism in a drag bar. Her attempt to write a book doesn’t make it beyond the first sentence of the second chapter, and she finds no space between art galleries, yoga studios and the beds of strangers. Instead of trying to fit in, she starts regarding her depression as a political issue.

Through 15 of the girl’s humorous encounters, *AREN’T YOU HAPPY?* explores our post-modern society between precarity and self-marketing, serial monogamy and neo-spirituality, disillusionment and the pressure to be happy. Susanne Heinrich’s debut film brings together pop and theory, feminism and humour, and gives you tons of quotes you’ll want to see on advertising billboards in neon letters.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It started with my discontent in society. I was in my mid-twenties, but my writing career and my first marriage were already behind me. I was depressed, lost between flings and suffering from a feeling of alienation. I found myself unable to write. Everything I tried to say seemed fatuous, banal and irrelevant. Why couldn't I just be happy? I lived as a free, equal individual in an enlightened democracy, didn't I? But if it were my fault, why did all the other young, talented women around me feel the same?

At the right moment, a friend encouraged me to read theoretical texts. Through reading the sociologist Eva Illouz, I came across the term „emotional capitalism“, which describes the way the emotional and economic spheres shape one another in late capitalism. Via Byung-Chul Han, I read of the “entrepreneur of the self”, who sells his or her optimised self on the “market of romance” (Eva Illouz).

Reading about these ideas was a revelation for me. I wanted to know where they came from, and immersed myself in books. I went from Michel Foucault to Judith Butler, by way of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, via Roland Barthes and Gilles Deleuze. I read *The New Spirit of Capitalism* by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, Baudrillard's *Theory of Simulation* and Vilém Flusser's visionary media theory, *The Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway, *The Antiquity of Man* by Günther Anders, Hartmut Rosa's Resonance Theory. I was a self-taught student, and read everything backwards and forwards trying to catch up. Diving into the world of theory gave a meaning to my sadness. For the first time, I located myself within society and society within myself.

At the same time there was a change of leadership at our film academy. A great candidate was rejected for the second time - it seemed that they did

not trust a woman with such a large budget. We students wanted a strong artistic direction - not some chauvinist, corporate type who spoke in the usual start-up language of “competitiveness”, “innovation” and “effectiveness”. The spirit of the DFFB as a place for open cinematic experimentation seemed to be at stake. I radicalized myself and made this fight against neoliberal appropriation my own. I jumped half-naked on to the red carpet at a Berlinale premiere, and was arrested for the first time in my life.

We lost the fight, and remained as a shaken and disillusioned, yet politicized generation of students. This experience was strangely combined with my newly discovered feminism, and in the feminist critique of capitalism I finally found my space of thought. I secretly attended seminars at Universität der Künste. In a seminar on queer theory I came across





Karin Michalskis *Alphabet of feeling bad*, a video installation on negative feelings. Seeing this work changed everything for me. I would have otherwise never had the idea to not see depression as defect, illness, or individual failure, and instead to politicise it in the context of neoliberal working conditions and gender relations.

During this period I regularly went for walks with my mentor Isabelle Stever. On one such walk, we talked about the character of the „Melancholic Girl” that had popped up all of a sudden. Two books helped me to frame the monologue I had written: *Schriften zum Theater (Writings on Theater)* by Bertolt Brecht and *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl* by the group TIQQUN, which described the character I had invented in terrifyingly accurate detail. The script for *Aren't You Happy* came together within only a few days. I wrote it in a rush, without thinking and without stopping. I barely changed a word from the first draft. It was a breakthrough: I had a voice again - a new voice that was very different from the old one that had sickened me for years. I had started to change.

The script magically attracted all sorts of people. I realised that I stumbled upon something of importance. This was no longer about me. The temporary space of the film became a sort of sanctuary for people for

whom classic narrative cinema offered no answers and who felt imprisoned like myself. Not only for me, working on the film was an emancipatory act.

I tried to translate my new beliefs into a structure. I wanted to do things differently than I had learned such as not using actresses' bodies as instruments and to trust crewmembers that were new to film and did not already have references. During the shooting of the film I was pregnant, which impacted my style of directing. I could not act like a genius despot.

Indeed, I stopped being a Melancholic Girl by working on the movie. I explain it through the newfound ability to politicise negative feelings and to go from individual stories to structural analysis of society. Neoliberalism permits us unlearn structural thinking. It's so much fun to learn it again. In any case, it has led to humor and ease. For me, this film marks a transition from melancholy where post-structuralism had situated me, and something new that I can now go in search of. I dedicate it to those who need it the way I needed it when I thought psychoanalysis could make it any better.

INTERVIEW

The Female Myth

PHILIPPE BOBER : You once said we should talk about feminism. And you said that Aren't You Happy? reverses stereotypes. Did I understand that correctly?

SUSANNE HEINRICH : Almost. We played with Laura Mulvey's concept of the „male gaze“. This key idea of feminist film theory says that classic (Hollywood) movies are filmed in a way that satisfies male scopophilia, which means the sexual pleasure one gets from looking. Women are the „spectacle“ that is looked at, and men are the „bearer of the look“. So I thought, why not turn it around, film the male bodies like women's bodies, and see what happens? For example, in the initial monologue there

is this shot of a soft, round male body, lasciviously draped before us. Or another scene where a guy performs pin-up poses on a bed while the melancholic girl is quoting from Tiqqun. It's about deconstructing ways of looking through a simple exchange, a little game. It is a small contribution, which also addresses the impossibility of a female gaze. What I mean to say is **there is not, or not yet, something like the female gaze**. I can only try to avoid or play with the fetishising, the controlling nature of the male gaze.

P. B. Do you want to talk about the other levels of feminism in the movie?

S. H. Let's stick with the jokes. Most of the hairstyles of the Melancholic Girl are signature hairstyles from Hollywood divas. It starts with her





»OF COURSE I AM HAPPY.«

having Audrey Hepburn's hairstyle in *Breakfast at Tiffanys*. Then there are the curls of *Pretty Woman*, the famous side-part of Bette Davis, and the tousled bouffant of Brigitte Bardot. By playing with her hairstyles, we mark the Melancholic Girl as - more than a woman of flesh and blood - a male fantasy. A 'mythical woman' who stands for all women. The line from the casting monologue, "I'm every woman," works as a kind of slogan for the mask concept.

P. B. Another joke is that at the end of the movie, for 4 ½ minutes, we watch the melancholic girl eating ice cream, because there are rarely women eating in movies.

S. H. Exactly. It's so empowering, isn't it? These are all very concrete examples.

P. B. And aside from the jokes?

S. H. **The whole film can be read as a feminist criticism of capitalism.** The claim is that in our postmodern society we move through non-places, and talk in advertising speech instead of really connecting with one another. We are looking for a substitute for lost religion. We have sex, but we have lost the eroticism. Serial monogamy is a one-way street. There



»MY BODY IS A WAR ZONE WHERE THE ENTIRE WORLD STAGES ITS BATTLES. IT IS OWNED BY EVERYBODY ELSE MUCH MORE THAN BY ME, SO I CAN LEAVE IT FOR FREE USAGE ANYWAYS.«

»YOU'D BE A GOOD PROSTITUTE.
YOU'RE SO TENDER.«



are basically no more real events; they are all just gymnastic routines that have to be repeatedly performed to prove that we are oh so free. Instead of recognising that the structures are pathological, the individuals – mostly women – are pathologised and treated. The potential roles that women can play in society are still ridiculous. There's just no room for women. And the location of arguments, battles and collisions is still the female body. That's where the archetype of the Melancholic Girl emerges.

It's not about psychology

P. B. I didn't see it as an archetype. As the bearer of a modern narrative – yes. But as a human, not as an archetype.

S. H. **I don't think of any of the characters as being real, flesh-and-blood human. They are more similar to the characters in Brecht's theater** where a mother stands for all mothers, or a worker represents all workers. For example, we have created the rooms of the male characters as themed motif rooms instead of real inhabited rooms. And so, all the characters too, are proxies.

P. B. And the main character is a male fantasy? That surprises me.

S. H. On the subject of male fantasy, it is perhaps still important that the Melancholic Girl is mainly this face – this blank, timeless face that doesn't give away any emotion. Of course this beautiful surface invites you to project: to see something in it, to add to it, or to take away from it, and that's where the attack happens. That's why the film has these hypnotising close-ups where the characters look directly into the camera.

P. B. Can you talk about the connection between the structure, and the style of the acting, the dialogue, and the set?

S. H. Yes. For example, if it had been told in a different way that was more naturalistic at both the level of dramaturgy, scenography, costume, and so on, then you would at best feel pity for a young woman who is finding herself. But this is not a coming-of-age film, I do not want to tell this as a personal story. This is not about psychology, but rather about social structures – this I understood while reading the script. **Everything originated on the basis of the script, so all formal decisions were made from questioning it.** From reading Brecht, I came across the alienation effect, and his concept of theater as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and I thought that would work well for the film. You can see this from the integral role that music plays in the film. It does so much more than just reacting to action, creating atmospheres, and evoking feelings.

»I'M WAITING FOR THE END OF CAPITALISM.«



P. B. So, you are concerned with another effect?

S. H. Yes! For me, this has a lot to do with the distinction Godard drew between making political films, and making films politically. **I think if you really want to say something that has not been said before you have to invent a new form as well.** Otherwise, you simply reproduce pictures. And I was just looking for a precise expression, and I ended up with that image. There were a lot of small, individual decisions on which I ruminated for an extremely long time until I was sure. For example, we had rehearsals for three months. That was very exciting, because, of course, the actors were all used to TV acting, and it took a long time before they delivered choreography rather than feelings.

It all boils down to the belief that we have a very strange idea of identification with characters today where it is often just a simple transfer of emotion. Someone is standing by a window and crying, and it's raining outside, and we're crying as well. But identification, as Brecht understood it, is a joyful and playful discovery in structures that are presented to me. It's about keeping a distance so as not to lose your critical consciousness. **I'm actually dealing with a specific mechanism of action, which works differently than in emotional cinema.** This does not mean that viewers are not allowed to have feelings, on the contrary.

I believe that if it's more than a simple transfer that happens, we do not only sympathise with the characters, but our sadness can also apply to the content itself and the conditions that are described. The exaggerated description denaturalises the conditions, which means it makes them appear unnatural, artificial, absurd – and alterable. Then you may think: It could all be different. This effect I call „making discomfort productive“.

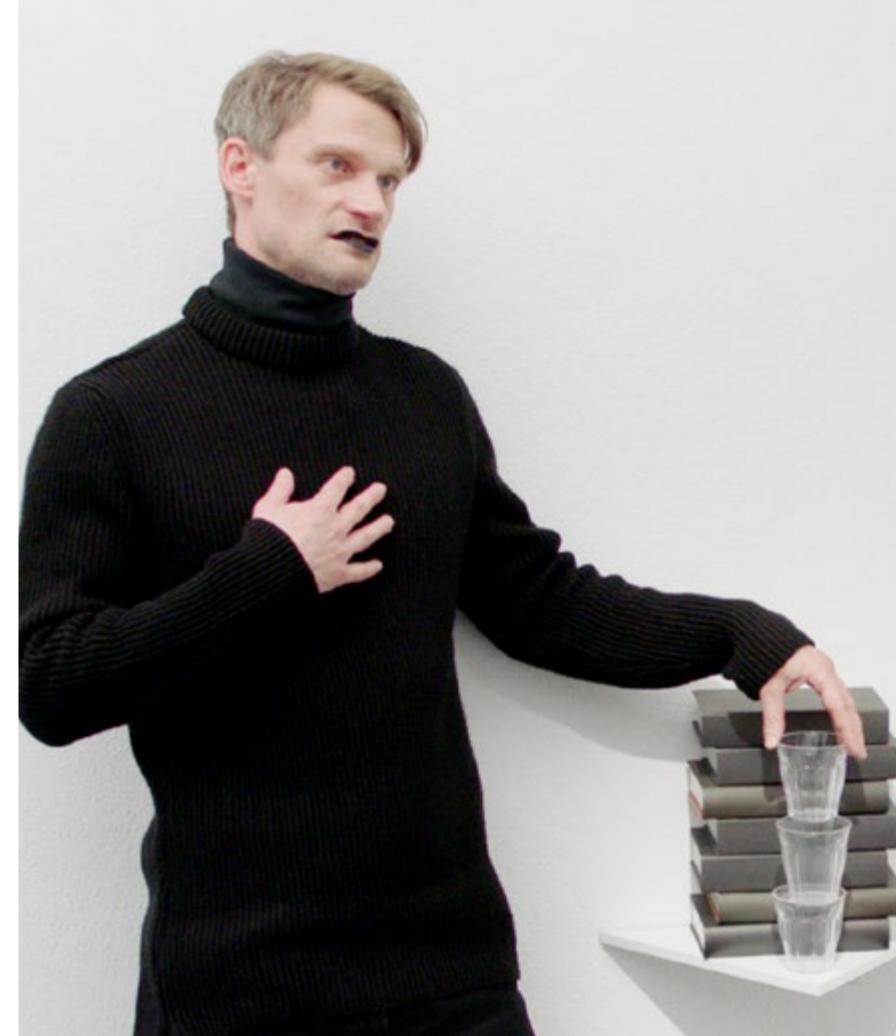
P. B. You spoke briefly about the special role of the music. Can you tell me more? How did you come up with setting the soundtrack of the film to a big band?

S. H. That was a long process. In the beginning, we had the plan to send certain scenes to various bands and musicians I knew and to have them score individually. After the first couple of drafts, it was clear that this would break the film into short films. I wanted something that holds the movie together - not narratively, but in a way that is more like different parts of a show. One morning Mathias [*Bloech, assistant director*] jumped up from the breakfast table, and shouted, "You need a big band!" I immediately thought, "That's it!" The irony, nostalgia and lightness that a so-called 'big band' brings from its historical context would be perfect! This could historicise the contemporary world that is shown. As a bygone world, it would appear even more absurd. And then the dirt of

the analog instruments! That would give the smooth images a wonderful depth where there would be room to develop feelings for the film. It was a brilliant idea.

Moritz [*Sembritzki, composer*] was perfect for the composition. He understands pop as a certain approach, and not as a specific style. He is also not a film composer. I think that was good, because most of the film composers I met had learned to make music as something to be unnoticed, and in the background. The hardest part of the collaboration was finding a common language. I knew how the music should feel, but once again I had no role models to refer to. As sample music, I had used Dimitri Shostakovich, Michael Nyman, circus music and techno for my rough cut. But if the film were scored with contemporary electronic music, for instance, it would have become much smaller than it is, the music would have given it a sell-by date.

We had the idea to feel the big band's presence throughout the entire film - even if everyone is not always playing. But you can feel that potential, that power all the time. That's why we've also included improvisations on how the musicians move in and out, their breathing and their presence. In some of the scenes, the musicians are very close to us like a silent film band playing live for the film.



A road movie in the current world?

P. B. I have another topic. One thought that has come to my mind is that the film has the feeling of a road movie in the present world.

S. H. I like the term "road movie" a lot, although strictly speaking, the film is an episodic film with no chronology, and no coherent narration. But "road movie" agrees with the fact that the Melancholic Girl is a stray, a wanderer. There is reason behind her wearing those boots, those hiking boots, a lady only from the fur coat up, which is a reference to Jacques Demy's, *Une Chambre en Ville* ... Anyway, she is a wanderer, and it may be a road movie in the way that *Falling Down* by Schumacher is a road movie, which is also very symptomatic of its time, or even the films of Altman, or *Wanda* by Barbara Loden, or *Sue* by Amos Kollek.

I think the Melancholic Girl is the most representative and logical figure to arrive at when you want to convey something about our time, and our Western Bubble. And there is an interesting essay by Beatriz Colomina, about the bed being the paradigmatic site of the 21st Century. In that sense, the road movie of our time may have to be

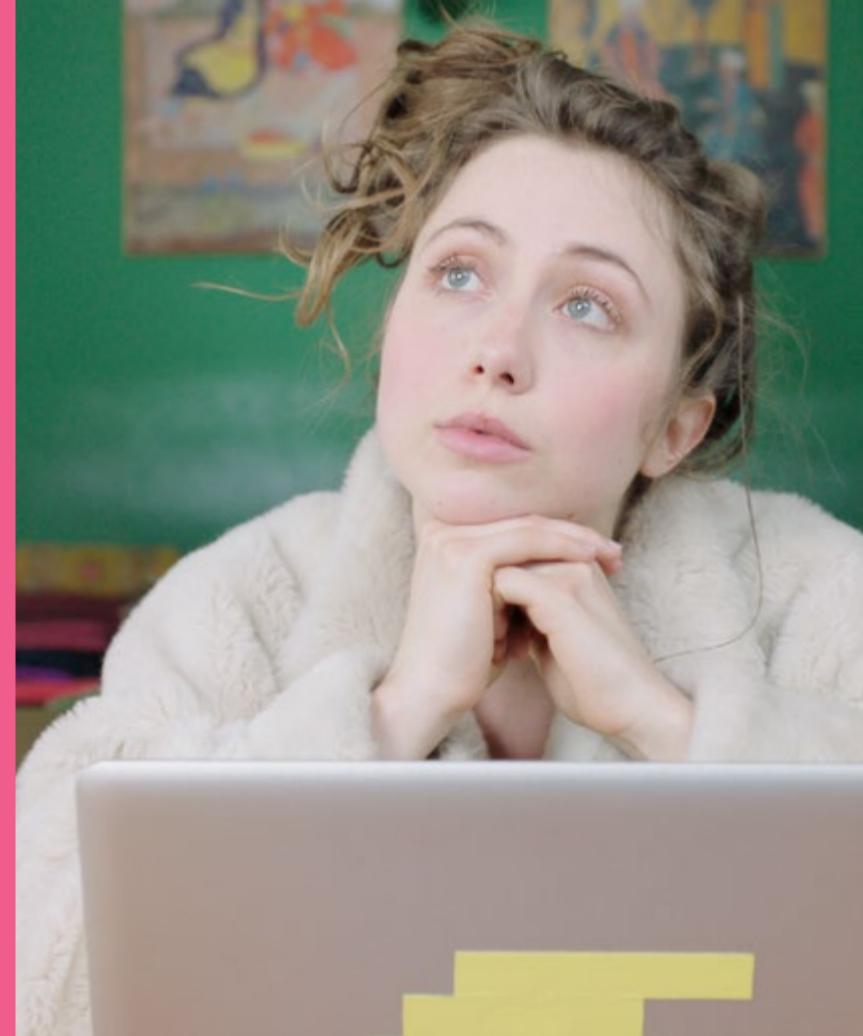
a bed movie. So, yes, I **also believe that it is the road movie, or perhaps the bed movie of our time.**

Humor has something to do with liberation

P. B. Perhaps you could say something about the irony of the film, or about its humor. I've noticed that there are moments when only women laugh.

S. H. Yes, that's true. I also wondered what kind of humor I had found. I was never particularly humorous, at least not in my writing (*laughs*). I do not think that it's irony. I think it has to do with liberation on different levels. When the man in the last scene does those pin-up poses on the bed that normally only women are forced into, it's not just about showing the construction of gender as an absurd performance that one has to constantly fulfill, **but it is also simply about seeing a man in this position.** I feel free then and relieved, somehow compensated, and that's why I laugh. I think the knowledge of the conditions in this film has just made me paralysed, or angry for a long time. It was hard to somehow find a viable attitude, if you understand what I mean. The humor was perhaps the only way to deal with this knowledge. It's a productive laugh that turns an actually painful knowledge into something else.

»I'M WRITING A BOOK. BUT I CAN'T GET BEYOND THE 1ST SENTENCE OF THE 2ND CHAPTER.«



The biographical question must become the political question

P. B. A banal question: but how much of the film is autobiographical?

S. H. I do not like the question. Men are rarely asked this question, and when they are, they are highly prized for working with autobiographical material, and it is assumed that they have emotional competence. Women who work with biographical material are always subject to the suspicion of inwardness and navel-gazing, and are denied the ability to think structurally. My point is that the biographical question must become a political question. But to not leave your question unanswered, **maybe the film is that much an intimate confession as it is filmed philosophy.**

P. B. I do not really know anything about you as a writer. Would you like to tell me your life?

S. H. Well, I wrote four books between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five. I had a little moment of fame with my first book when I read at the Bachmann Prize in 2005. It was an explosive start to my literary career, because the second sentence of the text I read in front of the jury was, "we smoke while fucking." My parents had a hard time handling the book.



»I AM A HOUSE WITH OPEN DOORS.
WHEN I OPEN MY MOUTH YOU CAN SEE
MY INNERMOST BEING.«

»IN THE TYRANNY OF SELF-REALISATION
EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST. THAT'S WHY THE
SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION RETIRED FROM
ART.«



I'm always told the story about my mother turning off the television broadcast of the event after that sentence so that my brothers wouldn't hear any more of it. And then there were newspaper articles with headlines such as "One Woman, 27 Bedfellows". The first book has a lot of sex in it. It is also very wild and overloaded and angry and desperate and youthful and precocious.

The two novels after that are unfortunately not good. I was in a marriage with an older man at the time, and because I wanted to be a nice girl, I suppressed a lot of thoughts. I just was not free in my writing anymore. That's why my writing somehow became very small. Besides, I think the novel is just not my form. And then I wrote another collection of short stories: stories about couples that are at crucial points, open relationships, and so on. However, they were all created before my politicization, and also before my feminist awakening both of which happened very late in my life. Nevertheless, I believe that my novels have relevance, that is to say, the first and the last book I wrote. And most importantly, the writing crisis that followed was the reason why I started making films. Actually, I intended to get back to writing by filmmaking. And now the movie is also very talkative.

**This film had not been already made.
That's why I had to do it.**

P. B. I think I asked you the question once, but I do not remember the answer. So: I don't know of any comparable films.

S. H. Me neither. I made the film, because it did not exist yet. There were no cinematic role models to work from. Of course there are a lot of films I like, and I believe that, although it sounds far-fetched, they have something to do with the film. For example, I believe that Harun Farocki had some influence on my way of thinking. Or that Helke Sander, a filmmaker of the first women's movement who is also briefly cited in the film, was also an inspiration. But I also made this film, because I would have liked to have such a film at an earlier time in my life. But it did not already exist. That's why I had to do it.

P. B. That is interesting. Jana [Kreissl, producer] asked me why I am involved with this film. And the answer was that when I was in Leipzig, I understood that you had to make this film. In principle it is also what distinguishes an artist from an artisan. We drank a lot in Leipzig, so I cannot say what exactly you said, but that's the feeling I went home with. And that's what you have in common with the other directors I work with. But that's the question for me,

too. I've never worked for money in my life. And I always wonder about the meaning of the work. Making a film because it's a good product is not something that interests me. It's interesting when it's a movie that has to be made.

S. H. I want to shed some light on these romantic thoughts as well. **I make art because I cannot help it. That's the way I connect with the world.** And then there are my political beliefs. But it's not that I made the film to change the world in a certain way, or a political agenda that was easy to grasp. In that case, I would have written a pamphlet, but instead I made a movie. And yet it is a film that I have made responsibly, in every step of its creation. I think there is a difference. Either you do something to achieve something specific, or you do something with a sense of responsibility and you do not know exactly what will result. I am putting the film out into the world now, and there are probably some things going on around it, and that's good. It is definitely much more than just a tool. And it has an inner need, and that is certainly something that distinguishes it from other things that want to be or should be something. It is definitely bigger than me, and more than the sum of its parts. And it couldn't not be made. I knew that if I had had to wait two years, to gain more experience before making a feature, it would have melted between my fingers, either I did it at that point, or not at all. So I became a director during the process.

You mean I'm about to corrupt your work?

P. B. Can you think of something else to talk about?

S. H. It would be very interesting to talk about our cooperation of course. But maybe it's too early for that.

P. B. Do you mean our cooperation until now or are you already thinking about the next project?

S. H. I mean until now, and that **the simple fact that we work together is doing something with this project, and also with me.** I was very careful in who I chose to work with. When we were looking for money, we checked out different production companies who were mostly dudes who produced the films of their male buddies, and did some advertising along the way. I felt like it would corrupt the film to take this kind of money from these kind of people. So, I mean, on a political level, it's really exciting what happens right now.

P. B. Do you think I'm about to corrupt you?

S. H. Yes. I don't know, no. I hope not. Are you?

P. B. I do not think that's the point. I'm not really interested in corrupting your work. There are different things. On the one hand, that money is an abstraction. If I have something, it's an abstraction. And I was never a member of anything. That is, the simple fact that my company exists is already a political fact, so to speak. But when producers or distributors start talking about politics in syndicates, I'm embarrassed. Although I often think of politics, I never wrote anything political. From time to time I said something political, in semi-public situations. But that's not taken seriously because I'm not tied to an association or anything.

S. H. I think maybe I have a different concept of the political. I really go back to the statement, "the personal is political." **I think it's political that I can make films as a woman.** Women have only been educated in film-making for 40 years. The new study of the FFA [Germany's national film funding institution] shows that the film business is still based on men's networks. Therefore, it is definitely a revolutionary act as a woman to make a film, and it has a very different effect than when a man does it. The film has other obstacles, different consequences and is received differently.

P. B. But what did you want to say when you said you wanted to talk about our collaboration and what it triggers?

S. H. At the moment it presents me with many interesting challenges, because I am simply confronted by your completely different way of living. I have to question myself over and over again. It starts, because we go to good restaurants. I live in a flat share in Leipzig, I almost never eat out and have almost no money. I lead a student life, but I have also chosen this because I have decided that I do not want to put any pressure on my art to feed me. When we go out to dinner, I always feel a bit like Cinderella. But at the same time I ask myself what kind of dependencies could arise from that.

And it's very interesting that my collaboration with you and your world keeps me reflecting on my position. For example, there was the encounter between friends of mine and you, where I felt totally caught in the middle. I came in to the situation naively, and thought that it would be a very exciting encounter, and then I had the feeling that there was such a barrier coming from my girlfriends because you represented the white, powerful man and the industry to them and a confrontation with former violations. You seemed to be open-minded, but I still find myself asking, how aware are you of the privileges that you have? Do you know that you are entering a safe space here? Do you know that it is seen as a power gesture when you pay? And I was conflicted, and had a real challenge to find out where I actually stood. I really would have liked these parts of

my life to come together, but maybe it's exactly what I had to learn, to embrace contradictions.

There have been a few other instances. I wonder why I find it so hard to ask you if we should go to the Syrian snack bar the next time you are in Leipzig. Because normally I just go there, and the food is good, but it's also cheap, just €3.50. Why does this cause a feeling of shame in me? And here I have to think of Didier Eribon, the Foucault biographer and his book *Retour à Reims*, which deals with classism, and the shame of the working class. I'm a pastor's daughter, but a pastor's daughter from the east, and I have the feeling that **I am a pseudo-intellectual who can throw big words around, but I'm not really at home in that world** and have worked so painfully hard to appear to be.

It's a constant role reversal. Of course, I also work in the world in which we travel together. And then I come home here, and have a baby and lots of queer friends and friends who live in housing projects and pay solidarity rents and raise children in unconventional groupings. This is definitely a funny contrast, a funny confrontation that is currently occupying my mind. And because I feel like it's just a very productive connection, I'm following it too, and I'm curious to see what it does to me and the way

I make films, because in any case it will do something - like everything that I let in.

P. B. Yes, that's also very interesting. We have plenty of time left to see what happens. I also find it very exciting.

The interview was conducted by Philippe Bober. It remains true to its original form, and has been modified only to provide clarification.



»WE HAVE THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE BETWEEN BEER AND WINE. YOU HAVE THE FREEDOM TO TAKE ME WITH YOU, AND I HAVE THE FREEDOM TO LET MYSELF BE TAKEN. WE HAVE THE FREEDOM OR THE DUTY TO SLEEP WITH EACH OTHER.«



From left to right: Jana Kreissl, Marie Rathscheck, Susanne Heinrich and Agnesh Pakozdi

JANA KREISSL

producer

Even as a child, Jana Kreissl received an insight into the media landscape through the occupations of her parents. She gained her first work experience in editorial and technical support roles, followed by internships and jobs at various film production companies, where she became aware of her enthusiasm for all aspects of the film medium. Through studying in the Department of Theater, Film and Media studies in Vienna, she dealt intensively with the theoretical side of film. Her desire to make films herself led her to the DFFB (The German Film and Television Academy), where she has been studying Creative Film Production since 2014.

MARIE RATHSCHECK

actress

Marie Rathscheck was born in Stuttgart in 1990, to German-French parents. From 2010 – 2014 she studied scriptwriting at the University of the Arts in Berlin. Alongside this she completed her studies in acting at the Academy of Dramatic Arts “Ernst Busch” Berlin. Since 2017 she is a member of the Leipzig theatre ensemble. In addition to her work as a stage actress, Marie Rathscheck has taken roles in film and television. “Aren’t You Happy” is her first feature film.

SUSANNE HEINRICH

director, scriptwriter

Susanne Heinrich, a vicar’s daughter from East Germany, wrote 4 books between the age of 19 and 25 (most recently „Amerikanische Gefühle“, Dumont 2011). She was nominated for the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize and received fellowships at Villa Aurora L.A. and Casa Baldi Olevano Romano (Villa Massimo). She sings in various bands and has pursued a variety of artistic projects. With her first short film she was accepted into the German Film and Television Academy (dffb). Following several experiments, „Aren’t You Happy?“ is her first feature film.

AGNESH PAKOZDI

camera

Agnesh Pakozdi was born in Budapest, Hungary. Originally an economist, she studied Film, Art and Image Design in Budapest, at the Berlin University of the Arts and at the DFFB. In 2015 she completed a training course at the Global Cinematography Institute in Los Angeles. Over the last decade, she has made three full-length feature films, more than twenty short films and numerous documentary films as well as art projects as a graphic designer, in Germany, Georgia, Switzerland, USA, Egypt, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Hungary. Her films have been successfully received at international festivals including Cannes, Oberhausen, Rotterdam, Angers, the Viennale and Berlin Critics’Week.

COPRODUCTION OFFICE PHILIPPE BOBER

Coproduction Office is an international film company producing and selling bold, award-winning films.

The founder of Coproduction Office, producer and entrepreneur Philippe Bober, partnered with ground-breaking directors* early in the careers to produce and sell more than thirty films to date. Seventeen of these were selected for Cannes', Venice's or Berlin's Competition where they have received more than 20 prizes, including the 2014 Venice Golden Lion for Roy Andersson's A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE and for Ruben Östlund's THE SQUARE, the 2017 Palme d'Or.

As one of Europe's finest production and sales entities, the company has a catalogue of films produced in house, as well as restored classics such as Roberto Rossellini's key works. The catalogue is known for its carefully chosen gems, with at times transgressive content, and distinctive cinematic language.

*Including Lars von Trier, Roy Andersson, Ulrich Seidl, Jessica Hausner, Takashi Miike, Lou Ye, Kornél Mundruczó, Cristi Puiu, Dagur Kári, Michelangelo Frammartino, Carlos Reygadas, Corneliu Porumboiu, Shirin Neshat, Thomas Clay, Shin'ya Tsukamoto, Ruben Östlund, Gust Van den Berghe, Spiros Stathopoulos.

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