

 69^e Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum

Official Selection
tiff
Toronto International
Film Festival 2018

'THRILLING...

...PULSATING...

...TICKING...

...TIMEBOMB'

RETRO SPEKT

EEN FILM VAN ESTHER ROTS

RETROSPEKT

RETROSPEKT is a brutally poetic, suspense-packed, modern-domestic fairy tale seen through the eyes of Mette, a confidant and successful young mother, struggling with life's absurd purposelessness.

Mette (Circé Lethem) is in the final phase of her rehabilitation, when one day Miller (Lien Wildemeersch) pays a visit, trying to get Mette to testify against 'Frank'; Miller's boyfriend who apparently put Mette in a wheelchair. Mette can't seem to remember anything. Then, left alone and in a haze of medication and increasing anxiety, Mette has time to reminisce.

In an escalating puzzle-like narrative, we inhabit Mette's consciousness and see the events in the film unfolding through her fractured memory. Trying to juggle daily pressures of relationship, career, and motherhood Mette inevitably slowly drowns in a cacophony of repercussions. Blunt, semi-operatic voices and music echo her fragmented daydreams of the events leading up to her accident.

Sitting at home on maternity leave, Mette is struck by the increasing absence of satisfaction that she once felt from her organized life. Both her family and job as a Domestic Violence counselor no longer provide her with a sense of purpose. When her husband Simon (Martijn van der Veen) is away on a business trip, Mette learns that a former client of hers (Miller) is in trouble. On a whim, Mette seizes the opportunity to do something 'meaningful' and invites Miller into her home, fully aware of the potential consequences.

RETROSPEKT is life's sense of humor or proof many of us are living a fairy tale; it is easy to make sense of 'it' all in retrospect, but the chaos of everyday life blurs our vision at the point in time when decisions are made.

cast:

Circé Lethem
Lien Wildemeersch
Martijn van der Veen

crew:

directed, edited and script - Esther Rots
director of sound - Dan Geesin
director of photography - Lennert Hillege

produced by:

Rots Filmwerk - Hugo Rots & Esther Rots (The Netherlands)
Column Film - Gijs van de Westelaken & Chantal van der Horst (The Netherlands)
co-producer: Serendipity Films - Ellen De Waele (Belgium)

101 minutes
colour
DCP
Dolby 5.1



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - ESTHER ROTS

SENSORY CINEMA:

RETROSPEKT is a film that is seen and felt through Mette's perspective, in the 'I' form and in an arena that I refer to as sensory cinema. I work intuitively and associatively where by conveying a feeling is as important as telling a story. I do not want to illustrate Mette's life, but I want to show her interpretation of that life, her experience, her fractured reality with all its clumsy negotiations.

MUSIC & SOUND:

The use of music and sound design has always played a very important role in achieving this sensory cinema and the oscillation between the objective and subjective. Director of Sound Dan Geesin always works on a parallel trajectory alongside me, using the same elements that I use to develop the film without illustrating the script.

The music in RETROSPEKT drives the idea and feeling of a fairytale. The brutally operatic music is romantic, absurd and dramatic. It narrates a parallel emotional development and uses humor to create distance where either the audience or Mette need a little space or hindsight. Part of Geesin's intuitive art is his ability to simultaneously create an emotional attachment to the audience and Mette's development.

THEMES:

-Our Raison D'être: With the diminishing of religion, politics and family values as mainstays in our individualistic society, the reason for being must be sought again and in our selves. But when everything seems possible, meaninglessness is always in the shadows.

This vague, nagging but very recognizable and contemporary feeling of unrest manifests itself in the many facets of life, disguised by a thick layer of daily targets, priorities and the embodiments of success.



With Mette this turmoil manifests itself in her need for control and it is precisely this control that she loses several times in the film.

-'now' versus 'retrospect'. The biggest enemy of our carefully designed priorities and control over our lives is perhaps time. The unexpected can expose the vivid futility of a well worked out plan; the millisecond everything changes.

RETROSPEKT plays with this absurdity by giving it a pivotal role in the story and also using it as a focus in the structure of the film. This time-play is an essential part of the audience's experience of RETROSPEKT. The non-linear chronology is a necessity that results in a feeling of displacement and disorientation that is essential for the perception of Mette's perspective. This physical framing lets Mette fluctuate between what she was, is, wants to be but can't be.

-motherhood in society, and the associated social expectations. The film also deals with the taken for granted unconditional maternal love from mothers and women in general. Some mothers simply do not revere babies. Too often this is confused with postnatal depression; placing a postnatal depression as a theme to this film would imply that women who are not directly and head over heels in love with their newborn can only be regarded as victims of hormonal imbalance. For me this is a simplistic and outdated perception that needs to be addressed, socially and globally.

RETROSPEKT (the album) will be released as a download and on vinyl in December 2018. Listen to 3 of the 19 tracks here:

<https://soundcloud.com/dangeesin/sets/retrospekt-sample-songs>

This link is also for Publication use



ESTHER ROTS' BIO

After her first two independent short films were selected consecutively for the Golden Palm competition in Cannes, Esther Rots' first feature film *CAN GO THROUGH SKIN* premiered in the Forum section of the Berlinale, and won many awards amongst which the Fipresci, the Ingmar Bergman Award and 3 Golden Calves, the Dutch Academy Awards.

Rots' work revolves mostly around the tricks of the mind; the intense difference between knowing and feeling, conscious and unconscious, the reality and illusion of the everyday, accepting feelings or shutting them out: the beautiful logic of the subconscious. Esther is able to set these indescribable sensations in the context of a logical story and translate them into cinematography. By being as intimate as possible with the characters, and bringing the 'I' perspective into the context of the cinema experience, the work is felt not told.

Esther Rots writes, directs and edits all of her work. Together with her brother Hugo Rots, she established the film production company Rots Filmwerk in 2006. (www.rotsfilmwerk.nl)

The book 'Take 100, The Future of Film' published by Phaidon Press is a survey featuring 100 of the most exceptional and talented emerging film directors from around the world who have been selected by 10 internationally prominent film festival directors, and includes Esther Rots and her debut feature *Can go through skin*, selected by Christoph Terhechte.

CIRCE LETHEM'S BIO

Circé Lethem (1976) started acting in 1993 at the age of 17 when she got the lead role in *Portrait d'un Jeune Fille de la Fin des Années 60 à Bruxelles*. The film was part of a prestigious film collection on Arte in which French Directors were asked to make one-hour films about their adolescence. After the shooting she decided to study drama at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. During her last year of Drama school she was asked by director Jürgen Gosch to play *De Nachthal*. In 1997 she was invited by the theatre groups *Dito'dito* and *Transquinquennal* to join the cast of *Ja ja maar nee nee*, also called *Ah oui ça alors là*. She also worked on stage with Adrian Brine, Jules-Henri Marchant and Hanneke Paauwe. In 2016 she played in "*Figaro!*" with theatre group *Comp. Marius*. On the screen she had some beautiful parts in French and Belgian Films such as Adrian's sister in *La Chambre des Officiers*, Anna in "*Les Destinées Sentimentales*", Ariane in *J'aurais Voulu être un Danseur*, Soeur Irène in *Soeur Sourire*, by Stijn Coninx and Iris Kryotos in *De Behandeling* even known as *The Treatment*. She portrayed a lot of guest roles in *Vermist*, *Witse* and *Familie en Les Survivants*.

Recently she was awarded an ANGELA AWARD for her role in *RETROSPEKT*.

LIEN WILDEMEERSCH' BIO

Lien Wildemeersch (°1983) studied Germanic Languages (Dutch/German) at KULeuven University, obtained a certificate in Philosophy and completed her teacher training. She continued her studies at the Ghent Conservatory (now KASK), where she graduated cum laude at the Drama Department. Her graduation project 'Manson/Mensen' was selected for the International Theatre School Festival in Amsterdam, where Lien received the Kemn-Award for Best Actress. Since 2010, Lien has been a member of the NTGent ensemble, one of Belgium's major theatre companies.