

Berlinale
61 Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum

KAI HILLEBRAND RALPH HERFORTH
MARIA SCHUSTER VASUPOL SIRIVIRIYAPOON

SWANS

A FILM BY HUGO VIEIRA DA SILVA



DIRECTOR HUGO VIEIRA DA SILVA ON ...

... how the story starts:

In this film two people are confronted with a situation that is completely new for them. In a minimalistic setting (an apartment, a hospital) they are each forced to face intimate layers of themselves, past feelings, an unfamiliar body, their own body.

... the developments:

In the course of the film, father and son embark on a parallel journey: the boy to his (past) connection to his mother's body, the father to a past intimacy that he once had with the boy's mother.

... sexuality:

Manuel's sexuality is very vague. In a way he is lost. His interest in people is similar to that of his interest in objects; it remains superficial and he builds a kind of fetish relationship to them. At first he experiences his mother's body – like the objects or the masks – as a substitute for a deeper relationship to another person. In the course of the film, the quality of these relations changes.

... coming of age:

I don't really see Manuel's path as a coming-of-age story. His journey, triggered by his mother's body, does not move towards the development of an identity but rather opens up a sensory space of indefiniteness: a physical exploration of a world that does not submit itself to conventional language. What happens there is open. His father Tarso embarks on the same journey yet in a very different way.

... the character of K.

K. is only created through the gaze of Manuel and Tarso. She appears and disappears, we don't know anything about her. She has a ghost-like presence in this film. A household ghost.

... the casting and the work process:

The work with the actors was very important and it began before the shooting with improvisations and research that I had developed in collaboration with the choreographer and dramaturge Heidi Wilm. We continued this collaboration on set where we created several of the film's scenes together. Maria Schuster, who plays the character of Petra, took on the challenge of embodying a person in a coma. Actors generally are used to build a psychological or biographical background for their characters. In this case, however, she couldn't use these conventional tools. Maria brought in a huge measure of generos-

ity to the rehearsals where together we found a way to let her character emerge from her physical presence. With Kai Hillebrand it was different. We found him through a street casting because we were looking for a skater and not an actor. In a long working process that lasted about two months, we worked on his presence and his ability to improvise so that later we could develop a lot of scenes with him. Working with Ralph Herforth was always very intense. He comes from a more commercial cinema. Sometimes we clashed. But right from the beginning we had the feeling that he had a wish to try out different ways of working. In the course of our work, he revealed a fragility that we had not known and that became fundamental to the character of Tarso. Ralph opened up immensely during the shooting and added much of himself into the character.

... Berlin as a location:

Berlin is not just one but ten or fifteen cities with very different aspects. The Gropius city has a certain meaning, for each and every citizen of Berlin. This comes also partially from a filmic memory. The Gropius city was initially designed and conceived within the frame of social utopic values of the 60's. Then it became temporarily forgotten and today is simply a residential area, somewhat lost without much social life. However it's full of things you don't see at first sight; you have to open doors to see what's happening. It seems empty, especially in winter but there is a lot going on beneath the surface.

... working with cinematographer Reinhold Vorschneider:

Reinhold really liked the script. He is very rigorous. And he has something that a lot of cinematographers don't have: He appears to be quite formal but the most important thing for him is to tell the story and to reflect about the images that are made. Some media claim that there's a certain "Vorschneider" aesthetic but that's a mistake. Reinhold is not interested in an "aesthetic". Rather he consistently challenges what cinema can be. It wasn't like that I had a story and I wanted a cameraman to deliver me the pictures for it. It was more of an attentive and collective experience of creating something together.

... the title of his film "Swans":

The expression "Swans" naturally carries a multitude of meanings as well as a symbolic dimension that differs from culture to culture. I would rather not define its meaning for the film. I think that every viewer is sure to find a personal relationship between the title and the story and perhaps not only on the symbolic level ...

... his work in Germany:

SWANS is a consequence of my life in Berlin. Berlin is a crossroads of cultures where new forms of social life have emerged. Some of these forms are not based on the old concepts of belonging to a culture of origin. This situation brings many interesting questions. It is within this framework that my work has been developing.

HUGO VIEIRA DA SILVA DIRECTOR



Born 1974 in Oporto, Portugal. After studying law at the Catholic university in Oporto from 1992 to 1995, Hugo Vieira da Silva graduated from the Lisbon School Of Theatre and Cinema (ESTC) in 1999. His graduation documentary *Arte pública* was awarded with the Kodak Prize for Best Portuguese Documentary film 1998. His following documentaries *Grupo Puzzle* and *Confesso* were screened and curated in several international contemporary art institutions and galleries. After receiving the Nipkow Grant fellowship programme 2003 he moved to Berlin. His first feature film *Body Rice*, produced by Paulo Branco, won several awards, most notably: the Best Director category in Buenos Aires (Bafici-2007) and Mexico (Ficco-2007), a Special Mention of the official competition in Locarno 2006, Best Cinematography and Best Sound of the official section in Fortaleza (Brazil) 2007. Furthermore, the film was selected for more than 10 competitive international sections. *Swans* is his second feature film. During development, the project was selected for L'atelier – Cannes film festival 2009, Binger Filmlab Script Development Programme and was awarded at the Torino FilmLab Development 2008. He was recently curated/selected for the book "The future of film-100 new directors" edited by Phaidon-New York, 2010. Hugo Vieira da Silva currently lives and works between Vienna and Berlin.

Filmography (selection) as writer and director:

2010	<i>Swans</i> (feature film), 120 min / Red Produced by Flying Moon, Contracosta Produções
2006	<i>Body Rice</i> (feature film), 120min / 35mm Produced by Paulo Branco
2003	<i>Confesso</i> (Albuquerque Mendes (documentary) 52min / Digital
2001	<i>Grupo Puzzle</i> (documentary) 52min / Digital
1998	<i>Arte pública</i> (documentary) 30m / 16mm

HEIDI WILM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Heidi Wilm, born 1978 in Graz, studied Contemporary Dance at the Iwanson School in Munich and philosophy at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. She works as a choreographer, dramaturge and performer. Various projects and collaborations with artists from different fields. Publications on dance and performance theory. Currently developing the feature film *Wellengang* together with Hugo Vieira da Silva, produced by Prisma Film, Vienna, selected for Cinemart 2011, International Filmfestival Rotterdam.

SWANS



SWANS

a film by Hugo Vieira da Silva

GERMANY / PORTUGAL 2011

126 minutes

DCP · color · 1:1,85 · Dolby Digital 5.1 · in German

CAST

Manuel	Kai Hillebrand
Tarso	Ralph Herforth
Petra	Maria Schuster
Kim	Vasupol Siriviriyafoon
Doctor	Eva Kryll
Healer	Cornelius Schwalm
Andreas	Christian Schwarz
Nurse	Anne Rathsfeld
Policeman	Robert Lohr

CREW

Director of Photography	Reinhold Vorschneider
Editor	Andrea Wagner
Sound Recordist	Nic Nagel
Writer	Hugo Vieira da Silva
Co-Director	Heidi Wilm
Director	Hugo Vieira da Silva
Producer	Helge Albers
Co-Producer	Francisco Villa-Lobos
Associate Producer	Roshanak Behesht Nedjad
Production Manager	Ole Nicolaisen
Production Designer	Thomas Molt
Costume Designer	Gabriella Ausonio
Make-up	Ljiljana Müller
Casting	Antje Mißbach
Sound Design	Daniel Iribarren
	Manuel Laval
Sound Mix	Matthias Schwab