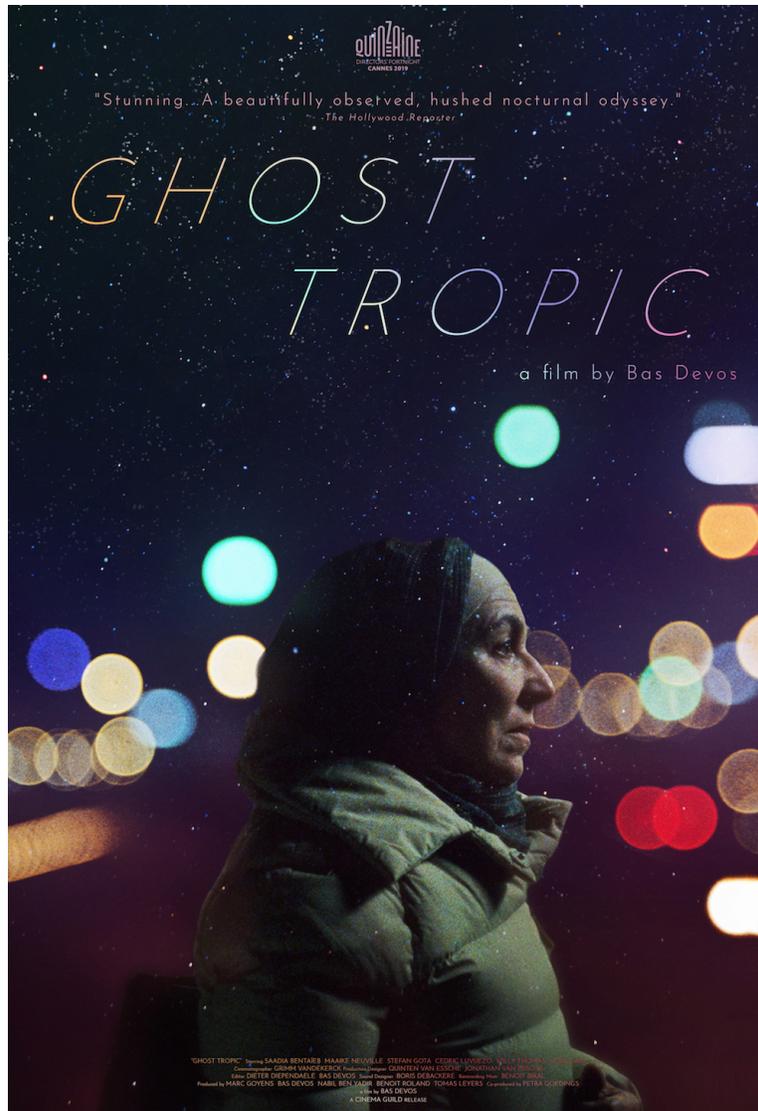


a Cinema Guild release



Opens August 28 in virtual cinemas nationwide

2019 / 85 min / Flat / 16mm / HD / 5.1/ Color  
In French with English subtitles

**PRESS**

Qing Jin, Cinema Guild  
[jin@cinemaguild.com](mailto:jin@cinemaguild.com)

**BOOKING**

Tom Sveen, Cinema Guild  
[tom@cinemaguild.com](mailto:tom@cinemaguild.com)

The Cinema Guild, Inc.  
2803 Ocean Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11229  
Tel: 212.685.6242, Fax: 212.685.4717  
[www.cinemaguild.com](http://www.cinemaguild.com)

Press Materials:

[http://www.cinemaguild.com/theatrical/ghosttropic\\_press.html](http://www.cinemaguild.com/theatrical/ghosttropic_press.html)

## **SYNOPSIS**

Khadija (Saadia Bentaïeb) is a fifty-eight-year-old Maghrebi cleaning woman living in Brussels in the wake of the 2016 bombings that shook the city. After work one night, she falls asleep on the last subway train, wakes up at the end of the line and has no choice but to make her way home—all the way across the city—on foot. Along the way, she has a series of encounters: with a security guard, a convenience store clerk, a group of teenagers. She asks for help and she gives it and slowly, steadily makes her way.

Director Bas Devos' lightness of touch combines with the richness of Grimm Vanderkerckhove's 16mm images to create a small wonder of humanistic storytelling. *Ghost Tropic* is a testament to the everyday drama of immigrant life and insists on the possibility of goodness and beauty, even in the dark of night.

## **CAST & CREW**

Saadia Bentaïeb as Khadija  
Maaïke Neuville as Gas Station Clerk  
Stefan Gota as Security Guard  
Cedric Luvuezo as Medic  
Willy Thomas as Neighbor  
Nora Dari as Daughter

Written and Directed by Bas Devos  
Cinematography by Grimm Vendekerckhove  
Edited by Dieter Diependaele & Bas Devos  
Sound design by Boris Debackere  
Rerecording mix by Benoit Biral  
Music by Brecht Ameel

Produced by Marc Goyens, Bas Devos, Nabil Ben Yadir, Benoit Roland, Tomas Leyers  
Coproduced by Petra Goedings & Sibylle Smets

World Sales: Rediance  
U.S. Distribution: Cinema Guild

## **DIRECTOR'S BIO**

Bas Devos was born in Zoersel, Belgium in 1983. After making four short films, he completed his debut feature film, VIOLET (2014). The film screened in the Generation section at the Berlinale where it won the Grand Prix from the Generation 14plus International Jury. His second feature, HELLHOLE (2019) premiered in Berlinale Panorama and won the prize for best director in Hong Kong. GHOST TROPIC (2019), starring Saadia Bentaieb, is his third film.

## **FILMOGRAPHY**

Ghost Tropic (2019)

Hellhole (2019)

Violet (2014)

## **SELECT FESTIVALS & AWARDS**

Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival, Directors Fortnight 2019

Official Selection, International Film Festival Rotterdam 2020

Official Selection, Museum of the Moving Image's First Look 2019

Official Selection, Chicago International Film Festival 2019

Official Selection, CPH:PIX 2019

Official Selection, Viennale 2019

WINNER - Best Director, Cairo International Film Festival 2019

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

### **Invisible Worlds**

In preparation for my second feature film, Hellhole, I spent a lot of time with young immigrants in Brussels. Some of them played an important part in the film, so we regularly rehearsed their scenes. During this preparation, I often got to talk to other residents from certain neighborhoods. I was curious about life in those large residential towers filled with unemployment and poverty, but also with a great deal of resilience and joy.

Behind every door, in every apartment, there is a whole world. Worlds that often remain invisible. And the most invisible lives in the Cité, those of the mothers of the young people, interested me the most. Who are these women who wear colorful headscarves, strolling around the large courtyard and then disappearing into the elevator?

In any case, they occupy a very precarious place in our society as women of color who are primarily Muslim.

Although the distance between them and me is great, they seemed very willing to talk to me. Some of the women I met played a small part in Hellhole. Generally, there is little said about these women. Such strong individuals! Their situation is often very compelling. Many of them are first or second-

generation migrants. They often work as cleaning ladies or housekeepers. And something that I found rather intriguing was that many of them look at their children's generation with a mixture of distrust and a mild form of envy. In conjunction with the simple fact that their children were born here and they were not, lies a very complex relationship in terms of their home and this city.

Sometimes I noticed a wry smile in some of these women when they spoke about their children and what they were doing. They didn't always approve. But at the same time, they knew that it was precisely those little transgressions that showed that their children really lived here. And I think they were sometimes lovingly envious of that.

I believe that some of them have really sacrificed themselves to give their children the opportunities that our society has never given them. They fluctuate between two worlds: The home that reminds them of the country of their origin, and the world outside. The world of their children in this impressive, hyper-complex city.

### **Simplicity**

I wanted to create a portrait of a Brussels woman in the way that I see them in the Cité, in Molenbeek or in the subway. Through the portrait of that woman I might be able to tell something of the story about this underexposed and under-represented generation of women.

The aim of the film is also to depart from the fragmentary nature of my two previous films. After *Violet* and *Hellhole*, I wanted to make a film that can be viewed as a snapshot. In this case, a single night. Outside of a short epilogue that takes place in a different time and place, the timeline is linear. The scenes merge into one another.

And finally, the starting point of the plot had to be a simple, almost banal incident: a woman, Khadija, falls asleep on the last train after work and is forced to walk home through night-time Brussels.

By creating a minimalist portrait, both in terms of content and form, I believe that I can reduce the distance between the viewer and Khadija. I wanted to make her visible and tangible. To achieve that, I aim to create as much space as possible in which to look at her. Simplicity is therefore important in order to be able to show her in all her complexity.

### **A Leap in the Dark**

Throughout the film, Khadija meets a series of people. A homeless person, a security guard, immigrants, a gas station clerk, a night shop owner, and a night nurse. Their encounters are sometimes wordless, and sometimes they are merely observations. Sometimes, conversations arise. But soon it becomes clear that Khadija's journey is slightly surreal in nature.

This timid woman wouldn't normally engage in these kinds of encounters, but circumstances force her to and she seems to see them as an opportunity. For her, the journey home is a modest revolution. A turning point. A leap in the dark.

The most meaningful encounter of all is the one with her daughter. When she catches her teenage daughter on a nightly escapade with some boys she is upset. She also sees a kind of carefree, relaxed demeanor in her daughter that she has hardly ever felt herself.

### **Brussels, a Sprawling City**

Brussels is an essential part of this film. A microcosm of European society. The social and cultural contrasts of its inhabitants are visible in its streets. All social extremes can be found there. The sad beauty of Brussels is that it cannot be disguised. Men in tailor-made suits step over the homeless to get to work. Some of the poorest inhabitants live in the center of the city. However, although the city serves as a powerful backdrop to the story, in this film, the journey through the city is also extremely significant.

A trip by subway, bus, car, and especially on foot, is also a trip through the super-diverse lives that make this city what it is.

Brussels has been my home for almost 20 years. And yet the city is still partly unknown to me. As if it cannot be fully grasped. As if it floats before my eyes, sometimes in sharp relief, and at other times, dim once more. This apparent formlessness makes this city interesting cinematically. It can feel both familiar and mysterious at the same time. And Khadija's journey reflects that character: everyday, ordinary, and yet alienating and somehow magical.

Bas Devos