

a Cinema Guild release



Opens Feb 9 at Film at Lincoln Center in New York

2023 / 82 min / 1.25:1 / 16mm to 2K DCP / 5.1 / Color
In Dutch/French/Romanian/Mandarin with English subtitles

press

Layla Hancock-Piper
layla@cineticmedia.com
Cori Futrovsky, Cineatic
cori@cineticmedia.com

booking

Tom Sveen, Cinema Guild
tom@cinemaguild.com

The Cinema Guild, Inc.
2803 Ocean Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11229
Tel: 212.685.6242, Fax: 212.685.4717
www.cinemaguild.com

Press Materials:

http://www.cinemaguild.com/theatrical/lastthings_press.html

synopsis

Here follows Stefan, a Romanian construction worker living in Brussels who is about to return home to visit his mother, and perhaps stay for good. Using the leftovers from his fridge, he cooks up a big pot of soup and begins handing it out as farewell gifts to friends and family. But while waiting for his car to be fixed, he meets Shuxiu, a Belgian-Chinese woman preparing a doctorate on mosses. Her attention to the near-invisible stops him in his tracks.

On the heels of *Ghost Tropic* (2019), Bas Devos offers another Brussels city symphony. With a quiet grace that's becoming a trademark, he and his team capture both the longing of contemporary urban life and the potential for enchantment that still exists in spaces shared by strangers from different worlds.

director's note

A container of soup

In the 1980s, science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin wrote a short essay with a beautiful title: *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*. In it, she argues that early humans were primarily gatherers of berries, fruits, grains and seeds. The image that we have of a hunter, a wielder of spears, a slayer of mammoths, may well dominate our collective conscience, but it is flawed. The first cultural artefact was not a spear, says Le Guin, but a vessel. A bowl, a carrier bag, a woven net, a pouch in which to carry back home all those seeds and nuts and leaves. But this sack, or pouch, and its (his)story, lost out to the more heroic image of the mammoth slayer wielding a spear. A very masculine image underpinning a masculine narrative.

Le Guin counters this proposition with a more feminine narrative. Moving away from that heroic image, to search for stories of cooperation, of sharing, of gathering. Because it is that hoarding, that stockpiling and sharing that really defines us as humans. I love that image!

It was after reading this essay that the film I was trying to write really began to fall into place. The narrative was a simple one: a man who is going away for a while empties his fridge and makes a soup with the vegetables that would otherwise go rotten. He then distributes that soup to his friends and family. This film is about boxes of soup, about seeds and roots and the soft moss under our feet. And consequently, it is a film about what it means to be human.

A thick, fibrous now

Biologist and philosopher Donna Haraway puts forward the idea of a 'thick now' to describe the intricate web of terrifying connections that permeate our collective reality.

She proposes a way of thinking about time that raises our awareness of our interconnectedness with each other, but also with the non-human world. It is about living in the now while remaining mindful of what came before us, so that we leave behind a more peaceful landscape for those who come after us. Perhaps, a way of reappraising the broken connection between man and nature. Moss serves as a powerful metaphor for talking about that 'thick and fibrous now': intricately bound to future and past, yet in the now, and intensely intertwined with the environment, the quality of the surrounding air and water, the amount of sunlight. Human behaviour finding echo in those soft beds of spongy vegetation. Shuxiu is Stefan's guide, and also ours.

The film builds towards a moment of stillness, a moment of undivided attention. When Stefan meets Shuxiu in the swampy, man-made no man's land between Brussels and Vilvoorde, they share an experience that comes close to this 'thick now'. By watching and listening to each other and their surroundings. By paying attention. Maybe attentiveness is a prerequisite for love.

The name of the world

As I started working on this film, I got hold of a handheld magnifying glass. When I bring piece of glass close to my eye, I see what is in front of me, magnified twenty times. I regularly go on walks with Geert Raeymaekers, a bryologist, an expert on mosses. He is a kind, warm man. Together, we gaze through our magnifying glasses at the tiny world beneath our feet. He identifies the many varied species we hold between our fingers and calls them by their mysterious Latin names. *Syntrichia laevipila*, *Kindbergia praelonga*.

Naming things is the first step in learning to look at them, writes Robin Wall Kimmerer in her book *Gathering Moss*. It is a way of entering into an intimate, nurturing relationship with the world.

When Geert and I look up from that world beneath our feet, everywhere, between the greenery and overgrown concrete, we see cans, bottles, cigarette packets, empty crisp bags, toilet paper, some lonely shoes, a broken umbrella and a bicycle. If we knew the names of all the mosses, plants and trees around us, would this place look different? We take an imaginary stroll towards a way out from this squalid wasteland, following a trail upon our ailing planet. It takes quite a bit of imagination to envision any other future than a dystopian wasteland.

As Haraway writes: "...it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what thoughts think thoughts...It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories."

I can think of no better medium than film, to envision that other future, to tell that other story, to 'world' that other world.

credits

CAST

Stefan – Stefan Gota

ShuXiu – Liyo Gong

Cedric – Cedric Luvuezo

Mihal – Teodor Corban

Saadia – Saadia Bentaïeb

Anca – Alina Constantin

ShuHuan – ShuHuang Wang

CREW

Written and directed by – Bas Devos

Assistant Director – Sofie Tusschans

Director of Photography – Grimm Vandekerckhove

Film Editor – Dieter Diependaele

Production Designer – Špela Tušar

Costume Designer – Manon Blom

Sound design – Boris Debackere

Rerecording mix – Benoit Biral

Music – Brecht Ameel

Produced by – Marc Goyens

Production – Quetzalcoatl

International Sales – Rediance

director's bio

Bas Devos was born in Zoersel, Belgium in 1983. His first feature, *Violet*, won the Jury Prize at Berlinale Generations in 2014 and was selected for MoMA and Film at Lincoln Center's New Directors/New Films. His second feature was selected for Berlinale Panorama in 2019. *Ghost Tropic*, his third feature, premiered three months later at the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs in Cannes. *Here* is his fourth feature film. He teaches film at Luca School of Arts in Brussels.

select festivals and awards

WINNER – Best Film, Encounters, Berlinale 2023
WINNER – FIPRESCI Prize, Berlinale 2023
WINNER – Best Feature Film, Valdivia International Film Festival 2023
WINNER – Best Fiction Feature, Guanajuato International Film Festival 2023
Official Selection – Toronto International Film Festival 2023
Official Selection – New York Film Festival 2023
Official Selection – San Sebastian International Film Festival 2023
Official Selection – AFI Fest 2023
Official Selection - International Film Festival Rotterdam 2024

filmography

"Taurus," fiction, 2005 (11')
"Pillar," fiction, 2006 (16')
"We Know," fiction, 2010 (10')
Violet, fiction, 2014 (82')
Hellhole, fiction, 2019 (90')
Ghost Tropic, fiction, 2019 (83')
Here, fiction, 2023 (82')