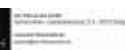


HENRIETTE & GUIDO

An unusual love story

Documentary by Stella Tinbergen, D 2024, HD, 102 min

DOP Sebastian Hattop - Editor Marc Nordbruch - Composer Marina Baranova -
Sound Thomas Hamann - Sounddesign Holger Jung - Dance Teacher Tamara McCall





Logline

Henriette is a system crusher. This manifests itself in an explosive mixture of neediness and aggressiveness. That Henriette can still live 'outside' freely is possible because of Guido, the man who loves her and who tries to build bridges between Henriette and the rest of the world. The love story of Henriette and Guido is at the same time the story of a person who represents many mentally ill people with their demand to be taken seriously and being recognized.

Synopsis

Henriette is a system crusher. Born with a frontal lobe disorder, directly after birth she remained in the intensive care unit and only after many weeks she was given to her parents. This early childhood trauma is expressed today in a wild mixture of aggression and neediness. The highly intelligent Henriette is fighting against rejection which she often provokes herself. On her side there is Guido who is steadfastly building bridges to her surroundings, which she continually destroys.

But thanks Guido she takes remarkable development steps. In an inclusive fairy tale she defeats the magic bird and shows that she owns capacities which are an enrichment for others. The love story between Henriette and Guido is more than the narrative of her struggle with and in the society. It is also an example for many mentally ill people with their longing to be noticed and to be taken seriously.

Director's Note

I am interested in the particularities of human lives and the biographies of people who have to fight for their way through their lives.

In recent decades, this has included the painter Marianne von Werefkin and the dancer couple Alexander Sacharoff and Clotilde von Derp. The confrontation with them and their art offers opportunities to deal with the phenomenon of human creativity, but also with works whose contemplation opens up new and higher dimensions of human creativity.

I am also interested in people whose minds blossom in ways that drive them to despair. My schizophrenic brother Siegfried is one of them. I made the film »Siegfried - my schizophrenic brother« with him in 1998. An essential part of his life is the daily battle with the ghosts in his head. This battle makes him anxious and compliant in contact with the outside world. This makes it relatively easy to deal with. Siegfried now lives in an assisted living community and has largely found peace with his life.

Henriette, who is the subject of the film »Henriette and Guido – An unusual Lovestory«, is also mentally ill. But Henriette knows no peace. She has been struggling since the day she was born, exhausting herself and those around her.

Henriette is the daughter of my friend, Dr. Hilma Simon. Due to damage to Henriette's frontal brain, Henriette is disturbed in her behavior and personality. Unable to recognize where her own freedom ends and that of others begins, Henriette always seems to want to sound out the weak points of a system for its flexibility.

This repeatedly brings the police onto the scene. And leads to misunderstandings and hardships, which - caused by the stress on both sides - often lead to unintended consequences. Henriette is lucky that she has always met people along the way who stand up for her. First and foremost is Guido, Henriette's partner. He softens Henriette's clashes with the outside world and thus enables her to achieve: a life of freedom.

Tamara McCall has been campaigning for inclusion for decades. Tamara is a dance teacher and professor at the University of Music in Osnabrück. Here she has established a platform for the disabled.

In our film, Tamara tries to lead Henriette's fighting spirit into forms of artistic expression. Declared aim was to help Henriette become more self-aware of her uniqueness and to say and feel it: I am here and it is good the way I am. We were amazed at how quickly Henriette got involved in this work. Of course, like everything Henriette gets involved in, this collaboration has also led to struggles and arguments.



But in the end, the continuous work with Tamara culminated in a performance that delighted everyone involved - including Henriette. The dance work provides the framework for our film and shows that even a story like Henriette's can become a success story if we join forces.

Stella Tinbergen

Project

Team

Henriette & Guido – An unusual lovestory

D 2024, 102 min, HD, DCP

German Version, International Version (German, English Subs)

Director: Stella Tinbergen

DOP: Sebastian Hattop

Editor: Marc Nordbruch

Music: Marina Baranova

Sound: Thomas Hamann

Sounddesign: Holger Jung

Dance teacher: Tamara McCall

Filmbio Stella Tinbergen

Education:

Höhere Technische Bundeslehranstalt Graz (Fachrichtung Audiovisuelle Medien, Prof. Richard Kriesche),

Filmhochschule Wien (Fachrichtung Regie und Produktion)

Films (Selection)

2024 Henriette & Guido – An unconventional Lovestory
Documentary, 102 min.

2020 Kunst als Schlüssel zur Existenz - Künstlergruppe50 Wiesbaden
Documentary, 79 min.

2014 Poeten des Tanzes – Die Sacharoffs
Documentary, 87 min.

2013 Forschungsprojekt Sacharoff
Documentary, 33 min.

2009 Marianne von Werefkin – Ich lebe nur durch das Auge
Docufeature, 85 min.

2005 Der Fall Mischa E.
Documentary, 90 min.
Preise: Robert Geisendörfer Preis 2006,
Nominierung Medienpreis Davos 2006

2005 Siegfried – Geister, die ich rief
Documentary, 55 min.
Preise: Journalistenpreis Schizophrenie und Stigma 2006

- 2001 Elias, das Zirkuskind
Documentary, 55 min.
- 1999 Haus des ewigen Lebens
Documentary über den jüdischen Friedhof/Frankfurt
- 1997 Siegfried – mein schizophrener Bruder
Documentary, 70 min.
- 1996 Stundenglück
Documentary über Frauen, die Mörder lieben, 45 Minuten
- 1994 Der verendete Krieg
Documentary über Flüchtlingsschicksale in Mosambik,
60 min.
- 1992 Die 19 Kinder des Kamakei
Documentary über das Bevölkerungswachstum in Kenia, 45 Minuten
- 1991 Elefantenträume
FILMDEBUT
Essayfilm about Elephants, 30 min.



Press / Critics

HENRIETTE & GUIDO

If there is such a thing as a genre of portraits of disabled people or outsiders in fiction and even more so in documentary film, then, apart from the primary task of film, which is to touch us and take us to places we have never been before, it has three main motifs. The first is a critical question to society regarding how it deals with people who, in one way or another, do not conform to the norm. The second is a personal closeness to these people, who are always so much more than the problems they have and may cause, an understanding that perhaps makes solidarity possible, and the third is because number one and number two would otherwise be difficult to bear, a prospect of hope in principle, a common ray of light (and here it is important to guard against kitsch or other forms of dishonesty).

The film »Henriette and Guido« strikes exactly the right balance between cinematic engagement and the necessary restraint. The humanism of such a film lies in the function of the protagonists. It is not a film about Henriette and Guido, it is a film with Henriette and Guido. That is why it begins with their love story. After all, according to a question that Henriette asks herself as well as us, the audience: If she tells her story, if she allows herself to be filmed in her everyday life, does that mean generating more respect and understanding, or does it provoke even more rejection and bullying?

Henriette was born with brain damage, but the trauma of her early separation from her mother and her treatment in various homes are possibly even more responsible for her difficulties with the world around her. She can be very aggressive, even if the reasons for it are often difficult to understand, and then again she has something angelic about her; as Guido says, she is like an emotional »surprise bag«. We accompany Henriette on visits to her mother, in music and dance therapy, in distance learning and also to the police station, where she has once again ended up after arguments. Patient Guido, whose family history of alcoholism, violence and suicide we only get to see in fragments, remains in the background in the film, as he probably does in real life. But we do see that he too has to fight for his dignity and self-determination.

Recently, and not only because of a film on the subject, people like Henriette have been called "system destroyers". The usual social and psychiatric institutions and their methods reach their limits there. But there are also limits

to the resilience of the people who mean well by her, her mother, therapists, teachers, even policewomen, who certainly don't want to treat Henriette like an ordinary troublemaker, but who also have their rules. It is a small consolation that these limits have been extended and cushioned, at least in comparison to the time of Henriette and Guido's childhood. The mother can now deal with her feelings of guilt differently than she once could. Not only Henriette, but also society is making progress. Perhaps.

The director Stella Tinbergen has dealt with mental illness in films and installations on several occasions and has found a way of approaching it that is also personally motivated. »Siegfried – My Schizophrenic Brother« and »Siegfried – Voices in My Head« (both 1997) and »Siegfried – Ghosts I Called« (2005) describe the ordeal of her brother, who at the age of 16 was committed to a psychiatric ward where he was hardly treated therapeutically but mainly kept quiet. It was only at the age of 40, with the help of his sister, that he was able to cautiously find a way to a more self-determined life. In »The Mischa E. Case«, which ends in murder and suicide, she shows that she does not take the easy way out. And in her portraits of artists, such as the one about Marianne von Werefkin, Alexej Jawlenski's companion and an artist in her own right, Stella Tinbergen repeatedly engages with ambivalence and contradictions. This also applies to the form of her films, which are usually both documentary and artistic in nature, reality and art.

This combination also characterizes »Henriette and Guido«; it is the opposite of a »rough« documentary. The shots are carefully composed, the color palette, muted and dark, used deliberately, and finally the music, reduced post-romantic piano sounds, which initially accompany the action from the off, are drawn into the action during the therapy. And the most beautiful view at the end of the play is a scene in which art and life are completely united, in the director's other passion: dance.

What will become of Henriette and Guido remains an open question. After all, there have not only been advances but also a few setbacks. The reconciliation with the siblings, which is only lightly hinted at, will not produce a new idyll. Henriette and Guido's lives will remain difficult. And it will remain difficult for those around them. But it has acquired a glow. And the film has perfectly fulfilled its task. To Touch.

Georg Seeßlen

(Oct. 2024, *Strandgut Kulturzeitschrift*, to be published with premiere)



Tamara and Henriette, getting to know each other



Rehearsal: Engagement, acceptance and respect



Guido Mattern



Friends and Helpers



Baby Henriette and mother Hilma



Premiere

Eine Produktion von

Stella Tinbergen - Dokumentarfilme

und

strandfilm Produktions GmbH
Kurt Otterbacher

strandfilm

HESSEN FILM & MEDIEN

Anna Schoeppe und Stefanie Marschner

nordmedia



Thomas Schäffer und Thomas Starte

Kulturamt Wiesbaden

Jörg-Uwe Funk



Referat Chancengleichheit

Fachstelle für Inklusion Osnabrück

Patricia Heller und Steven Brentrop

Spielbank Wiesbaden



Renate Petzinger

Ulla Reiss

Hessisches Ministerium
für Soziales