



RETROSPEKT
a film by Esther Rots

**CIRCE LETHEM
LIEN WILDEMEERSCH
MARTIJN VAN DER VEEN**

RETROSPEKT

Mette (40) is in the final phase of her rehabilitation, when one day Miller (32) 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 pain, medication, and increasing anxiety, Mette has time to reminisce.

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 councilor no longer provide her with a sense of purpose. When her husband Simon is away on a business trip, Mette learns that a former client of hers (Miller) is in trouble. On a whim and hoping to resolve her own emptiness, Mette seizes the opportunity to do something 'meaningful' and invites Miller into her home, fully aware of the potential consequences.

Retrospect is life's sense of humor or proof we are all living a fairy tale; it is easy to make sense of 'it' all in hindsight, but the chaos of everyday life blurs one's vision at the time the 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 and Chantal van der Horst (The Netherlands)

co-producer:

Serendipity Films - Ellen De Waele (Belgium)



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - ESTHER ROTS

RETROSPEKT is a poetic, suspense-packed, modern domestic fairy tale about Mette. She is a confidant and resilient young mother, struggling with one of the contemporary turmoil's of our society; the fear of life's purposelessness.

RETROSPEKT is a film that is seen and felt through Mette's perspective. My method is intuitive and associative, and conveying a feeling is just as important to me 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 reality with all its clumsy negotiations; in a pronounced 'I' form. The film crawls intimately between the hairs of both the protagonist and the viewer - 'experiencing' in an arena I like to call sensory cinema.

THEMES:

-The search for a reason to exist. 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 oneself. 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 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.

Mette's search for *raison d'être* remains close to home. She loses herself in a little drama going on right under her nose; her agency can't find appropriate and safe care for one of her clients, Miller. For Mette, this is the perfect excuse to be distracted from her own problems. Against better judgment, she seizes the possibility to do something 'useful' with both hands; 'protecting' Miller.

-'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. In this, hindsight functions as a sort of quicksand that you can't get out of once you're in it. The disbelief that something goes wrong and the realization that you can't stop it.

Although RETROSPEKT is not a film solely about hindsight, the understanding of it and its absurdity play a pivotal role in the story and has a major impact on the structure and experience of the film.

The non-chronological narration revolves around a car accident; the turning point in Mette's life. The film consist of a prologue followed by two intertwined parts, both of which move towards her car accident, but from opposite time perspectives and with different fears.

This time-play is an essential part of the audience's experience of RETROSPEKT. Although I

have played a lot with time in previous films and have worked with it as a means of determining strong atmospheric changes, with RETROSPEKT the chosen non-linear chronology is a necessity, resulting in a feeling of displacement and disorientation that is essential for the perception of Mette's perspective and gives the film an unspoken, exciting, on-edge feeling. This physical framing lets Mette fluctuate between what she was, is, wants to be but can't be.

By telling the first part (the rehabilitation) in reverse, Mette's abrupt halt works as some sort of kinetic energy being stored up as she moves closer to the accident; so the exact thing Mette has been running from, the vacuum, is crystallized around her. Mette's unrest only becomes a quest for balance and tranquility after the movie ends, once Mette starts the real rehabilitation.

-motherhood in society, and the associated social expectations.

The film also deals with another distinct dilemma of our time; the seldom discussed issue of how the expectation of unconditional maternal love from mothers and women in general is taken for granted. 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.

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 operatic music is romantic, absurd and dramatic. It narrates a parallel emotional development and creates 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.

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 Transquinennial to join the cast of Ja ja maar nee nee, also called Ah oui ça alors là. They toured for 5 years in Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and France. She also worked on stage with Adrian Brine, Jules-Henri Marchant and Hanneke Paauwe. In 2016 she had lots of fun to play the character of Cherubino 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. Her latest character was in the film Les Survivants in 2016.

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. Next to theatre, Lien has also been involved in several short films and some Flemish television series. Upcoming feature films in which Lien will be starring, are 'Mette' by Esther Rots and 'Nocturne' by Viktor van der Valk.

Lien is also a skilled dancer and musician. She was trained in ballet, jazz dance and tap dance and plays piano, cello, harp and accordion.

