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LUCY BEECH

WORKING WITH WASTE

featuring
RIAR RIZALDI, JAMES RICHARDS
AND STEVE REINKE

ENGLISH VISITOR GUIDE

6 July to 1 October 2023

Project coordination: Ulrich Kreienbrink
Technical realisation: Carlo Bas Sancho, Mathis Oesterlen
Educational programme: Sandrine Teuber, Jan Blum
Graphic design: Katarina Šević, Anna Mándoki

EVENTS
EXHIBITION WALK
Wednesday, 6 September, 5 p.m.
with Edit Molnár, director Edith-Russ-Haus (in English language)
Wednesday, 27 September, 5 p.m.
with Marcel Schwierin, director Edith-Russ-Haus (in German language)
GUIDED TOURS
Every Sunday during the exhibition at 3 p.m.
(Attendance free, regular entrance).
Group tours on request.

Curated by: Edit Molnár & Marcel Schwierin

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Lucy Beech presents a series of films at Edith-Russ-Haus which explore relationships between waste, creativity and transformation. Questions of flow and blockage in these works pertain not only to individual guts and urban drainage networks, but also to understandings of creativity. Thinking is, for Beech's films, a metabolic and digestive process.

Beech's films on show as part of the exhibition *Working With Waste* are constructed by blending hybrid materials into screenplays and exist at the intersections of documentary, fiction and poetry. Developed through an exchange of materials and research with various practitioners from different fields including, environmental science, literary theory and medical history these films focus on processes of waste reuse in the context of poetry, agriculture and biomedical pharmaceuticals. Whilst making these works the artist spent time shadowing drain experts and scientists involved in sewage treatment where the task of stabilizing sludge and monitoring microbial diversity in wastewater: a riot of bacteria, fungi and protozoa, reveals the work involved in maintaining the fantasy of the human-animal divide. Entanglements between species and the blurry boundaries between waste and use are the focus of Beech's films on show at Edith-Russ-Haus, which are invested in materials that don't fit neatly into categories and intimacies that prove difficult to forge and maintain.

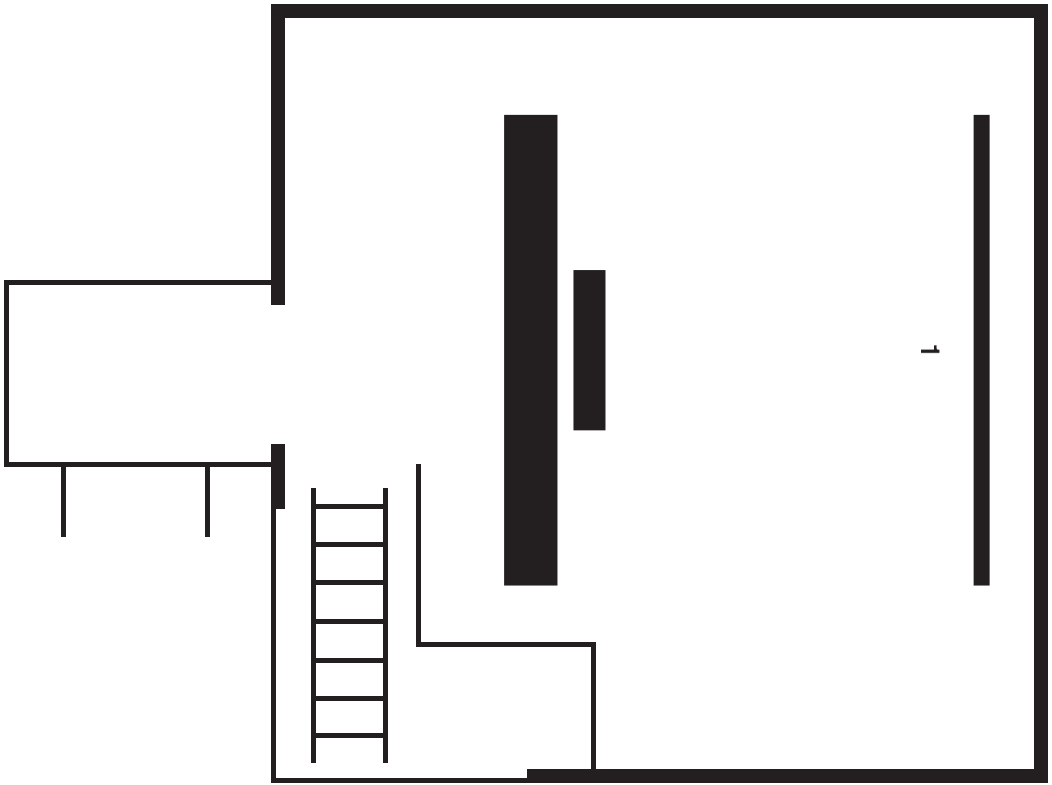
Alongside their own work Beech has invited works by filmmakers Riar Rizaldi, James Richards and Steve Reinke that are shared within the wider scope of their presentation. These films have also evolved through collaboration and invest care and attention in otherwise discarded or surplus materials. The exhibition 'Working With Waste' began life as a research group founded by Beech of which Riar Rizaldi and James Richards were both participants. In this context group activity grew out of a series of questions: *what kinds of creativity are involved in reactivating waste materials, what are the rhythms, values and historical legacies attached to working with waste across different disciplinary spheres*

and how do attitudes to waste shape infrastructures and norms?

To realize this multipart exhibition, the Edith-Russ-Haus collaborated with Kunstinstituut Melly in Rotterdam and Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof in Hamburg. Each of the three exhibitions foregrounds different aspects of Beech's collaborative and research-based practice and forms its own focus through the selection of works and their presentation.

Lucy Beech was the 2021 recipient of the Media Art Grant from the Foundation of Lower Saxony at the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art.

EXHIBITION GROUND FLOOR



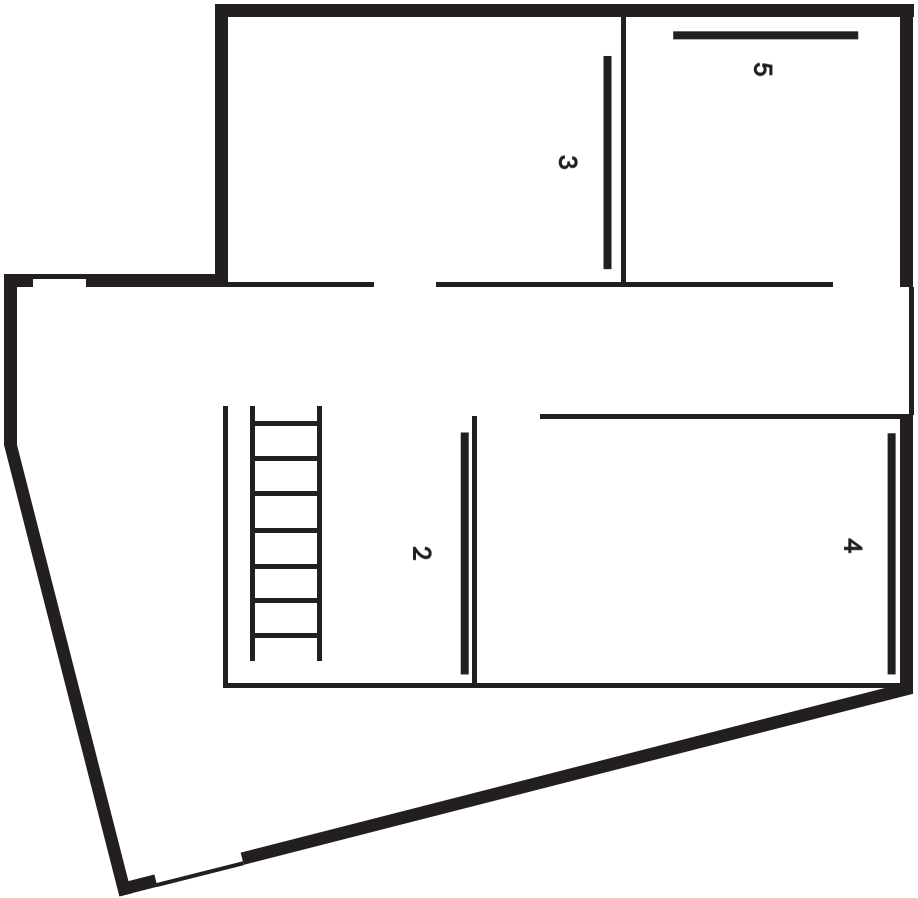
1
LUCY BEECH
WARM DECEMBERS

2022
4K video with 5.1 surround sound
26 min

Warm Decembers reimagines a poetic verse novel written by queer theorist and poet Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950–2009) which the author described as recording a "crisis in writing". At the end of the poem Sedgwick published the discarded fragments of her working process as notes. By incorporating her poetic waste, the author serves up the leftovers of the poem's construction and advertises the revisions and erasures that have made it. Taking these notes as an invitation for artistic interpretation the film borrows and experiments with the poem's discordant flows and is a constant interplay between language, music and imagery. Beech's audio visual approach is inspired by Sedgwick's description of the poem as a gathering of thresholds: "between a person alive and dead; a person and a photograph; a present and a past; a child and adult; people with the same name; a happening and the dream of it; a writer and a character; an I and a she or a he". This conjuring of transgressive states offers an experimental space to reflect on psychoanalytic ideas, about infantile experience and inner and outer worlds and the role creativity plays in constructing identity.

The film was scripted through an exchange of ideas with writer Cassie Westwood who features in the work performing part of her essay *The Use of The Poem in Transition* (2022). She describes how Sedgwick's diverse attitude to waste materials has helped her make sense of her own false starts and necessary revisions as she works to integrate memories, desires, or identifications that she was led to believe were incompatible – or unacceptable – with the identity she was assigned at birth.

EXHIBITION BASEMENT



2
RIAR RIZALDI
FOSSILIS

2023
4K video with stereo sound
12:59 min

Fossilis is an oneiric cinema, a phantasmal science-fiction prognosis, an essay film and a tale of the verdant inferno of technological legacy, resonating the complexity of electronic waste in the 21st century of Asia where most of the discarded electronics—due to the planned obsolescence—in the planet is dumped and buried. With live-action sets built from waste materials, scenes from flea market of cannibalization parts, 3D assets and environment from abandoned projects and AI images generated from thousands of unused images from a personal dataset, Fossilis offers more than just concepts, narratives, and representation of e-waste as an issue, but also engages in the process, development, and modes of film production that involves actual, both digital and physical, waste and e-waste objects as means of artistic practice.

3
LUCY BEECH
REPRODUCTIVE EXILE

2018 – 2023
4K video with stereo sound
30 min

Reproductive Exile explores the user experience of biomedical pharmaceuticals derived from urine. The film tracks the experience of a cross-border patient in the commercial surrogacy industry where we encounter this "reproductive exile" on the road, in her car, obsessed with a machine called 'Eve'—a scientific prosthetic assigned to her as a personalized organ model who she confides in while swabbing, driving, and injecting herself in a seemingly endless loop. Occupying an uncomfortable space between reality and fiction the film slips between a road movie and film essay, linking research on the cultural, social and economic agendas of the assisted reproduction industry with the experience of the film's disoriented protagonist. In a drug induced hallucination she imagines her inner body flooding - mirroring a medical state referred to as 'third spacing' which is an exaggerated response to excessive hormones in which fluids collect between cells in a bodily space not normally suffused with fluids. In this state of overflow the protagonist imagines her body conflated with human and nonhuman others that facilitate her fertility treatment.

4
LUCY BEECH
FLUSH

2023
4K video with 5.1 surround sound
15 min

'Flush' alludes to the dispersal of colour and the mechanism by which waste is expelled from the home, and its subject is a 'freemartin' cow whose indeterminate sex characteristics, cast their 'usefulness' as agricultural products into doubt. Freemartins cows share a placenta with a male twin and through an exchange of blood and hormones are often born intersex. The cows' incapacity to lactate, its unrecognisable udder, and small teats defy the logic of the industrial farm making freemartinism a prolific research subject, especially for turn of the 20th Century scientists invested in speculations about the hormonal human body and ideas about sex differentiation in mammals. By studying the freemartin scientists gathered that an individual's immune system can be modified by cells from another individual. The intersex cow substantiates Anne Fausto-Sterling's description of sex differentiation as a process that is always ongoing. Going further than simply defining gender as a construct, Fausto-Sterling argues that what makes biological sex —namely the endocrine system— is itself a product, at least in part, of cultural and environmental factors. Acted upon by myriad environmental, political, economic, and social forces, the porous endocrinological vision of the freemartin refuses the comforting fiction of the autonomous body and instead points to our profound enmeshment with the world. *Flush* explores the limits of what is considered waste and the ways in which the discipline of endocrinology relies on permeability of the boundaries between scientist, fertile cow and pregnant human. Taking a poetic approach to the messiness of these relations the film approaches biology as too complex to provide clear-cut answers about sexual difference.

5
JAMES RICHARDS AND STEVE REINKE
WHEN WE WERE MONSTERS

2020
HD video with stereo sound
21 min

Cinema is always Frankenstein; a composite being. Indeed, what is more monstrous than the cut itself? For Richards the filmic severing of an image from its origin reveals it, making it available for inspection. *When We Were Monsters* relishes deviations and perversions that appear on closer inspection or when searching for stable meanings. What happens when we lean into our desires and find the porous line between inside and outside, self and other, the body and the world? The starting point for this collaborative film was an unused

video tape of projection footage made by the artist Gretchen Bender, who turned clinical images of infections, deformities, and morbid injuries into an abject flicker film. Reinke and Richards expanded Bender's medical gaze into a broader perspective, combining new sequences and animations, interweaving them to produce a film with a rich soundtrack of audio and spoken word.

Lucy Beech (b. 1985) is an artist filmmaker who practice revolves around collaboration and encompasses roles such as directing, editing, choreography, research and writing.
Forthcoming/recent exhibitions of their work include: Kunstinstitute Melly NL, Edith-Ruß-Haus für Medienkunst, Oldenburg, Harburger Bahnhof, Kunsthalle, Mainz DE, Tramway Glasgow, De La warr Pavilion and The Liverpool Biennial UK. With their collaborator Edward Thomasson they have presented work at Tate Britain UK, South London Gallery, Maureen Paley London UK, The Barbican Theatre UK, The Camden Arts Center UK. Beech is currently guest professor at The Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf and recently completed a fellowship at the Max Planck institute for the History of Science.

NOTES ON WARM DECEMBERS

A correspondence between Lucy Beech (LB) and Cassie Westood (CW)
Cassie Westwood is the narrator and co-author of the script of *Warm Decembers*, she is a writer and teacher, based in Oxford. Her most recent essays are on queerness, earworms, and allusions.

LB: Through two years of correspondence you and I adapted Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's eight chapter verse novel into a screenplay. In the end we decided that the film would be book-ended by a prologue and epilogue and through the process of making, you became the narrator of the film. The prologue is a direct reference to the text that you wrote, 'The Use of a Poem in Transition', which embraces instances of writers (and especially poets) incorporating earlier drafts, deleted passages, or false starts into a published work. In the epilogue you're reading from Sedgwick's notes directly. So I wanted to ask first, what was most significant to you about Sedgwick publishing her notes and what did you find most exciting about Sedgwick's method of leaving the textual decisions and excisions on display? Did you find that a lot of the poets undertaking this work of poetic salvage tended to be queer?

CW: I did find that the writers working with waste tended to be queer. I don't know if this was because there was a bias in what I was looking for. There seems to be a really obvious reason for why queer writers might find some kind of meaning in forms that are unfinished, or poems and novels that advertise a certain difficulty in finding a satisfactory final shape. Putting waste on view is a means of advertising the changes and everything that change implies. There were of course also people talking about waste, long before the contemporary moment. Most of my examples tend to come from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Take for example the English essayist Charles Lamb talking in the 1820s about his visit to Cambridge where the manuscript for John Milton's poem, 'Lycidas', is stored. He writes about how shocked and horrified he was to see annotations and deletions and remnants of the drafting process on view. He says it's almost unthinkable to imagine that the poem might have been any other way.

The question of what we do with our waste became important in the early nineteenth century, with the increasing availability of printed matter. Paper and printing becomes much cheaper and books are produced and designed to be consumed and then passed on. Although you had circulating libraries, I think there would have been an increasing sense of books themselves being no longer quite as rare and precious, but actually a kind of potential-

ly disposable item. 'Penny dreadfuls' were after all a Victorian invention. So I wouldn't be surprised to find a historical correlation with that. The Romantic poets had also been profoundly interested in fragments: think of Hyperion by Keats, or 'Kubla Khan' by Coleridge. There's a whole genre of the fragment poem and a Romantic interest in ruins as well. I think they're connected to the subject.

LB: So would you say the romantic poets are like a precursor to the genre of poetic waste?

CW: Yeah, I think I was trying to work that out, really, because there are some quite important differences between the Romantic fragment poem which gestures towards the whole, and the poems that I look at in that essay, which refer to the stuff the writers had to get rid of to get there. It's not like the poems by Sedgwick or the novel I look at by Merrill or Ocean Vuong gesture towards some vast sublime thing that you can't quite apprehend, it's more like, the process of making becomes the emphasis.

LB: This process of showing working is also of course quite different from the ruin. In relation to our editing process which was quite multi-layered I was thinking about how we switched all the time between formal and informal methods of exchange around the poem, as we tried to get closer to building a new form for it as a screenplay. For example I remember asking you to write a timeline of the life of Beatrix in order to map a trajectory of the character that we were pulling out, to become the protagonist of the film and then, in other ways, we were thinking more intuitively about how certain lines spoke to us both in different ways. I think we both knew quite quickly that Beatrix was going to be our protagonist. What drew you to the character of Beatrix?

CW: In a way the figure of Beatrix feels familiar from some of Sedgwick's more autobiographical essays. I realized that she somewhat describes a story that I could tell about my own childhood, not quite understanding the conventions that the rest of the family seem content to operate. You and I have been referring to Beatrix as an orphan, what was it that you felt compelling about the story of her absent parents?

LB: There is such strong visual imagery attached to Beatrix's attempts to understand who she is. Brought up by distant relatives (her aunt and cousin) she is a teenager caught in the process of carving out her subjectivity which seemed a very interesting place to meditate on the experience of transition. The poem seems to embody the work involved in building an identity and

the simultaneous breakdown of Sedgwick's own capacity to write the poem.

CW: Yes, Sedgwick's creative approach to the poem gives you another description of how you might build a psyche from the stuff that you've got or are left with.

LB: Exactly. I remember the first time you told me that you carry these poetic works like 'The Warm Decembers' around with you as you move through the world. You called the poems which advertise the waste of making: 'totems of your transition'. This is such a beautiful image. Poetic works: all their lives, drafts, characters and images inside your pocket. I remember even discussing with you an idea I had to blow up the props so they would be huge pieces of fluff and waste objects in your pocket like Mary Norton's fantasy novel The Borrowers, or something. In the end this approach would have made the story too biographical, which of course it is, but more in the sense of the shared tools that Beatrix, you and even myself are using to shape a sense of self and the creativity inherent to that task.

CW: In the end I really like that the film begins with me talking about myself and ends with me narrating the story through Sedgwick's notes. It feels like the kind of journey that I would want from this experience – to end in a space less fixated on making a convincing story about myself. The whole process has been interesting and meaningful because it's made it so clear how hard it is to make anything. I'm thinking of all the different characters and elements of the poem that we've whittled away.

LB: It amazed me how artfully Sedgwick weaved this work of cutting and editing into the poem. She describes the poem in her notes as recording a 'crisis in writing' which manifests in the language as a sense of the poem being picked up and put down during the writing process. Scenes can slip from underneath scenes or there's sudden incoherency that can be hard to follow. Perhaps the film then, is a record of our engagement with the poem, which was equally as messy. After all it was the poem's performance of the act of searching for coherency that drew me to it in the first place. And yet, this constant sense of moving through different transformational states is what made the poem so difficult to edit, or reduce to a single narrative. I weirdly felt some guilt attached to the process of distillation, did you?

CW: I did feel a degree of compunction in cutting up the original text. A feeling that was reconciled by recognizing that loss and change are part of the creative process. But I did often ask myself: if Sedgwick was around, how would she feel about our approach?

LB: Yes me too, and then I find myself back on the second page of 'The Notes on The Warm Decembers' which feels like a call to action:

"It isn't so much a story about confusion, actually, so much as about the intense creativity passionate readers seem willing to invest in preserving, and if necessary inventing, the continuity of the nexus of individual identity. One of the defining impulses of The Warm Decembers was to find new ways of trying, experimenting with, and honoring this form of creativity.

I always saw myself as the impassioned reader experimenting with the creativity that her poem offers up in both form and content.

CW: Elsewhere she talks about this passionate approach as a form of 'ardent reading' and I actually wrote about this in a sister essay to the one I perform in the film's prologue. Ardent reading is a process of breaking off bits of books and taking them into yourself, incorporating them, or if necessary – changing endings. Sedgwick refers to this as fantasy – not because these works are of a particular genre with knights and dragons or mysterious prophecies, but fantasy books in the sense that they exist in the reader's head, not on the page.

LB: Perhaps then the film is an ardent reading of the poem! Finding enough coherency to build a new form out of the poem did feel counterintuitive at moments – like fixing it somehow. The poem does so much visual work on its own. But in the end I found choreographing the points at which the visual language of the poem comes to the fore and does the work and then falls into the background the most exciting.

CW: Yes and this richness feels complex in a different way when playing with the temporality of the poem in the context of moving image.

LB: Yes and for that reason it felt important to make time move in different directions, there's the seasonal loop, the discordant memories that feel non-linear, the timespace of a dream. It was truly exciting to feel that there were so many directions one sentence could go in but also on such close reading I gained ever greater admiration for Sedgwick's research, so many words had such deep multiplicitous meanings.

CW: Yes! Sedgwick is really good at conjuring up half images: images or phrases that are sort of amphibious in the way that they are partly visual and partly verbal.

LB: In your essay 'The Use of a Poem in Transition' you talk about gender for you not as an object to be found, connected to a sense of belonging or independent, insofar as it is there waiting to be discovered. How have your thoughts and feelings on this changed as you have moved through your transition?

CW: My basic understanding that I tried to express in my essay is that my sense of gender identity never felt to me like something there that I just had to dig deep enough to find, like some precious metal, or hidden ruins, or some buried secret thing. It still doesn't feel like that. It feels a lot more like learning, insofar as you have to learn to use an object rather than relate to it. Donald Winnicott called this maturation. It's a capacity that you develop, as part of learning and growing and I think broadly, that's still to me how it feels. Sensing my gender has been like learning something about myself but at the same time it's not learning about something that was already there, it's working through external information and what it means in relation to all the other bits of information that you have. You have no real schema for this, but it's like some kind of process, in which you're trying to make a meaningful structure out of the bits and pieces that you have.

LB: Would you say there is a push and pull between invention and discovery as well, or learning and unlearning.

CW: Learning is another way to describe the process that Winnicott associated with the transitional object or phenomena. We have to understand the object as found – that is, real, independent – but we also need to be able to imagine that we've made it; this is a kind of halfway house that mitigates the pain of reality. For me it really does feel like both and neither. I'm not making a gender identity, I'm learning what it means to say I feel like a woman.

LB: How do you think this relates to Beatrix's narrative?

CW: I think Beatrix is a character who feels deeply uncomfortable in her body. There's something about her that is ungainly, a bit like a horse that won't quite do what you ask – recalcitrant in some way, or stubborn.

LB: Beatrix's lack of bodily control seems to have so many meanings. For Sedgwick there is an obvious relation to creativity. I was thinking about the way in which excessive retention can be as problematic as leakiness – how Sedwick seems to continually map ideas about containment and flow or

leakiness onto the female body which seems to always link back to the ability to have an independent thought, or 'hold your own'.

CW: Yes totally, I was also thinking about how to put into words the meaningfulness of Beatrix's bedwetting and urination. Although it's obviously not physiologically identical with what Sedgwick called 'anality', B's trouble with piss feels like it's best explained as an issue that stems from the anal stage of her psychosexual development. And I think the film tries to capture something of that in its visual language.

So, in my understanding, the developments associated with the anal stage focus on our ability to establish (and cross) more deliberately a border between inside and outside. This is present in the oral stage, as the infant takes into itself milk from the breast, but insofar as it's able to expel -- to move something from inside to outside -- that process is largely involuntary (throwing up). By contrast, potty training involves a dialectic of control and release, which, in broader terms, is Beatrix's whole problem. She's leaky but she's also simultaneously fixated on continence: as though that image of the orb of gratitude being filled up corresponds to the bladder she also wants to grow and fill. On the other hand, I suppose, the prohibitions and the taboo surrounding defecation and urination -- where and when we're allowed, or not allowed, to do it -- mean that the forces governing Beatrix's decisions are external, social and cultural. It's as though she's negotiating something that she wants, as well as something that the outer world wants for (or from) her, and she experiences that as a deep and almost unresolvable conflict.

The landscapes she paints are tied to this as well, I think. The 'sausages of flab', 'nipped in at the ends' to make figures and objects sound to me very like turds. Another way of thinking about the anal stage would be in Kleinian terms: it's the first occasion on which an infant can make reparation for its retaliatory attacks on the mother (biting the breast, defecating), since the pride and pleasure expressed by parents when a child demonstrates a degree of competency in potty training must often be interpreted as pride and pleasure at what the infant has produced. It's as though what we produce can feel like a gift, or like creativity. Auden said in 'The Geography of the House' that 'all the arts derive from / This ur-act of making' – that is, making stool.

That's what I meant, I think, by bringing the anal stage into the conversation. It feels to me as though Beatrix's room as you imagined it in the film is a way of representing the first of those issues, the passage between inside and outside. And obviously the ways that we've discussed creativity and the creative

process, seem to me to link quite directly to Beatrix's control and capacity to release something of herself into the world on her own terms.

Also within this creative process you and I also had to learn in this process to be leaky, right? We in a way, were excessively retentive, in that we both had so many ideas, or had done so much research. You come to the point where you've read too much, and you can't start, and you can't write. You need to take a good shit to get rid of some of the material.

LB: Yes this metabolizing is such a huge part of the poems form and content - the idea of flow also or retention is always felt in relation to the social pressures of 'keeping things down', 'stomaching things', ejecting things - involuntarily emotions that overflow, outbursts. The abject is one of Sedgwick's tools in this way, she's preoccupied with movement between states of being and is constantly moving across borders, rules or assumed positions, whether familial, social or biological.

I came up with the idea of using the bagpipe as the sound that accompanies the creature that lives inside Beatrix's mothers lungs. I thought of the instrument like the paperlight globe which Sedgwick analogises as the bladder. We mixed the bagpipes with a scraping technique where a cello bow is dragged backwards. The creature in Bea's mother's lungs is for Sedgwick (I presume) an image of the tuberculosis that kills her in the end, but also you mentioned before that it's something deeper to do with the gestating body? Gestating in the sense of reproducing bacteria, protosoa and the many strangers that live in our bodies. You said before that this image rejects a dominant reproductive futurism in view of messier relations. What do you make of the stranger in her mother's lungs?

CW: In my essay (which we've talked a lot about) in the 'Bathroom Songs' collection, I touch on this analogy between the different creatures that might inhabit a body including both bacteria and babies. I do think it's a suggestive idea for her, but I'm not sure whether its significance is semantic, per se, so much as associative. I mean, it's another example of being filled up from the inside – like the orb of gratitude as you say but also in so far as - the way that the only way we've been able to make meaning from those images is with recourse to psychoanalytic ideas, about infantile experience and outer/inner worlds.

LB: In the end, in the poem it's unclear if it's this creature scratching the inside of her lungs or the childbirth that kills Bea's mother. Either way I really connect to your reading of the creature as this other-act of gestation

that transgresses the bodily autonomy of the mother and especially the idea that gestation is a bodily labour continually undertaken by non CIS female bodies.

So many of Sedwick's lines are brimming with possibilities - take the inclusion of Trollope, we talked a lot about that, Trollope in the dictionary gives: 'a vulgar or disreputable woman' - but of course there are more associations: Sedgwick seems to simultaneously reference the writer Anthony Trollope and the sluggish wobbly movement of pudding falling off its plate in Beatrix's dream. This dream scene is an example of Sedgwick's muddy threshold crossing. The father carries the Trollop-like pudding but it also stands in for him, for the way he walks, the smell on his breath. The pudding is made from 'burst dimpled milk'. Dairy stands in for a simultaneous presence and absence of animals, but also refers directly to the passage of grief as her father crosses from life to death. In this same moment Beatrix attempts to move beyond the sense of self her father constructed for her. The passage between states, the sense of being on the inside or outside of the process of constructing your own identity and the material presence of milk, create this continual pull in different directions, or of being at sea in a process of change.

CW: That whole scene in the film as you say describes the disgust that Beatrix feels so vividly. As a psychoanalytically inclined writer and a feminist, Julia Kristeva would have absolutely been on Sedgwick's radar. The abject is a way of describing how we constitute ourselves through the objects we choose to ingest (and reject), which firms up the boundary between inside and outside. But it's also the act of crossing between inside and out that can't help but reiterate the boundary. So this movement between states somehow also firms them up, which is where Sedgwick ends in her notes. She ends with a slightly despairing shrug of the shoulders as if to say: I tried, but in the end, theoretically informed writing always remains separate from the poem. They are definitively separate and actually trying to bring those two modes of writing together, ended up just reasserting their difference. But then she adds: how could I promise not to try to do it again, because the trying was so pleasurable. She's not saying she won't do it again, even though she knows it's going to be a failure. I feel like that's a good way of describing what we've done together isn't it? It's like, the film and the poetry have ended up reasserting their differences through the process of us trying to find the common ground between them.

BETWEEN WASTE AND CREATIVITY

Elsa Richardson

When Lucy first told me the name of their new film, I assumed that it was a reference to *Flush* (1933), Virginia Woolf's imaginative biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel. Usually dismissed as one of the great modernist's lighter works, it is in truth a quite remarkable experiment in stream of consciousness that attempts to capture the multitudinous thoughts, feelings, and fleeting impressions that flash through the mind of a family dog. Lucy's film is, however, not about the adventures of a floppy-eared canine and its poet mistress. The title, Flush 2023, alludes to the dispersal of colour and the mechanism by which waste is expelled from the home, and it's subject is the freemartin cow whose indeterminate sex characteristics, produced through an exchange of blood and hormones with a male twin, cast their 'usefulness' as agricultural products into doubt. As the film begins, I feel a hot crackle of embarrassment at my error, a mishearing that speaks of an attachment to real dogs —the cantankerous terrier that snores at my feet— and their fictional counterparts, which can verge on the mawkish. Yet as the camera follows the cows through milking, rutting, insemination, as animal's encounter technologies varied in sophistication from the metal gates that pen them to the delicate work of the laboratory, trailing fluids —shit, milk, blood, semen, piss— in their wake, my thoughts crept back to Woolf's experiment in non-human memoir. As hard as I tried to shoo the dog out the door, Flush kept nosing his way back in.

Perhaps what links these two seemingly incommensurate texts —canine biography and artist moving image— is attention. By slow track of a reluctant lollop, close-up of an extravagantly lashed eye, a gentle lick of the nose, muscular form silhouetted as the last of the day's light gathers itself in, we are drawn in again and again by the promise of intimacy with the film's bovine subjects. Overlaying these images is a poem that pays a particular kind of attention, biographical, that is not usually bestowed upon non-human subjects. It begins, like Woolf's *Flush*, with an origin story. Where the pedigree dog 'claims descent' from a family of the 'greatest antiquity', the freemartin was once devil 'cast', the animal's name is broken down: farrow, ferry, free: freemartin. Questions of genealogy and inheritance serve to locate cows and dogs as historical subjects, as creatures with pasts that can be traced and in possession of biographies that might be worth writing. The scientific language of reproductive management is also, as film and text acknowledge, a profoundly impoverished mode of address that exposes the limits of cross-species knowability. Poetry, a form better attuned to the productive potentials of the abstruse, offers an alternative approach to

writing of non-human lives that revels in the messiness of our cross-species entanglements. The poetic authoring of Flush 2023 allows us to glimpse the freemartin's existence beyond biological determinants. This is made possible by what Lucy describes as poetry's 'viscosity', forces of flow and resistance that —like the exchange of blood and hormones through shared placental connections— move meaning between categories and expose the contingency of concepts like fertility, productivity, sex, nature, and waste.

Reflecting on 'The Warm Decembers' (1978-1986) —her long verse novel that was never finished— Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick recalls that initial impetus derived from an:

> idea that came to me dancing [...] a long Victorian narrative poem that would include both a man named Miles and a hound named Miles. The hound Miles would be epileptic. At the formal climax of the poem the hound Miles would have a seizure, in the course of which he and the man Miles would get their narrative points-of-view inextricably fused

This vision of mingling species speaks to Woolf's narrative experimentation with *Flush*, in which she attempts to encounter the world through the senses and experiences of a dog. As Cassie Westwood points out though, for Sedgwick the imagined border crossing that inspired 'The Warm Decembers' ultimately 'fails to materialise' and is preserved instead as the 'unrealized germ of the poem'. This note is one of many thoughts, images, offcuts that could not be incorporated into the poem, but which could also somehow not be thrown away.

It is to these discarded fragments that *Warm Decembers* (2022) turns, a film that lingers in the interstices between creativity and waste, pressing at the boundaries that divide different bodies, states of being, interior and exterior worlds. It takes up the story of one of the poem's side characters Beatrix, who was orphaned as a child and is now navigating a difficult transition into adulthood, the trauma of which is made manifest by a painful bladder condition that causes her to experience hallucinations. Urine is the waste material running through the three works featured at Edith-Russ-Haus, a bodily fluid that further entangles human with non-human. *Reproductive Exile* (2018) explores the user experience of biomedical pharmaceuticals derived from the urine of menopausal women and pregnant horses; a fictionalised account of assisted reproduction in which invisible connections are formed by the production and sharing of animal and human sex hormones. Pulling at this thread once more, Flush probes at what the affirmation 'mothers for mothers', might reveal of the interspecies intimacies

that underpin modern edge reproductive science. 'Mothers for mothers' is a direct reference to 'moeders voor moeders', a Dutch urine donation programme that is operated by a major pharmaceutical company, which produces fertility drugs for use in humans and animals. Urine collected 'by piss men on their bikes' from pregnant women makes its way to the milking room, where cows are dosed with drugs purified from 'hot, fertile, urine streams/extra uterine, placental excretions' to prevent the kind of pregnancies that produce freemartins. The extraction of a particular hormone, human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG), for use in the management of non-human fertility not only points to the vast productive potential of waste, but it also extends the sentiment of 'mothers for mothers' across species lines.

This is a two-way exchange: pregnant hormones are used to stimulate fertility in cows, but as a field of knowledge endocrinology has long depended on the animal as a key experimental subject and a proxy for the human. There is, as we glimpse Reproductive Exile and *Flush*, a violence implicit in this 'use' of non-human bodies. Alongside experimentation with the freemartin, the origin story of the hormone is bound up with the life a small brown dog, not unlike the Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel. Around the turn of the twentieth century the Department of Physiology at University College London played to a series of experiments that lead to the discovery of hormones, which involved the vivisection of dogs. These were undertaken by brother-in-law scientists, William Bayliss and Ernest H. Starling, who while investigating the relationship between the nervous system and pancreatic secretions found that, contrary to long-held orthodoxy, the former did not influence the latter. Instead, it appeared that the pancreas was encouraged to produce digestive juices by chemical messengers that originated in the walls of the intestinal lining and whose communications were delivered through the bloodstream. To test this hypothesis, the collaborators turned to one of the laboratory's dogs. Having anesthetised and sliced open the animal the scientists first isolated and disconnected the nerves that linked the intestines with the brain. They then proceeded to inject the animal with hydrochloric acid, which mimicked the effect of gastric movement and even though the essential nervous connections had been severed, these movements still prompted the pancreas to begin secreting digestive enzymes. Drawing on this research in a lecture to the Royal Society of Physicians in 1905, Starling coined the word 'hormone' from the Greek 'to arouse or excite' to describe how 'activities and growth in different parts of the body' could be stimulated by the excretions of seemingly remote organs. Endocrinology —a discipline whose etymology vows to sieve, sift, sort through the clutter of our fleshy interiors—relies on permeability of the boundaries between dog and scientist, fertile cow and pregnant human.

Like the placental injection dying technique we see in the lab in *Flush*, a dog lying on a table, eviscerated but still living, speaks to something scopophilic in the scientific imagination, a desire to see, to examine, to expose, whatever the cost. There is a quite different relationship between seeing and knowing staked out by Lucy's films, which employ a variety of imaging technologies to enter the inaccessible. Where the vivisector opens the body to unmask its workings, Lucy's work probes interior, often interstitial, spaces: the endoscope that threads its way down the alimentary canal, the radio waves of the MRI that produce subtle anatomical images and the 'flows of ink' into a placenta, that could be cow or human, mapping out the territory shared by twins. Cameras also follow the path taken by evacuated bodily waste through sewers and drains that strongly resemble the tracts and tunnels of the digestive system. Information travels between these interior sites: questions of flow and blockage pertain not only to individual guts and urban drainage networks, but also to understandings of creativity. Thinking is, for these films, a metabolic and digestive process. In common with the 'great mounds of feed metabolised' in Flush, poetic production is a matter of consumption, absorption, and evacuation.

These are wet films. Soundtracked by hot milk hitting concrete floors, by urine that soaks bed clothes, water that drips and flows, liquids that squirt, rush and spill over, they activate the fluidic to think about the movement of ideas beyond the strict binary oppositions of male/female, scientific/imaginative, interior/exterior and human/animal. In these moist worlds, viscosity, the measure of a given liquid's resistance to flow, serves as a poetic mechanism that signals both circulation and blockage. Clogs in the system often prove more generative than states of flow, sticky intersections where one is forced to sit with difficulty. 'The Warm Decembers' exemplifies the creative potential of getting stuck. Still unfinished after nine years, Sedgwick described the poem as the record of a 'crisis in writing', a slow-burning creative calamity that required she stay with the mess. Lucy's films are invested in the meanings made by congestion, by ideas that cannot be incorporated, by boundaries that remain uncrossed and by the intimacies that prove impossible to forge. Nowhere is this starker than in our relationship with the non-human world. Perhaps the beginnings of Sedgwick's 'crisis in writing' can be traced back to the unincorporated tale of 'man named Miles and a hound named Miles'? The melancholy of this missed connection is echoed in *Flush*. When Barrett Browning and her dog first encounter each other in an overstuffed Victorian drawing room they fail to communicate, as Woolf describes: 'She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other'.

Flush also worries at the incommensurability of the promise of modern science —knowledge of the freemartin as an experimental subject— with the universe of bovine experience that this occludes. The gestural marks made by the mounting gomer promise insight into the cow as a desiring creature, but the information they impart —who is ready to be inseminated— reveals only the value of the animal body to the fulfilment of human ends. What might those marks mean to the heifer?

In Woolf's *Flush*, the poet's dog is baffled by the black inky marks his mistress makes on the page, because he is engaged in a different kind of poetic composition, a practice borne of the nose rather the eyes. Humans know, she writes, very little of the 'world of smell', but for Flush 'Love was chiefly a smell; form and colour were a smell [thus] to describe his simplest experience with the chop or biscuit is beyond our power'. A reminder that non-human animals possess forms of sensory knowledge closed to us, it is also a provocation towards the other ways of seeing and knowing that Lucy's films traffic in: the placenta 'sensed' with ink or the intricacies of a protagonist's reproductive system explored through a manufactured avatar (named Evatar). There is something in the use of technologies like the endoscope to see the body from the inside out that resonates with the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion's use of the gut as a metaphor for psychical processes. In *A Memoir of the Future* (1975) he imagined what it might be to take an intestinal view of himself:

> Suppose I used my alimentary canal as a sort of telescope. I could get down to the arse and look up at the mouth full of teeth and tonsils and tongue. Or rush up to the top end of the alimentary canal and watch what my arse-hole was up to. Rather amusing really. It depends what my digestive tract felt about having me scampering up and down the gut all night.

Adopting this bottom-up perspective on the self was, for Bion, one approach to the problem of what he termed 'undigested facts': memories, feelings, sensations, and other fragments of psychic matter that get stuck in the system. Lucy's *Warm Decembers* is clogged with unmetabolized experiences. Spurred by Sedgwick's leftover ideas, the indigestible waste of a 'crisis in writing', the film is occupied by forms of leakage and constipation, creative, bodily, and psychological. Enacted through the bladder of Beatrix, at once too porous and too retentive, its visual language is that of containment and flow.

In the film's opening monologue, Cassie Westwood, reflecting on her own transition wonders: 'What will I keep of what used to be me? What will be staying with me whether I like it or not?'. Probing at the messiness of living with Bion's 'undigested facts', *Warm Decembers* is occupied by questions of interstitially in relation to sex, gender, and identity. In *Reproductive Exile*, interstitial space emerges in the problem of 'hyperstimulation' that can occur when the ovarian follicles are over stimulated by urine-derived hormones used as part of assisted reproduction, resulting in the movement of fluid into a third space in the body, where nestled between cells it bloats the belly in a brutal parodic pregnancy. The generative possibilities of the interstitial are most clearly realised in the body of the freemartin. Altered by the flow of blood across from their male twin and pushing at biological binaries, the 'infertile heifer' substantiates Anne Fausto-Sterling's description of sex differentiation as a process that is always ongoing. Going further than simply defining gender as a construct, Fausto-Sterling argues that what makes biological sex —namely the endocrine system— is itself a product, at least in part, of cultural and environmental factors. Acted upon by myriad environmental, political, economic, and social forces, this porous endocrinological vision refuses the comforting fiction of the autonomous body and instead points to our profound enmeshment with the world. In *Warm Decembers*, it is the creature that lives in Beatrix's lungs —voiced by bagpipes and backward pull of cello bow— that exposes the limits of the self; there lurks *mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the microorganism that kills her mother and lives on, gestating and reproducing. Made up of organisms that are us but are also not us, we are all —as Cassie has it— 'creatures with seams and sutures', defined by multiple, contingent, patchwork natures. As part of her research for *Warm Decembers* , Lucy spent time at a sewage treatment plant in Berlin where scientists are engaged in an unceasing battle with sludge. The Sisyphean task of stabilising this waste material, a riot of bacteria, fungi and protozoa, reveals something of the work that involved in maintaining the fantasy of the human-animal divide. Along similar lines, recent efforts to map the human microbiome have found that living with 'companion species' —dogs, cows, protozoa— means sharing their bacterial flora and fauna. It is to bacteria that we might turn then to realise the kind of cross-species intimacies dreamed by biographies like *Flush*, posited by Sedgwick's poetic ambitions and explored in these three films.

Dr Elsa Richardson is a cultural historian of health, medicine and psychology, Having completed her PhD with the Centre for the History of Emotions at Queen Mary University of London, Elsa is now a Chancellor's Fellow in the History of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland

Warm Decembers (2023)
4K video, 30 mins 5.1 surround sound

Words:
Adapted from *The Warm Decembers* (1978–1987)
By Eve Kosofsky Sedgick

Poem reworked by
Lucy Beech and Cassie Westwood

Opening monologue:
Extract from
The use of The Poem in Transition (2023)
by Cassie Westwood

Supported by:
Edith Russ Haus für Medienkunst
KUNSTVEREIN GARTENHAUS
Arri Cameras
Eve Sedgwick Foundation, NYC

Locations:
Berlin Water Works
Waßmannsdorf, Berlin sewage treatment plant
Ruhleben sewage treatment plant, berlin
Berlin Sewer Network
Sacrower See, Berlin
Studio Babelsberg, Berlin

Cast:
NARRATOR: Cassie Westwood
BEATRIX: Angel Hafermaas
CLARE: Beatrice Murmann
COSMO: Kamil Sznajder
FATHER: Franz-Joseph Heumannskämper
MOTHER: Michaela Winterstein
TROLLOPE: Nelson Faber

Production Crew:
1st assistant director Lauren Pringle
2nd assistant director Manuela Aguilar

Camera:
Director of photography Lukáš Milota
1st assistant camera : Tom Ridilenir
Camera operator: Jakub Vrbík
Grip: Zdeněk Vichr
Gaffers: Matěj Zamrazil, Robert Smělý
Spark: Vlastimil Rybář
Steadicam Operator: Michel Herbers
DIT: Manulea Aguilar

Sound:
Sound Recordist: Anna Magdalino

Production:
Production manager: Lorika Perzhaku

Production Assistants:
Omnia Darwish Saad
Sara Holzwarth
Adrian Forstbach
Emiliano Echegaray

Art Department:
Set Design: Miren Oller
Set design assistance: Alik Kadoum

Art Department Assistants
Noelia Contreras
Anna Laszlo
Dominik Leingartner
Art work: Bill Beech

Set Construction:
Head Carpenter: Thomas Fornoff
Carpenters:
Franziska Lutze

Paul Mede
Lukas Lonski

Hair & Make Up:
Lau Perez

Costumes:
David Ramirez, Pineapple Factory Gallery

Set Photographers:
Anastasia A Arsentyeva
Dominik Leingartner

Casting:
Lorika Perzhaku
Studio Levi Berlin

Post Production:
Editor: Lucy Beech
Assistant Editor: Manulea Aguilar
Sound Design : Ville Haimala
Sound Mix: Gaston Ibarroule
Colourist: Arash Maleki
Assistant Sound Editor: Anna Magdalino
Foley: Milan Van Belle
Post Producer: Matías Nicolás Boettner
Translators: Flora Valeska Woudstra

Special Thanks:
The Eve Sedgwick Foundation
Wir Sind Uns* Agency, Berlin
Stefan Natz and Arri Cameras
Fraser Taggart
Franziska Aigner
Oliver Laric
Manulea Aguilar
Angel Nieto
Stefan Düll
Capucine Landreau
Aileen Murphy
Lauren Pringle
Julia Ballentyne Way
Studio Levi Casting
Yung Eldr
Ben Olayinka
Velvont
Gut Kerkow Bio-Metzgerei, Berlin
Working With Waste Research Group

Flush (2023)
4K video with 7.1 surround sound (15 min)

Voice over performed by Lucy Beech
Poems by Lucy Beech:

Freemartin (2023)
GOMER (2023)
Admixture (n.), (2023)
Endocrine (adj.), (2023)
Gonadotropin (adj.), (2023)

Poems developed from the essay *Sex Panic and the Productive Infertility of the Freemartin*
by Lucy Beech and Tamar Novick for *Bovine Regimes* special issue, Technology and Culture, Johns Hopkins University Press, (2023)
and interviews with
Professor Dr Enrico Lopriore at Leiden University Hospital (2023)
Script Consultant: Tamar Novick

commissioned by Kunstinstituut Melly
Supported by: Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin
Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Ammodo

With:
Dr., Professor Enrico Lopriore
Jip A spekman

Louise Crowley
Liam O'Keefe

Locations:
Ruhleben sewage treatment plant, berlin
Berlin Sewer Network
Leiden University Medical Hospital

Production:
Production manager: Julija Mockute

Directors assistants:
Rotterdam unit: Manuela Aguilar
Berlin unit: Matías Nicolás Boettner

Camera :
Unit 1:
Director of photography : Ronnie Macquillian
1st Assistant Camera : Steven O'connor
Unit 2:
Director of photography: Tom Ridiliner
1st assistant camera: Agustín Bruzzese
2nd assistant camera: Nicolás Gombinsky

Post Production:
Assistant Editor: Manuela Aguilar

Musical Composition:
Ville Haimala

Sound Design and Mix:
Gaston Ibarroule

Color Grading:
Matías Buenaventura

AI Support:
Siddharth Sharma

Special thanks:
Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy
Leiden University Medical Centre
Dr., Professor Enrico Lopriore
Tamar Novick
The Bodily Waste research group (MPIWG)
Dr., Professor Dagmär Shafer (Max Planck Institute)
TAPS Support Foundation (Twin Anemia Polycythemia Sequence)
Claudia Gerri and the Fetal-Maternal Interface Research Group (MPIWG)
Working with Waste research group
The Tail Painter UK
Nicolás Gombinsky
Tobias Peper

Reproductive exile (2018–23)
4K video, 26 min, stereo sound

Supported by
Lafayette Anticipations, Paris
Tramway Glasgow
De La Warr Pavilion, UK

Cast:

Eve:
Based on work undertaken by the EVATAR™ research team
Woodruff Lab, Chicago

Intended Parents:
Anne Von Keller
Laurence Bouvard
Melinda King
Abigail Rice

Fertility Brokers:
Katherine Veckerová

Eva Larvoire
Tereza Paclova Richtrová
Vilma Frantová
Maren Brown
Lucia Jágerčíková

Locations:
Luhacovice Sanatorium Miramare Czech Republic
Reprofit IVF clinic, Brno

Producer: Aude Mohammedi-Merquiol
Executive producer: Mikulas Novotný

Crew:
Assistant director: Zuzana Walter

Camera:
Director of Photography: Lukáš Milota
Focus puller: Jakub Vrbik
Camera Assistant: Zdenek Vichr
Sound recordist: Adam Laschinger
Boom operator: Honza Skála
Props: Matej Sykora,

Drivers:
David Moravčíkf
Bill Beech

Production assistants:
Adriana Ingeliová
Noé Robin
Sylvain Dreyfuss

Post production:
Musical composition:
Graham Massey,
Gaston Ibarroule
Editor: Lucy Beech
Sound design: Rob Szeliga,
Sound Mix: Gaston Ibarroule
Grading: Ludovic Roussaux
VFX: Nadeem Ali
3D modeling: Kazusyoshi Sato

Translation: Mirjam Linschooten

Special thanks:
Anna Colin
Sophie Lewis
Naomi Pearce
Oliver Laric
Hélène Malmanche

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