



64^e SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2025

cinéart

RIETLAND

EEN FILM VAN SVEN BRESSER

PERSMAP


Viking Film



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EEN FILM VAN SVEN BRESSER MET GERRIT KNOBBE & LOÏS REINDERS

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Synopsis

RIETLAND is een imponerend drama waarin de natuur het leven van de mensen lijkt te overheersen. De film werd geschreven en geregisseerd door Sven Bresser die met dit speelfilmdebuut een veelbelovend visitekaartje afgeeft. Zelden heeft een oer-Hollands landschap er zo fenomenaal uitgezien.

Wanneer rietsnijder Johan (Gerrit Knobbe) het levenloze lichaam van een meisje op zijn land vindt, wordt hij getroffen door een onbestemd schuldgevoel. Terwijl hij voor zijn kleindochter (Loïs Reinders) zorgt, gaat hij op zoek naar antwoorden en probeert hij het kwaad op te sporen.

RIETLAND werd geselecteerd voor het Filmfestival van Cannes, als onderdeel van het prestigieuze Semaine de la Critique-programma, waar voor het eerst in 27 jaar weer een film van een Nederlandse regisseur te zien was. RIETLAND is lovend ontvangen door de internationale pers en is de slotfilm van het Nederlands Filmfestival. Ook maakt de film deel uit van de selectie voor de Gouden Kalf competitie en is het de Nederlandse inzending voor de Oscars.

Sven Bresser on Reedland

LIGHT, DARKNESS & IN BETWEEN

A man, nature and evil. The connection between these elements form the essence of Reedland; a portrait of a Dutch landscape, slowly turning into the complex, inner landscape of its main character. Despite its plot, I don't see the film as a classic murder-mystery.

The search for a factual truth – the whodunit – was a vehicle to explore a more complex and deeply human truth, and a prompt to reflect on questions of guilt and innocence, (male) violence, and xenophobia.

LANDSCAPE AND ARENA

I myself grew up in a small village surrounded by reed beds. The commercial reed farming here all disappeared somewhere in the early 2000's and with it the reed landscape as it originally was. I tried to find this landscape that is deeply ingrained in my memory but did not exist anymore in my native village. In this quest I found the wetlands of the Weerribben-Wieden, in the north part of the Netherlands. It's one of the only places left where a few communities still live from the commercial reed harvest. Not only is the age-old profession of reed-cutting, but also the landscape of the reeds itself, threatened by various factors. There is strong competition from Chinese imports and there are growing neo-liberal and nature reserve policies that make the harvest very difficult.

The arena and the landscape are much more than just a location or a setting within which the story takes place. The arena is inherently linked to the themes, the main character and the narrative. Those who live and work in the Weerribben-Wieden, a fragile cultural landscape, feel a certain obligation to preserve this land. Johan, too, has learned from an early age to put himself in the service of nature. The reed is his source of income, but his connection with the landscape goes beyond making a living. The discovery of the murdered girl in the reed disrupts Johan's relationship with nature.



Nature reflects Johan's state of mind and his existential conflict between good and evil. The waving reeds are ambivalent; peaceful and threatening at the same time.

The film also tries to question the innocence of nature. The poetic notion of a 'guilty landscape' with which the postwar Dutch artist Armando describes nature's indifference to human suffering, is an idea that gave me a different 'lens' to look at this rural environment that I already know my whole life.

Other works by Armando that reflect on guilt and evil also helped to shape my imagination of the story, I see clear similarities between the mystical black hole in the reeds and Armando's artwork *Zwart Water* (*Black Water*, 1964).

FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL - NATIONALISM AND XENOPHOBIA

Over my years of research in the local area, it soon became clear that reed-cutting and the landscape are inextricably linked to socio-economic and political shifts in the world. The rivalry or conflict between Johan's reed-cutting village and the 'Trooters' on the other side of the lake, has always been there. But it has been growing in modern times as their traditional source of income gradually falters. Globalization has made old crafts like reed cutting unprofitable and causes them to slowly die out. People feel that their way of life is under threat. They want to protect their existence and identity. They form a closed front against the outside world. It's a story we see again and again.

The rivalry between villages, regional flags and local hymns exists in many places in the Netherlands, but they have often become relics of the past. In the film, I wanted to render this tribalism in a more radical way. I want to approach the fictional village and its surroundings as 'a state'. The people in Johan's village derive their identity from the small patch of peat land on which they were born. The whole film takes place within the 'national boundaries' of the community; the village as a microcosm under pressure from global forces over which the inhabitants themselves have no control.

The scene of the meeting between reed farmers and government agencies illustrates the complexity and ruthlessness of the capitalist system that farmers (and other populations) worldwide are at the mercy of, and the way of thinking in terms of 'us' and 'them' can be its consequence.

We see some farmers adopt bureaucratic jargon in the hope of fighting the system, while at the same time the vast majority just listens, confused and despondent. It's yet another incomprehensible discussion. Then the finger can be pointed at the distant elusive stranger: the Chinese. Finally the meeting ends with hatred towards the enemy and scapegoat across the lake: the Trooters.

The film doesn't visualize the Trooters and keeps them an anonymous threat from outside. I want to approach the fear of the unknown as something intrinsically human while at the same time exposing its irrationality and hypocrisy, giving the viewer the space to connect the fear to their own reality.

THE INVISIBLE & THE UNKNOWN

The film begins as a sober portrait of a man living off the land. Johan's daily routines drive the film; the work on the reed beds, the journey home, eating, drinking, urinating, feeding the horse. Routines that become rituals.



Rituals that on one hand connect us to the mundane, the reality and on the other ensure we transcend it. The poetry of the everyday. But after finding the murdered girl, there is a constant sense of threat in the quiet landscape. The film is not about what Johan shows, or does, but what he hides from us. And, above all, what he harbors unbeknownst within himself.

Reedland is largely about what we don't see. The potential evil hidden in Johan's character or hiding behind the dense reeds; the engine hum at night; the foggy country road; faces we cannot see. The threat and violence are almost never visible, but constantly palpable. I hoped to touch on the essence of the fear of the unknown.

I never consciously think in genres when making a film. But, of course, I see that the film draws on elements from different genres while breaking their codes at the same time. At the very early stages of development, I was always seeking an unpredictability in the narrative and a feeling of confusion: what kind of film am I watching?

The mundane peasant portrait is interwoven with a submerged crime story, Dutch folklore, western and the fantastical. I didn't want to emphasize these different tones with genre aesthetics that follow to the stylistic rules of a 'murder mystery' or 'fantasy.' I wanted the discovery of the supernatural in the film to be portrayed with the same simplicity as Johan eating a plate of potatoes or the wind weaving through the reeds. To blur the boundaries between reality and the fantastical, to a point where the fantastical can feel real and the real can feel magical.

CASTING / SHOOTING

Almost all of the people playing in film are from the communities surrounding the Weerribben-Wieden. For me, the only honest way to explore this landscape, and the rituals that are connected to it, was through the people who already lived there for generations. For three years I have regularly gone to the area. For one season I lived there to help with the reed harvest, to study the craft and better understand the nature, the people, and their way of life. During this time, I met many of the people who appear in the film. I first saw Gerrit at one of the many reed-cutting meetings I attended.

After our first real conversation, I knew he was the one. He's a very special person, hard to describe in words. He has something harsh and at the same time something very gentle and kind.

From my very first meetings with my producer Marleen, we talked about the necessity of capturing various weather conditions for specific scenes. The weather plays an essential role in the film. A violent wind, dark clouds, the sun transforming the reeds into a golden-yellow sea, these were elements just as important as an actor performing a scene well. We tried to design a shooting method that would allow us to truly follow the weather.

We kept the most important locations on standby, so we could decide at the last minute where and what we were going to shoot. We also arranged for an extra old 16mm camera, so we could always film storms or other specific weather conditions on days off. Gerrit was sometimes our trustworthy guide in this way of working. It's a romantic cliché, but someone like him - who has lived on that land every day since childhood - can truly read the weather as it approaches.





Sven Bresser

Sven Bresser is a filmmaker based in Amsterdam. His first short film *L'été et tout le reste* premiered in the official selection of the 75th Venice International Film Festival, was selected at the Toronto International Film Festival and won the Dutch Academy Award for Best Short film. That same year, his TV film *Free Fight* was nominated for two Dutch Academy Awards. After finishing the mid-length film *She used to sing here* in 2021, he started working on his feature film *Reedland* which will premiere at the 2025 Cannes' Critic's Week: a story set in the same rural landscape he grew up in himself.

Filmography

2025 *Reedland*

SHORT FILMS

2021 *She used to sing here*

2018 *Free Fight*

2018 *L'été et tout le reste*



Viking Film

With Viking Film producer Marleen Slot thrives to be a nurturing home for talents from all across the world. Telling stories for audiences to strongly identify with, by filmmakers with whom she is closely connected. Viking Film believes in the power of real cooperation's. Only in collectivity we are capable of bringing stories to a different level and attracting audiences from around the globe. Since its establishment in 2011, Viking Film wants to create high-quality films for both the national and international market with a special focus on arthouse and animation films.

Viking Film has (co)produced feature films by outstanding filmmakers from around the world, including *REEDLAND* (Sven Bresser, La Semaine de la Critique, Cannes Film Festival 2025), *JIMPA* (Sophie Hyde, Sundance Film Festival Premieres 2025), *THE BLUE TRAIL* (Gabriel Mascaro, Berlinale Competition, Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize 2025), *SILVER HAZE* (Sacha Polak, Berlinale Panorama 2023), *OINK* (Mascha Halberstad, Opening Film Berlinale Generation K+, 2022), *DIRTY GOD* (Sacha Polak, Sundance World Dramatic Competition and opening film IFFR, 2019), *ROJO* (Benjamin Naishtat, TIFF Platform and San Sebastian 2018), *NEON BULL* (Gabriel Mascaro, Venice Orizzonti and TIFF Platform 2015) and *ZURICH* (Sacha Polak, Berlinale Forum winner CICA Art Cinema Award 2015).

Together with director Mascha Halberstad, Marleen opened in 2020 the Holy Motion Studio in Arnhem. The 600m² animation studio is specialized in stopmotion animation and in 2022 released their first feature film, *OINK*, that was awarded Best Film of the Netherlands, sold to more than 40 countries and nominated for a European Film Award.

Marleen worked as a producer at Lemming Film for many years. In 2007 she attended the EAVE producer's training and in 2009 she participated in ACE. In 2013 she was selected Producer on the Move during the Cannes Film Festival, in 2021 she was part of Inside Pictures. Besides her work as a producer Marleen sees the importance of actively taking part in (inter)national film policy making. From 2016 until 2020 she has been chairman of the Netherlands Producers association and currently, she is president of the board of ACE.

Cast

Johan

Gerrit Knobbe

Dana

Loïs Reinders



Crew

Director and writer	Sven Bresser	Directors Assistant	Natascha Erfanipour, Willemien Slot
Producer	Marleen Slot	Costume Design	Robin Burlage
Cinematography	Sam du Pon, NSC	Co-Producer	Dries Phlypo, A Private View, Martien Vlietman, VPRO
Editor	Lot Rossmark	Executive Producer	Frank Klein
Production Design	Clara Bragdon, Liz Kooji		
Music	Mitchel van Dinther, Lyckle de Jong		
Line Producer	Olya van Poppel		
Sound Mix	Vincent Sinceretti		
Sound Design	Kwinten Van Laethem		
Sound Recording	Calixte De Coster		
Casting	Nathalie Crum, Sven Bresser		
Casting - Children	Martha Mojet		

