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Aus einem Jahr der Nichtereignisse

From a Year of Non-Events

Ann Carolin Renninger, René Frölke

Producer Ann Carolin Renninger, René Frölke. **Production company** joon Film (Berlin, Germany). **Directed by** Ann Carolin Renninger, René Frölke. **Director of photography** René Frölke, Ann Carolin Renninger. **Editor** René Frölke.

Black/white & colour. 83 min. German.

Premiere February 11, 2017, Berlinale Forum

Willi is nearly 90 years old and lives alone on a farm in northern Germany. He likes to talk to his cat, he feeds his chickens and makes his rounds with the aid of a squeaky walker. The garden is overgrown. His house is full of all the things that have accumulated there over the course of a long life, relics of bygone times. Occasionally someone comes to visit, or a moped passes by, but not much happens otherwise. As the seasons change, the film paints a portrait of the everyday life of this resolute, slightly dishevelled old man. It's also a visual essay on the cycle of life, as the camera observes nature, captures fruit and flowers in bloom in all their glory. Textures equally come to the fore: the cat's fur, the pattern on the coffee service, the structure of a marzipan cake; at times the camera photographs apples or plastic garden chairs as if they were still lifes. The images transcend mere depiction – they contain a feeling of evanescence, which is enhanced by the fragility of the Super-8 and 16-mm material used to film them. Even the black screens that appear when the reels are changed reveal the passage of time.

Birgit Kohler

Clocks that tick synchronously in different times

A farmer in a film, but not a film about agriculture. *Aus einem Jahr der Nichtereignisse* (From a Year of Non-Events) is more the description of a very pragmatic stance toward life, in which obstructions exist to be overcome. While observing a year in the life of Willi a picture comes into being that approaches the persisting impressions of his life, but that is not a biography.

As a child, walking up the path at the old Shipyard and, up at the corner, having to decide whether to venture the last step and confront Willi or simply to run back fast. Fear and magical attraction, because behind the corner lurk chaos and anarchy, a world in which the boundary between human and animal could not be clearly drawn, and in the centre of it all stood Willi. The recollection of the feeling of gazing into a strange lambent world was the impulse to make this film.

Our somewhat romanticised initial image of a farmer could not be maintained for long. The difficulty of capturing what is beautiful without creating a postcard landscape was our source of productive friction, along with the question that comes with every film: 'How should we approach the person?' Our choice was a sixty-year-old silent camera; silent only in theory, because even if it cannot record sound, the noise of its mechanism can hardly go unnoticed when shooting. Another limitation was the maximum length of a shot: twenty-four seconds. After that, the camera's mechanism had to be cranked up again, forcing one to reposition oneself at relatively short intervals, with each new shot. A scene is thereby continually interrupted or falling apart. From the beginning, we attempted to create dissonances and, at the same time, to counteract beauty whenever it emerged. The separately and digitally recorded sound was assembled freely alongside the picture, as a way of re-inscribing the filmed images and playfully sabotaging their inherent clichés. The film may thus be only our own subjective fiction.

'You can get through everywhere'

We don't know how it is for Willi when he is alone. Probably it is similar to how we experienced it when we were with him. Sitting in the living room, gazing out the window to the courtyard, few words, long pauses, a lot of pragmatism and small variations of eternal sameness – clocks that tick synchronously, but show different times. Willi shrugs.

Again and again his observations of the present, the weather and the animals drift, as if by chance, into a story from the past, to swimming across a river in Italy, always with the added detail of a dough trough he used to keep his things dry. Then the tale glides even deeper into the past, to an early summer – being at the lake, learning to swim. A recurring narrative with its very own causation takes shape, woven from memories, holding an inner logic whose narration gives a life structure, like the eternally recurring seasons or the daily walk across the courtyard to the barn to feed the remaining hens, despite all obstacles. The walk to the barn seems like the visible choreography in which a person and his attitude toward life become palpable. The sentence, 'You can get through everywhere,' is Willi's succinct, spoken distillation of this.

The cinematic depiction of these repeated paths and daily routines presents itself as a form of narration that stands on equal footing with the recurring mythical report on crossing a river. But it remains a blind spot; what came first does not

become visible: the stance that defies obstructions, or the story telling about it. Culture thus appears as what the human being defiantly holds up against nature, without losing the feeling of being ineluctably thrown back to precisely that nature.

Ann Carolin Renninger, René Frölke



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Ann Carolin Renninger was born in 1979 in Flensburg. From 2000 to 2006, she studied Cultural Studies in Leipzig, Strasbourg, and Paris. Since 2008, she has developed and produced documentaries for the production company Zero One Film in Berlin. In addition to that work, in 2010, she started joon Film, a platform for artistic cooperation in filmmaking. Ann Carolin Renninger lives in Berlin. *Aus einem Jahr der Nichtereignisse* is her first film.



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René Frölke was born in 1978 in East Germany. In addition to working as a freelance editor, cinematographer, and director, he has been making his own films for several years. In 2007, he began studying art in Karlsruhe, but dropped out in 2012. René Frölke lives in Berlin.

Films

René Frölke: 2007: *Jour de grève* (14 min.). 2008: *Ropinsalmi* (12 min.). 2010: *Führung* (37 min., Forum Expanded 2011), *Von der Vermählung des Salamanders mit der grünen Schlange* (94 min.). 2012: *Jeremy Y. call Bobby O. oder Morgenthau Without Tears* (84 min.). 2014: *Le beau danger* (100 min., Berlinale Forum 2014). 2017: *Aus einem Jahr der Nichtereignisse / From a Year of Non-Events*.