

THE HEARING

A FILM BY LISA GERIG

ensemble
film



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THE HEARING

A FILM BY LISA GERIG

Switzerland, 2023, 81 Minutes
World-Premiere: CPH:DOX, Main Competition



LOGLINE

Four rejected asylum seekers relive their hearing on the reasons for fleeing their home countries and question the core of the asylum process itself.

SYNOPSIS

What happens when your future depends on telling your own life story? Four rejected asylum seekers relive the hearing on their reasons for fleeing their homelands thus shedding light on the core of the asylum procedure. Those who succeed in recounting the personal danger in their home country “credibly and without contradiction” have a better chance of receiving asylum. Will the interviewees be able to describe their memories of traumatic experiences in such a way that they meet the official criteria this time?

A simple swapping of roles reverses the balance of power for once, with SEM interviewers answering the questions of the asylum seekers. In this way, THE HEARING not only provides insight into the crucial yet sensitive hearing, but also questions the asylum procedure itself.



CAST

PASCAL ONANA
VICTORIA INNOCENT
J. SAEL
LIVING SMILE VIDJA

CHRISTINA AFFOLTER
CHRISTOPH BANDERET
DEMIAN CORNU
LARA SPINNLER

CREW

Writer & Director LISA GERIG
Producers MAURIZIUS STAERKLE DRUX, EVA VITIJA
Cinematographer RAMÓN GIGER
Sound Designer JULIAN FUCHS
Editors RUTH SCHLÄPFER, LISA GERIG
Composer MARTINA BERTHER
Postproduction Supervisor IAN OGGENFUSS
Re-Recording Mixer DENIS SÉCHAUD
Colorist HANNES RÜTTIMANN
Commissioning Editors URS AUGSTBURGER, SVEN WÄLTI
Distributor Switzerland OUTSIDE THE BOX
World Sales RISE AND SHINE WORLD SALES
Supported by BUNDESAMT FÜR KULTUR, ZÜRCHER FILMSTIFTUNG,
KULTURFONDS SUISSIMAGE, FONDATION SUISA, VEREIN CASA
NELL'ARTE, MARKANT STIFTUNG, STIFTUNG ANNE-MARIE
SCHINDLER, STIFTUNG CORYMBO



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I have been involved in the asylum sector for nine years. I have led a group of 50 volunteers who visit detainees in the deportation detention center in Zurich. As a result, I know the direct consequences of the decisions made by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), especially for people who are refused asylum.

At the center of every asylum procedure is the "hearing on the reasons for flight", which is conducted by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). This is where the authorities ultimately decide on who is allowed to stay and who is not. Its procedure is known only to a few, because it is not public. Who are the people who conduct these hearings? What questions do asylum seekers have to answer? On the basis of which criteria is the asylum application decided? And how does this decision come about?

In my film, real asylum seekers reenact their asylum hearings, confronted with real employees of the SEM. They all have one thing in common: they had to flee their home country because their lives were threatened, but they were still refused asylum. THE HEARING sheds light on how these decisions are made. None of the protagonists are actors; they are who they show themselves to be. The balance of power is reversed during the course of the film. In a simple swapping of roles, the interviewers of the SEM suddenly begin answering the asylum seekers' questions. Through this simple reversal, the film not only offers insight into a procedure that is unknown to us, it also subjects it to critical questioning at the same time.

I am particularly interested in the tension between the emotional, difficult life stories and the criteria and methods to which the authorities subject the applicants.

The hearings are clearly regulated. The interviewers prescribe how the asylum seekers must report about events and their own experiences, deciding on what is important and what is not. Often the asylum seekers have never talked about their lives in this way. Not even with people who are close to them. Now they are suddenly sitting “naked” in front of foreign representatives of the authorities who are judging their lives. In the drab rooms in which the hearings take place, descriptions of hardship, of very personal, sometimes existential experiences of one’s own history collide with politically influenced views and the authorities’ procedures. People who apply for asylum are forced to look into the abyss of their lives and trigger a bureaucratic process. The film shows both the people who support it and those who are at its mercy.

The four stories of the asylum seekers and the answers of the interviewers show how questionable the system of the asylum hearing is. How is a severely traumatized person supposed to be able to tell their story “without

contradiction” as required by law? How accurate can a translation be? How can the danger of class and origin-related misunderstandings be avoided?

Such questions also touch on fundamental issues: Are hearings, as shown in the film, reasonable and the ideal instrument for granting asylum? Do they lead to the hoped-for goals? Can they really clarify who deserves protection? And what does it mean when your future depends on how you tell your story? And beyond that: Can the current concept of the refugee still adequately respond to the diversity of today’s motives for asylum?

I hope that the audience of THE HEARING will think about what they’ve seen and be touched – not only by the way the interviewers do their work, but especially by the strength of the asylum seekers, who have experienced the harshness of the asylum system first hand, who have exposed themselves to it again and are questioning it.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Lisa Gerig (*1990) studied film in Zurich and Geneva, majoring in editing. Her thesis film ZAUNGESPRÄCHE is a radically subjective look at the situation of people held in Zurich's deportation detention center and won several awards. 2018-2023: Diploma studies in Documentary Film Directing at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, where she won the Promotional Award for Young Students in 2019. Today she works as a freelance filmmaker in Zurich and Cologne.

2019 À DEUX, 28min, doc
Förderpreis Young Students

2015 ZAUNGESPRÄCHE, 13min, doc
Best Documentary Filmschoolfest Munich, camera prize Nonfiktionale Bad Aibling, prize Alexis Victor Thalberg Foundation.





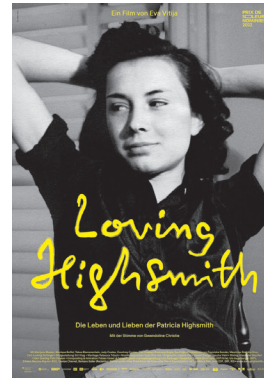
ENSEMBLE FILM GMBH

Based in Zurich, Switzerland, ENSEMBLE FILM combines creative competence in all artistic and practical aspects of film production. We stand for documentary and fictional auteur films with their own signature. We are convinced that in our fast-paced times, well-told, cinematically realized stories have a lasting impact on audiences. Together with our talents we constitute a dedicated ensemble.

Since 2023 ENSEMBLE FILM is run by Franziska Sonder and Maurizio Staerke Drux. From 2018-2022 the company was run together with Eva Vitija.

THE HEARING celebrates its world premiere in the Int. Competition of CPH:DOX. LOVING HIGHSMITH opens the 2022 Solothurn Film Festival and is sold to over 20 countries, a.o. THE ART OF SILENCE releases at the HotDocs Toronto Film Festival and in competition for the Max Ophüls Prize 2022.

CAVES celebrates its world premiere at the 78th Biennale di Venezia in 2021, and THE GAME also starts its international journey at the 77th Biennale di Venezia in 2020, winning international Film Awards and screening at over 100 film festivals.





CONTACT

Production Company

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World Sales

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Film Website

HEARING-FILM.COM

Swiss Distribution

OUTSIDE THE BOX
INFO@OUTSIDE-THEBOX.CH
WWW.OUTSIDE-THEBOX.CH

TECHNICAL SPECS

Languages

ENGLISH, DARI, FRENCH, GERMAN,
TAMIL

Length

81'

Masterfile

Cinema DCP & Apple Prores 4444
Digital in color / Dolby Surround 5.1

Aspect-Ratio

2.39:1 (Scope)

Resolution

2k (2048x858)


Camera

Arri Amira (and others)

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 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern EDI
Bundesamt für Kultur BAK



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