

Here

A film by Bas Devos



82 mins/ Belgium 2023/In French, Romanian and Mandarin

Winner Best Film Berlin Film Festival Encounters Section 2023

And the FIPRESCI Award (Encounters)

Opening date tbc

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SYNOPSIS

Stefan, a Romanian construction worker living in Brussels, is on the verge of moving back home. He cooks up a big pot of soup with leftovers from his fridge, to hand out as a goodbye gift to friends and family.

Just as he is ready to go, he meets a young Belgian-Chinese woman who helps her aunt in a little restaurant whilst preparing a doctorate on mosses.

Her attention for the near-invisible stops him in his tracks.

Download photo set [here](#):

Further information on our website [here](#):

CAST

Stefan
ShuXiu

Stefan Gota
Liyo Gong

Cedric
Mihai
Saadia
Anca
ShuHuan

Cedric Luvuezo
Teodor Corban
Saadia Bentaïeb
Alina Constantin
ShuHuang Wang

CREW

Written and directed by
Assistant Director
Director of Photography
Film Editor
Production Designer
Costume Designer
Sound design
Rerecording mix
Music
Produced by
Production

Bas Devos
Sofie Tusschans
Grimm Vandekerckhove
Dieter Diependaele
Špela Tušar
Manon Blom
Boris Debackere
Benoit Biral
Brecht Ameel
Marc Goyens
Quetzalcoatl

Belgium 2023
In French, Romanian and
Mandarin
82 mins
2K Flat DCP



BAS DEVOS

Bas Devos was born in Zoersel, Belgium, in 1983. Since graduating, Bas Devos has made two shorts *The Close* and *We Know*. His first feature, *Violet*, won the Jury Prize at Berlinale Generations in 2014 and was selected for New Directors New Films at Moma New York. His second feature, *Hellhole*, was selected for Berlinale Panorama in 2019. *Ghost Tropic*, his third feature, premiered three months later at the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs 2019 in Cannes. *Here* is his fourth feature film.

He teaches film at Luca School of Arts in Brussels.



FILMOGRAPHY

TAURUS short, 11 min (2005)
PILLAR short, 16 min (2006)
WE KNOW short, 10 min (2010)
VIOLET feature, 82 min (2014)
HELLHOLE feature, 90 min (2019)
GHOST TROPIC feature, 83 min (2019)
HERE feature, 82 min (2023).

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

A box of soup

In the 1980s, science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin wrote a short essay with a beautiful title: *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*. In it, she argues that early humans were primarily gatherers of berries, fruits, grains and seeds. The image that we have of a hunter, a wielder of spears, a slayer of mammoths, may well dominate our collective consciousness, but it is flawed. The first cultural artefact was not a spear, says Le Guin, but a vessel. A bowl, a carrier bag, a woven net, a pouch in which to carry back home all those seeds and nuts and leaves. But this sack, or pouch, and its (his)story, lost out to the more heroic image of the mammoth slayer wielding a spear. A very masculine image underpinning a masculine narrative.

Le Guin counters this proposition with a more feminine narrative. Moving away from that heroic image, to search for stories of cooperation, of sharing, of gathering. Because it is that hoarding, that stockpiling and sharing that really defines us as humans. I love that image!

It was after reading this essay that the film I was trying to write really began to fall into place. The narrative was a simple one: a man who is going away for a while empties his fridge and makes a soup with the vegetables that would otherwise go rotten. He then distributes that soup to his friends and family. This film is about boxes of soup, about seeds and roots and the soft moss under our feet.

And consequently, it is a film about what it means to be human.

A thick, fibrous now

Biologist and philosopher Donna Haraway puts forward the idea of a 'thick now' to describe the intricate web of terrifying connections that permeate our collective reality.

She proposes a way of thinking about time that raises our awareness of our interconnectedness with each other, but also with the non-human world. It is about living in the now while remaining mindful of what came before us, so that we leave behind a more peaceful landscape for those who come after us. Perhaps, a way of reappraising the broken connection between man and nature. Moss serves as a powerful metaphor for talking about that 'thick and fibrous now': intricately bound to future and past, yet in the now, and

intensely intertwined with the environment, the quality of the surrounding air and water, the amount of sunlight. Human behaviour finding an echo in those soft beds of spongy vegetation. Shuxiu is Stefan's guide, and also ours. The film builds towards a moment of stillness, a moment of undivided attention. When Stefan meets Shuxiu in the swampy, man-made no man's land between Brussels and Vilvoorde, they share an experience that comes close to this 'thick now'. By watching and listening to each other and their surroundings. By paying attention. Maybe attentiveness is a prerequisite for love.



The name of the world

As I started working on this film, I got hold of a handheld magnifying glass. When I bring piece of glass close to my eye, I see what is in front of me, magnified twenty times. I regularly go on walks with Geert Raeymaekers, a bryologist, an expert on mosses. He is a kind, warm man. Together, we gaze through our magnifying glasses at the tiny world beneath our feet. He identifies the many varied species we hold between our fingers and calls them by their mysterious Latin names. *Syntrichia laevipila*, *Kindbergia praelonga*.

Naming things is the first step in learning to look at them, writes Robin Wall Kimmerer in her book *Gathering Moss*. It is a way of entering into an intimate, nurturing relationship with the world.

When Geert and I look up from that world beneath our feet, everywhere, between the greenery and overgrown concrete, we see cans, bottles, cigarette packets, empty crisp bags, toilet paper, some lonely shoes, a broken umbrella and a bicycle. If we knew the names of all the mosses, plants and trees around us, would this place look different? We take an imaginary stroll towards a way out from this squalid wasteland, following a trail upon our ailing planet. It takes quite a bit of imagination to envision any other future than a dystopian wasteland.

As Donna Haraway writes: "... it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what thoughts think thoughts, (...) It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories."

I can think of no better medium than film, to envision that other future, to tell that other story, to 'world' that other world.

