

1ha 43a

six attempts to get closer to the land

filmessay by monika pirch

Pressrelease December 2015



Official Selection 2016
Slamdance Film Festival



Best Film about the Topic of Soil
Innsbruck Nature Film Festival 2015



"A very beautiful film with much thought and message."
Kyia Clayton, Director Tassie Eco Film Fest

"In autumn 2004 I became a landowner.

There had never been any farmers in our family. So during the years that followed

I did exactly what my mother, my grandfather and my great-grandfather had done:

On 11th of November I checked my bank account for the rent."

Synopsis

With a fine sense of humour and her poetic visions the author undertakes six attempts to approach her recently inherited property. By trying to get in touch with her field, she submerges deeply in the past, the future and the administration.

Following her urge to start a relationship with the land, she tries to establish a physical connection with the field, is watching her tenants, talks to experts in the administration and is looking for her very future with her parcel. Having in mind a sensible use and a possible yield she comes up with ever new ideas how to use the field.

All resources of this small piece of land are challenged: Real estate, soil characteristics, work, potatoes and wind. During the research she encounters various financial desires but also historic handicraft and her deceased great-grandmother, who takes an interested look at the field as an object of speculation. In comparing traditional approaches with recent behaviour the author slowly develops her knowledge of the daily business in agriculture, where 2% of the population is feeding the other 98%.

In the course of a year and through ongoing variations of failure the film unfolds a poetic and personal view on 1,43 ha of acre.

Background: Soil

The theme of soil is now connected to important topics like sustainability and equality.

Fertile farmland is a non-renewable resource. Once it has been sealed up, overfertilized or simply gone with the wind, it has disappeared forever.

At the same time, the ongoing financial crisis has turned buying and selling land into a growing speculative market, not only on the far away African continent, but on the European doorstep as well. As a result, the farmers are running out of land. The machines are getting bigger, but the areas they farm keep getting smaller.

In the end there is only one full-time farmer left in the village, who works all of the lands in the immediate (and wider) vicinity without ever coming across a colleague. Farming has become a niche profession, and it feeds us all. To achieve this, the agricultural sector has become the way it is now: large-scale and supported by machinery and chemicals. As a result the farmlands are (almost) free of birds and other wildlife. They also depend on adequate fertilization. Only the weather and the stock exchange can make the business fluctuate. For those who find this too insecure there are other professions. Or they just stop farming the land and let it lie fallow. There's money in that as well.

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Directors Statement

1,43 ha of acre, how much is that?

This was often the first question I was asked when talking about my filmproject. And then many question followed – question I had asked myself when thinking about a responsible approach to my new property. While investigating the given possibilities it became obvious, that I did not have many options and that I had no idea how agriculture is really working on a daily base.

At the same time I became more and more connected to my field. From my background as a visual artist I also looked at the parcel as a playing field, where I could approach the soil, the potatoes, the air and the measurements on a direct and physical level. During my research I was fascinated by the historic filmmaterial I found and the traditional methods of cultivating the land I learned about. Obviously there is no way back in the past and it would not lead to a more sustainable practice with soil today – but looking back can clarify why the connection to what feeds us everyday has been lost: Only very few people actually work with the soil and do cultivate food, so many people have lost touch and in consequence lost the sense of responsibility. I think this is what the film is about. I hope that my approach to the subject will trigger all kind of thoughts and associations in the viewer through my observation and my failure too.

Filmfacts

Germany 2014

51min 17 sec, colour & b/w, DCP 5.1

Script/Director/Editor: Monika Pirch

DOP: Stefanie Gartmann

Soundrecording: J. Buerjes/P. Baum/ D. Harders

Animation: Nikolaus Burhenne

Sounddesign/Soundmix: Tom Blankenberg

Producer: Monika Pirch

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Film- and Medienfond North Rhine-Westphalia

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City of Mönchengladbach

Filmwerkstatt Düsseldorf

Director

Monika Pirch was educated as a photographer and media artist at the University of Applied Science in Dortmund, Germany and graduated at Chelsea College of Art, London. Since 1996 her videowork has been exhibited regularly in Germany and Europe.

Since 2007 she creates videoinstallations for theater productions and works as an editor for documentaries and shortfilms for independent filmmaker and television productions.

„1ha 43a“ is her first film.

Screenings and Festivals

CinemAmbiente - Environmental Film Festival
6th - 11th of October 2015, Turino, Italy
www.cinemambiente.it

Innsbruck Nature Film Festival
6th – 9th of October 2015, Innsbruck, Austria
www.inff.eu

FILMZ – Festival des deutschen Kinos
24th – 29th of November 2015, Mainz, Germany
www.filmz-mainz.de

blicke – filmfestival des ruhrgebiets
28th of November 2015, Bochum, Germany
www.blicke.org

Slamdance Festival
January 2016, Park City (UT), USA
www.slamdance.com

Green Me Filmfestival 2016
January 2016, Berlin, Germany
www.greenme.de