

A film by **Jan van den Berg and Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann**

Press Information



SILENT SNOW

THE INVISIBLE POISONING OF THE WORLD

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Pípaluk, a young Inuit, starts a search for the silent assassin that slowly poisons her people. A journey through three continents makes it clear that persistent pesticides are not only threatening her own country, but the entire world.

The white Arctic plains are an eminent example of nature's untouched beauty: an endless nothing in which only few know how to survive. But a silent assassin is destroying the Inuit community in Greenland. Chemical residues from all over the world accumulate here invisibly, poisoning both humans and animals. By ocean currents and attached to snow, pesticides like DDT are carried northbound into Inuit land, causing illness and premature death.

In *Silent Snow*, a group of experienced Inuit starts out on a dangerous dog-sledge expedition through their barren land. But while global warming and disappearing icebergs are problems they can perceive directly, the pollution of their land remains a hard to imagine threat.

Interwoven with the polar expedition, *Silent Snow* follows a young Greenlandic woman (Pípaluk Knudsen-Ostermann) on her journey around the world to find the local causes of the contamination that is quietly

poisoning her people. Her journey takes her to three

different continents, where she is confronted with conflicting interests when it comes to short-term gains and healthy solutions for agriculture, industries and health care. She meets the people behind the sources of pollution and discovers the heartbreaking dilemmas that lie at the heart of it. For example in Africa, where some people are looking for alternatives for DDT, however its grey poisonous clouds are a cheap way of saving millions of lives in malaria prevention. The disastrous health issues that result on the long term are conveniently put aside. In Central America, Pípaluk meets plantation workers who suffer from various diseases as a result of the use of dangerous pesticides. In India, a riverkeeper who fights against the contamination of the river tells her that people from his own community threaten him, as they depend financially on the chemical factories there.



The Silent Snow project

The Silent Snow project aims to raise awareness of pollution caused by persistent pollutants and consists of both a short film and a feature length documentary by Dutch filmmaker Jan van den Berg, educational material for schools and a website: www.silentsnow.org. Silent Snow is a documentary project investigating, together with the people who are affected the most, what turns out to be a structural pollution of the entire global environmental system. The Silent Snow project offers a platform to people who fight for healthier alternatives for pesticides.



In the short film, that had its premiere at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in 2007, the subject was introduced by following two young girls in Greenland and the way in which they are confronted with the pollution of their environment. The short film was selected for over 100 international film festivals and won awards in (among other countries) Bologna, Lausanne, Sydney, South Korea, Tokyo and Toronto. It has been embedded in educational packages on human rights and the environment and broadcasted in many countries.

After a successful world premiere on the UNEP conference in Nairobi 2011, the feature length film of Silent Snow has started on a tour around the globe to create awareness on the silent poisoning of the world caused by persistent pollutants. The film was shown on film festivals in more than 25 countries and thousands of people saw the film in Belgium Dutch, German and Swiss cinemas. It won awards on the Envirofilm Festival in Slovakia, Festival delle Terre in Italy, the International Mountain Film Festival in Slovenia and the Human Rights Film Festival in Barcelona, Paris & New York.

The director and co-writer's opinion



Jan van den Berg: "The discrepancy between the magnificence of this seemingly untouched white land and the steady but invisible destruction of this area by developments elsewhere in the world is the essential drama I wished to capture. Together with Pipaluk, I wanted to find out why this is happening and understand the perspective's of the different people involved; the victims, the producers, and those who try to fight for solutions".

Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann: "Our life is threatened by dangerous pesticides. They travel up North by ocean currents and winds and have horrifying effects on people's health, causing all sorts of cancer and fertility problems. As a young woman who would like to have a child in the future, I was very worried and wanted to make this film in order to search for answers and solutions. The work and traveling that I did in order to make Silent Snow really opened my eyes in many ways. I met many interesting and brave people who literally invited me into their living room to tell me their personal stories. These people are living a life influenced by man made threats but



they fight and don't give up the dream of a better and healthier life. We are all affected by this pollution, but we can actually fight it".

Quotes from the film



Don Timoteo Jackson, indigenous Bri Bri leader in Costa Rica:

"They use mercury and contaminate our rivers. We lived in harmony with nature but greed is destroying it all."

- **Ellady Muyambi van Toxic free Uganda:**

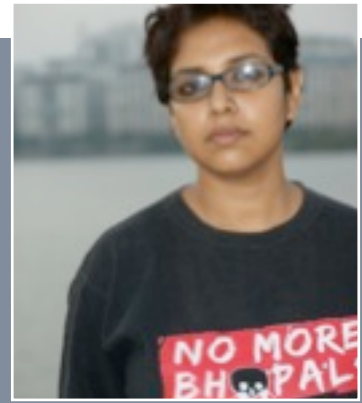
"Chemical companies from the US paid people here to spray DDT instead of promoting healthier alternatives, like mosquito nets."



- **Henriette Rasmussen, former minister, Greenland:** "Our natural diet has been polluted so much that the doctors are warning us that breast-feeding or pregnant women should not eat it any longer."



- **Jose, riverkeeper for Greenpeace in India:** "Most polluting factories are owned by the government. Who will take action against them? They use the water and, after the production, dump the effluence in our river. They have illegal pipes. All the fish die. They have no right to pollute the river like that."



Shweta Narayan fights against pesticides in India: "I'm scared even to have a baby because I might have been exposed to chemicals. They are capable of causing many birth defects."



Nemesio Tores Torres plantation-worker in Costa Rica: "They knew that this product was prohibited in the US, but they allowed the use of it here. Many of us became blind and impotent, or died of cancer. They transport these contaminated bananas and other fruits abroad."



Hunter in Greenland: The ice is thinner every year. We hardly see polar bears anymore."



• **Anjana, cotton farmer in India:** “We thought the new seeds would be an improvement, but it didn’t turn out the way we hoped. They’ve cheated us and my husband had to spray even more pesticides.”



Mother in Tanzania: “The children are still getting malaria and nobody wants to buy our eco-cotton anymore because it contains DDT as a result of the reckless spraying.”



• **Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann, Greenland:** “My only consolation is that on my journey I met many wonderful people willing to fight against the silent poisoning of the world. Together we will find the strength to continue.”



Srinivasan, cotton farmer in India: “We need to cut back the use of fertilizers and pesticides but multinationals and the state produce new seeds that need even more pesticides. Farmers have no voice in this process.”





Reviews

"Many thanks for this important work!"

Kathryn Gilje, Pesticide Action Network
New York

"Thank you for the deeply touching and inspiring film. I feel really honored to have watched the movie in Nairobi. The film is very powerful and genuine."

Negusu Aklilu, Director, Forum for
Environment
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

"Our warmest congratulations for this great movie. It is very educational and touching."

Aileen Yap and James Soh
National Youth Achievement Award Council
Singapore

"Silent Snow is more than a beautifully photographed travelogue. It's a call to arms in the battle to save our planet."

Shirrel Rhoades
Solaris Hill, Key West
Florida

"With breathtaking images of nature, Golden Calf winner Jan van den Berg emphasizes both the beauty and vulnerability of our world."

Movies that Matter festival, The Hague
The Netherlands

"A well meaning and instructive film. A melancholic reminder that environmental treaties only work if everyone complies: if they are spraying DDT somewhere, they are spraying it everywhere."

Talha Burki
The Lancet Oncology
London, UK

"A fantastic and powerful movie!"

Sabina Bacia
Cluburile de film One World, Roemenie.

"A poetic, but also an activist film."

Wendy Koops
Down to Earth! Magazine, the Netherlands



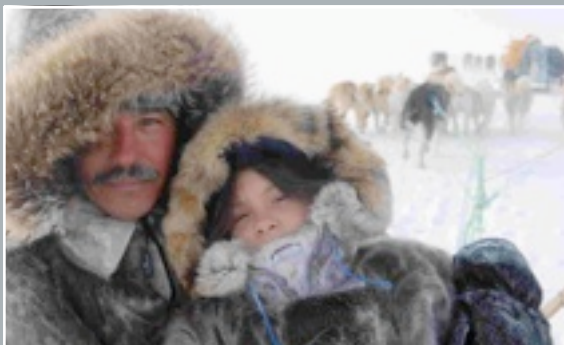
Jan van den Berg and drsFILM

Writers, artists and filmmakers are working together in this production company, founded by Jan van den Berg, who in the early seventies started making films from his original field of study, cultural anthropology. Since that time drsFILM made many documentaries and drama productions. The films are mostly about people at the cutting edge between cultures. Jan van den Berg made several earlier films on environmental issues, like Gallow Creek (2009) and Taming the Floods (1999).

• 2007: SILENT SNOW

Short film on the silent poisoning of the Arctic. Was screened in many countries after its premiere on IDFA 2007. Stop Global Warming Award and J-Wave Audience Award, Short Shorts Film Festival In Japan / First Prize Planet in Focus, Toronto / Best International Film, HRAFF Australia / Prix du meilleur court métrage, FIFFEL, Lausanne / Children Earth Vision Award, Japan / Golden Snail, Slow Food on Film Festival Bologna / Honorable Mentions at INKAFEST Peru and HR Film Fest. Buenos Aires / First Prize Green Film Fest Seoul. See: www.silentsnow.org.

"The film is visually striking and uses the subtle, delicate and unsentimentally-told story of two young girls in an isolated and unfamiliar land to shed light on a powerful story of global significance"
- Jury Slow Food on Film Festival, Italy



• 2009: GALLOW CREEK

A girl, fighting to preserve a unique forest comes up against a real estate developer in Limburg, The Netherlands. See: www.hetgalgenven.nl.

"The nature and cinematography of Gallow Creek resembles the documentary work of David Attenborough. The amazing acting qualities of the local theater ensemble and use of the local dialect, address your imagination. The film can be called non-Dutch in that way."

- Michelle Lentz in XI mediasite

• 2001: TAMING THE FLOODS

Landscape architect Jan Dijkstra has a dream: the introduction of new nature on a large scale. When he is sent to Poland he grabs his chance and starts to work on creating a large river reserve on which man will exert no control. But he has not taken into account the needs and wishes of the local farmers. Nominated for a Dutch Academy Award. The jury: "A fascinating film on a fascinating topic."



Human Rights:

Human rights are also an important theme in the work of Jan van den Berg. The series of "War after Peace" are an excellent example. It shows how people from different cultural backgrounds still fight the war in their minds, long after the actual war is over. Jan van den Berg made several films in a.o. Afghanistan, Sudan, East Timor and Cambodia for this series.

• 2004: DEACON OF DEATH, Looking for justice in today's Cambodia.

Looking for justice in today's Cambodia. A Golden Calf at the Dutch Film Festival. The jury: "a moving story in which a Cambodian woman dares to confront the man whom she holds responsible for the death of her family. Convincingly and with respect the director has depicted this almost classic drama of good and evil, crime, punishment and forgiveness."

"A tale so intimate and suspenseful that it has the feel of a novel."

- Anne-Marie O'Connor in de Los Angeles Times

Upcoming:

• NO FIGHT NO VICTORY

Documentary on the fight against hunger in Brazil.

• UTRECHT AT SEA

A series of portraits of Utrecht born artists e.g.; author and illustrator Dick Bruna, violinist Janine Jansen and architect Gerrit Rietveld. The start of the international distribution is planned in 2013, just before the celebrations of three hundred years Peace of Utrecht.

• FIEN DE LA MAR

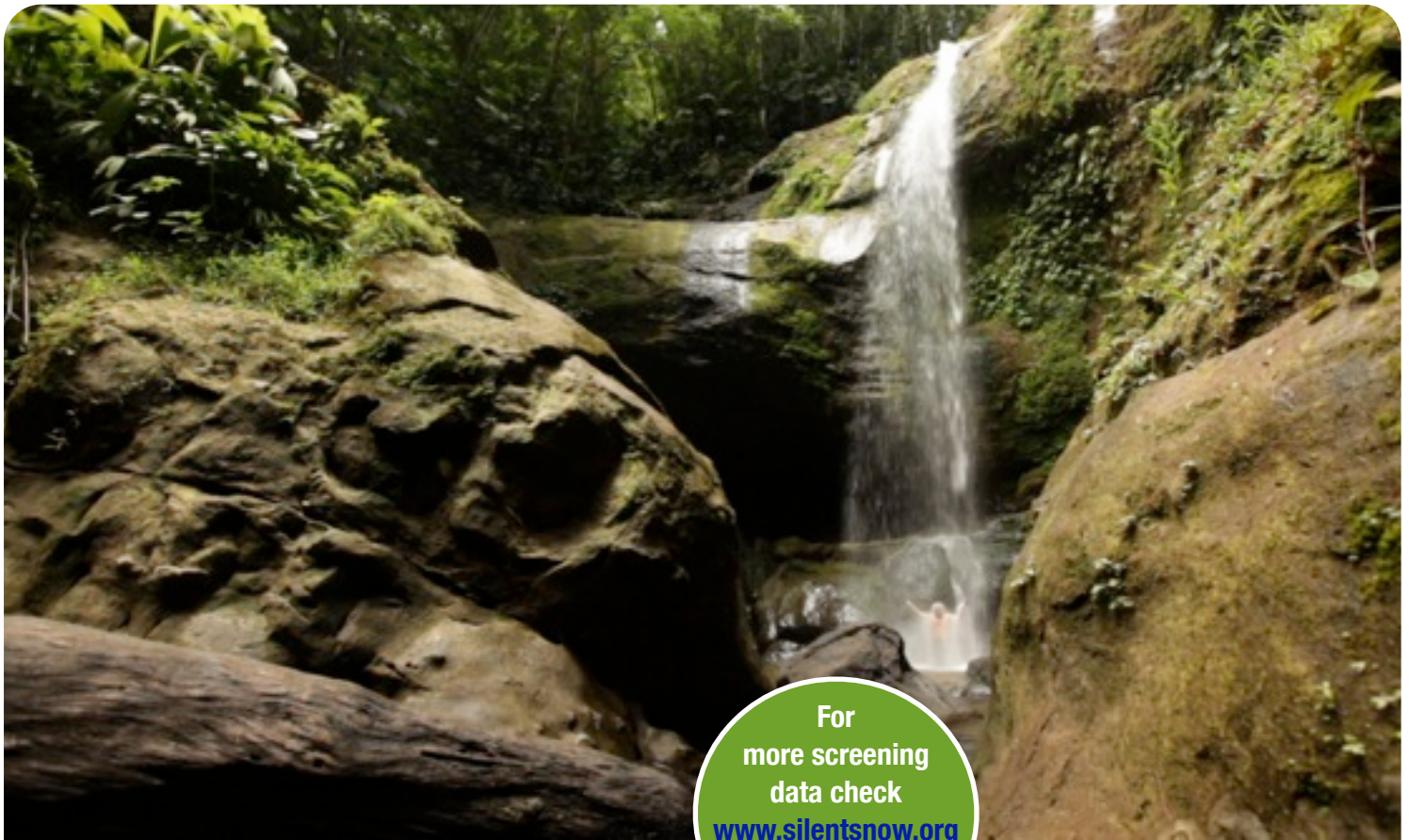
Film about Dutch actress Fien de la Mar.

Awards:

many awards on international film festivals, a.o. a Golden Calf for Deacon of Death, looking for justice in today's Cambodia (Dutch Film Festival), Golden Snail for the short Silent Snow film (Bologna) and a Golden Key for Bye Jan (Lorquin, France).

More information on these films and drsFILM:

www.drsvilm.tv en www.silentsnow.org



For
more screening
data check
www.silentsnow.org

SCREENINGS & AWARDS 2012

'Best Mountain Nature and Culture Film' award at IMFFD Slovenia / 'Prize for Innovative Looking for Answers to Pressing Questions' at Envirofilm, Slovak Republic / 'Survival International' award IX Festival de Cine y Derechos Humanos, Spain / Award at Festival delle Terre, Italy.

UPCOMING SCREENINGS:

- Atmosphere Festival, France: March 26 - Apr 4
- Int. Mountain Film Festival Domzale (SI): Apr 2 - 6
- Athens Int. Film Festival, Ohio (US): Apr 13 - 19
- ViewFinders Festival, Halifax (CA): Apr 19
- Mediawave, Hungary: Apr 26 - 30
- Greenland Eyes Int. Film Festival (GE): Apr 28
- Karel de Grote University College, Antwerp: May 2nd
- Festival de Cinema Europeu, Brasilia: May 8 - 13
- Envirofilm, Slovak Republic: May 14 - 19
- Human Rights Film Festival, Barcelona: May 17 - 22
- Festival de Cinema Europeu, Rio de Janeiro: May 22 - 27
- Cine de Derechos Humanos IMD, Buenos Aires: May 23 - 30
- Festival delle Terre, Roma, Italy: May 27
- CinemAmbiente, Torino, Italy: June 3
- Madeira Film Festival 'On the Road': August
- Bansko Film festival, Bulgaria, 21-25 Nov



Executive producer John Padget, Jan van den Berg and filmmaker and journalist Shirrel Rhoades in Florida.



Jan van den Berg with Andreas Schriber (BioVision) and Michael Stanley-Jones (SafePlanet) in Geneva.



Polar explorer Ole Jørgen Hammeken, Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann and Jan van den Berg in The Hague.

Festivals Silent Snow was screened:

Movies that Matter Festival, The Hague, The Netherlands 2011 / Tallahassee Film Festival, US 2011 / Parnu International Film Festival, Estonia 2011/ Dutch Film Festival, the Netherlands 2011/ Int. Film Festival Hamburg, Germany 2011 / Ekofilm, Czech Republic 2011 / Pariscience, Paris, France 2011 / Planet in Focus Environmental Film Fest, Toronto, Canada 2011 / Inconvenient Film Festival, Vilnius, Lithuania 2011 / Thusis Film Festival, Czech Republic 2011 / Int. Mountain Film Festival Kathmandu, Nepal 2011 / Tiburon Film Festival US 2011 / Princeton Environmental Film festival US 2012 / UFO 0110 International Digital Film festival, New Delhi 2012 / ViBGYOR Int. Film Festival, Kerala India 2012 / Environmental Film Festival in the Nations Capital, US 2012 / FrauenFilmTage, Vienna Austria 2012 / Festival du Film Vert, Suisse Romande 2012.

Credits

A film by Jan van den Berg & Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann

Partners: Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation (BOS), Lichtpunt (Canvas Belgium), Rotterdam Media Fonds, TVP Poland, Jade Foundation, CoBO fund, Jacob Gelt Dekker, NCDO, DHV, Limits to Earth, ASN Bank, Mosa Tiles, and Greenpeace.

Based on the stories of Ole Jørgen Hammeken, Ellady Muyambi, Henriette Rasmussen, Glory Mollel, Sophia, Anjana, Srinivasan, VJ Jose, Shweta Narayan, Don Timoteo and many others.

script & director - Jan van den Berg
co-auteur - Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann
camera - Viraj Singh & Jan van den Berg
additional footage - Birgit Hillenius, Marc Plomp, Marro Kievit, Gordy Cox, Fabio Hidalgo
editor - Boris Everts
consulting editors - Srdjan Fink & Stella van Voorst van Beest



music advice - Paul Oomens
sound design - Bart Jilesen
live sound - Elangovan Ranga, Jillis Schriel & Radhakrishnan Sivarajan, Guadalupe González Novo & Judit Mol
sound edit - Max Frick, Ank van Essen-Schouten, Elena Martín Hidalgo.
country producers - Ann Andreasen and Ole Jørgen Hammeken (Greenland), Samuel Obae (Africa), Nina Subramani, Subrato Sengupta (India), Jorine Muiser (Costa Rica)
commissioning editor - Babeth M. VanLoo

titles - Guido van Eekelen, Jaron Korvinus, Daan Mens

color correction - Geert van Schoot
executive producers - Jacob Gelt Dekker & John Padget

drsFILM/ Jan van den Berg

AS film/ Andre Schreuders

Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation/
Babeth M. Van Loo

More information: www.silentsnow.org

CONTACT

For questions and additional information, please contact drsFILM. See www.silentsnow.org for more information on the Silent Snow project en for the movie trailer.
www.silentsnow.org
www.janvandenbergtv

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