

TO GARBO AND LENIN - shortfilm

Director Jessica Laurén about the film:

What if two of the 20th century most famous icons had met?

We let Greta Garbo and Vladimir Lenin meet at PUB's department store in Stockholm one day in April 1917.

Vladimir is on his way through Stockholm home to Petrograd after a long time in European exile and needs to buy a suit. Greta lives in the city and works at the hats department.

They both have lost a dream, which is the starting point for a conversation that lasts all day as they walk through the city.

The underlying theme of the movie is breakpoints. They live in a time between old and new, war and peace, oppression and equality. In 1917, it comes to a point of no return with hunger riots, revolutions and the energetic work for female voting rights.

All this lies in the background of their temporary meeting, where their roles as we know them are also reversed.

Lenin, associated with the labor movement, comes from an educated high-ranked family, while Garbo has grown up in Stockholm's poorest working quarters.

How does this affect their conversation? Who is really on the workers' side?

The breakpoint theme is also affecting their personal meeting. They come from different places, they meet briefly but intensely and then they move on to their very different fates, one going East, one going West.

I have chosen to parcel the story into a fairy tale sparkling pastiche, and I play with a style between Art Nouveau and hand-painted films using filmed actors treated into painted backgrounds.

My inspiration comes among others from Wes Anderson. I share the same passion for building up new worlds somewhere between art and reality.

Though the film also is in the break point between live action and animation I am not really sure where to put it while submitting it to festivals and give them therefore complete freedom to put it where it suits them best.

I have quite disrespectfully mixed facts and fiction to get the story going in an interesting way.

Due to facts, Garbo's and Lenin's connections to the PUB department store is for real. Lenin bought his suit there (and wore it during the revolution), and Garbo worked at the hat department before going to Hollywood...

It is just too good to not make a story about it!

To Garbo and Lenin

Synopsis by Jessica Laurén

It's the year of 1917 and Greta Gustafsson and Vladimir Ulyanov meet at the PUB department store in Stockholm, where she works as a clerk and he comes in to buy a new suit before he returns to Russia.

They both have lost a dream. She has given up an offer to become a movie actress because it would cost her the employment at the department store, and he who has planned the Russian revolution in exile for many years, have found his plans been overtaken by the Russian bourgeoisie party that recently performed the February revolution and overthrew the Tsar.

They realize that they, despite their huge differences, have their existential struggles in common and start a conversation that lasts all day while wandering through the city. They manage to open up each other's eyes to new possibilities, and convince each other that it is worthwhile to follow their dreams after all.

In the evening they have a drink of absinthe at Blanch's Café and they give each other their new names, Garbo and Lenin.

Lenin asks Garbo to follow him to Petrograd as his muse and as the face of his revolution. The question remains hanging in the air, she gives it a thought but nothing is said out bluntly.

He will continue by train to Petrograd that same evening and she follows him to the Central Station.

On the way there he is telling her about his political point of view, and she is questioning it though she, coming from pure working class, don't agree with his methods and thinks that he, as an academic, doesn't know what he is talking about.

At the station he once again asks her to accompany him to Russia, but she tells him that she will go in the other direction - to Hollywood.

He wants to follow her and he even suggests to marry her and give up politics, but she declines.

Eventually he enters the train, and their farewell is a fact.

They are heading in different directions, each to their own icon status, one essentially different from the other.



Jessica Laurén, director



Biography

Born 1967 in Stockholm, Sweden.

Started to work with animation as a colouring artist directly after high school, and quite fast moved on to inking, in betweening and animation.

1986 - 2003 employed by Stockholm-based companies as Kanalfilm (feature film “Ratty”), Cinemation (feature film “Charlie Strap and Froggy Ball”), Happy Life (TV-series “Three friends... and Jerry) and Filmtecknarna (commercials, short films, TV series, music videos etc).

2004 - 2012 employed as a director and designer at Filmtecknarna.

2010 published a book, “Helt random”, an illustrated humoristic noir description of mother-daughter relationship.

Since 2013 working as a director, illustrator, scriptwriter and designer at her own company Goldspoon/Dessiné AB.

Work in 2D, 3D, live action and mixed media-techniques.

Filmography

2019 - Incidents, short films/TV-series, in the spirit of #metoo

2017 - “To Garbo and Lenin” - short film with own script, direction, design

2011 - “Who is where?” - 8 short films based on books by Stina Wirsén (premiered as feature film at Swedish cinemas 2011 and also broadcasted as TV-series at SVT, Swedish Television)

2010 – “Who?” – 8 short films based on books by Stina Wirsén (premiered as feature film at Swedish cinemas 2010 and also broadcasted as TV-series at SVT, Swedish Television)

2004 - "Kiddie Thoughts" – TV-series, 10 short films with script and design of my daughters, Silke and Tindra Varga Laurén, broadcasted on Scandinavian TV-stations

1994 - "Water of the sun" – short film with own script, direction, design, music

Scholarships and awards in selection:

2018 - To Garbo and Lenin - Best Drama, Best Making Of, Fan Award, MovieScreenPro

2018 - To Garbo and Lenin - Best Historical Short Film and Best Costume Awards, SFAAF

2018 - To Garbo and Lenin - Best Trailer Award at Near Nazareth Film Festival

2018 - To Garbo and Lenin - Best Trailer Award - ARFF, Around International Film Festival

2012 - Sydsvenskans och BUFF:s Great Film Award for the "Who"-films, shared with Stina Wirsén

2011 - Nominated by Kulturnyhetera (Swedish Television) to the Alternative Golden Bug

2010 - Nominated to the award "Cristal", Annecy Film Festival

2010 - "Premio Speciale categoria Elements +3", award for "Who's bleeding", Giffoni Film Festival

1994 - Scholarship from Gothenburg Film Festival for short film "Water of the Sun"