

FAMILY AFFAIR FILMS  
presents

# WHITE FLASH

based on a true story

a film by Laura Hermanides

# Production details

English Title	White Flash
Original title	Witte Flits
Director	Laura Hermanides
Writer	Laura Hermanides & Roelof Jan Minneboo
Producer	Family Affair Films, Chris Stenger
Distributor Benelux	Gusto Entertainment
Main cast	Renée Soutendijk, Raymond Thiry, Sanne den Hartogh
Length in minutes	90 minutes
Category	Feature film
Countries of production	The Netherlands
Shooting Location	The Netherlands
Spoken Language	Dutch
Format	DCP
Colour	Colour
Genre	Social drama
Planned release date	Summer 2024
Supported by	The Netherlands Film Fund Amsterdam Fund for the Arts

## Logline

This is the story of Aagje, Toon and their son Rick (42). Rick suffers from psychotic episodes, depression and severe headaches. We follow their journey in the last six weeks leading up to the death of Rick. A journey proving that letting someone so close to us go, is the most extreme expression of love.

# Synopsis

Every week, AAGJE and TOON visit their son RICK (42), who lives in a closed psychiatric ward. He suffers from psychotic episodes, depression, severe headaches, leading to unpredictable behavior.

When DOCTOR KOCH announces that Rick's request for euthanasia on the grounds of unbearable and incurable psychological suffering, will probably be granted, Aagje feels relieved. For Toon it's a total shock. Rick has six weeks left. Which for himself is too long, but is it enough time for his parents to let go out of love?

Rick bares his soul - the good, but also the dark - to the one closest: his mother Aagje. Whenever in an episode, she gets the full brunt of it. As Rick's euthanasia nears it gets harder and harder for Aagje to deal with this.

Doctor Koch advises Rick to make practical arrangements for his nearing end. Rick tries, but can't bring himself to clean out his apartment. The total chaos Aagje and Toon find at the flat touches Aagje deeply and she starts to doubt: what if Ricks episodes are a cry for love and attention after all?

Although redemption is closer than ever, Rick can't take it anymore. He threatens to jump off a balcony. His parents are informed and hurry over. Even though they're scared, they ultimately decide to leave while Rick still threatens to jump.

Rick shows remorse for his actions and continues to discuss his funeral wishes with his parents: the exact music that should be played, that everyone needs to dress in white and that they should drive his classic car to the funeral.

The night before his death, the family gathers in the hospice: Rick wants to eat his favorite pastries with them. The next day, Rick says farewell to his family before drinking the potion. He falls asleep and Aagje feels how life peacefully flows out of his body. No more pain, like Rick said.

# Cast



## AAGJE - Renée Soutendijk

Renée Soutendijk first starred as a lead actor in *Pastorale 1943* (1978, Wim Verstappen). In 1982 she played her first foreign part in the American feature *Inside the Third Reich* (1982, Marvin J. Chomsky). After this Soutendijk played several foreign productions among which *Peter the Great* (1986, Marvin Chomsky & Lawrence Schiller), Polish production *Wherever You Are* (1988, Krzysztof Zanussi), and German television productions such as *Hauptsache Leben* (1998, Connie Walter), the thriller series *Alphaman* (1999, Thomas Jauch), *Das Delphinwunder* (1999, Christoph Schrewe). Recently she had supporting roles in the American drama *A Perfect Man* (2013) and in Luca Guadagnino's *Suspiria* (2018). Renée starred the feature film *Sweet Dreams* by Ena Sendjarevic, for which she was awarded best actress at the Locarno Film Festival 2023.



## TOON - Raymond Thiry

Raymond Thiry started acting in theatre in 1987. After years of playing in popular tv-shows, he receives his first Golden Calf nomination in 2006 for his role in the art house film *Langer Licht* by David Lammers. In 2009 he wins this same award for his work in *Winter in Wartime* (Martin Koolhoven) and in 2015 he is again awarded, for his role in *Blood, Sweat & Tears* (2015) by Diederick Koopal. Raymond impresses as Luther in the Dutch Crime series *Penoza* (Diederik van Rooijen). He also starred in the feature film *Wolf*, the Dutch nomination for the European Film Awards in 2014 and in *The Paradise Suite* (Joost van Ginkel), submitted for Best Foreign Language at the Oscars in 2016. In 2020 he plays in *Quo Vadis, Aida?* (Jasmila Zbanic, 2020), a film that receives an Oscar nomination.

# Artistic statement -Laura Hermanides

White Flash is the story of Agnes, Jan and their son René. I met Agnes and Jan in 2013. Blown away by their story, I worked on a documentary on people going through something similar. I couldn't find a family as loving as theirs where trauma didn't play a part in the death wish. I returned to Agnes five years ago - Jan passed away in 2015 - asking whether she was open to translate their story into a film. She hesitated, but René had asked her to fight for people like him. Finally she trusted me and we spent months going through all of Jan's and René's writings.

Letting go as the ultimate expression of love is the point where theory and practice meet. In Dutch law euthanasia is allowed as a form of mercy in extreme situations of psychological suffering. The story of loving parents letting go as the utmost sacrifice is an important document to add to the philosophical debate. I support the theory, but does it survive the complex reality? Are we capable of overcoming our own instincts of wanting to hold on?

During writing I already involved the actors, improvising scenes from the true story. I brought their input, their language, their movements, all back to the script. The actors met people of the real story, and we filmed in the actual house of Agnes, on which she insisted.

Euthanasia should be possible in extreme cases of suffering I believe. On the other hand, there is the complexity of letting go as an almost supernatural form of love. In White Flash the contradiction in this matter is explored; trying to accept the limits of what we can shape, and to appreciate what we are given as long as it lasts.

My friendship with Agnes reminds me of the necessity of appreciating life while it lasts. A film about her is a film about embracing life despite the extreme, impossible sacrifices it may demand.

# Biography - Laura Hermanides

White Flash is Laura Hermanides' debut feature film. Laura has written and directed several internationally acclaimed short films and documentaries including the Teledoc Campus Prove me wrong (Best Film San Francisco Shorts Film Festival; Best Director Rush Doc Film Festival), the short film Nymphet (Sundance Channel Award; Best Actress, Best Director & Best Film Shortcutz Awards) and the short film Amantea (Best Short Talent Award Da Bounce Urban Film Festival; and selected for many international Film festivals like Uppsala, Vienna, Glasgow).

## Anahit (2022)

(curated by The National Gallery : <https://landmarks.utexas.edu/video-art/laura-hermanides>)

- Greenwich Village Film Festival New York, Best Director Award, 2022
- Nominated Best Experimental Shortcutz 2023
- Cinedans, Eye Filmmuseum
- Cinedans on Tour 2022
- Selected Dutch Shorts, Eye Filmmuseum 2022
- Greenwich Village Film Festival New York, Best Director Award, 2022
- Forum van de Regisseurs Nederlands Film Festival 2022
- LOOP Fair Barcelona, curated by The Curators Room
- Dag van de Korte Film, GoShort, Eye Filmmuseum & Nederlands Film Festival

## Amantea (2019)

- Best Short Talent Award Da Bounce Urban Film Festival
- Cannes Short Film Corner 2019
- Shortcutz Amsterdam 2020
- Elba Film Festival 2020
- San Francisco International Short Film Festival

## Nymphet (2016)

- Sundance Channel Award, broadcasted worldwide
- Best Actress, Best Director & Best Film Shortcutz Awards
- Go Short Dutch Competition
- Best Short Film Cordoba Film Festival Colombia
- Special Mention International Short Film Festival Leuven
- Broadcasted by Canvas

## Prove me wrong (2014)

- Best Film San Francisco Shorts Film Festival
- Best Director Rush Doc Film Festival
- Glasgow Short Film Festival
- Top 10 Documentaries Uppsala Film Festival
- Vienna Shorts Festival

# Family Affair Films

Family Affair Films is an Amsterdam based production company founded by Floor Onrust, specialized in contemporary fiction and documentaries of high artistic quality with a strong author-driven visions. We develop projects with new talent and we nurture our relationships with established filmmakers.

Steve McQueen's documentary OCCUPIED CITY (2023) premiered in the official selection of Cannes and recently screened at Telluride. The Dutch premiere of the film will take place during the 26th edition of IDFA. THREE MINUTES - A LENGTHENING (2021) a documentary by Bianca Stigter premiered in Venice in 2021 and was selected for Toronto, Telluride and IDFA and Sundance.

Furthermore, their slate include features such as SPLENDID ISOLATION (IFFR 2022) by Urszula Antoniak, BLOODY MARIE (IFFR 2019) by Guido van Driel, LIGHT AS FEATHERS (Toronto 2018) by Rosanne Pel and BEYOND WORDS by Urszula Antoniak (Toronto & San Sebastian 2017).

Fall 2023, WHEN WE LOST FROM THE GERMANS, Guido van Driel's third feature film, and ZOMERVACHT, Joren Molter's debut film, premiered in cinemas.



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