



MARET

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PRODUCTION

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CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Synopsis | 05 |
| Interview with Laura Schroeder..... | 06 |
| Biography of Laura Schroeder..... | 10 |
| Interview with Susanne Wolff..... | 14 |
| Biography of Susanne Wolff..... | 17 |
| Cast and credits | 18 |

RED LION and RED BALLOON FILM present

SUSANNE WOLFF

MARET

a film by
LAURA SCHROEDER

Luxembourg, Germany / 2023
OV: German, English
4K - Colour - 127' - 1:66 - 5.1



SYNOPSIS

After losing part of her memory, Maret, 44, sets out to find out who she used to be. She learns about the many different life paths she followed, in none of which anything was ever really achieved. A profoundly unhappy person in a never-ending, headlong rush. A doctor on the island of Lanzarote offers to put this restlessness to an end through brain surgery. A promise of peace and satisfaction.

Will Maret proceed with the surgery that would take away part of her being - or not?

INTERVIEW WITH LAURA SCHROEDER

Director

by Frédéric Mercier

What is the origin of Maret's script?

For a long time, I wondered what might be left of us if we forgot our past. That was the original question, the basis for this script. In the absence of an answer, I started investigating, particularly the scientific aspect.

What did you discover?

Like many people in our society, I grew up with the idea that a lot of problems could be solved with psychoanalysis, by speech therapy. However, thanks to a neurosurgeon, I came to learn that for some of the scientific world, many disorders have an organic origin. Nowadays, many problems are solved with the push of a button. I discovered something called deep brain stimulation. One of the film's axes originated from asking whether it could be possible to become someone else, using scientific methods. If this did become possible, there would still need to be the desire to use such methods. Aren't our wounds a fundamental part of our personality? Would we agree to live without our sorrows?

Is Maret a second-chance-film?

No, I didn't want to make a film about a character who reinvents herself in a foreign country by changing jobs, for example. I'm interested in choices. In our lives, we are all on a journey. If it were or could be cancelled, how would we react? How would we continue the journey? What I'm most interested in is trying to understand why we choose one way of life over another. Like Maret, we are often torn between two poles: on the one hand, a quiet and rather orderly existence, and on the other, a more turbulent life.

Is the film's scientific basis true?

90% of it is. It is definitely not science-fiction. Nevertheless, what Maret does at the end of the story is just an experimental possibility for now. To date, deep brain stimulation is mainly being used for motor function diseases like Parkinson's. But many experiments are trying to understand the effects on anything that originates in the brain - such as epilepsy, anorexia, depression. In short, we tried to cast a light on something that only exists underground as of yet.

Why did you choose to set part of the action on the island of Lanzarote in the Canary Islands?

When I first went there in 2016, I already had parts of the story in mind. I knew that my character would have to travel to a destination far away and different from where she had always lived. When I discovered Lanzarote, it just clicked. Its landscape is dry, desert, volcanic, devoid of trees and covered with black sand. Lanzarote and Germany are worlds apart. I thought of *Paris, Texas*, of Antonioni, of Maret lost in this inhospitable landscape. I like the island's light: on Lanzarote, time has stopped, there is something 'vintage' about it, a bygone era, in total contrast with the modernity of science.

Like in *Barrage*, your previous film, Maret has a complicated relationship with her parents.

In both films, there is friction between parents and children. There is an uneasiness between generations. This scene might be where we best get to access who Maret is. Anchoring her socially allows us to understand her aspirations, her discontent, and her constant desire to run away.





Maret is an artist. Do you have a critical view of the contemporary art world or is it simply a framework?

It is a framework. With the scene in the contemporary art fair, one could argue that I am being critical, but that isn't my intention. I really liked some parts of Ruben Östlund's *The Square*, especially the long twelve-minute performance with the monkey-man. It's not about rejecting a milieu but about using it to make a more general reflection on society as a whole and to portray a character who has sought to invent herself, far from her original milieu, by looking for a way to express her existential doubts.

Maret is a complex and sometimes even difficult character. Do you fear that she may sometimes put off the viewer?

This is what is at stake in the film. At the beginning, something terrible happens to her and she appears to us as a victim. Only later does she start to change in our eyes. We discover some rather disturbing elements of her personality. This raises the stakes as Maret asks herself whether she actually wants to get rid of them. But the more we discover her flaws, the more we also see how vulnerable and torn she is. It makes us feel closer to her.

The scene with Baba on the island contrasts with the rest of the film. It's an almost dreamlike trance.

It is a catharsis. Before leaving the island, I wanted Maret to have a physical and spiritual experience. But I didn't want to use meditation or yoga. I discovered Candomblé, a syncretism of Nigerian slave traditions and Catholicism. It is recognised as a religion in Brazil and there are five Candomblé houses in Europe. I went with Judith Angerbauer and Susanne Wolff to a ceremony in Berlin that lasted four hours. Apart from the fact that it made a big impression on all three of us, it convinced me that it was the right option for Maret.

Can you tell us about the film's score?

Pianist/performer Simon Ghraichy and I chose pieces by Robert Schumann. Classical piano – although Schumann's music is anything but classical. They appear in five specific moments of the film where we move from one state, one place, one mood to another. The music also gives Maret another vulnerability, another colour. A kind of languor. The songs always end rather abruptly. Like in the days of pressing 'stop' when we listened to a cassette – they are rips in her memory.

Why did you choose this ending?

I think that the ending shocks a lot of people. We live in an age where we prefer happy endings. But this is not a happy ending. For me, it was very important to go to the end of my reflection on neuroscience and to ask the question: how far are we prepared to go to be more serene, happier, more balanced? I want to encourage the viewer to reflect on it. I thought a lot about Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* when I was developing the story, and about this, perhaps slightly crazy, 'dystopian' idea, that deep brain stimulation could replace soma.

LAURA SCHROEDER

Director

Writer

Born in Luxembourg, Laura graduated with a Masters in Film Studies at the University of Paris 1 - Sorbonne and a Postgraduate Diploma in Directing at the National Film and Television School, London.

After her studies, she writes and directs two short films *Senteurs* (2008) and *Double saut* (2011), both screened in many festivals worldwide, as well as the transdisciplinary theatre play *Luxtime - Jacques Tati Revisited* (2009) which, after its success in Luxembourg, is also shown at the Avignon Theatre Festival in 2010.

In 2012, she directs *The Treasure Knights*, a family drama for children.

After directing two episodes of the sitcom *Comeback* and two documentaries for the series *Routwaïssgro* for Luxembourgish TV, Laura stages the contemporary German play *Das Ding Aus Dem Meer* by Rebekka Kricheldorf at Théâtre de la Ville in Luxembourg in January 2016.

In 2017, Laura's first personal feature *Barrage*, co-written with Marie Nimier and starring Isabelle Huppert and Lolita Chammah, has its world premiere at the Forum section of the Berlinale. After travelling festivals worldwide and being released in many countries, the film gets chosen to represent Luxembourg at the Oscars 2018 for Best Foreign Film.

Maret is Laura's latest feature up to date.

Filmography

- 2008 *Senteurs*, short
- 2011 *Double saut*, short
- 2012 *The Treasure Knights, the Secret of Melusina*, feature
- 2017 *Barrage*, feature
- 2023 *Maret*, feature





“If it was possible to become free of negative emotions by a riskless implementation of an electrode - without impairing intelligence and the critical mind - I would be the first patient.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Society for Neuroscience Congress,
November 2005

INTERVIEW WITH SUSANNE WOLFF

Actress - Maret

by Duncan Roberts

Maret goes through a real emotional rollercoaster over the course of the film. Was this one of the aspects that attracted you to the role?

I would say yes, definitely. I do like lonesome characters, kind of impulsive or maybe also aggressive. And of course, the story itself, the aspect of memory loss, was very interesting to me...this search for your own lost life. And not least the chance to shoot a film abroad, on Lanzarote, was very charming.

Was there a collaborative process with Laura Schroeder in exploring the character of Maret, or was she already fully formed in the script?

The sound and colours of the character were already formed by Laura and [co-scriptwriter] Judith Angerbauer. But we spent a lot of time together talking about the character. Because Laura is a very open-minded director, and she had no problems with giving space to my interpretation. She respected my instinct, so to say. This is not very common to every director, but she was very generous.

There were things we had to discuss. Especially the relationship between Maret and Elias, which is based on a lot of discussion and thought. Because we realised that this encounter is maybe the heart of the story, her first realisation of who she might have been.

Maret out of necessity must place her faith in others, but also suffers from what may be restlessness. How difficult is it for her to trust friends and family and even strangers like Dr Moore?

I would say, first of all, it's part of her character not to trust people immediately. And I think that she forces herself to trust Dr Moore, because she's desperate. She feels nobody

understands her in Germany, and then she gets this call and realises maybe this might help. But I think after a very short time, she realises that that there's a gap between her and Dr Moore. And I think this gap is between the scientific interest of Dr Moore and the emotional despair of Maret.

The film highlights how crucial memories are to the way we relate to the world and others. But does memory loss really allow for a reinvention, as Dr Moore suggests it could for Maret, or is our personality so ingrained in our DNA that we cannot escape?

I think that is still a very interesting question in the world. We can't say what is aptitude and what is environment, and how much of each? I think this discussion is still going on. Even though you plant yourself 100% into a new life situation, you carry this longing for the unknown path in your body. Your body has its own memory history. That's what I think.

You are on screen for virtually the whole film, as you were in Styx, which must be a dream for an actor. But does that intensity also bring with it additional pressure?

To be honest, I have to say I love it. Because you have so much space, so many possibilities to show parts of your character. You are not in the stressful situation to show everything in one scene, or maybe three scenes. I love this kind of energy, because for me it relates to the theatre where I also had the opportunities to stay on stage from the beginning to the end.





SUSANNE WOLFF

Actress

Susanne Wolff began her theater career at the Thalia Theater Hamburg and moved to the Deutsches Theater Berlin in 2009, where she appeared in works by many important theater directors. She not only played the big female roles *Nora*, *Penthesilea*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Maria Stuart*, but also *Othello* and *Macbeth*.

In 1999 she was awarded the Boy-Gobert Prize of the Körber Foundation. In 2003 she received the 3sat Prize for her portrayal of *Nora*, and in 2006 the Rolf Mares Prize.

For her role in the film *Das Fremde in mir* by Emily Atef, she was awarded the German Cinema Talent Award in 2008 and Best Actress at the Sao Paolo International Film Festival. In 2013, she received the German Television Award for *Mobbing* by Nicole Weegmann. The series *Morgen hör ich auf* starring Bastian Pastewka and Susanne Wolff was awarded the Golden Camera in 2017. In 2019, Susanne Wolff received the German Film Award for Best Actress for her role in the refugee drama *STYX*, in addition to the Heiner Carow Award, the Günter Rohrbach Film Award and the Metropolis.

The film *Almost Home* with Susanne Wolff in the female lead has just been awarded the Student Oscar 2022 and has thus qualified for an Oscar nomination for Best Short Film.

Selected Credits

- 2008 *Das Fremde in mir* by Emily Atef
- 2011 *The Three Musketeers* by Paul W.S. Anderson
- 2011 *Fenster zum Sommer* by Henk Handloegten
- 2012 *Mobbing* by Nicole Weegmann
- 2016 *Morgen hör ich auf* series created by Martin Eigler, Sönke Lars Neuwöhner, Sven Poser
- 2016 *Hedda* by Andreas Kleinert
- 2017 *Return to Montauk* by Volker Schlöndorff
- 2018 *Styx* by Wolfgang Fischer
- 2019 *Bloody Marie* by Leenert Hillege & Guido van Driel
- 2022 *Geborgtes Weis* by Sebastian Ko
- 2023 *Sisi & I* by Frauke Finsterwalder
- 2023 *Maret* by Laura Schroeder

“Memories are overrated. They’re just fiction, pure fantasy. Just because everyone clutches at them like straws or thinks that memories are what defines them, doesn’t make them true.”

Dr Moore

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