

HEART EATING, *a requiem.*

An experimental short film by Barbara Millonig

AT 2014 | Experimental Short Film | 22:30 min | 16:9 | 1080 25p – HD | Color

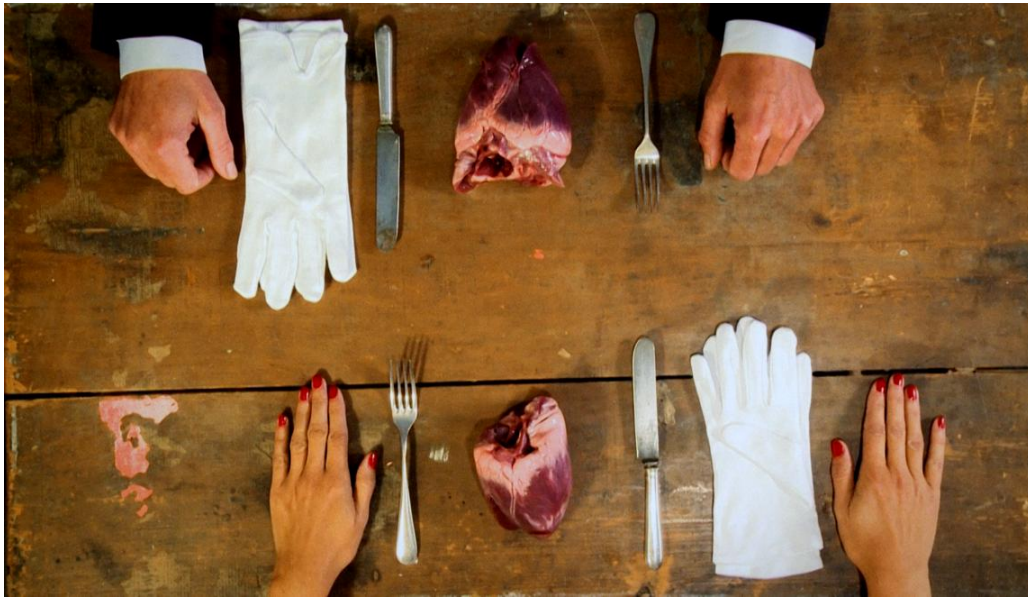
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HEART EATING, *a requiem*, IS A SPECIAL KIND OF LOVE STORY.

HEARTS ARE THE LEADING ACTORS.

PLACES OF ENCOUNTER: A TABLE AND A DREAM.

SUBJECT MATTER: UNFULFILLED LONGING. MASSACRE DE L'AMOUR. I WANT MY LIFE BACK,  
„EVERTHING INCLUDED, PLEASE”!

## SYNOPSIS

HEART EATING stages the struggle for a balanced relationship between Eros and Thanatos, between female and male principles, between women and men.

Touching, and with a myriad of universal symbols!

They are sitting at a table, celebrating giving and taking. Both of them engage in heart-related actions. SHE gives her heart away, one piece after another, until almost nothing is left. HE stuffs his heart and refuses to reciprocate with any of his.

SHE initiates change, leaves her familiar and limited space behind, takes her heart and pain into her own hands and seeks her female dignity. HE, on the other hand, keeps destroying hearts with a vengeance.

Can SHE send out a signal that will reach his heart, so that HE decides to stop?



## EXPLANATORY TEXT

"The heart is unique among human organs in that it embodies both physical and psychological states. It has become not only the most frequently used symbol, but also the sanctuary for personal and moral qualities, and it epitomises being human," writes Ole Martin Høystad in his 2006 study *A Cultural History of the Heart*.

(*Kulturgeschichte des Herzens: Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* [A Cultural History of the Heart: From Antiquity to the Present Day], Böhlau Verlag, Cologne 2006.)

The heart is an especially powerful symbol when viewed against the backdrop of the alarming degree of heartlessness in our world. At first glance, heartlessness appears to be concentrated in the places where war, power, capital, rivalry and ideology reside and are fiercely defended, namely in the hands of men. The question then arises: "So why don't women, who account for half the world's population, take an uncompromising and strong stance against this?"

HEART EATING, *a requiem*, addresses this subject matter through symbolism. The film presents various gender-specific aspects of heartlessness towards oneself and others, in light of the way male and female principles work inside us, and asks whether there are any solutions. Eschewing the use of dialogue, the film stages a series of images aimed at the audience's soul and communicates with them independently of linguistic context.

Both sexes suffer as a result of injured dignity and integrity, which is the origin and starting point for all heartless actions. But there are major differences in the way hurt feelings are processed and how they manifest themselves. HEART EATING, *a requiem*, pinpoints some of the essential principles of these highly complex issues and brings them to life through the four protagonists and their actions:

- womankind, wounded having been robbed of its power;
- mankind, wounded having forfeited its heart;
- the creative power of inspiration;
- and the power of ideology, which places constraints on the spirit.

Arranged in opposite-sex pairs, the protagonists represent generally valid principles which work inside all of us, independently of gender and shaped by socially predefined rules handed down from one generation to the next.

But why do we as humans constantly engender heartlessness, instead of drawing on the potential of love?

### **ANSWERS AND MESSAGES**

The socialization of men has caused them to fend off, despise and ostracize female elements from their psyche. Men refuse to acknowledge the feminine inside themselves, interpreting it as weakness, neediness or loss of control and thus they transfer their contempt onto womankind and women.

The socialization of women has caused them to suppress the male elements in their psyche. Afraid of their own strengths, they idealize and support, yet also fear and fight against, these elements in men. But when they act like men, they, at the same time, unconsciously identify with the inherent contempt for women.

These inner dispositions and gender-specific constraints on outward scope for action necessarily lead to two different ways of processing aggression: women tend towards resignation, men towards destruction. Women often direct their aggression inwards upon themselves, while men direct it at others. Women need space to develop and achieve greatness. Men require boundaries that force them to moderate their behavior and cause them to treat others humanely.

The core thesis of the film is that both men and women must be willing to take responsibility:

**"women must locate their strength  
and men their hearts!"**





## PERSONIFICATION OF FEMALE AND MALE PRINCIPLES

**Woman on carpet:** Personification of the female principle, characterized by access to feelings and the need to connect.

**Man in courtyard:** Personification of the masculine principle, characterized by the ability to act and the need to separate what strives to be connected.

**Man at piano:** Embodiment of a male spiritual principle. Inspiration increases scope for thought and action and allows the soul to express itself.

**Woman in courtyard:** Personification of a feminine spiritual principle. Ideology places constraints on scope for thought and action, and tries to force diverse aspects of life into forms bound by preconceptions and ideals.

**Woman in red dress:** Embodiment of the feminine, which can set an example by powerfully and independently taking command of its dignity.



## USE OF SYMBOLISM

**Table:** Symbolizes giving, taking and sharing. Symbol of encounter and communication.

**Dream:** In the visionary, visual world of the dream, coupled to the soul's unconscious reservoir of images and solutions, the journey is revealed which the woman on the carpet and the man in the courtyard must take before they can reach their own and their counterpart's heart.

**Eggs and milk:** Symbols of female fertility.

**Heart placed around the neck like a necklace:** Symbolizes taking responsibility for matters of the heart.

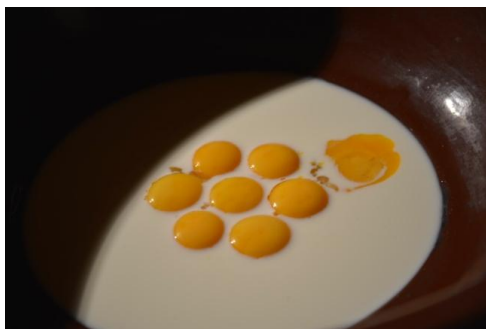
**Mirror:** Symbolizes willingness to perceive and define oneself.

**Chopping block and cleaver:** Symbolizes the destructive power of male energy.

**Red powdered clay:** Symbolizes the Incarnation. There are also associations with the story of the Creation in the Book of Genesis in the Bible, in which God creates man from the dust of the ground.

**Intermingling pieces of heart with milk, egg yolks and powdered clay:** Integration of the feminine into the masculine. Expresses the will to take responsibility for the devastation and also clean up the battlefield.

**Forming of a heart:** Symbolizes the "act of Incarnation" through emotive heart-related actions.



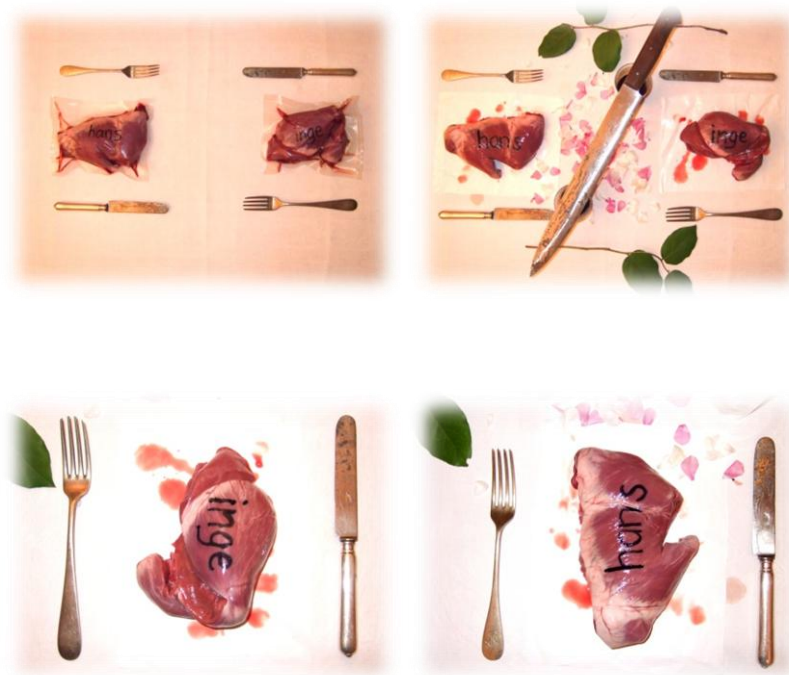
## REASONS FOR TACKLING THE THEME OF LOVE AND HEARTLESSNESS

- **That which is wounded will wound in return!**
- Ongoing horror about humans' inability to act humanely
- 25 years of experience in psychology, psychotherapy and coaching; expert in integration
- Insight into how heartlessness functions, initially against oneself, then against others and the world in general
- Insight into how healing takes place

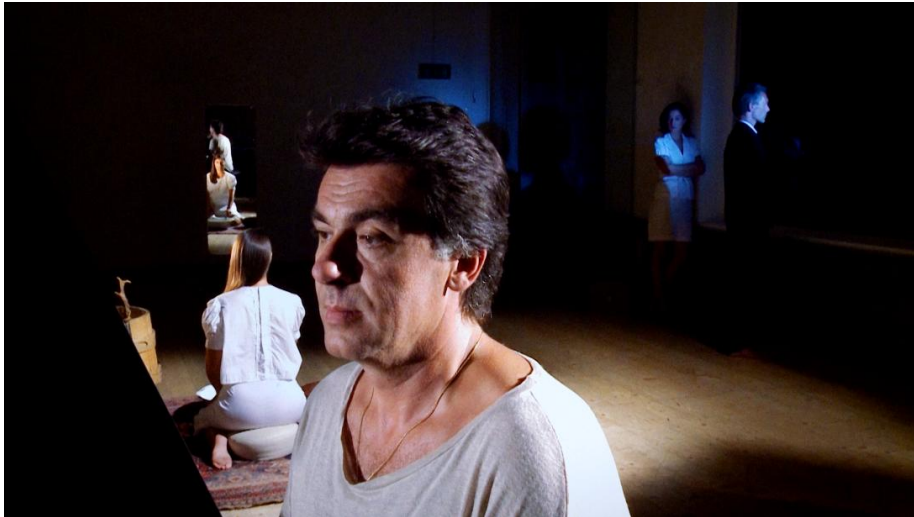
## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Theoretical analysis regarding the construction of femininity.

2008 photo series and performance cookery entitled 'Ragout of Heart', inspired by the works of Jessica Benjamin, Marina Abramović and Ingeborg Bachmann.



HEART EATING, *a requiem* is the next stage of that project. Dedicated to the theme of love and heartlessness, it will be the first part of a trilogy.



## CAST

female hands at the table	
woman on carpet, woman in red dress	KARIN FRANK
male hands at the table	
man by the window, man in courtyard	CHRISTOPH GOTTLIEB HESZLER
woman by the window	
woman in courtyard	SOPHIE POLLAK
man at piano	ALEKSANDAR PANDILOVSKI

**Karin Frank** is a Vienna-based actress and lawyer. Her credits include: a TV series; various theatrical productions; cast member of *theater privat* independent theater group.

**Christoph Gottlieb Heszler** is a musician and former sound technician. He is a committed vegetarian who refuses to eat meat out of respect for the lives of other creatures. After reading the *HEART EATING, a requiem* screenplay, his comment was: "strong stuff". He accepted the male lead nonetheless, despite the hearts and because he welcomes the film's message.

**Sophie Pollak** is the owner of the WE BANDITS fashion store in Vienna, which offers unusual brands with an emphasis on quality and sustainability in production.

**Aleksandar Pandilovski** is a musician and composer.



## CREW

director, producer, screenplay	BARBARA MILLONIG
director of photography, editor	
post-production	STEFAN PETERS
music („Requiem for Hearts“)	ALEKSANDAR PANDILOVSKI
sound design & mixing	GEORG O. LUKSCH
hair, make up	VERNA RABL / TATENDRANG
costume design	WE BANDITS fashion store (Vienna)
color grading	DANIEL HOLLERWEGER
1st. AD, sound, lighting-assistant	NORA MIKSCH
2nd. AD, props	SEBAHAT KAYAN
production assistants	CRISTINA IOANA OLTEAN, EDITH MURLASITS
making of	CRISTINA IOANA OLTEAN, FATMA GHORBELI
	CHRISTOPH GOTTLIEB HESZLER, STEFAN PETERS
dolly grip	ZETH KRAGHOLM EDWARDSSEN
driver	DERRYL
digital effects	MARKUS RINGBAUER, ERIKA EISENHUT
press photography	KLAUS PICHLER
graphic design	IDENTUM Agency for Brand Charisma
film consulting	JENNY GAND / nachtfilm
English translation of press release	AUSTRIA SPRACHENDIENST INTERNATIONAL

### **Barbara Millonig (Director; Producer; Screenplay)**

Born in Villach, Austria in 1959, Barbara Millonig has a background in psychology, psychotherapy, communications, coaching, and personal development. After obtaining a qualification in cultural management, she decided to channel her experiences, findings and insights into creative output. The experimental short film HEART EATING, *a requiem*, is her first film.

### **Stefan Peters (Director of Photography; Editor; Post-Production)**

Born in 1967 in Vienna, Stefan Peters studied communications and education at the University of Vienna. His first appearance in front of the camera was at the age of three; he has worked behind the camera since the age of eighteen. He is also a coach, and he completed his first novel in 2014.

### **Aleksandar Pandilovski (Soundtrack Composer)**

Born in 1967 in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, Aleksandar Pandilovski studied music at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje before moving to Vienna in 1989. A musician and composer, he is involved in various musical projects in Austria and abroad.

## COMMENTARY

by Stefan Peters (director of photography, editing, post-production)



### About working on the film:

"Working on HEART EATING was something I really wanted to do. I was very impressed by the director's ideas and approach, and there was good chemistry, which is probably as important as anything. After long, intensive days of filming the mood on set was always positive, which says a lot. I've rarely experienced such a spirit of cooperation and so few egos. Barbara managed to get the best out of everyone. Hats off to her for that!

Post-production was a long walk over stony ground, as usual."

### About the film:

"HEART EATING paraphrases the way men and women are foreign to each other. Both lack the necessary words, yet they share the common ground of heartfelt pain. The film externalizes the processes of giving and refusing, wounding and healing.

In this 20-minute experimental film, Barbara Millonig presents the battle of the sexes in the form of open-heart surgery. The film is distressing and sensory, reserved at times, and the protagonists attract and repel each other as though in a *tableau vivant*. At the end one is left with the terse realisation that 'a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do'".

## SPONSORS

Heartfelt thanks to the sponsors of HEART EATING, *a requiem*, without whose support we would not have been able to achieve such a high level of professionalism and quality.



## FUNDING

- Cultural Department of the City of Vienna (MA7) New Media, Film
- Office of the Carinthian Government, Dept. 6, Competence Center for Education, Culture and Generations

