

 Locarno Festival
Official selection

Produced by
NEON REALISM

ACID FOREST

(ORIG. RŪGŠTUS MIŠKAS)

Creative Documentary by RUGILĖ BARZDŽIUKAITĖ
Realization in collaboration with DOVYDAS KORBA

2018 / Lithuania / 63 min

PRESS KIT

Film supported by:





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LOGLINE

Can you imagine a tourist attraction where people come to see a dead forest? Where they are not only observers, but also the ones being observed and heard by the black birds?



SYNOPSIS

Tourists from different countries come to see the dead forest, inhabited by the black birds. The forest recalls a nuclear fallout for some of the visitors, while others relate it to Hitchcock's *The Birds*. We see the tourists from the cormorants' perspective, where they look like a curious species exploring the strange landscape.

Gradually, a peculiar story is revealed: there used to be an ancient pine forest, but then several cormorants landed there. Now there are thousands of the birds and they kill the pine trees by...shitting. The human observations and responses to this environment are as multi-layered and bizarre as the history of the forest itself.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The film is set in the Curonian Spit, which is a very scenic peninsula in Lithuania, edged by the Baltic sea from one side, and the lagoon from the other. It is a UNESCO heritage site, rich in natural resources and high-end beach resorts. For many people, the cormorant colony is a black spot in a heavenly setting.

What was your personal motivations for making this film?

The controversial context of the cormorant colony intrigued me as a space for anthropological-philosophical research. Cormorants are the ones who don't appear to fit the established order. Yet, the impact of these creatures is very ambivalent. On the one hand, they are deadly harmful to one species, but very valuable to another. However, humans feel a duty not only to comment on, but also to control the environment.

How would you describe the genre of *Acid Forest*?

The film takes place in nature, however filmmaking methods are completely opposite than those, used in wildlife documentary, as the main species that we investigate is the human species. We install cameras in the trees to observe humans through the birds' perspective. That's how the usual interspecies hierarchy of cinematographic gaze is reorganised.

How long did it take to make this film?

It took us 3 springs to shoot this documentary, as the dramaturgy required very particular season. The editing process was taking place in parallel, so the film was growing in a very natural way, reacting to the expanding needs of the narrative.

What was your method for making a sense out of all the material?

While editing *Acid Forest*, I had to go through hundreds of hours of footage. Apart from the main storyline, I kept my focus on playful dialogues, illustrating how a range of political questions, historical narratives, migration vectors and cinematic experiences intervene into the human projections of nature. I hope it helped an environmental paradox of *Acid Forest* to become a metaphor for a surreal world that we are living in.



DIRECTOR'S BIO

Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė (b. 1983) works as filmmaker and theatre director, based in Lithuania. She completed her MA in Screen Documentary at Goldsmiths, London (2013), BA in Cinematography (2006) and Theatre directing (2008) in Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. In her creative works, Rugilė explores the gap between objective and imagined realities, while challenging an anthropocentric way of thinking in a playful way. Prior to *Acid Forest*, Rugilė has directed four short films and two contemporary operas (*Have a Good Day!* and *Sun and Sea*), which brought 6 prestigious awards for the creative team and are still touring around the world. Rugilė is one of the three artists who will represent Lithuania for the Venice Biennale of Art in 2019.



PRODUCER'S BIO

Dovydas Korba (b. 1984) completed a BA programme in film production at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2007 and continued his MA studies of Photography and Media Art at Vilnius Academy of Arts and the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Dovydas combines producing with his other practice in contemporary art field. Dovydas is co-founder and producer of film production company *NEON REALISM* (formerly, *A LAUKAS*).

NEON REALISM

PRODUCTION COMPANY BIO

NEON REALISM (formerly, *A LAUKAS*) is a base for creating author-driven documentaries as well as fiction films and live art projects. The creative documentary *Acid Forest* has a world premiere in Locarno Film Festival this year. Another recent production of *NEON REALISM* is the opera *Sun and Sea*, which will represent Lithuania in the Venice Biennale, 2019.

CREDITS

Director, cinematographer, editor
RUGILĖ BARZDŽIUKAITĖ

Producer, sound director
DOVYDAS KORBA

Sound mixer
JONAS MAKSVYTIS

Colour grading
JONAS SUNKLODAS

Animator
VYTAUTAS KAZLAUSKAS

Postproduction coordinator
AUSTĖJA GAPUTYTĖ

Image postproduction services
MADSTONE

Foley recording
JACEK WIŚNIEWSKI
FILIP STEFANOWSKI

Foley editing
ALICJA NOWAK
FILIP KRZYŻYKOWSKI

Foley services
COBBLESTONE

Technical assistance
TOMAS AMINOVAS
GINTARĖ BUTKIENĖ
GABRIELĖ BURBAITĖ
GEDIMINAS DARGUŽAS
VACLOVAS GEDVILAS
SAULIUS GUDAS
AIVARAS KASPERAVIČIUS
DONATAS RAVAITIS
DAINIUS VERŠULIS

Translators
RAMINTA BARZDŽIUKIENĖ
GABRIELĖ BURBAITĖ
JUSTINA DAUNORIENĖ
LINAS DIDVALIS
VINCENT DU
JULIETTE JOFFE
LUIN LAM
IRMA NORBUTAITĖ-ANDRAŠIŪNIENĖ
ELLE SEPP
ASTA ŽUKLYTĖ

English proofreader
YATES NORTON

Graphic designer
JURGIS GRIŠKEVIČIUS

Public relations
LINA VAITIEKŪNAITĖ
JOGINTĖ BUČINSKAITĖ

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NEON REALISM / A LAUKAS

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