



# bluish



A film by

Lilith Kraxner & Milena Czernovsky



Logline

*bluish* describes an atmosphere of ambiguity, a feeling, a fragile state of being.

Short Synopsis

Errol and Sasha, two somewhat disoriented characters in their twenties, are each aimlessly drifting through a city's gloomy winter days. Whilst casting a soft gaze on fragments of their everyday lives, people, stories, places and realities start to overlap and intertwine. *bluish* describes a fragile state of being, a condition or rather an atmosphere of ambiguity and longing.

Technical Data

LENGTH 83 min  
PICTURE Color 1.33:1  
SHOOTING FORMAT Super16  
SCREENING COPY DCP  
SOUND 5.1  
ORIGINAL LANGUAGES English, German, Russian  
SUBTITLES AVAILABLE English, German  
YEAR OF PRODUCTION 2024  
COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION Austria  
WORLD PREMIERE FIDMarseille (2024)

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In *bluish* we want to grasp a momentary condition, a state of being, an atmosphere we sensed in our surroundings and maybe even amongst our generation. In an attempt to capture these notions of uncertainty and ambiguity and translate them onto screen, we collected small and big moments of the everyday embodied by our two protagonists.

As we follow them, each aimlessly drifting through a city, driven by the desire as well as the fear for the unknown, we reflect upon anxieties, insecurities, longings and constructions of identities.

Embedding our protagonists' search movements as well as their questioning of meaning and belonging into the spatial and social structures of a city, it was soon clear to us that we also wanted to tell about further worlds interlaced into their daily lives. Stories within stories, that are woven into our narrative such as: computer games, stage performances, dreams, or meditations. Worlds and spheres inhabiting the possibilities of an undefined more, of altered imaginations and conditions of being. In order to create these sequences we collaborated with a number of artists that contributed their works and worlds to our film, collectively creating layers of expanded realities, experienced by our protagonists as well as our audience.

What does it mean to inhabit a body, a city, a space? How does the ongoing process of becoming and longing manifest in the everyday? *bluish* casts a soft gaze on small moments, gestures and shifts of realities whilst creating networks of connectedness and alienation.



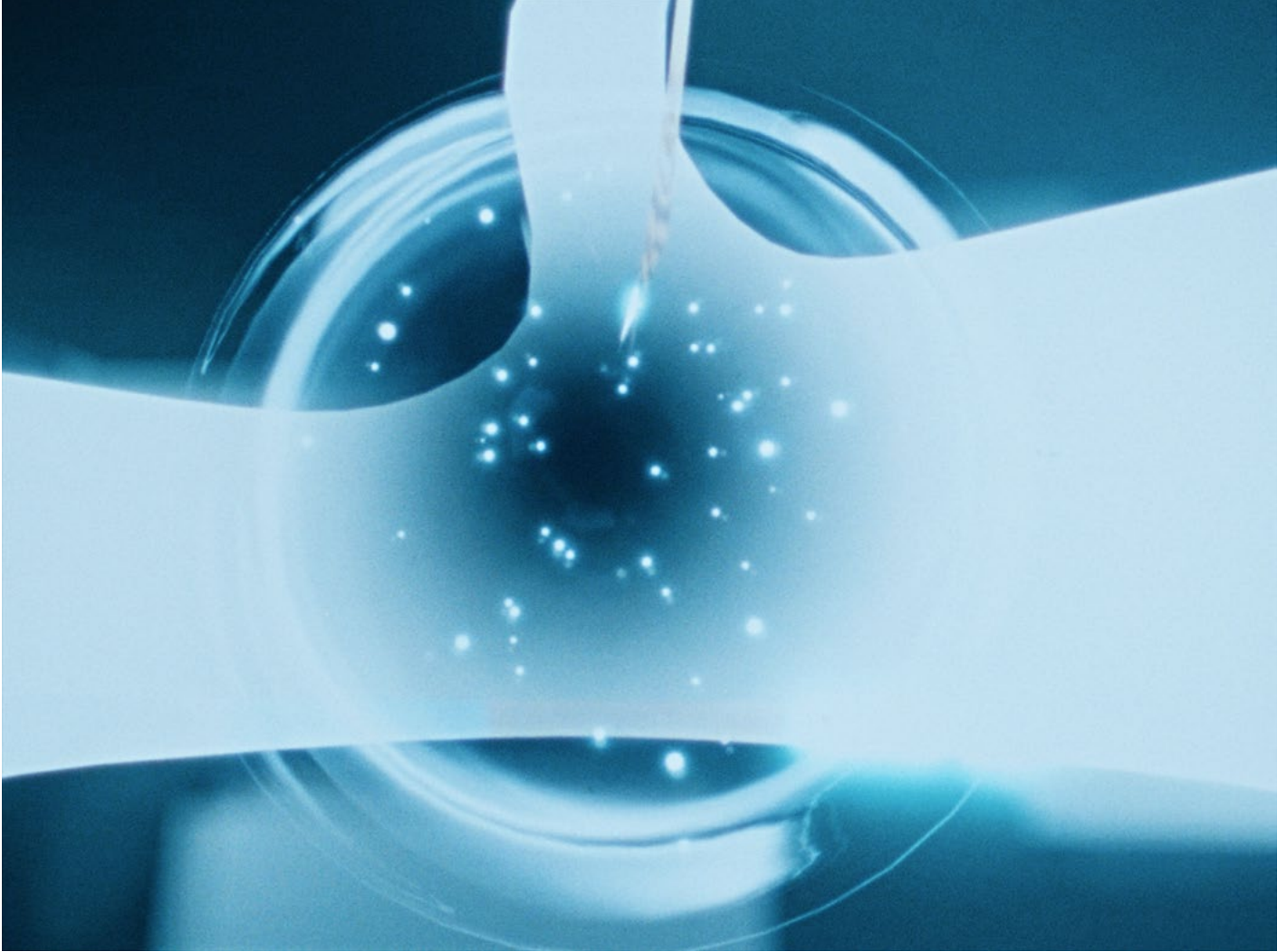
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Short Biographies

Lilith Kraxner (\*1995, Austria) lives and works in Vienna. After attending the Friedl Kubelka School for Independent Film, she is currently studying video and video installation at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

Milena Czernovsky (\*1993, Austria) has studied scenography at University of Applied Arts Vienna. Her works oscillate between stage and set design, installation and film.

After several collaborations, the duo celebrated the premiere of their feature film debut *BEATRIX* in 2021 at FIDMarseille.



Interview

## Savina Petkova in conversation with Milena Czernovsky and Lilith Kraxner

The title *bluish* fits the film perfectly. Can you tell me the story behind the name?

LK The title came very late, we had almost finished editing...

MC We decided on *bluish* because for us, it describes an atmosphere. Like something in between, it's more a feeling, a state of being, rather than anything else...

LK During the editing I was reading "Bluets" by Maggie Nelson, which in some sense I connected to our film.

MC So we started thinking a lot about the color blue, which was already visually very present in our film. And as we were collaborating with the band Les Reines Prochaines [the three-women-band we see at the beginning], who told us that they are always dreaming the titles of their songs, we thought that the title should appear in our dreams. And that's what happened, I dreamed that we would name our film *bluish*.

But how does one make an atmospheric film? How do you collaborate in order to transpose feelings onto images and sound so well?

LK Our working process involves a lot of talking about situations. When we started writing, it was 2022, a post-COVID-lockdown period. At the time, we were both often experiencing awkward situations and interactions with people, so we just exchanged stories about how life feels at the moment to us. From then on, it's more like piecing small pieces of a puzzle together. We never start writing from a 'narrative' perspective, but more from gathering moments before we see how it all can fit together. With *bluish*, our script was quite different compared to the finished version of the

film. The editing process was really challenging for us, because the film didn't work out the way we wrote it. Time felt too linear and, in the end, the solution was to cut the whole narration into pieces and give it a new order.

Time, as chronology seems to be less important than daily time and artistic time, the time of the performance and the creation of art. So maybe you can talk about these different times, and how they come together in the film.

MC We were interested in creating different layers within the film: that you can live and experience things in everyday situations, but also other worlds that are woven into our everyday, stories within stories. So we collaborated with a number of artists and collectives to offer space and time gaps within our film, for them to expand our perspective through their contribution... We also wanted to play with the role of spectatorship: the audience may expect to stay a cinema audience, but then becomes an audience to a performance, a game, or unexpectedly attends a meditation.

LK I also think the two of us are very much drawn to tell stories of the everyday, but also we 'secretly' love drama. So using different layers was a tool to stage emotional peaks, marked by sound, whilst still representing them in a kind of realistic way. For example, the performance by ZAK stays a performance within the plot which gives the audience a possibility to question their own understanding of reality.

And I'm very curious, because you said a lot of the film came together in the edits. What was the shooting process like?

LK We shot the film on 19 days on location in Vienna with a very small and wonderful team. The process of shooting was very concentrated and we mostly followed our script. The original structure was that we had these two characters [Errol and Sasha], we followed one character for the first part of the film, until she sells a plant to the second character and we start following her instead. But in the edit that didn't work out so well for us... We used a lot of the footage as it was, though, but we brought it in relation to other scenes.

MC And by doing so, the meaning of some things just changed and the scenes influenced each other in new and exciting ways.

LK We ended up realizing that breaking the linearity of time, only added to the atmosphere we were trying to convey. As Milena says, creating new cross-references and relations between scenes turned out to be very fruitful and exciting.

How important is the city setting, in this case?

MC It was very important for the film to be set in the city, as we were very interested in the overlaps of people, places and realities and the coincidences that can happen in a city.

LK Since we wanted to make a winter film, we also talked about how it feels like to be moving through a city, in winter. The journeys feel much longer and often you'd feel kind of stuck. At the end of the film we have this barely noticeable jump in time, that brings us to summer, where some things may have loosened up, but in a way everything is also still the same, after all we can only guess...

Your protagonists are in their 20s, but does that make the film a Gen Z portrait? *bluish* looks, sounds, and feels much more contemplative than the aesthetics we usually associate with Gen Z.

LK We did talk about our generation, the tinder dates, zoom meetings, studying online, and all these things we've experienced in the past years, even though it was never our intention to make a Gen Z movie. But we realized that it can be perceived as such. Nonetheless, I think those experiences are not particular to our generation, but rather something that a large part of society goes through these times. For me it relates much more to an idea of nowness.

MC We actually don't want to put the film in a box, but we are very open to different ways of reading it and we understand the urge to frame it in a way, as labels can sometimes be helpful. The film intentionally plays with ambiguities, so we are

aware that it can be hard to grasp. That was also what we were trying to depict, when choosing a name that embodies a state of inbetween.

Can you walk me through your collaborative process as well as the creating of your visual style ?

MC Our collaborations are based on friendship. We have known each other for a very long time, the two of us, our cinematographer Antonia de la Luz Kašik, as well as our assistant director and creative consultant Lara Bellon. So we are four very close friends and we really do trust each other. We enjoy talking about our ideas and this time, everyone was involved very early on in the process. Lilith and I did all of the writing together, gathering all these situations, talking a lot about experiences and also observations of our surroundings, and then we tried to develop a character that could embody this feeling we wanted to convey. During the writing process, we got to know Natasha, our second protagonist, and we really wanted to work with her, so we created a character that's based on her.

LK About the visual concept – Our first film *BEATRIX* was also shot in the same constellation of people, a very small team, but it was just one location (our house back then). For *bluish*, we were eager to evoke a feeling of movement, our protagonists should be moving through places, even if it was a winter film. We talked it through with Antonia, saying that we wanted to use only a few images to create one scene, to try to fit everything in one take, to have no unnecessary images, no editing back and forth to show the details of a scene. There is a frame and there is always something happening outside of the frame, and that's okay. You don't have to explain everything to the audience.

MC It is somehow funny that there is actually almost no camera movement, whilst movement itself is in a way central to the film.

Did you have a mood board for *bluish*? Or did you rely more on conversations than images and references?

MC We had something like a mood board, where we collected colors, surfaces, and materialities, but it was more like talking about feelings we wanted to evoke through the images. Working with Antonia, we knew that we wanted to continue using the visual language we had already developed with our previous film *BEATRIX*.

LK As we shot on 16mm film, it was important to us, to situate the film in the here and now, to not make it look timeless. That's why we intentionally decided to include, rather than to spare out screens and everyday technologies, to preserve a feeling of contemporariness.

What about the actors and performers in the film, how did you communicate the tone and mood you wanted to achieve?

LK It was different with every person who took part in this film, most of them were artists and performers.

MC There were some with acting experience, but none were professional actors. We had a casting process for some, and others we invited for a particular part. We adapted the script in relation to the cast, tried to integrate them in the process of developing the character so they could improvise and react intuitively.

LK For us, directing is mostly about creating a framework and holding space for things to happen and then we work with how each person reacts within that framework.

## Djamila Grandits on *bluish*

Drifting through gloomy winter days, craving for touch, attempting to make sense of what is around, bodies slip through non spaces and grey cityscapes. Like knots in a network the intersections of parallel lives and perceptions become points of reference. Liminal states of being, spaces and layers of entanglements allow for small moments of collectivity and togetherness. A film like a mapping of a city and some of its dwellers in all their ambiguities. Ambiguities structuring a being in between. Moving whilst falling into it, falling apart, falling into place. Time bends and expands, as possible futurities and unspoken pasts are ever present.

Framed with generous precision and patience, offering space and guidance to closely observe minor movements and tactile shifts in materialities, we feel skins, waters, plant leaves, screens and concrete open up into vast spaces.

Bodies carrying themselves through cityscapes. Floating on the edge of a pool, contemplating over food, craving for soft touch and observing subjects of interest. Performative stagings of function and self, frequenting spaces structured by the social whilst feeling a dissonance complicating connection. Navigating transitions into new spaces, trying to understand what it means to arrive, deciphering codes and infrastructures, craving for connectivities whilst setting little anchors of stability and inscribing their own tones and choreographies into ever new environments. Latent tensions find temporary release in letting loose, feeling wind on skin or submerging into water. Screens - always close by, serve as protection and devices to connect, to search, to lose, to initiate, serve as technologies of movement and touch.

At times the everyday is swiftly ruptured by interventions opening space for the collaborative, when screens for the imaginaries of the larger collective serve as wormholes, warning us not to trust the linearity of time. Katrina Daschner's deep sea jellyfish remind us of queer oceanities and hydro feminist utopias, "Perlenmeere" that in their fluidity and sensuality counter the heavy empty screen carried through the rigid non-place of a mall. A mall that Rebecca Merlic translates into a digital deep space, a glitchy rendering of a memory, an architecture to inhabit, a portal to escape to somewhere, for glitch bodies to occupy. Wise and witty in their royalty, Les Reines Prochaines glamorously set the tone for this film negotiating ambiguous states and scales of being, while never leaving our side. The auratic and dense performance by ZAK - underscored with a heart-wrenching hit by Lau Lukkarila and Benedikt Palier - amplifies a peak to evoke tears on and off screen, and when their voice asks us from the off to feel our toes wiggling in the wind while having us meditate over a pitch black screen we literally start to move in other fictions.

*bluish* operates on multiple strata, whereas one layer is structured by the logistics of navigating day to day life; bus rides, organizational burdens, snacks, negotiations of frame, others hint towards deeper realms of knowing and being, realms hard to control in their accessibility, sometimes overwhelmingly present, sometimes hard to grasp.

Spheres start to merge, to morph; when mothering a bunch of babykittens and hatching eggs in bags, when discussing invisible art, initiating impossible phone calls and leaning on unknown people, whilst continuous unexpected encounters with the queens become part of the daily.

Skillfully balancing unspoken edges of blue; adjusting and becoming, arriving and staying, drifting through unknown and familiar waters, ever accompanied by an awkwardness, as we get a lingering that something is off, something is blurry, something is glitch.

Choreographies structuring the ish, the maybe, the not yet, the hardly, the has been, the might be, and all the underestimated imaginaries, realms and waters that come along with this vast state of bluishness.





Cast

Leonie Bramberger  
Natasha Goncharova

Aurelia van Kempen  
Ava Binta Giallo  
Desi Bonato  
Djamila Grandits  
Dorit Margreiter  
Edith Grandits  
Enzo Rupp  
Eva Sommer  
Fränzi Madörin  
Guilherme Maggessi  
İklım Doğan

Jessica Comis  
June Chung  
Lau Lukkarila  
Laura Stampfer  
Lea Rupp  
Lens Kühleitner  
Mathea Hoffmann  
Mathis Sus Zwick  
Mel Berger  
Muda  
Vadim Kostrov



#### Featured Works

##### GLITCHBODIES

© 2022, video game by Rebecca Merlic  
sound by Manuel Riegler, 3D scan and implementation  
of Leonie Bramberger by Rebecca Merlic

##### PERLENMEERE

© 2016, film by Katrina Daschner, Lady Chutney  
Production

##### MEDITATION

© 2023, text by Lilith Kraxner & Milena Czernovsky  
spoken by Lau Lukkarila

##### UFO | ULTRA FETT ORIGINAL

© 2022, performance by ZAK - Aurelia van Kempen,  
Desi Bonato, Eva Sommer, Jessica Comis

#### Music

##### BIST DU KLEIN, BIST DU GROSS

© 1990 Les Reines Prochaines - Pipilotti Rist,  
Fränzi Madörin, Muda Mathis, Regina Florida Schmid,  
Teresa Alonso  
neu interpretiert © 2023 Les Reines Prochaines -  
Fränzi Madörin, Muda Mathis, Sus Zwick

##### SASHA'S DANCE

Natasha Goncharova & Benedikt Palier  
Yamaha PSRE413 was used to create this music piece

##### NIEMAND

composed, produced, written & song by Pascal  
ARBEZ-NICOLAS & Rebeka Warrior  
performed by Kompromat  
© Universal Music Publishing / Strictly Confidential  
France / CTZ Publishing  
courtesy of Universal Music Publishing Austria GmbH /  
Concord Music GmbH, Berlin  
© Clivage Music, 2019

##### LOVE FOR PARADOX (LAMENTO)

© 2024 Benedikt Palier  
Lyrics, melody and vocals by Lau Lukkarila  
Music and mix by Benedikt Palier  
Choir by Benedikt Palier, Lilith Kraxner, Milena Czernovsky

bluish



## Crew

### A FILM BY

Lilith Kraxner &  
Milena Czernovsky  
Lara Bellon

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & CREATIVE CONSULTANT

Antonia de la Luz Kašik

### CINEMATOGRAPHY

Paula Tschira

### ASSISTANT CAMERA

Benedikt Palier

### SOUND & MUSIC

Chuqi Lu

### ADDITIONAL SOUND

Nora Czamler

### ASSISTANT SOUND

Moritz Nahold

### SOUND MIX

Nora Czamler

### ART DEPARTMENT

Menura Film

Hanga Balla

Pauline Stephan

Mel Berger

### SCRIPT CONSULTANT

### & SET MANAGER

Tizza Covi

### DRAMATURGICAL CONSULTANT

Hannes Böck

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANT

### & OUTSIDE EYE

### SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Sarah Hichri

### PRODUCERS

Lixi Frank

David Bohun

Camille Chanel

Flora Mair

Saskia Arth

Jonas Schwaiger

David Einwaller

Augustus Color

Alessandro Pelliccia

Albina Agliullina

Stefania Schenk Vitale

Helen Parks

Richi Wagner

### JUNIOR PRODUCER

### PRODUCTION MANAGER

### UNIT MANAGER

### INTERN

### GRAPHIC DESIGN & TYPOGRAPHY

### FILM LAB

### COLOR GRADING

### TRANSLATION RUSSIAN

### SUBTITLES

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