

Garagefilm International PRESENTS



# a sweetness from nowhere

A FILM BY Ester Bergsmark

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: MIKAEL JÄGERSON, EDITOR: ESTER BERGSMARK, COSTUME DESIGNER: ISABELLA KARLSTRÖM, ANNA ERIKSSON, MARION FOUR, COMPOSER: ELIN PEEL, SOUND DESIGNER: CAROLINA JONSSON, MARIKA FÖRSTEN, HEATHERS: MIKAEL HÅKON LARSSON, PRODUCTION DESIGNER: CLARA SKANSSON, LOCATIONS: ESTER BERGSMARK, ERIK ANNERSSON, FRANKSÅ SVENSSON, MUSIC BY: ERIK & HEATHERS, CO-PRODUCERS: PARALITTE BELLISSTAM, KRISTINA COLLANDER, KRISTINA BERGSSON, ELISA FERNANDA POKR, CATHERINE FRÉZIER PERSSON, EXECUTIVE CO-PRODUCERS: ANNE MARIE SÖRHAN, TERMELEN, JENNY LUNDQVISTEN, ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS: OJA LINDQVIST, MARIKA HANDELZ SMÅ, BRYNHILD PÅRHANSSDÖTTIR, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: MIKAM ÖPÅNG, PRODUCERS: ANNA MARIA KANTORUS, SCREENPLAY BY: ESTER BERGSMARK, DIRECTED BY: ESTER BERGSMARK, PRODUCED BY: GARAGEFILM INTERNATIONAL, IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH SVT FILM STOCKHOLM, FILM I VÄST, AND WITH GARAGEFILM'S CO-PRODUCERS: SIBER FILMS, ARKTIK FILM NORGE INVEST, WITH PRODUCTION SUPPORT FROM THE SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE (FILMCONSULTANT ANNAK EYDLOSSELL), THE NORWEGIAN FILM INSTITUTE (FILMCONSULTANT ANNA LUNDMARK), WITH SUPPORT FROM NORRISK FILM & TV FOND, CREATIVE EUROPE MEDIA, THE SWEDISH ARTS GRANTS COMMITTEE, FRÖTT BOD FOUNDATION

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## Synopsis

When there's no other way out, play dead – a tactic we share with jellyfish.

In 2011 in Berlin, a haunting shout triggers a journey of survival.

At the heart of the film is a story of lust, of finding your way back to life after being stuck in a frozen state. Through fantasy, the body, and unexpected connections between time, nature, and healing, the film unfolds.

It is a joyful exploration and curious search, woven with three main threads: documentary essay, poetic facts, and evocative fable.



## director's note

This film is about the human pulse that keeps so many transgender people alive today — and about its strange resonances with the non-human.

It moves across timescales much longer than the everyday. It lingers with the contemplation of death, asking us to imagine, if only partially, the vastness of time and space that surrounds a life, and that also surrounds this very moment of experience.

When you have been excluded from the category of “human”, when your belonging is pushed behind your species and beyond this era of hate, joy and desire can still be found in the midst of darkness. The film listens for those moments: flashes of sweetness that emerge where they are not supposed to exist.

Life bites back. A force moves through everything like sap — running, sticky, connective. A living tissue that binds what appears separate. Places and times begin to touch one another; distinct entities brush up against each other in a kind of cosmic intimacy.

I want to recover forms of dissociation from the language of psychiatry. I want to resist its framing as only deficit or damage and instead ask how this disability might also be enabling — how it can become a method for sensing, for knowing, for discovering things about the world that remain inaccessible through normative perception.

I am trying to make a tactile, sensory film. Many of us who are trans have disconnected from our bodies in order to survive. This film is an invitation to be with the body, and to imagine figures beyond the trans woman defined primarily by threat and violence. The film also proposes a way of approaching the body: not to see passivity as something merely passive, but as a form of survival — a way of holding the body, of acknowledging its vitality and its capacity for connection. It explores the freeze response and dissociation not as fixed positions, but as states that can open possibilities, while also risking numbness, isolation, and separation.

The night club as a whale fall, these states can give rise to temporary communities that cannot form elsewhere. Freeze, dissociation, drifting away — these are not singular or static conditions. They resemble ephemeral ecosystems: moments in which something unique, vital, and alive can emerge, even in the aftermath of threat. The body, in its vulnerability and survival, becomes a site for connection, emergence, and transformation.

Ester Bergsmark

## director's biography

**Ester Bergsmark**, based in Stockholm, is a visual artist and filmmaker whose work spans documentary, fiction, and experimental film. Films such as «Something Must Break» (2014) and «She Male Snails» (2012) have received international acclaim. Her work is presented at festivals, cinemas, and galleries worldwide. Bergsmark completed her PhD project, «voice under», in 2023. Her interdisciplinary approach explores how desire, joy, and liberation generate inner, outer, and collective transformation.

## filmography:

*Instinct* – 2019 – Short film.

*Swedish Candy, Some Violence and a Bit of Cat* – 2018 – Short film.

*Something Must Break* – 2014 – Feature film.

*She Male Snails* – 2012 – Documentary.

*Dirty Diaries* — segment “Fruitcake” – 2009 – Short film (anthology).

*Maggie in Wonderland* – 2008 – Documentary.

*Swallow (Svälj)* – 2006 – Short film.





# the production company

*Garagefilm International* is owned by producer **Mimmi Spång**. Since the start in 2007 they have produced a number of award-winning films together with **Anna-Maria Kantarius** who joined the company in 2010. Garagefilm's focus is on content with high artistic ambitions and in the past decade it has made a name for itself as one of the leading arthouse companies in Sweden.

Garagefilm's productions include *Guidance* by Johan Jonason, nominated for the Dragon Award at the Göteborg International Film Festival, *Sebba* directed by Babak Najafi and awarded Best First Feature Film at Berlinale, feature comedy *Cockpit* by Mårten Klingberg, seen by over 270 000 in domestic cinemas and political thriller *Call Girl* by Mikael Marcimain, winner of the FIPRESCI Critic's Award at Toronto International Film Festival 2012.

2014 saw the release of Ester Martin Bergsmark's *Something Must Break*, awarded at among others IFF Rotterdam, and Jens Östberg's feature debut *Blowfly Park*. In 2015 Lisa Aschan's *White People* premiered at Stockholm International Film Festival, and Maria Bäck's documentary *I Remember When I Die* had its world premiere at CPH:DOX where it was in competition for a Nordic:DOX Award. In 2016 the documentary *Golden Girl* by Susanna Edwards premiered in competition at Tempo Documentary Festival, and Johannes Nyholm's feature debut *The Giant* opened in cinemas to outstanding reviews. *The Giant* was in competition at Toronto IFF, followed by San Sebastian FF where it received the Jury Award.

In 2018 Garagefilm's , *Amateurs* by Gabriela Pichler and *The Heart* by Fanni Metelius, were both in competition at Göteborg International Film Festival and IFF Rotterdam this year, and *Amateurs* is selected for the international competition at Tribeca Film Festival in April. *Amateurs* was also awarded the Dragon Award for Best Nordic Film at GIFF.

During November 2019 *Call Mum!* by Lisa Aschan had premiere in Swedish cinemas. In January 2020 *Psychosis in Stockholm* by Maria Bäck opened Gothenburg film festival, with the film premiering in cinemas during autumn 2020.

In 2022 three of Garagefilms co-productions premiered; *Woman on the roof* by Anna Jadowska at Tribeca FF, and *Godland* by Hlynur Pálmason, and *Sick of Myself* by Kristoffer Borgli (both supported by Eurimage) at Cannes FF.

In 2023 Garagefilm's co-production *Slow* by Lithuanian director Marija Kavtaradze had its world premiere at Sundance FF, and 2023 also marked the premiere of Garagefilm's latest feature film *The Hypnosis* by Ernst De Geer at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

In 2024 Garagefilm's co-production *My Wonderful Stranger* by director Johanna Pykkö premiered at Premiers Plans. Garagefilm have in recent years completed their very first tv-series: *Taelgia* written and directed by Jens Östberg (2023), and *Painkiller* by director Gabriela Pichler (2024).

Currently, Garagefilm is co-producing the films *A Prayer for the Dying* by Dara Van Dusen, *Arrú* by Elle Sofe Sara, *The visitor* by Vytautas Katkus and *Fjord* by Cristian Mungiu. *The visitor* had its world premiere at Karlovy Vary IFF 2025 and the director Vytautas Katkus was awarded with best director at the Crystal Globe Competition.



## the producer

**Anna-Maria Kantarius** is a producer trained at the National Film School of Denmark. She has worked at Garagefilm in Stockholm since 2010.

Anna-Maria has produced critically acclaimed, award-winning festival favourites such as *Amateurs* by Gabriela Pichler, *Something Must Break* by Ester Bergsmark, and *Call Mom!* by Lisa Aschan.

In 2022, she produced the dramedy series *Painkiller* for SVT (6 × 30 min), directed by Gabriela Pichler.

She was selected as one of Variety's "10 Producers to Watch" in 2018, and in 2022 Garagefilm was named one of Screen International's 75 leading production companies in Europe.



A woman with long, wavy brown hair and bright red lipstick is shown from the chest up, wearing a thick, white fur coat. She is looking upwards and to the right with an expressive, dramatic expression, her hands raised in a gesture. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with architectural elements like a door or wall.

## film crew

DIRECTOR Ester Bergsmark

SCRIPT WRITER Ester Bergsmark

PRODUCER Anna-Maria Kantarius

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Mimmi Spång

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Minka Jakerson, Ester Bergsmark

PRODUCTION DESIGNER Clara Isaksson

CHOREOGRAPHER Halla Ólafsdóttir

EDITOR Ester Bergsmark, Anna Eborn, Isabella Karlström, Marion Tuor, Neil Wigart

SOUND DESIGNER Carolina Jinde, Matias Frøystad, Håkon Lammetun, Anna Nilsson

MUSIC SCORE Elin Piel

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