



# GERLACH

THE LAST FARMER

Syndicado  
FILM SALES

DOCMAKERS

A FILM BY  
**ALIONA VAN DER HORST & LUK BOUWMAN**

The Netherlands / 77 min / 2023 / color

**PRODUCER**

**Docmakers**  
Ilja Roomans  
ilja@docmakers.nl  
docmakers.nl

**WORLD SALES**

**Syndicado Film Sales**  
Aleksandar Govedarica (sales)  
aleksandar@sydicado.com  
Jasmina Vignjevic (festivals)  
jasmina@syndicado.com

# Synopsis

## Logline

A humorous and loving portrait of an old-school crop farmer who cheerfully weathers life's headwinds.

## Synopsis

GERLACH is a loving and humorous portrait of arable farmer Gerlach, who has been farming in the shadow of Amsterdam Airport for sixty years. Around him, he has seen everything change. His simple wooden house is now wedged in between a Shell petrol station, a McDonalds outlet and various distribution centers. With great dedication he cares for his beets and grains, while property developers eye his land and climate change disrupts his harvest. Despite everything that comes his way, Gerlach stands tall with his down-to-earth humor, helped by his loving brothers and friends. His little house is the raindrop in which the world is reflected, existentialist and absurdist.

**Link to film trailer**

GERLACH'S  
AARDAPPEL  
PARADYS

*"Gerlach's Potato Paradise"*

# Aliona van der Horst

Director

Dutch director Aliona van der Horst has directed eight international award-winning documentaries in the past 25 years. Her films are known for her gentle, compassionate view of her subjects and poetic style, with a sense of tragic-coming humor. She is a member of AMPAS documentary branch and EFA.



## Filmography

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2021 | <b>Turn Your Body to the Sun, 93'</b>            |
| 2017 | <b>Love is Potatoes, 90'</b>                     |
| 2013 | <b>15 Attempts, 50'</b>                          |
| 2011 | <b>Water Children, 75'</b>                       |
| 2008 | <b>Boris Ryzhy, 59'</b>                          |
| 2006 | <b>Voices of Bam, 89'</b>                        |
| 2003 | <b>The Hermitage Dwellers/Hermitazhniks, 73'</b> |
| 2000 | <b>After the Spring of '68, 58'</b>              |
| 1997 | <b>The Lady with the White Hat, 47'</b>          |

# Luuk Bouwman

Director

Luuk Bouwman is a filmmaker and musician. He has made several feature-length documentaries, including *It Is True But Not Here* (2017) about artist and cult musician Dick Verdult and *All Against All* (2019) about the rise of fascism in the Netherlands, which premiered at IDFA and for which he was awarded the IDFA Stipend 2023. His documentaries are driven by extensive research and long-term engagement with his subjects, revealing processes and mechanisms. As a musician, Luuk was part of the technopunk band Aux Raus with which he played all over the world.



## Filmography

- 2019 **All Against All, 103'**
- 2017 **Dick Verdult: It Is True But Not Here, 70'**
- 2015 **The League Against Swearing, 52'**
- 2012 **Dark Oss, 70'**
- 2006 **The New West, 60'**



# Docmakers

## Producer

Docmakers is a collective of documentary filmmakers consisting of Aliona van der Horst, Fabie Hulsebos, Suzanne Raes, Sanne Rovers, Yan Ting Yuen and producer Ilja Roomans. We love films that need a long run, as well as unexpected special or urgent initiatives that require a flexible approach. Producer Ilja Roomans has 20 years of experience producing both Dutch productions and international co-productions, she is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences (Oscars).

Recent work: Close to Vermeer by Suzanne Raes (Kristallen Film, nominated for Golden Calf 2023) and Master of Light by Rosa Ruth Boesten (a.o. SXSW 2022 Best Documentary Feature Award, Cinema Doc Eye Spotlight Award 2023, 3 Emmy nominations).

# Syndicado Film Sales

## World Sales

Syndicado Film Sales is a Toronto based world sales and production company established in 2016 that specializes in all rights sales. We are looking for aural, cinematic and character driven narratives that convey an universal approach.

We attend all major festivals and markets, currently representing such films as:

Taming The Garden (Sundance/Berlinale),  
The Zola Experience (Venice)  
and Blix Not Bombs (CPH DOX)







# Directors Statement

## Background

For many years, Aliona's father used to stop off at a farm shop not far from Amsterdam Airport to buy the delicious potatoes and strawberries that the small-time farmer Gerlach van Beinum grew there. 30 years ago, Aliona's father befriended Gerlach. She also grew to know him well, and would often invite him to see her films (documentaries like Boris Ryzhy and Love is Potatoes). found him as perceptive about her work as many professional critics. He is a very intelligent man with a very thoughtful way of commenting.

Gerlach is one of the few remaining small scale farmers tending their own land in the Netherlands. His land is in a sought-after area close to Amsterdam. Big businesses like McDonald's, the airlines and the Dutch government itself are always trying to turf him out of his home. With the assistance of his brother, an engineer, he has fought multiple lawsuits to keep his farm intact. Aliona had longed planned to make a film about him but kept putting the project off. Then she met fellow director Luuk Bouwman (director of All Against All, on which I was a script coach). They decided to collaborate together on the documentary and immediately set to work.

## The style of the film

One of the attractions of the project was that we could turn up whenever we wanted. Gerlach would make no fuss about our presence. We would often shoot in the kitchen with the farmer and his close friends. It's a film about really small things. We took inspiration from the work of US author Elizabeth Strout (best known for Olive Kitteridge). Strout is renowned for her closely focused portraits of small town Americans, forgotten people you need to really know to appreciate. We wanted to portray Gerlach with similar affection and attention.



*Luuk Bouwman as DoP during shooting*



We enjoyed a lot being in the kitchen and having a feeling for the rhythm of the conversations, with an eye for the absurd. The old farmer has to deal with the illness of his best pal, Rinus, but that doesn't get in the way of their philosophising and chatter in the slightest.

We worked for months on getting the edit right. We were determined to find the right balance between story and feeling. We joke that van der Horst provided the film's lyrical flourishes while Bouwman was responsible for the jokes.

Gerlach is a lovable and humorous character. He is suffering from an aggressive form of rheumatism which leaves him in constant pain and causes him to stoop - but he never complains. Often, we hold shots of his face. The mystery of a person lies in the face...and he was OK with us filming him. You can read many things in his face but there is also a mystery which you can't quite grasp. The farmer is from a generation who didn't show their emotions easily - you therefore have to study his expressions to know what he is feeling.

### **Climate change and capitalism**

Over the years of filming, the weather in the Netherlands became more extreme and we watched Gerlach struggle more and more to get a good harvest. His suppressed despair as his crop failed for the first time in sixty years touched us more than many a climate report. Local politics appears less driven by addressing climate catastrophe than by the land business. It is disconcerting to see the land being sold off bit by bit. Gerlach cultivates his land with respect and love: the fat fertile clay still gives him a good yield, even after a hundred years of farming. But on this fertile clay the municipality wants to erect the ugly distribution centres, after which this fertile soil is ruined forever.

"The basic pattern of climate change is not that of paranoia, of them against us, but rather that of schizophrenia, of us against us" writes Dutch philosopher Wouter Kusters. Gerlach does not condemn his fellow humans, despite his keen eye for the disruption of consumerism and tourism. There speaks an old soul observing people from a distance. He articulates the unfathomable lemming-like situation of mankind who seems to be walking merrily into the abyss.

### **Old age and impermanence**

Ultimately, the film is about our impermanence, which Rinus and Gerlach discuss with understated humor. Everything eventually disappears, sighs Gerlach, both the ancient Inca civilization, and himself: 'we are all people of one day'. The body slowly decaying runs parallel in the film to our planet's increasingly decaying ecosystem.





A FILM BY  
ALIONA VAN DER HORST & LUKK BOUWMAN

# GERLACH

THE LAST FARMER

DIRECTED, WRITTEN AND FILMED BY ALIONA VAN DER HORST & LUKK BOUWMAN PRODUCED BY ILJA ROOMANS EDITING LUKK BOUWMAN  
ASSISTANT EDITOR SANDRO LIGTENBERG MUSIC ANNETTE KRUISBRINK BRAM MEINDERSMA HARRY DE WIT EMANUELE PELLEGRINI  
DRONE RECORDINGS RIK MEIER ADDITIONAL EDITING KATARINA TÜRLER SOUND DESIGN & SOUND MIX MARK GLYNNE  
COLOR GRADING & FINISHING LAURENT FLUTTERT PRODUCER KRO-NCRV YOLANDE VAN DER BLIJ COMMISSIONING EDITOR KRO-NCRV JELLE PETER DE RUITER

GERLACH IS A DOCMAKERS PRODUCTION IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH KRO-NCRV SUPPORTED BY NPO FUND AND THE NETHERLANDS FILM FUND

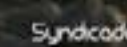
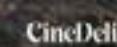
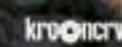


PHOTO: PASCAL SAUNDERS / THEAGENCY.COM



# Credits

Written & Directed by	<b>Aliona van der Horst &amp; Luuk Bouwman</b>
Produced by	<b>Ilja Roomans</b>
Cinematography	<b>Luuk Bouwman</b>
Drone recordings	<b>Rik Meier</b>
Sound	<b>Aliona van der Horst</b>
Editor	<b>Luuk Bouwman</b>
Music	<b>Annette Kruisbrink, Bram Meindersma, Harry de Wit, Emanuele Pellegrini</b>
Sound Design & Mix	<b>Mark Glynn</b>
Color Grading & Finishing	<b>Laurent Flutters</b>
Poster Design	<b>Pien den Hollander</b>
Credit Design	<b>Chris Marmier</b>
Trailer	<b>Rosa Ruth Boesten</b>
Subtitles	<b>Harry Pallemans</b>
Poster Photo	<b>Sander Troelstra</b>
Commissioning Editor KRO-NCRV	<b>Jelle Peter de Ruiter</b>
Production Manager KRO-NCRV	<b>Yolande van der Blij</b>
World Sales	<b>Syndicado Film Sales</b>

GERLACH is a Docmakers production in co-production with KRO-NCRV supported by NPO Fund and the Netherlands Film Fund

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