

# el olvido

a film by HEDDY HONIGMANN





*“A film about poverty  
and poetry in a country  
plundered by the powerful.  
But also a film where the  
powerless resist being  
consigned to oblivion”*

**El Olvido** takes us to the forgotten city of Lima, to a forgotten people, the Peruvians and - like most countries in Latin America - the forgotten land of Peru.

Occasionally - during presidential elections, after a serious earthquake, or when a new mass grave is discovered, and then only if it's big enough - the world remembers Peru's existence, but just for a few days.

But in **El Olvido**, we do not witness elections or experience earthquakes and neither are we present at the discovery of a mass grave.

As we wander through the streets of Lima, we visit old restaurants and some small shops, we enter a few smart bars and we sit down in various plazas to watch and observe. We meet some moving characters who use poetry, real or mental juggling, dreams and creativity to resist being consigned to oblivion and against those who have sworn for centuries that they love their people, but who in reality they despise.

Like great unassuming poets, the characters of **El Olvido** look at history with a sense of

humour and irony and give a twist to reality: in a little alley, a street vendor with an endearing smile sells toys - tiny buckets. Holding up the biggest of them, he yells in a loud voice: “Look at this giant one; buy it, it can hold up to 10 litres of water!” Which is ironic in a country where you can never be sure if there will be water when you turn on the tap. If you have a tap, that is.

But in **El Olvido** there's also room for silence and in those moments Lima resembles Macondo, the imaginary city of “One Hundred Years of Solitude” by García Márquez. Just so they wouldn't forget, the villagers of Macondo wrote down the names of things and stuck them to the objects that might be forgotten: a tree, a house, a bird...everything. In this Macondian Lima, shoeshine boy Henry wanders through the streets. What is one to make of a 14-year-old boy who doesn't have any memories, neither good nor bad? In his unforgettable face, the emptiness shows. Perhaps some frog juice - a Peruvian remedy for memory loss - will help him recall at least one happy moment.



# The national cocktail of Peru



Pisco Sour is the national cocktail of Peru. In my 50 years as a bartender, I've made it for many presidents.

When I think of them **I see history as a badly-mixed cocktail made of semi-democratic elections, coups, terrorism and corruption.**

In the last fifty years, we've done everything we could to become a true South American country. Scandals... ...a dirty war between the army and various guerrilla movements, towering inflation, bank notes that were of more use as toilet paper. Famine. Fear. **And more than 70,000 deaths due to violence.**

One president leaves the palace by the back door, while the next one barges through the front door with a lot of fanfare.

We had elections recently. And if you were to ask me: Which would you prefer **Hepatitis B or AIDS** ? We Peruvians chose **Hepatitis B**, otherwise known as **Alan García**. The very man who ruined the country between '85 and '90. Now he's in power again and I may have to make him a Pisco Sour one day. Because that's for sure: The man knows his drinks.



**"...NATIONAL STRIKE BLAME THE GOVERNMENT!, NATIONAL STRIKE BLAME THE GOVERNMENT!"**

BARTENDER JORGE KANASHIRO



# A forgotten city



“I swear in the name of God and the Holy Apostles to faithfully uphold the office of President of the Republic which the nation has entrusted to me...”

FERNANDO BELAÚNDE | 1980-1985



DO YOU HAVE ANY NICE MEMORIES?

HENRY: NO.

NONE AT ALL?

HENRY: NONE.

ANY BAD MEMORIES?

HENRY: NEITHER.

NO DREAMS?

HENRY: DREAMS? I HARDLY EVER DREAM.





JORGE KANASHIRO

bartender & teacher

STUDENT WAITER

LUIS CERNA

waiter since 1950

MARÍA VILLOTA DE CERNA

wife of Mr Cerna

CITIZEN of LIMA

shooting at us

PEPITO

tin can & comb player

*poetry*

CHÉ

the crystal ball magician

STUDENT BARTENDER

FERNANDO BELAÚNDE

(2 times president, deposed in 1968 by a military coup)

*corruption*

ALAN GARCIA

(2 times president)

MAURO GÓMEZ

owner of the "Clinic for bags"

PILAR

the blind singer

CITIZEN of LIMA

old streetphotographer

DAVID GUTIÉRREZ

malabarist

ADOLFO CHÁVEZ

the smiling waiter

MARÍA CARRASCO DE CHÁVEZ

wife of waiter Chávez

ALBERTO FUJIMORI

(3 times president, now in jail)

LUCÍA RUIZ

strong & romantic

*love*

DULOVINA CÓRDOBA

Lucía's mother

CITIZEN of LIMA

listening to streetmusic

*magic*

TOÑO

the frog juice specialist

CITIZEN of LIMA

street seller of toys

DANIEL GUTIÉRREZ GRADOS

owner broidery shop

ESMERALDA

street entertainer

LALA

who looks at the sky

ESTEFANÍA

the Olympic champion

MARÍA

lovely mother of the 3 girls

CITIZEN of LIMA

waiting for her frog-juice

JOSÉ

the "fatty"

JOSÉ'S FRIEND

JOSÉ'S FRIEND

ANÍBAL COTRINA

the poetry-lover

LISBELLA

lost in the traffic

CITIZEN of LIMA

candy streetseller

CÉSAR LEVANO

about 10 times in prison

CHATO

the "hat catcher"

CITIZEN of LIMA

has an "appointment"

WILLY CHEROQUE

the all-round musician

HENRY

shoe shiner without dreams

*loneliness*

CARLITOS

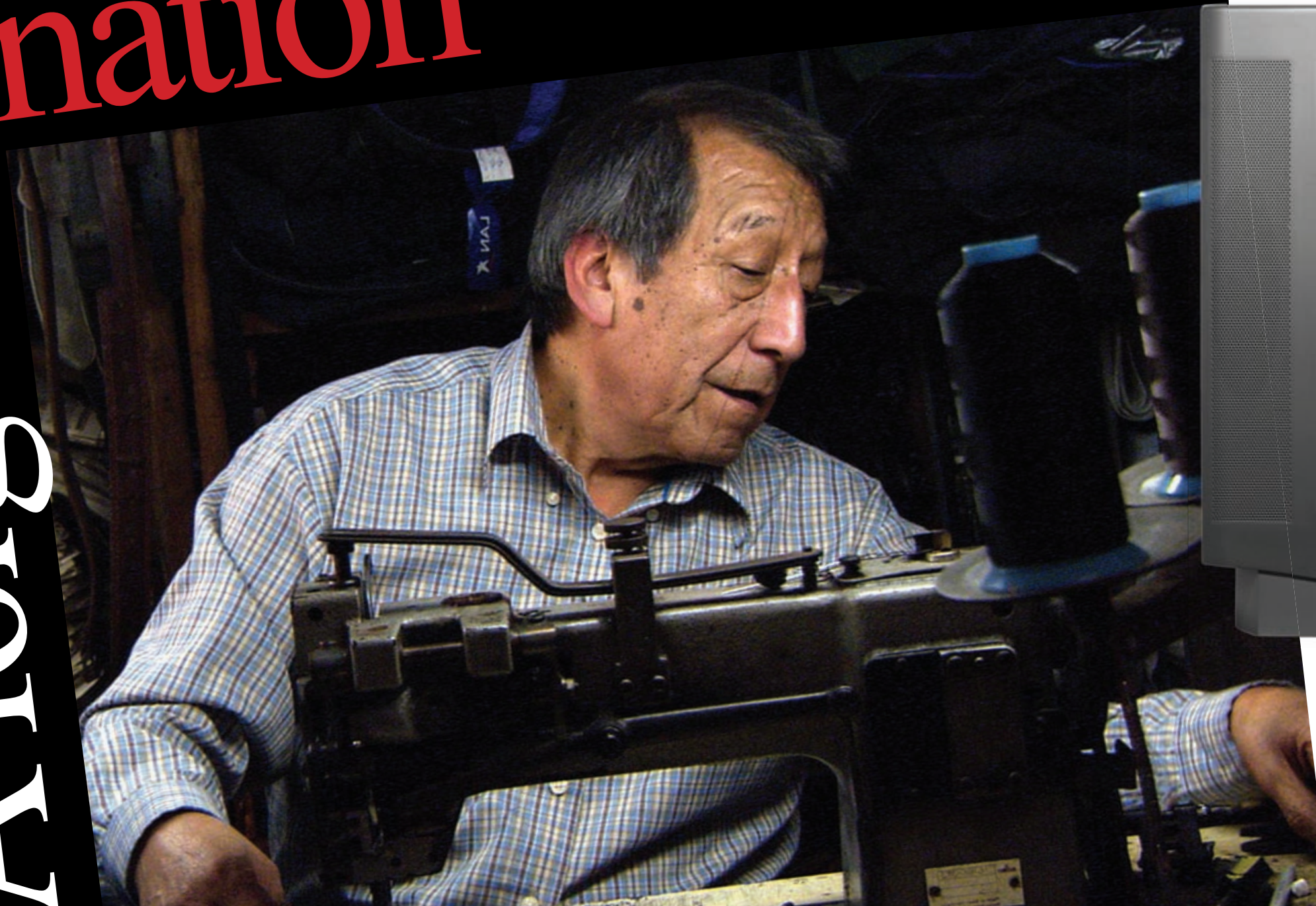
shoe shiner who studies until midnight

CITIZEN of LIMA

sleeps, like many, in the streets



# A forgotten nation



For me the worst time was during the period of Alan García.  
It was of course stupid of me that  
I didn't see the hyperinflation coming.  
That was an absolute low. My worst time. I was almost  
destroyed financially thanks to Mr. Alan García's government.  
I won't forget him in a hurry.  
Hard times make you tough. I may have had my back against  
the wall, both commercially and financially, but I never felt  
defeated. With the little that I had left  
I gradually got back on my feet again.

**WHY DID YOU ALMOST START CRYING ?**

**MAURO: WELL, BECAUSE I...  
I AM A RATHER SENTIMENTAL PERSON.**



**"I, Alan García Perez swear in the  
name of God and the Holy Apostles,  
to faithfully uphold the office of  
President of the Republic which the  
nation has entrusted to me.  
Without disregarding the freedom of  
religion I shall honour the role of the  
Catholic Church..."**

**ALAN GARCIA | 1985-1990**



# A forgotten continent



**ALBERTO FUJIMORI | 1990-1995**

“ I, Alberto Fujimori swear in the name of God and the Holy Apostles to faithfully uphold the office of President of the Republic which the nation has entrusted to me. I swear in the name of our fellow countrymen and women who gave their lives for a great, just and free nation. I swear in the name of the children the youth, who are the future promise of Peru...”

”



“I always go with them when they leave the house. We're always together, I'm always with them. They're all I have. Unfortunately I also had an accident and have a bad leg because of it. Maybe that's why they help me sometimes. I worry that people look at us and think that I make them work. But they don't have to do it. they just play here and if they feel like it, they work. They're very close.”

**YOU'RE ALWAYS CUDDLING, AREN'T YOU?**

MARÍA: YES. THEY KISS, THEY HUG AND THEY PLAY, ALL DAY LONG. THEY RUN AROUND LIKE LITTLE BIRDS, BUT I DON'T LET THEM OUT OF MY SIGHT.





*“What a beauty mam, for 15 litres of water.”*



This seller of toys offers children an illusion: buckets for 15 liter water in a country where there’s no security at all to have drinking water.

*“Frog juice is very good for the memory”*



The presidents suffer from loss of memory and always forget about the poor who have nothing, who are always hungry. They should all come here. Yes, they should queue up with their ministers. With their wives. And their kids, the whole lot. The army should try it too. It’s basically good for everyone. It’s good for your memory, for your brain. For those crazy soldiers who go around killing people. And forget that they also have a family, that they have children too.



HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN SOMEONE TREATS YOU BADLY?  
ADOLFO: ONE THING ABOUT ME IS THAT I’M A GOOD CLOWN.  
TREAT ME BADLY AND I SMILE.  
...THE ONLY WAY I CAN DO MY WORK.

“THIS FORM OF AMNESIA IS  
DETRIMENTAL TO THE FUTURE  
OF PERU, AND ALSO TO THE  
FUTURE OF LATIN AMERICA”

CÉSAR LEVANO





# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**“SURROUNDED BY HORROR,  
I ALLOW MYSELF JUST THIS SILENT POEM”**

**JOSÉ WATANABE**



LIMA, PERU.

If Lima, the capitol of Peru, were to be covered in dust, the city would be invisible.

But it's not and yet hardly anybody ever notices it or gives its people, cheated and neglected by their rulers for centuries, any thought.

It takes an earthquake registering 8 on the Richter scale, or the recent discovery, in the most desolate mountains of Peru, of one of the largest mass graves in the history of the dirty war between the Peruvian army and the guerrilla movement Shining Path, for the country to be noticed for a few days or weeks.

In “Oblivion”, Lima represents all other Latin American cities, whose seas or mountains are graveyards. Horror is omnipresent: in its streets, bars, hospitals and neighbourhoods. But the country isn't ‘hot news’.

Reminiscence is a recurring theme in almost all of my films. With “Oblivion”, I wanted to create a poetic celebration of this forgotten city and its people.

A few years ago it was a waiter, at work in a fancy restaurant, who was the inspiration for the rediscovery of my city. This waiter, whom I recognized after many years away from Peru, told me how he has survived the humiliation and hardship by smiling. Others manage to hold up their head by silently making fun of the class that oppresses them, remembering with pride that they have survived both economical crisis and political terror from both sides. And some survive by entertaining car drivers with acrobatics, hoping for a few coins.

All my characters are first-class actors. Hardly any of them have ever been in a museum. Nor have they heard of Marcel Proust or Maria Callas; yet all the people you'll meet in “Oblivion” are born poets.

“Oblivion” doesn't scream at you, it whispers. “Oblivion” doesn't sob; it just cries.

“Oblivion” takes a flight over this forgotten city; like a bird it lands here, stops there, looks around, talks, listens, flies away again and finally turns into a crystal ball that a young man keeps in perfect balance, thereby defying anonymity.

**HEDDY HONIGMANN**



# HEDDY HONIGMANN

Heddy Honigmann is considered one of world's best documentary filmmakers. Her films (short & long fiction, short & long documentaries) have travelled all around the world receiving major awards and important retrospectives as in Toronto, the Museum of Modern Art in NY, Paris, Berlin, Minneapolis, Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Ontario, Utrecht, Grasz, Chicago and Berkeley among others.

She has also received many important awards for her entire work, as the Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award (2007), the San Francisco Films Society's Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Award (2007), the J. Van Praag Award from the Humanist Association (2005) Netherlands, the Jan Cassies award for her whole oeuvre from the Dutch National Fund for Cultural Films for Television (2003) Netherlands.

When she received in 2007 the San Francisco Persistence of Vision Award, John Anderson (a regular contributor to Newsday, the New York Times, Variety and the Guardian of London), wrote the following about Heddy's work:

Heddy Honigmann Is Good for You... and her films are appetizing antidepressants. Penguins, fast food and fat guys in baseball caps all have been credited with raising the profile of the documentary in recent years, but these are aberrations, stupid pet tricks at the symphony. Among the real artists of nonfiction, Heddy is as responsible as anyone for raising the standards of doc-making worldwide. She flexes the form to meet her purposes, but never sacrifices style or integrity. She champions the dispossessed without sermonizing, and she injects just enough of herself in her films to give us a sense of the woman behind the movie without ever eclipsing the subject or the substance, the sense of space or the sense of place (...)

That her films are egoless makes them all the more precious. This award is to honor the lifetime achievement of a woman who has taken us inside the hearts of subjects most other filmmakers would never have noticed.

(...) Born in Lima, Peru in 1951, Heddy trained as a filmmaker in Rome and has lived and worked in the Netherlands since 1978. It is said that love brought her to Amsterdam, and love has been the engine of her art - especially if one considers art a form of love. Heddy isn't particularly interested in railing against social inequities, despite the sense of political dissatisfaction one hears rumbling under her movies like a dyspeptic subway train. Rather, she is obsessed with the way people of often limited means deal with those inequities through art, through love, through sex. Through memory. Through dance and through music (...)



Heddy's films are elegantly composed, rich in precisely poetic imagery, fluid transitions and narrative flow. Ultimately, though, what one comes away feeling is the humanity, the empathy, the pouring out of hearts. Ask any theologian: What separates man from other animals? The same thing that distinguishes the work of Heddy Honigmann: Soul.

## Selected Filmography

**(2008) El olvido**

**(1999) Crazy**

**(2006) Forever**

**(1998) 2 minutes of silence, please**

**A Shetl that's no longer there  
& 11 other shorts of the series**

**(1997) The Underground orchestra**

**(1996) O Amor Natural**

**(2004) Food for love**

**(1995) Au revoir**

**(2003) Dame la mano**

**(1992) Metal and melancholy**

**(2001) Good Husband, dear Son**

**(1987) Mind shadows**

**(2000) Private**

**(1985) De deur van het huis**



# COBOS FILMS BV

Cobos Films is an Amsterdam based company that produces high-quality feature length documentaries for cinema and television. In 2001 Carmen Cobos became the sole company director, running the productions with her associate producer Judith Vreriks.

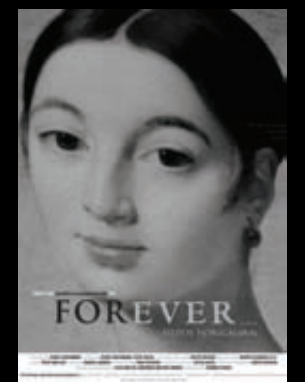
## COBOS FILMS



CARMEN COBOS

## Filmography

- 2008 EL OLVIDO
- 2007 ESMIRALDE, SIXTEEN YEARS IN 9 SCENES
- 2006 FOREVER
- 2004 SCHOOLPLEIN
- 2003 TWINKLE TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR
- 2003 THE LAST VICTORY
- 2002 MAMA BENZ & THE TASTE OF MONEY
- 2000 TWO LOVES
- 2000 A CRY FROM THE GRAVE
- 1998 WORKING FOR LABOUR
- 1997 LÁGRIMAS NEGRAS





# CREDITS

## el olvido

a film by HEDDY HONIGMANN & A COBOS FILMS PRODUCTION

with  
JORGE KANASHIRO  
LUIS CERNA  
DAVID GUTIÉRREZ  
LUCÍA RUIZ  
DANIEL GUTIÉRREZ GRADOS  
ADOLFO CHÁVEZ  
MAURO GÓMEZ  
and *many others*

directed by  
HEDDY HONIGMANN

written by  
HEDDY HONIGMANN

in collaboration with  
JUDITH VRERIKS  
SONIA GOLDENBERG

edited by  
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JESSICA DE KONING

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HEDDY HONIGMANN  
SONIA GOLDENBERG

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MARCOS CAMACHO

sound  
PIOTR VAN DIJK

dubbing mixer  
HUGO DIJKSTAL

associate producer  
JUDITH VRERIKS

line producer Lima  
GUSTAVO SÁNCHEZ

production assistants Lima  
JULIAN TORRES  
ESTHER AYARZA

catering  
JOSÉ SANCHEZ

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digital laboratory  
NORDISK SHORTCUT

sales agent  
FILMS TRANSIT INTERNATIONAL

designer titles & poster  
VÍCTOR BAROLI  
DAVID COBOS

archive  
“EL ACUERDO” DE JOSÉ WATANABE  
AMÉRICA TELEVISIÓN COMPAÑÍA  
PERUANA DE RADIODIFUSIÓN S.A

literary translation  
MIEKE WESTRA

subtitles  
ESTER & MARJA GOULD  
WARREN STOWE  
ERNESTINA VAN DE NOORT

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HENK TIMMERMANS

commissioning editor IKON  
MARGJE DE KONING

commissioning editor ZDF  
ANNE EVEN

produced by  
CARMEN COBOS

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PROMOTION FUND  
CoBO FUND



A COBOS FILMS production  
in coproduction with IKON & ZDF  
in cooperation with ARTE

COBOS FILMS



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[www.cobosfilms.nl](http://www.cobosfilms.nl)

[www.heddy-honigmann.nl](http://www.heddy-honigmann.nl)

[www.filmstransit.com](http://www.filmstransit.com)



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