

Kind Hearts

a film by **Olivia Rochette and Gerard-Jan Claes**

with **Billie Meeussen, Lucas Roefmans, Romane Van Damme, Charlotte Meyntjens, Rana Hamzaoui, Gaspard Renier, Victoria De Man**
production **Rasmus Van Heddeghem, Ruben Desiere** image **Olivia Rochette** sound **Lennert De Taeye, Nina de Vroome** editing **Dieter Diependaele**
sound editing **Ingrid Simon** foley artist **Olivier Thys** foley recordist **Aline Gavroy** sound mixing **Thomas Gauder**
colour grading **Olivier Ogneux** graphic design **Casier/Fieuws** produced by **Accattone films** a co-production with **Canvas**
with the support of **Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF), Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie, Stad Brussel, Beursschouwburg, deAuteurs**

ACCATTONE FILMS



flanders



Avila



Accattone films & Avila present:



KIND HEARTS

Belgium / 2022 / 87 min.

A film by
Olivia Rochette & Gerard-Jan Claes

PRESS NOTES

World premiere
Berlinale 2022 // Generation

FOLLOW THE FILM ON SOCIALS:
[Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

Press materials can be downloaded [here](#)

↓ CONTENT

- > [Contacts](#)
- > [Logline](#)
- > [Synopsis](#)
- > [Directors' statement](#)
- > [Interview with the directors](#)
- > [Interview with Billie Meeussen](#)
- > [Interview with Lucas Roefmans](#)
- > [About the directors](#)
- > [Cast & Crew](#)



↓ LOGLINE

The entrancing love story of Billie and Lucas, a young Brussels couple. The film paints a candid portrait of the formative but also uncertain facets of every (first) love.

↓ SYNOPSIS

Billie and Lucas, a young Brussels couple, both leave for university facing a year rife with change. Visions of the future, doubts about relationships and the expectations of adult life make up the main material for their conversations with friends and each other. *Kind Hearts* paints a candid portrait of the formative but also uncertain facets of every (first) love.



↓ DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

"For *Kind Hearts*, we did not set out to make a documentary 'about' love, but instead wanted to take a look at a love affair in the concrete, depicting meeting points between the two lovers Billie and Lucas. The experience of love is closely linked to the experience of narrative; in our minds, we recreate love as an adventure. This notion of love as construction is also reflected in the form of the film, characterised by its ambivalent place between staging and documentary. For us, working on a film is always a matter of attention, care and concentration, both in its choice of form and in its relationship to people and places. *Kind Hearts'* ambition is to adopt a loving gaze at how these two lovers relate to the world and each other."

Olivia Rochette & Gerard-Jan Claes



↓ INTERVIEW WITH FILMMAKERS OLIVIA ROCHETTE AND GEARD-JAN CLAES

By Nina de Vroome

Kind Hearts focuses on the love affair between Billie and Lucas. The couple faces the choice of continuing their studies after high school. With so many changes afoot in their lives, they wonder how their relationship will evolve. The film thus takes off at a crossroads in their lives. What was the starting point for the movie?

Rochette: It started with Grands travaux, a documentary we made in 2016 about a group of youngsters studying electrics at the Anneessens-Funck vocational school in Brussels. In one scene, Barry, one of the students at Anneessens-Funck, has a phone call with his girlfriend and a rather touching dialogue ensues. Using cliché-like but equally disarming phrases, he tries to put his feelings into words. This mode of speaking, trying to approach a loved one through words, germinated into *Kind Hearts*.

Claes: The starting point was the desire to film a love story, not with actors and without a conventional scenario, but portrayed in a documentary. The genre of a love story is of course iconic and recognisable, and is tied to a whole spectrum of known formats and forms. *Kind Hearts* also began with a sense of fascination for the way love is portrayed in films, soaps, pop music and stories, and how it is portrayed within this larger whole.

What did you find so exceptional about the characters in question? The way they spoke about love, or how they moved and talked?

Claes: I think we initially found Lucas' openness rather disarming, and Billie's more mysterious and timid appearance. The choice of characters is definitely the most exciting moment of the process. You choose two people with whom you will embark on a journey, without prior knowledge of where you will end up or whether it will actually work. Why these two people and not others? That is always a frightening decision.

Rochette: You choose the actors not only as characters but also for their story. When we began work on the film, we did not yet know how their relationship would evolve, what we would focus on and which events would unfold. Now the film contains its own logical narrative arc, but the starting point remains that documentary approach.

How does a narrative structure emerge from this documentary observation?

Rochette: I love watching people, observing how they act and relate to each other. I'm also deeply taken with the translation of specific features of Billie and Lucas' lives, which may not be very grand in themselves, into images. We

received a lot of input from them and allowed ourselves to be carried away by their lives. It is exciting that they themselves, yet also their relationship, were constantly evolving throughout our shooting process.

Claes: Above all we attempted to tell a simple *story*. While shooting we asked ourselves a couple of simple questions: how to introduce the narrative line? How to instantiate jumps in time? How to explain that characters suddenly find themselves in a different location? The starting point was always a certain simplicity. Olivia and I very much like the functional austerity of soap operas: a limited number of spaces which make up the living environment and playing field for characters and their quotidian concerns. A soap opera is always composed in accordance with a series of fixed formal "rules" and a number of recognisably basic strategies. At the beginning of a scene, for example, the façade behind which the scene is situated is always depicted, or an image informing us that night has fallen appears like a pancarte. This uncomplicated directness carries enormous appeal for us. The narrative is straightforward and light-hearted.

Rochette: Feelings are expressed so frankly in soaps. When you talk about love, you can deploy a heavily poetic register, but the beauty of it is always in its simplicity. In one specific scene from *Kind Hearts*, Billie and Lucas are sitting in a pizzeria having an earnest conversation: "Do you still love me?" "Yes, I think so", "Do you miss me?" and so on. We occasionally wondered whether this directness was even permissible. It was an element in the creative process that was difficult to rationalize. It is very recognisable, but that is what makes it beautiful. The most intensely personal becomes impersonal, and vice versa. It is universal.

Claes: Like pop music, it is about how one experiences emotions in a broader sense. A pop song appeals to a large group of people precisely because of its recognisability, it is a type of commonplace, empty form. In melodramas and soaps, too, the social is the basic material. They portray how certain emotions, desires and fears are shaped within a larger community. In this sense, they treat the surface, the artifice with which we build our world, and about how a social field is shaped by human beings. *Kind Hearts* is about that too: fiction not as an enlargement or an act of distancing, but rather a ...

An extension of what we do in our everyday lives? That is a rather abstract idea. Does it become more tangible in any way through you filming with the youngsters? Does it teach you anything about the concept you are describing?

Claes: At the start of the process, this theoretical approach was mainly reflected in the choice of the "arena" in which the film was set: the love story of a young couple. The film explores that transitional moment between youth and adulthood. Billie and Lucas look at adulthood as a rigid form descending on them and they then try to relate to it. At one point when Billie is unsure about moving in with Lucas, she tells Romane: "Some people do." Without knowing

whether she really wants to. In that appropriation of specific phrases, ideas and social fictions, the adult world becomes an ever more concrete reality.

How did you begin work on the project? How do the scenes emerge?

Rochette: Many filmmakers do months-long location scouting for research, something we don't do. We try things out with a camera as soon as possible, looking for a way of working and a relationship between us and the characters. Which scenes should we set up? How far can we go in fictionalizing them? When do Lucas and Billie feel most at ease when speaking?

Claes: In the beginning they asked if they were "doing well". This notion of "good" or "bad" had to be abandoned before we could get to work, since the performative idea of "playing a scene" had to be left behind. As the focus of the film became clearer to us, Billie and Lucas could play more calmly. We tried out a lot of things and at some point it works. Not every scene comes together in the same way. Some scenes in the film are the result of a more "documentary"-type observation, others are situations we observed or discussed beforehand that we liked and re-enacted on camera. So the fictional aspects are also approached in a rather documentary way, which grants it an existential quality, simply because its construction and beauty become visible.

Rochette: We prefer to approach situations in a rather straightforward way: long conversations where we see both Billie and Lucas speaking and reacting to what is being said. You see them thinking, hesitating, searching for words. We could not always capture this while observing with the camera, so for certain scenes we opted for a classical mise-en-scène, leaving plenty of room for a certain aimlessness.

Claes: Fiction always has something "elaborate" to it: you can start from something small and grant it extensive attention. We devote a lot of care and precision to the question of how we wanted to organize objects within a frame. These are concrete things like, "that bottle does not have to be there", or "you don't have to say that because that distracts us too much from the core issue. While editing the writing becomes even more precise, and every word is duly weighed and assessed.

↓ INTERVIEW WITH BILLIE MEEUSSEN

The film depicts something which happened a while back. What you filmed, for instance, took place several months ago. How do you now look back on those scenes – all of a very personal nature, but all also 'staged'? To what extent do you recognise it as what you really were like back then, or do you tend to see yourself more as an actress?

Billie Meeussen: I wouldn't say 'as an actress'. I simply see myself as I was then. Usually when one looks back at the past, one has memories of how one experienced everything. You forget many of those memories, or you adjust them to what you want to remember. They are always a bit distorted, but since they were captured on camera you always have proof of how those things actually unfolded, how we enacted them. And that was weird to the extent that I sometimes wondered, "So that was what it was actually like?" We got to give a lot of our own input, where we did things as we normally would, but also scenes where we remained more focused. Later, I couldn't remember which scenes were staged and which were more free and our "own" conversation. I don't remember very well what reality was and what was staged.

Do you think the filming had an impact on how you remember your relationship, or even the evolution and changes in your relation to Lucas and Romane?

I don't think it changed the memory of my relationship to Lucas or Romane. The scenes with Romane were more 'staged'. With Lucas, we played a lot of scenes when we had already split up. We played scenes where we were still together, and we also replayed the situation where we broke up. But it was all very natural. We were able to act it out as if it was happening in real time. We talked extensively about it, so we knew very well why we broke up. In the period that we did those scenes, we didn't see each other much, also due to COVID. So we saw each other mainly for the shooting, and then we played scenes where we were still together. But that wasn't difficult, since we parted peacefully and our mutual relationship has remained the same.

At the start of the film, Lucas asks you to pose for a picture. You feel rather uncomfortable about it: your character is someone who becomes very self-conscious when her picture is taken. At the same time, in the film you do not feel uncomfortable with the film camera. Where is the separation between the character and yourself? What is your relationship to the camera as the character 'Billie', and as yourself, Billie?

I don't think there is any difference between myself and my "character". Normally I don't like to be put into the spotlight at all, and I certainly don't like to be photographed, so my reaction is rather authentic. When I see that first scene, I can see that I am not at ease. As we went on, our bond of trust grew stronger and things got better. I gradually felt very comfortable around Gerard-Jan and Olivia.

↓ INTERVIEW WITH LUCAS ROEFMANS

Why did you want to take part and how did you first start working together?

Lucas Roefmans: The first time I saw Olivia and Gerard-Jan was during a class at secondary school. The teacher told us: "These are two directors who will come to observe in all our classes. You only need to be yourself." Olivia and Gerard-Jan sat right at the back of the class. They were even there to observe our end-of-year party. One day I approached them to ask what they were doing. A month later, they invited me for an interview. They said they were looking for a couple. I never felt any unease, it was all very spontaneous. Before I knew it, we were filming.

You re-enacted parts of your own life. What was it like to do something that intimate in front of the camera?

I never felt uncomfortable. Gerard-Jan and Olivia have a specific body language, an aura that gives you a sense of safety. We filmed in many different settings, and sometimes I completely forgot that we were filming at all.

Are you 'Lucas' or are you also a bit of an actor?

I've always remained myself. No moment in the film is made up of a fake-Lucas – from the get-go Gerard-Jan and Olivia said that everything had to remain realistic. Scenes such as the one where Billie and I split up felt very natural to carry out. As we completed the film, they filmed us and asked us a few questions and mentioned that they thought it rather special that we found it so normal to break up on camera. As we came to think of it afterwards we concluded that it's simply because we remained ourselves on screen. It was really like that when we broke up. The underlying reason why we broke up can also be found in the film. In the film, it is overexposed or simplified, but it is based on the truth.

How did you feel about seeing the film itself?

Olivia and Gerard-Jan never showed us any footage while shooting. The process itself came across as rather chaotic. They came in at all sorts of moments in my life, doing scenes in different places. I couldn't really imagine that the film would find its logical structure. When I saw the final version, however, I was surprised at how tightly they had kept everything under control. When Olivia and Gerard-Jan asked me what I made of it, I was trembling on my feet and could hardly answer – and I still can't answer now. I am very grateful that a film was made about the most beautiful period of my life: my youth.

*

Full interviews available via www.sobzian.be.

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

↓ Olivia Rochette

Biography

Olivia Rochette (Belgium, 1987) is a director, cinematographer, and co-founder of the online film magazine [Sabzian](#) and [Avilo](#), a film distributor and online video platform for Belgian cinema. As a filmmaker, she collaborates with Gerard-Jan Claes (Belgium, 1987). Their shared filmography consists of *Because We Are Visual* (2010), *Rain* (2012), *Grands travaux* (2016), *Mitten* (2019) and *Kind Hearts* (2022). Since 2009, the duo provides audiovisual work for choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and her dance company Rosas.



Filmography

- *Because We Are Visual* (2010)
- *Rain* (2012)
- *Grands travaux* (2016)
- *Mitten* (2019)
- *Kind Hearts* (2022)

Website

www.claes-rochette.be

↓ Gerard-Jan Claes

Biography

Gerard-Jan Claes (Belgium, 1987) is a filmmaker, lecturer, author, both founder and artistic director of the online film magazine [Sabzion](#), and co-founder of [Avilo](#), a film distributor and online video platform for Belgian cinema. As a filmmaker, he collaborates with Olivia Rochette (Belgium, 1987). Their shared filmography consists of *Because We Are Visual* (2010), *Rain* (2012), *Grands travaux* (2016), *Mitten* (2019) and *Kind Hearts* (2022). Since 2009, the duo provides audiovisual work for choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and her dance company Rosas. Claes teaches at P.A.R.T.S. and LUCA School of Arts.



Filmography

- *Because We Are Visual* (2010)
- *Rain* (2012)
- *Grands travaux* (2016)
- *Mitten* (2019)
- *Kind Hearts* (2022)

Website

www.claes-rochette.be

↓ CAST & CREW

a film by

Olivia Rochette
Gerard-Jan Claes

cast

Billie Meeussen
Lucas Roefmans

&

Romane Van Damme
Charlotte Meyntjens
Rana Hamzaoui
Gaspard Renier
Victoria De Man

with

Youssef Abden, Coli Alexandre, Yanis Arssi, Walid Caballero Ashfaj, Fleur Catteeuw, Boris Daems, Kris Dane, J.J. Yahweh Dane, Julia Ilonga Ekoka, Therasie Lomboto Ekila, Mohammed Elhakimy, Némó Flouret, Manon Francoy, Axel Gosez, Diabhite Goundo, Chris Goupande, Gloria Goupande, Idris Hamzaoui, Anna Franziska Jäger, Mounya Kardoudi, Louis Masil, Felix Mevis, Wiske Moyersoën, Murphy, Tayler Nash, Manon Nollet, Agron Sokoli, Amir Sokoli, Max Temmerman, Nefertari Vanden Bulcke, Rasmus Van Heddeghem, Stefanie Van Rompoey, Solène Wachter, Sami Zemni, Ayoub Zemouri

production

Rasmus Van Heddeghem
Ruben Desiere

image

Olivia Rochette

sound

Lennert De Taeye
Nina de Vroome

second camera

Ruben Desiere

editing

Dieter Diependaele

sound editing

Ingrid Simon

assistant sound editing
Selia Çakir

foley
Olivier Thys

foley recording
Aline Gavroy

sound mix
Thomas Gauder

colour correction
Olivier Ogneux

graphic design
Casier/Fieuws

interns
Yentl De Baets
Lieselot Everaert
Simon van der Zande

online edit, compositing
Lennert De Taeye

post-production image
Studio l'Equipe

assistants colour grading
Mathieu Cauville
Aldo Mulone
Tristan Regnier

image supervisor
Dominique Marcel

technical assistance
Vincent Carton
Julien Destexhe

video lab
Edouard Jeanjean
Marie Binet

audio lab
Damien Deville

sound editing studio
Alea Jacta

post-production foley studio
Studio l'Equipe

coordination sound post-production
Studio L'Equipe
Dominique Jochmans

technical assistance foley
Virgile Jans

mixing auditorium
Studio l'Equipe

technical assistance sound mix
Kyle Masterson Silvestro

translations Arabic
Amine Mazhoud
Soumaya Bazi

a production of
Accattone films

in co-production with
Canvas

with the support of
Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF), Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie, Stad
Brussel, Beursschouwburg, deAuteurs

↓ CONTACTS

Production
Accattone films
Ruben Desiere

rubendesiere@gmail.com
+32 488 38 12 02

Rasmus Van Heddeghem
rasmus@accattonefilms.be
+32 479 69 73 50

www.accattonefilms.be

**Distributor (BeNeLux) &
Belgian Press**

Avila
Niels Putman
niels.putman@avilofilm.be
+32 475 49 64 87

www.avilofilm.be

**PR Agency Berlinale
NOISE Film PR**

International press:
Mirjam Wiekenkamp
mirjam@noisefilmpr.com
+49 176 28771839

German press:
Dagny Kleber
dagny@noisefilmpr.com
+49 171 4024803

www.noisefilmpr.com

