

# SEX = SPEAK



65<sup>th</sup> Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin

Perspektive Deutsches Kino

Sprechfilm presents

# SEX = SPEAK

A documentary by  
**Saskia Walker & Ralf Hechelmann**



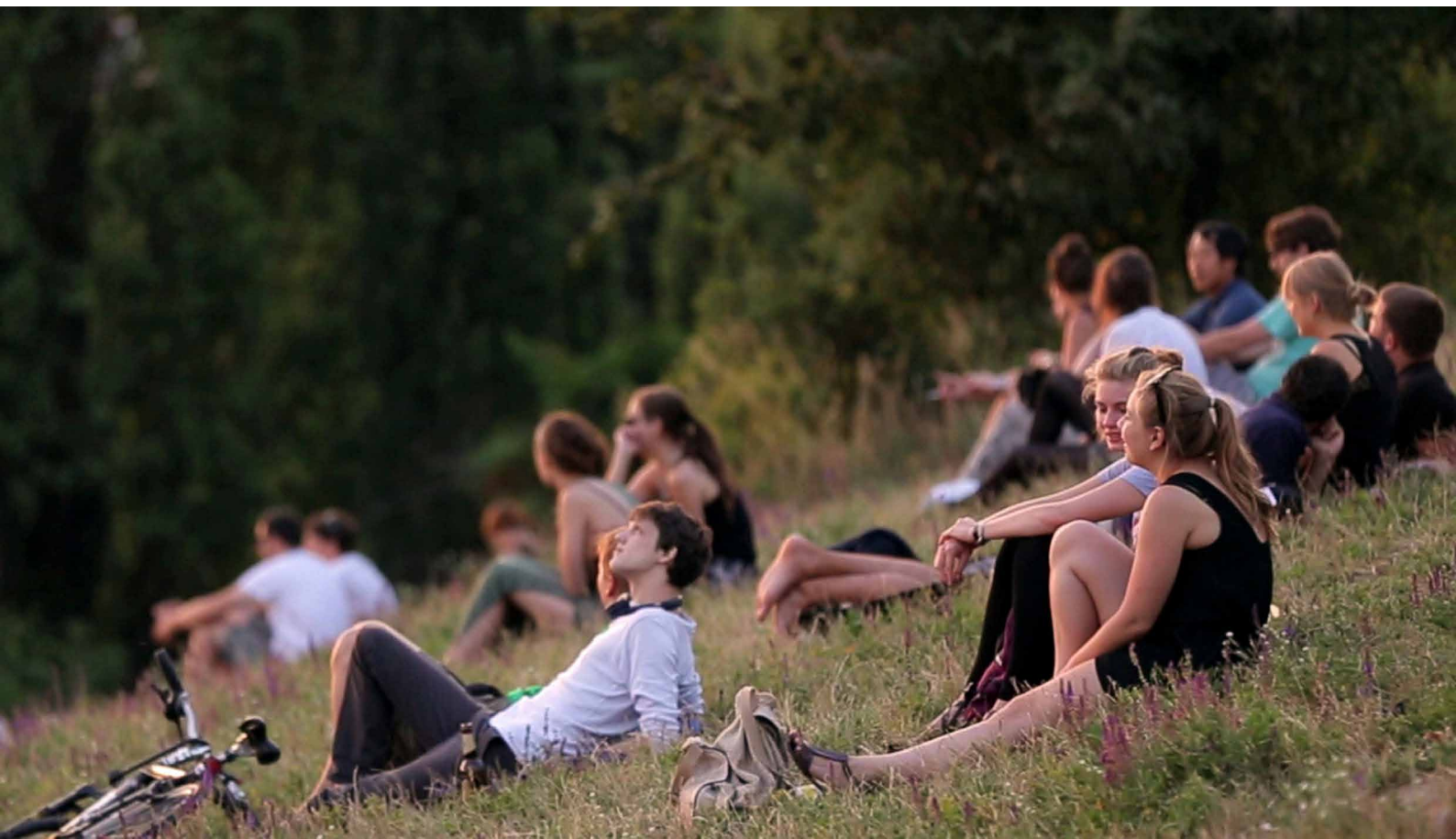
So far, I have only fallen for someone because she was pretty. Not because of character.

# Synopsis

Sex is the most beautiful thing in the world. But talking about it without straying into lascivious or becoming inhibited remains tricky. SEX:SPEAK believes in the power of free expression, the art of conversation, the miracle of the encounter.

Sixteen people ranging between the ages of 13 to 74 prove themselves to be practitioners of this discipline. It is a matter of insecurities and desires, of preferences and turn offs, of love and lifestyle.

A representative cross-section of society? Absolutely not! A statistically useful result? Still less! Fantastic advice? Not a bit of it! But it is a bold assembly of experimental data. Sober and playful. A documentary dance whose whole is more than the sum of its parts. What is it all about then? Actually, everything.



# Interview

## **How did Sex:Speak come to life?**

RALF HECHELMANN: Each time, we began by asking the question: "What do you think about sex?" That was always the starting point. As the question is so general, the answers we received were very different. And then, each conversation took its very own course. There was no set list of questions. We actually had conversations, not interviews.

## **Who are the people you are giving a voice in this film?**

SASKIA WALKER: They are your ordinary people next door. We only know a few of them well; most of them are chance acquaintances. All we knew is that they were willing to have a conversation with us about sex. That's something that can't be taken for granted.

## **How did you manage that even those protagonists that were strangers to you opened up during their interviews?**

RH: People were so open and ready to talk because we were, too. We didn't keep a low profile as interviewers, but talked a lot about ourselves as well.

SW: It may be of interest that the two of us always had the conversations with the protagonists together. We took part as a couple, and as such we also argued from time to time, or discussed the odd topic in front of them. In fact, we shared a lot of ourselves. The decision for us not to appear in the film was, in the end, for dramaturgical reasons. Without our questions, there was simply more suspense.

## **What does intimacy mean for you?**

RH: Not only what's explicit, in any case. I mean, for example, in what position you do it, how often, which fetish or whatever. For me, the intimate lies where the biological collides with the cultural. We are, after all, cultural beings who can't just follow our impulses and cravings. It's at that breaking point where someone really reveals oneself. It is the point where your personal secureness starts to crumble because you are talking about something that is a primitive state. Something that we always want to be able to control, but continually fail to. When that is talked about, things become really intimate.

SW: The film reveals the discrepancies between what we desire and what we are actually able to put into practice. Maybe, sex and sexuality are only on the surface of it really, and it is more about essentiality, because talking about sex involves that we touch on existential questions.

## **Why is homosexuality for example not talked about in your film?**

SW: Both homosexuals and heterosexuals participate. But we don't make this a topic.

RH: It's not interesting in my opinion. I am bisexual, and to be honest, I don't see any difference. Plus, there is no "directive" that says that when you make a film about sex and sexuality, you have to have at least one transsexual, one transvestite, one gay person, two lesbians and – very important – minimum one sadist and one masochist in it. And as an absolute must: two experts in each field.

**Were there any questions that weren't answered at all, or points during the interviews where protagonists reached a boundary, in terms of shame?**

SW: There were no unanswered questions. Each conversation had its particular dynamics. They were all like a box of magic – no one knew what would happen, not the protagonists, and not us. We didn't know either what they would say. So, we always started in a very general manner. Ralf's and my question styles are very different. One is quite brisk, the other one more reserved.

RH: The basis was to listen. If you really listen, you react to what has been said instead of thinking of the next question already. Only then it's a real conversation.

**Between the interviews, there are some breathers, i.e. breaks with poetic images from everyday city life in Berlin, combined with music. What's the idea behind that?**

SW: Our film is a talking film. So from time to time, you need a break. Well, I do.

RH: Yes, that pretty much says it all. Only one comment on the music. The music is also a statement. Just like the protagonists, the music is a character of its own and goes its own way.

**In your documentary, the camera is not fixed, but it moves slightly during the interviews. It seems to me like another observer in the room, a fifth person who sits at the table with you and observes the whole thing. Also, the image of the protagonist with the microphone in their hand is an unusual choice. What are the reasons behind these decisions?**

RH: Yes, the camera takes the role of an observer. An observer doesn't watch the entire time with exactly the same view; he or she breathes, and that's why we wanted to have a breathing camera. This was quite a special physical performance that our cameraman Andreas Haas delivered there. To hold a camera that still over a period of two or three hours is incredibly strenuous.

SW: As for the microphone: Whoever is holding it, is in power and can talk until finished. You can't hear anyone else then anyway. It is also a concentration aid in a way. You focus more on what you say. It leaves a bit of an old-fashioned impression, but we particularly liked that.

RH: You particularly liked that.

SW: In any case, the handheld mic creates a special intensity during speaking.

RH: C'mon. The truth is that we couldn't afford anything else. That's also

why you did the sound, even though you don't really know how to.

SW: Luckily we had a great sound designer.

**How did you finance the film?**

SW: We didn't. We applied for a grant from an institution, but it was rejected. Then, we made a trailer to put in a second application with the same institution. It was rejected again. If we had been more patient, we would have tried for other grants, but we didn't want to wait, and wait again. So we just kept filming.

RH: In actual fact, we had no money. So the film isn't even a low-budget film – it's a no-budget film. Although, that's not quite correct, because we did have a team of people who believed in our plans and invested in this undertaking with their skills and time and own equipment. However, that isn't the principle as far as realization and financing of our film projects are concerned. Also, we are good when it comes to handling other people's money. Funding institutions and broadcasters have to be good at that, too.

**You decided as a couple to also follow your artistic paths together.**

SW: That developed coincidentally. We met, and each of us had their different artistic jobs. Ralf was in theater, and I in the film business. Then we checked what our interests were and where they complemented each other.

**You have written a screenplay for a feature film. What's it about?**

RH: In short: About a couple that puts all cards on the table.

SW: Two people who decide to be a couple and don't want to be bothered with any form of lies or cheating. A man and a woman who want to meet each other in the reality.

RH: We are trying that, too. And sometimes it works well, and other times not so well.

SW: In that regard, Sex:Speak was also very inspiring for us.

ROMY SYDOW HELD THIS INTERVIEW ON JANUARY 28TH, 2015.



If I imagine I had to live with a woman. Why would I do that? If at all?  
A: Sex. B: Security.  
And then?



# Director's Statement

Based on our own experiences, we have, over years, been exploring new ways to examine, broaden and scrutinize the topics of love, and sex. The questions we raise are often painful, because they touch the individuals where they are vulnerable. To really open up to someone makes us feel exposed, fuels fear of loss and threatens our autarchy. To seal oneself off, however, and claim a status of satisfaction that is potentially only a reflection of one's own desires, is self-limiting.

Today, the options that are available to us individuals wanting to mate are manifold. How do we deal with this new freedom?

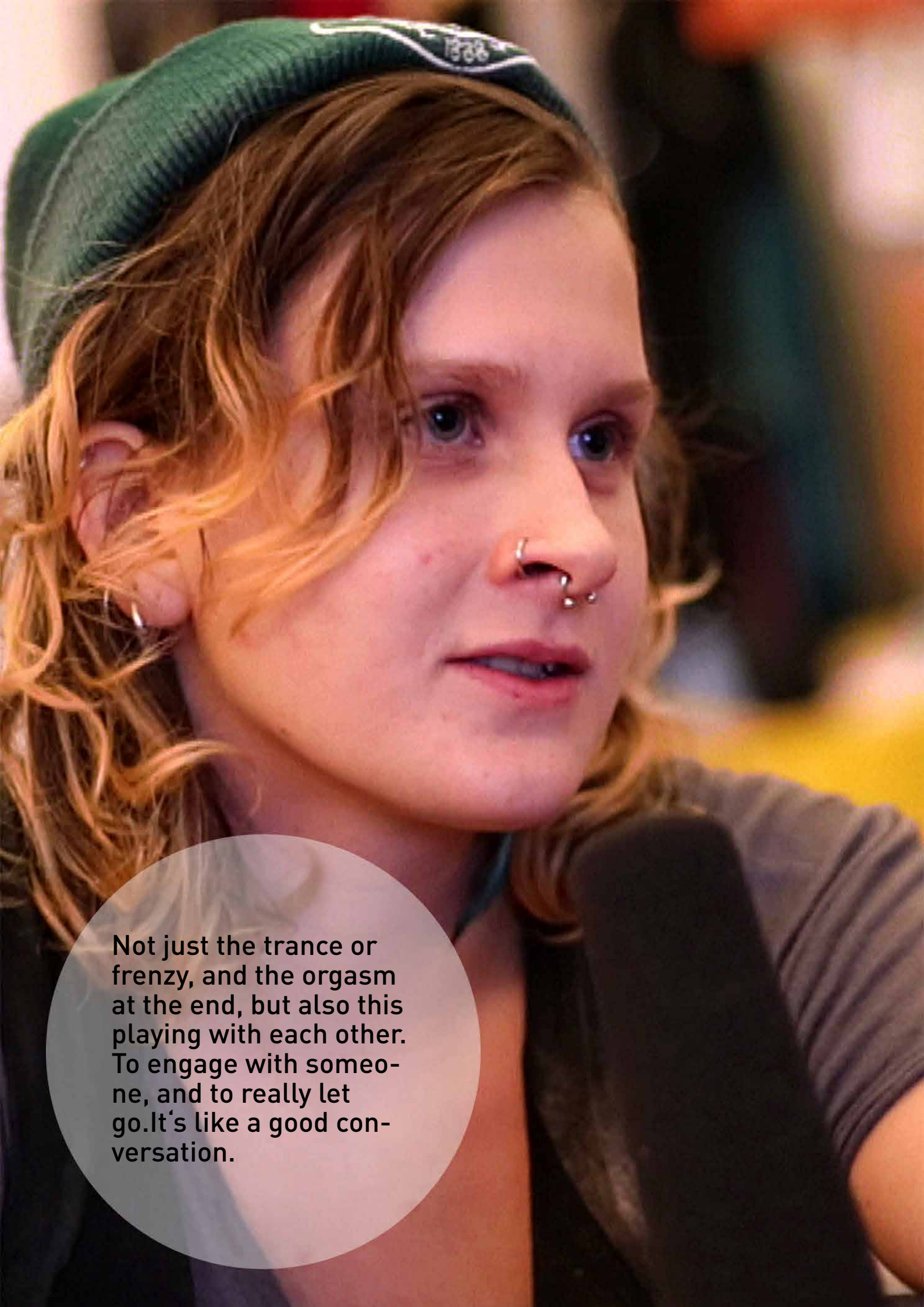
One can abstractly discuss almost anything. However, what happens when the questions are more concrete? There seems to be a lot of insecurity about what love really is, and how one should deal with their sexuality. Despite love being given the highest regard of all, and sexuality being omnipresent – actually speaking about love and sex continues to be strongly tabooed.

We will only find answers if, once the surface layers have been comprehensively mapped, an open discourse about the qualitative dimensions of sexuality follows. If we exactly examine how much love is possible. This is why we want to get others as well as ourselves talking. We want to talk about what is hidden behind any given category, preference or tendency. We want to explore coherences between a person's feelings, their personal circumstances, and the conditions imposed by society.

SEX:SPEAK is the first part of a series of films about our reality as filmmakers and as lovers.

Saskia Walker & Ralf Hechelmann



A close-up photograph of a young woman with blonde, wavy hair. She is wearing a green knit beanie with a white logo on the top. She has a nose ring in her left nostril and is looking slightly to the right. She is holding a black microphone in front of her mouth, suggesting she is speaking or performing. The background is blurred, showing warm, indoor lighting.

Not just the trance or frenzy, and the orgasm at the end, but also this playing with each other. To engage with someone, and to really let go. It's like a good conversation.

# Team

Directed by Saskia Walker, Ralf Hechelmann

Produced by Sprechfilm

Cinematography by Andreas Haas

Film Editing by Laia Prat

Music by Michael Gross

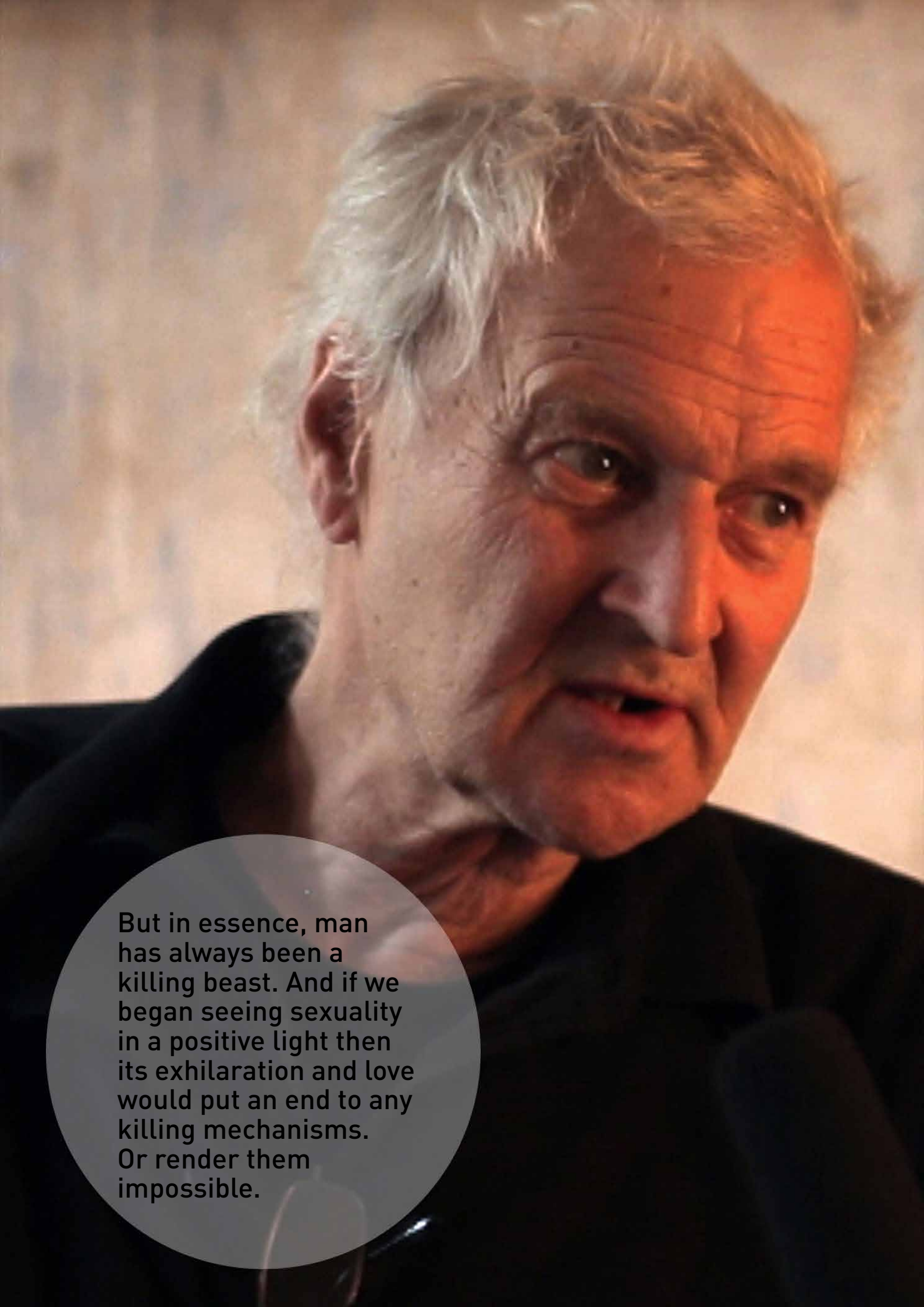
Sound Editing by Christian Conrad

Color Correction by Andreas Schellenberg

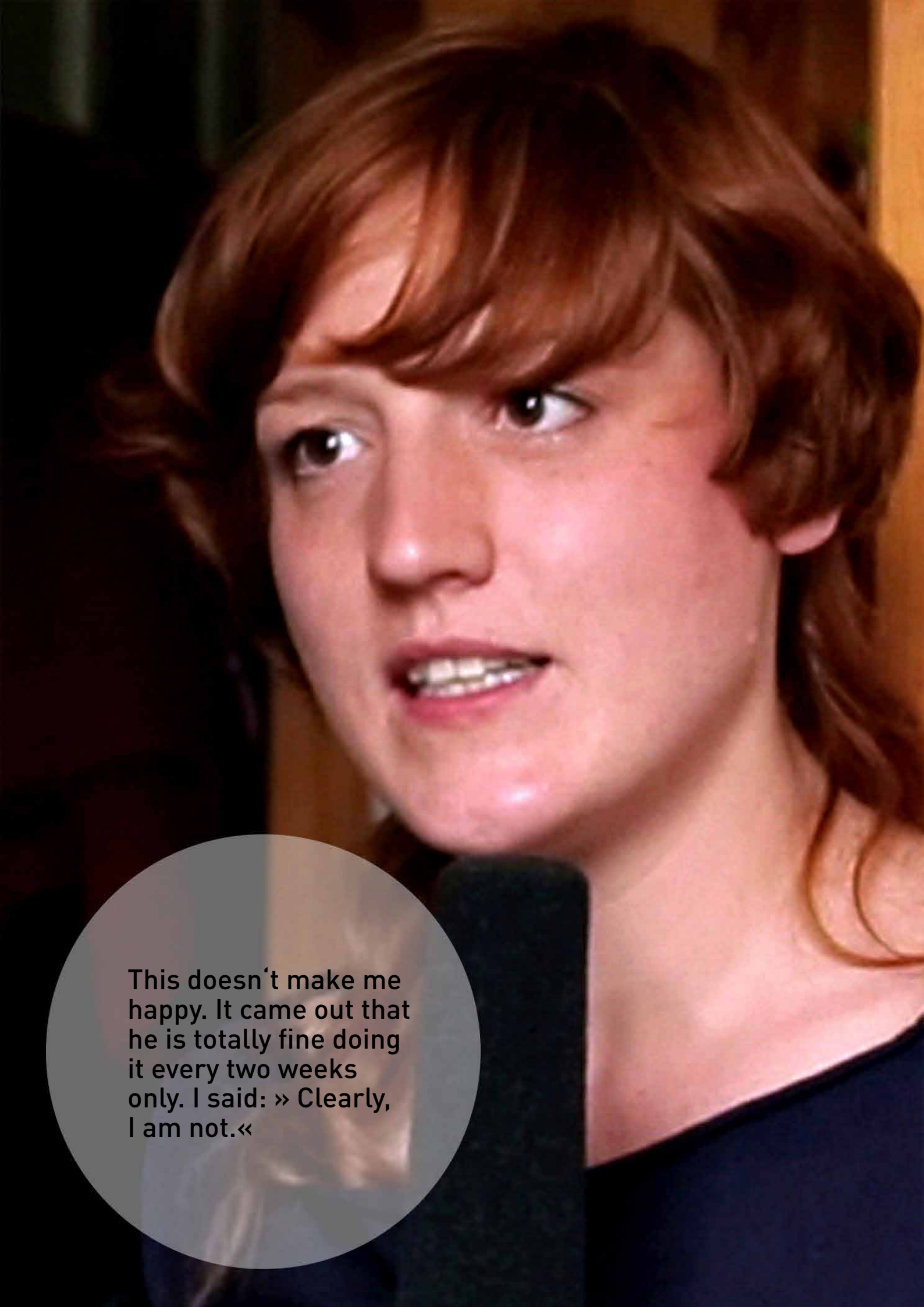
Germany, 2015, 80', colour, DCP, 5.1

Official website: [www.sex-speak.com](http://www.sex-speak.com)





But in essence, man has always been a killing beast. And if we began seeing sexuality in a positive light then its exhilaration and love would put an end to any killing mechanisms. Or render them impossible.



This doesn't make me happy. It came out that he is totally fine doing it every two weeks only. I said: » Clearly, I am not.«

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