



SUNBURNED

A FILM BY CAROLINA HELLSGÅRD

FEATURE FILM, 2K, 94 MIN., GERMANY / NETHERLANDS / POLAND

CONTACTS

PRODUCTION

NIKO FILM

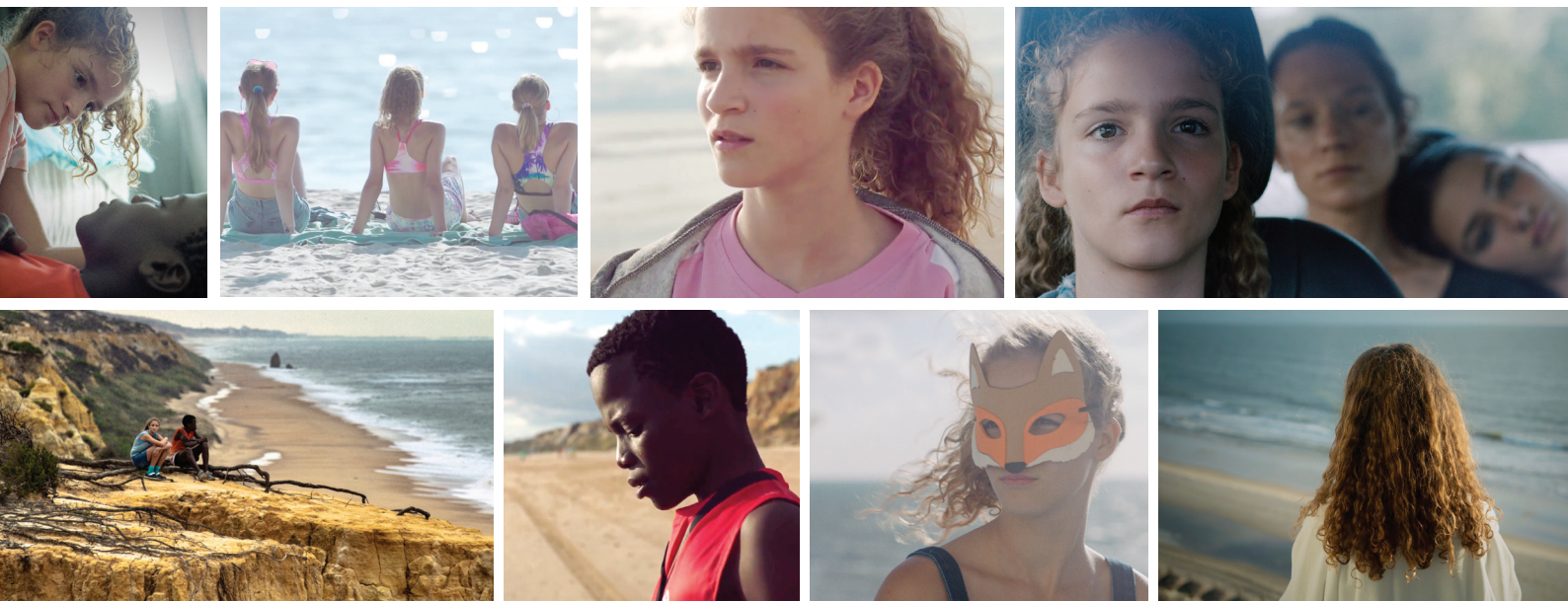
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SUNBURNED

LOG LINE

Feeling alone and neglected by her mother and older sister on their holiday in Spain, 13-year-old Claire is confronted with the much bigger problems of a young, struggling Senegalese beach vendor.

SYNOPSIS

Claire (13) is vacationing with her sister Zoe (15) and mother Sophie (40) at a resort hotel in southern Spain. Sophie spends her days by the pool and shows a minimum of interest in her daughters. In the beginning Claire clings to her older sister Zoe, who mercifully lets her tag along. But when Zoe meets a boy her own age, Claire is left alone. By the beach Claire befriends Amram, a young Senegalese beach vendor. As their relationship deepens, Claire tries to help him, but unintentionally ends up making his life even more complicated.

Writer & Director Carolina Hellsgård (EVER AFTER, WANJA)
 Produced by Nicole Gerhards / NiKo Film // GE
 Co-production Johanna Aust / FLICKFILM // GE
 Ineke Kanters / Jan van der Zanden / The Film Kitchen // NL
 Małgorzata Staroń / Staron Film // PL

Funded by BKM, FFA, The Netherlands Film Fund, Polish Film Institute, Film und
 Medienstiftung NRW, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Netherlands
 Film Production Incentive, nordmedia, Creative Europe MEDIA and
 German Films
 In co-production with WDR, SWR and arte

CAST, CREW, LOCATION



CAST

Claire
Amram
Sophie

Zoe

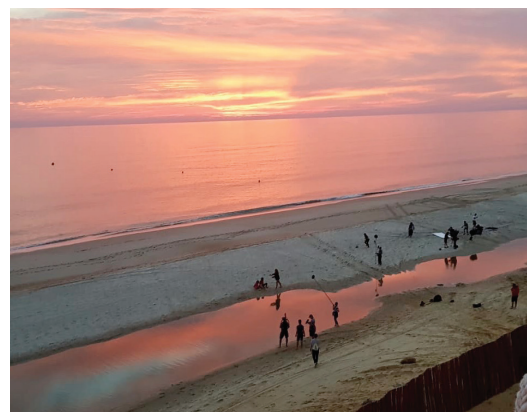
Zita Gaier (MAIKÄFER FLIEG)
Gedion Oduor Wekesa (STYX)
Sabine Timoteo (HOW I TAUGHT MYSELF TO BE A CHILD,
CRONOFOBIA, THE DRIFT)
Nicolais Borger (GUARDIANS)

CREW

Cinematographer	Wojciech Staron (Silver Bear for his outstanding artistic achievement for EL PREMIO)
Editor	Ruth Schönege (EVER AFTER, THE WICKED UNCLE)
Set design	Ben Zuydwijk (Golden Calf for J.KESSELS)
Sound design & Mix	Mark Glynne (Golden Calf for STAGES)
Music	Alex Simu (Golden Calf for BEYOND SLEEP)
Casting	Ulrike Müller & Jacqueline Rietz
Costume	Alette Kraan
Make-up	Susanne Woerle-Jiritano

LOCATION

South of Spain/Andalusia



STATEMENTS

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I remember my own vacations as a teenager with the family; the strange mix of apprehension and boredom that set in as the summer holidays began. The eternal power struggle between my sister and I, and how we alternated between being friends and in conflict with each other. I remember how the holidays allowed us to take on new personas, and how our teenage-selves evolved as we encountered new people. It was an intoxicating feeling, closely related to the promise of leaving our childhood behind. Our road to adulthood often took place against the backdrop of poverty and political unrest in the countries we visited. But like most tourists we indulged in the food, people and culture, instead of reflecting upon the circumstances. SUNBURNED is about all this; tourism, immigration and ultimately the dream about Europe. The film centers around the story of two young people and their shared longing for a better existence.

Carolina Hellsgård, Director

PRODUCER'S NOTE

In SUNBURNED the expectations of the western world clash with the hardships of the third world. Carolina Hellsgård intertwines the coming-of-age of a young girl with the refugee situation at the borders of Europe. 13-year-old Claire is trapped between child- and adulthood, and during a family holiday in Spain, her feelings of loneliness escalates. Desperately she reaches out for affection, and when she meets the Senegalese refugee boy Amram, her isolation seems to be broken.

Amram on the other hand is alone and has nothing; he fights with all his means for a way to survive. Both of them are in a precarious place, emotionally and literally and we feel, hope and fear for them. Their relationship begins with both children taking advantage of the other, but then it evolves into something else. This development is told with great sensitivity and authentic, reduced dialogues, set in natural, symbolic and sometimes almost magical scenes. SUNBURNED combines social and political themes with artistic and personal subject matters.

Nicole Gerhards & Johanna Aust, Producers

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/335165337>

CAROLINA HELLSGÅRD

BIOGRAPHY

Carolina Hellsgård

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* 14.06.1977 in Stockholm, Sweden

Carolina Hellsgård is a writer-director, born in Sweden and based in Berlin. She studied experimental media design at the Berlin University of Arts and film directing and screenwriting at Cal Arts in Los Angeles. Her critically acclaimed debut feature film WANJA premiered at the Berlinale 2015 and was nominated for Berlinale Best First Feature Award. It won Best Screenplay (Valletta FF) and Best Feature Film Debut at the Biberacher Filmfestspiele. It was theatrically released in Germany in the summer of 2016. Her second feature film ENDZEIT – EVER AFTER (Kleines Fernsehspiel / ARTE), premiered in the Discovery section at TIFF 2018, and has shown at a number of festivals; Filmfestival Max Ophüls Preis; Internationales Frauenfilmfestival Dortmund|Köln, Bilbao Fantasy Film Festival, Sydney IFF, Shanghai, Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival, Gothenburg IFF and at Carte Blanche: Mariette Rissenbeek on German Women Cinematographers at MoMA, NY. Hellsgård has been a recipient of the Dorothea Erxleben Fellowship, Berlin Women's Artist Grant and a guest lecturer at the Braunschweig University of Art (HBK). In 2017 she was a Villa Aurora Fellow in Los Angeles and in 2019 a medienboard Artist-in-Residence in Rome.

SUNBURNED is her third feature film project..

FILMOGRAPHY

2019 **SUNBURNED** (Feature, 94', Germany/The Netherlands/Poland)
2018 **ENDZEIT - EVER AFTER** (Feature, 90', Germany)
2015 **WANJA** (Feature, 87', Germany)
2013 **LÄUFER** (Short, 15', Germany)
2012 **HJÄLTAR** (Short, 15', Sweden)
2009 **HUNGER** (Short, 18', Germany)
2008 **KARAOKE** (Short, 15', Germany)

AWARDS

2015 Best Screenplay, Valletta Film Festival, Malta
2015 Bester Feature Film Debut, Biberacher Festspiele, Germany
2013 1. Prize exground Filmfest, Wiesbaden, Germany
2013 1. Prize Mostra de Cinema de Frontera, Spain
2010 1. Prize, Konstanzer Kurzfilmspiele, Germany
2010 Jury Prize, Cinema Jove Film Festival, Spain
2009 Jury Prize, Festival Internacional de Curtas, Belo Horizonte, Brazil
2009 Honorable Mention, Rio de Janeiro ISFF, Brazil
2008 1. Prize, Regensburger Kurzfilmwoche, Germany

NOMINATIONS

2015 Berlinale Best First Feature Award
2014 nominated for the German Critic's Award
2014 nominated for the Swedish Short Film Award
„Startsladden“ Göteborg International Film Festival, Sweden
2009 „Talent Award Editing“ by Film+
2008 Berlinale Talent Campus, Berlin Today Award

PRESS QUOTES WANJA (2015)

Hellsgård, together with her DOP Kathrin Krottenthaler, has created a fine balance between social realism and almost fairy-tale artificiality. (...) A remarkable and promising debut - staged with sensitivity, great images and powerful acting.

INDIEKINO.de, Toby Ashraf

From prison to the dump: Carolina Hellsgård's WANJA is a quiet and powerful debut feature about a young woman, fighting both herself and society. Anne Ratte-Polle plays the main role with nuance and intensity. Laura Tonke in HEDI SCHNEIDER STECKT FEST. The wolf-loving heroine of Nicolette Krebitz' WILD. Sandra Hüller in TONI ERDMANN and now: WANJA: this is the era of strange women in German cinema.

Der Tagesspiegel, Christiane Peitz

WANJA marks the feature debut of its director Carolina Hellsgård, who seems keen on maintaining a certain non-judgemental distance between audience and leading character, that allows her to be all the more real, in an unflinching portrait of a woman that is far from perfect. The overall approach may appear cold to the average cinematic viewer, but it can be more appropriately defined as lacking a will to spoonfeed its viewer. Hellsgård's film is also defined by admirable feminist vibes, stronger than perhaps intended, that mostly arise due to the behaviour of its archetypal masculine characters, who are either nice to the point of being obnoxious, downright exploital or annoyingly childish.

CINECOLA, Matt Micucci

The heartbeat of this film is Hellsgård's script; with its simple and sparse dialogue, it is able to show and never tell. The creation of WANJA is excellent, a blend of strength and uncertainty. (...)

This is a great film, with a protagonist not yet ready to give in, a masterly shot urban landscape and an eye on keeping the viewer engaged throughout. Hellsgård is a skilled filmmaker who understands story and keeps it at the forefront of her film.

TAKE ONE, Garry Pope

ENDZEIT(2018)

(...) once Vivi and Eva are forced off the train and start wandering the countryside, the forest seems to fold its arms around them, and ENDZEIT modestly deepens into beguiling mystery. (...) It's then, with the help of a runaway bride and some environmental hippie magic, that this blurry movie morphs into a fine fable about life, death and female self-determination (plus zombies).

The New York Times, Manohla Dargis

[...] how often do you get out of a zombie movie and wonder if you really belong to this earth[...]

Kino-Zeit.de, Beatrice Behn

Carolina Hellsgård's ENDZEIT initially seems like a classic zombie story. But then the film takes us into completely different realms.

F.A.Z, Andreas Platthaus

There is horror, terror, heart-pulsing intensity and fear, though equally accompanied by grief, loss, and regret. Go one step further, and the film reveals itself to be even more emotional, a plea against our treatment of the earth and a call to the basic human need for connection. This is not your typical zombie film. (...) Director Carolina Hellsgård brings Olivia Vieweg's story to life in arresting fashion, crafting a solid staple within the genre. However, it is her ability to not only capture but elevate each of the story's underlining layers that speak to near perfection.

Filminquiry.com, Stephanie Archer

NICOLE GERHARDS

BIOGRAPHY

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Exceptional films are our passion. Films bearing a distinct signature and an unique identity.

NICOLE GERHARDS studied Theatre and French in Paris as well as Film Production at the Deutsche Film and Fernsehakademie in Berlin. Since then she has (co-)produced 20 successful and award-winning films, almost all of them international co-productions. NiKo Film was the lead producer on eg. KILL ME and THE STRANGER IN ME by Emily Atef (Cannes - Semaine Internationale de la Critique), Kosovar Oscar-Entry BABAI by Visar Morina (International Film Festival Karlovy Vary – Competition), and co-producer on films like DOUBLE TAKE by Johan Grimonprez (Berlin International Film Festival 2009 – Forum Expanded), THE PRIZE by Paula Markovitch which won two Silver Bears at the Berlin International Film Festival 2011, amongst other accolades, Stina Werenfels' THE SEXUAL NEUROSES OF OUR PARENTS (Berlin International Film Festival 2015 - Panorama), THE MEMORY OF WATER by Matías Bize (Venice Days 2015), UNTIL THE BIRDS RETURN by Karim Moussaoui (Un Certain Regard, 2015) and PLOT 35 by Eric Caravaca (Séance Spéciale à l'officiel).

Furthermore ELECTRIC GIRL by Ziska Riemann had its international premiere in Busan, the German-Dutch-Polish co-production SUNBURNED by Carolina Hellsgård premiered at Alice nella Citta in Rome (both in 2019) and international co-production YALDA by Massoud Bakhshi will premiere in the World Cinema Dramatic Competition of Sundance Film Festival 2020.

NiKo Film is currently developing and financing three international co-productions; MISTER by Emily Atef, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PHILIP S. by Katalin Gödrös and ECHOES by Kai Gero Lenke.

Nicole Gerhards is a member of EAVE, ACE, the European and the German Film Academy. In 2012 she was chosen to represent Germany as Producer on the Move at the Cannes Film Festival and also took part in the Producers Lab Toronto and the prestigious Inside Pictures Programme.

INTERVIEWS

Building a connection with the world
– Carolina Hellsgård about her film *SUNBURNED*
Interviews by Thekla Dannenberg

SUNBURNED tells the story of the young Claire, who goes on vacation with her family to the Spanish Mediterranean. While being there, she meets the young African beach vendor Amram, and they initiate a relationship that takes place in an evocative and slightly surreal landscape, where games and burgeoning sexuality create a vague sense of danger of which the characters seem to be unaware of.

With Claire, I wanted to create a character who is not feeling at ease with herself, and is an outsider within her own family. When they go on vacation together, they are supposed to enjoy themselves, but Claire can't. She watches her mother's and sister's flirtation games and is merely confused. She doesn't yet grasp the concept of being desired, or desiring someone.

It was important to me that Claire would appear perfectly normal on the outside, she is cute, moves well, but yet she doesn't connect to the world. Her mother and her sister won't include her in their company and their interactions, and ultimately she feels lonely and somewhat lost. The non-communication within the family creates a sense of danger and almost thriller-like atmosphere.

Claire reminds me of Travis Bickle in *TAXI DRIVER*, who outwardly looks normal but doesn't fit in anywhere. Like Travis, Claire's way of relating to a love interest is somewhat awkward and wrong. In the beginning dealing with Amram, she is a quite unsympathetic and acts egotistically. But she also has an intuitive understanding and ultimately connects with Amram, since he is an outsider like herself.

In this film, continents meet, Europe and Africa, tourists and migrants. Claire experiences her first contact with an African beach vendor as an assault. Why start like that?

The meeting with the beach vendor triggers something in Claire. He touches her hand, nothing bad, but yes, it is a kind of violation. What's important is that it doesn't traumatise her – Claire doesn't become a victim, but understands something crucial. She realises that she too can be desired and then turns that around. She develops interests and desires on her own part, and quite unconventionally, decides that she will take action.

Claire gets to know Amram, a boy from Senegal who wants to sell her jewelry and other things. She wants adventure and he has to earn money.

To begin with, their relationship is definitely pragmatic, but they are also kindred spirits. Amram is on his own, and an outsider like Claire. He tells her quite openly that he needs money from the start. He wants five Euros and she gives them to him. He needs more money, so she gives him her mother's credit card. She's still a child so she isn't aware of the consequences of her actions. And maybe she's also a bit naive. But Amram's plight is acute and real, and Claire unlike many other people, reacts to that. That's why I like her so much.

What part does her family play?

The family provides the context for Claire, this is where she comes from, but if she wants to grow, she can't stay. Part of the reason why the family doesn't pay much attention to Claire, is because they are themselves trapped in different roles and mind sets. But I'm optimistic about all three women figuring it out. They will eventually find out what they actually want. Claire just happens to be the first one to achieve it. She leaves the family behind and embarks on a new journey. But the world is bigger and more complex than she anticipated.

Why is the mother so uninterested in her daughters?

I love the way Sabine Timoteo plays this clearly unsympathetic mother. It's a taboo, of course, but I thought it was important to show it as it is. Sabine and I developed a backstory about the mother being newly divorced and therefore seeking male attention and validation. She is convinced that her daughters will be fine without her, and that's why she doesn't pay so much attention to what they are doing.

Can you comment on the title SUNBURNED?

In one scene, Claire voluntarily gets a sunburn. It's a way of self punishing, but also about welcoming a new experience, although it hurts. Another aspect of the title is the dreamy connotation – if you get too much sun, you can't see things with the same clarity. Experiences and people become fleeting, and actions seem to have no real consequences.

The film relies entirely on the performance of its two young actors, Zita Gaier and Gedion Oduor Wekesa. Wasn't that a risk?

Of course, but we've taken lots of risks. Perhaps the biggest risk was the way we shot the film, in long takes and with little coverage. I knew Zita quite well after having spent a week in the countryside with her before we started shooting. But Gedion lives in Nairobi, and we couldn't rehearse with him before. We had to send a coach there. We'd seen him in *STYX* and knew that we wanted him for the role, even though Amram is from Senegal and would actually have to speak French. His patterns of movement are completely different than that of German teenagers.

SUNBURNED is a story about a Mediterranean vacation, but it's far from being a summery film. The cinematography by Wojciech Staroń has no lightness, no light, no shimmering air. There are some shots of the beach, but the architecture is austere, organized, and solid.

The whole film is blueish, which is connected to a melancholic feeling; a feeling of loss, a kind of mourning. There are two main losses in the film, Claire's loss of childhood, and the loss of immigrant lives in Europe. Wojciech's images brilliantly reflect these losses on an emotional level. We shot mainly indoors, to create a claustrophobic atmosphere. We worked a lot with mirroring surfaces, where Claire and the family appear to be trapped behind glass, disconnecting them from the world. There are hardly any panoramic shots; everything is shut in, because after all, these three women are caught in their existences, and initially can't get out. On the other hand, Amram is trapped as well. Spain has become a prison for him.

Wojciech and I, we both love Michelangelo Antonioni. His work is also very focused on austere architecture and the psychology of the characters – and full of shadows.

You filmed on the Spanish Mediterranean, near Huelva. But it's unrecognizable. Why does the place itself not matter?

It was important to me that the location shouldn't be obvious. I wanted the feeling that it could be anywhere – Italy, France, Greece. Even the scenes in north Africa shouldn't show a specific place, but the desert, a symbolic place. For some people living in African countries, there is no life, no future, no opportunities to develop themselves, or raise a family. Furthermore, climate change has worsened the living conditions. That's why they flee. It was important to me, that Amram going back to Africa, would in no way symbolise a solution. It rather means the end of his existence; desert, dust and death. Claire is not the typical white saviour, rather she is part of the problem, although she is more well-meaning than most other people.

How did you find the situation while you were filming? How were migrants, locals, and tourists interacting?

Most of the Senegalese I spoke to thought it was better to be beach vendors than working in the fruit industry, because they would often only earn twenty Euros a day there and they'd be living as captives in camps in the fields. That's virtually slavery. On the beach, at least they're free and not so lonely. The migrants also seem to get on reasonably well with the Spaniards. They aren't marginalised by people – only structurally. Many of them are quite young, but they aren't allowed to study. And in the winter, they all go to Paris, where they live in camps under the bridges. They have no perspective. But I found no racism – on the contrary. Actually most people are very nice to each other. The only people who were really bothered were always the tourists. When you're away from home, you take no responsibility, or have little understanding for migrants living in precarious situations.

Your previous films, WANJA and ENDZEIT [EVER AFTER], work more with genre elements. Why have you moved away from that in SUNBURNED?

I'm actually a very formal film maker - I like to make genre movies. But that just wasn't right for SUNBURNED. The film is not plot oriented but centers around emotions in its storytelling. SUNBURNED is very much a film about a limbo, about people being caught in different states of mind, trapped in preconceived roles. In a way I see the film as a kind of dream, or as if experiencing a memory, there are fleeting moments, which connect through emotions.

But I love genre. It's like a sonnet: you have to follow the pattern, but you can tell the story very atmospherically while doing that. I like that. My next film is going to be a heist movie, with bank robberies and lots of animals.

– Zita Gaier on her role as CLAIRE

Zita, you just turned thirteen and are playing the lead role in SUNBURNED. How did that happen?

I got cast. An e-casting to start with, then I didn't hear anything for months. Then suddenly I got a call from Berlin and another casting, this time with the director, Carolina Hellsgård. After that things moved quite fast, it was actually really fun. But Claire isn't my first role. I played the young Christine Nöstlinger in MAIKÄFER, FLIEG (FLY AWAY HOME) in 2015. I did dance training outside school during 5th and 6th grade, so I had no spare time. During that time I only did small roles.

How did you prepare for the role of Claire?

In terms of performing, I did a lot of improvisation. As for the story, Carolina, Sabine (playing Claire's mother), Nico (her sister) and I talked a lot about it, and about the back story that isn't told in the screenplay. Trying to get into the mind of the characters. You also start a grow with the role a bit. And of course, our coach Jakob helped a lot too. He was massively important, for me, for all of us.

Amram comes from Senegal. He's trying to earn money any way he can. But he too is still almost a child.

Like thousands of others, he's been sent to Europe with the hope of a good, or better life, and also to help the family back home. And then he's stranded, literally, in Spain, at the exact place where jaded western civilization spends its vacations. So he stands for all those whose dream of Europe has blown up in their faces.

Is Claire an example for you?

I'd definitely see her as an example because she has the courage to change something and not just talk about it, really do something. She doesn't let fear get to her - she does what she can in her situation.

She often doesn't clearly foresee the consequences of her actions.

She only realises some things afterwards, like when she steals her mother's credit card to give it to Amram. She does it because she wants to help but she doesn't think about the consequences. After all, it was a really dumb idea as far as Amram was concerned - the other beach vendors beat him up for it. They know that a stolen credit card is absolutely no use to them. They're more afraid that the police are going to come and clear their camp.

What do you think attracts them to each other? Their similarities or their differences?

Neither. They do have things in common but they aren't similar. I think they each give each other something. Things they're both looking for: consolation and stability.

There are many moving and touching moments in the film: they fall in love a bit, she makes a fool of herself in the dance group, and on one occasion she even carelessly puts Amram's existence in jeopardy. Which scene means the most to you?

The most important scene for me is in the boat when they're going to Morocco. The mother and sister want to go back, but that would be the worst thing in the world for Claire. Because Amram is hidden aboard the boat. If they turned around, it would all have been for nothing. That's the first time she emerges in full, kind of explodes and really tells them how she's feeling. And what she wants.

What was the most difficult part for you?

The most difficult from an acting perspective was the scene where Claire is running along the beach, crying. We filmed it at sunset, so there was huge pressure. We only had time for one take, and everything had to be in it.

And the nicest part?

The nicest bit for me was when we went filming in the Tabernas Desert, the only desert in Europe. That was incredible. The view! The sunset! It was wild.

What was it like working with Gedion? He lives in Nairobi and only met you the day before you started filming.

It was fun! We get on really well and it was really great filming with him.

How was that time on the Mediterranean in Spain for you?

It was an incredibly beautiful time for me. The filming locations were fantastic and the team was so fun and really special. We filmed for six weeks, from mid-October to late November. I was allowed off school for that period. For some subjects, I was given the material in advance, but in maths, for example, I had to do everything alongside. But it went pretty well. I always got everything sent to me by my classmates or the teachers. Really nice.

What did you learn, working on the film?

You know immediately on the set that the team spirit is incredibly important. And respect for the work of others. Whether you're in front of the camera or behind it. You need that cohesion. The better everyone understands each other, the better the project will be. And it was even more extreme for us because we were in this little seaside place and the whole team was staying in the same hotel together. The village was a pretend place - nothing but vacation apartments. So in November it was empty, there wasn't a soul there. Like a ghost town. A really weird atmosphere.

And what do you think the others learned?

That's hard for me to say. Probably a bit of Viennese dialect!

– *Gedion Oduor Wekesa on his role as AMRAM*

How did you come to the project?

I'm a drama student with ANNO'S ONE FINE DAY and one day our drama class teacher Godfrey Ojiambo told us that there was an audition for an international film. We auditioned and I was shortlisted. Later I did an online audition with the director and the acting coach Jakob and that's how I landed the role.

Can you tell us something about your background?

I'm the first born in a family of four. My two sisters and one brother live with my single mother in our rural home. I stay in the city with my grandmother who works as a tailor. I've never met my father so my mother and grandmother have been my support throughout. My mother does some farming so that she can take care of our needs.

How did you prepare for the role?

I used the experience that I had acquired in my drama class and also got a lot of help from my Drama teacher and the entire Annos One fine day team. I had to read the script over and over to understand the story and also build my character. My colleagues who also auditioned helped me a lot to read and act out some of the parts in the script.

How do you see the young Amram? Do you think he is a poor boy, who has made terrible experiences? Or is he a strong character?

Amram is a poor boy who has made some terrible decisions that I think were necessary to be able to provide for his family. I believe he is strong because he had to go through difficult situations but still kept focused. He is also a dream chaser because he worked hard in Europe to make sure that his dreams come true.

Claire is having a crush on him. She is a good person, but still a child. She is playing, while he is fighting for survival. What does he think of her?

Claire, despite having her own personal issues, is a good person. Her crush on Amram is genuine which helped him become a better person and make good decisions. He also thinks that Claire might be able to help him secure a good future for his family.

Claire is changing a lot over this week. Is Amram changing as well?

Yes, as Claire grows she inspires Amram to grow too. He also finds a friend in Claire who encourages him.

What does Amram think of Europe?

Amram thinks of Europe as the best place to be and the best place one can easily achieve their dreams.

What good or bad impressions would he take back home?

The bad impression he would take home was when he was discriminated in the disco but the good impressions would be how he was treated by people like Claire.

What moments did you find the hardest? The most beautiful?

The hardest moment was when I had to be kissed by Claire. I have never kissed anyone in my life so this was hard and interesting for me. The most beautiful moment was when I played with horses since I love horses very much.

What did you learn during the work with the film?

Working on the film taught me how to relate to different kinds of people and also how to communicate with them despite the difference in language.

What do you think the others learned from you?

People learnt a lot from me, like how Africa is different from the image portrayed out there. I taught a few people how to communicate in Swahili which is my national language.

What would you like the audience to learn from Amram?

What I would like people to learn from Amram is that you can achieve anything no matter where you come from or what you are going through so as long as you work hard towards your dreams. Also that family is the most valuable gift that one can have and we should be thankful for them.

How did you like the Mediterranean?

It was the best experience that I ever had. The weather was sometimes harsh but favorable, I liked the resort very much and would like to visit it again if I have the possibility.

– Nicole Gerhards on producing *SUNBURNED*

SUNBURNED addresses many topics that are of urgent interest at the moment. Escape and migration, the encounter with what is new or strange - and at the same time, the Mediterranean, vacation experiences, family, growing up. Which was the most important aspect for you?

As a mother of two daughters of that age, I immediately identified very strongly with the story. This is a relationship that is full of love at the same time as being sensitive and highly explosive, reflecting and often amplified by the blossoming and puberty of the daughters happening alongside the ageing of the mother — who, however, still feels and behaves like a young girl. I thought that the script narrated these dynamics in a very amusing way, and as things developed I was also able to bring in some things I knew from my daughters and myself. I also found it especially beautiful to tell a refugee's story, through Claire's eyes. Claire meets Amram with a mixture of neutrality and naiveté, and to begin with her priority is to break out of her own loneliness. It moved me greatly that Amram actually doesn't dream of being in Europe at all - all he really wants is to go home.

As the producer, how have you found the reactions towards the film project? Did you feel a demand for such a film? Or were people resistant?

Carolina started developing *SUNBURNED* before the migration wave of 2015. By the time we started with financing, there were already a lot of screenplays and films telling stories of refugees. So we were a bit concerned that there might be a negative impact for us. But in general, *SUNBURNED* hasn't been 'branded' like that. Almost all reactions were very sympathetic and positive.

How important was working with Carolina for you?

The director is at least as important, when it comes to choosing a project, as the screenplay. I love Carolina's black humor and her talent for storytelling. She knows exactly what she wants, but at the same time she's realistic and personable. She was an outstanding team leader - everyone was highly motivated. This was a very good collaboration.

The cast and crew are highly diverse and international. Was that intentional or coincidental?

SUNBURNED is a coproduction between Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland and it's set in Spain. So from the outset we had a team from all these countries. Carolina and our German co-producer Johanna are Swedes, and Gedion (Amram) is from Kenya. Of course, we didn't plan for Zita (Claire) being from Austria and Sabine Timoteo (Claire's mother) being Swiss - that just happened through casting. But we all loved that this was such an international team yet at the same time so absolutely homogeneous. A lot of people were together for eight weeks in the hotel where the film is set, yet there were no symptoms of cabin fever at all - on the contrary, the team only grew closer together! A lot of our own children also took acting roles or were with us doing practical work experience. So the team spanned several generations, which created a very warm, family-like atmosphere. And that was very supportive – not just for the young actors but for the adults too.

Can you talk a bit about why you chose particular people?

Wojciech Staroń was the cinematographer for Paula Markovitch's film *EL PREMIO*, which I coproduced. And he won a Silver Bear at the 2011 Berlinale for his outstanding artistic achievement. He's shot many films in South America, most of them with children in the leading roles. He's a wonderful person. I was convinced that Carolina and Wojciech would work very well together. Of course, a decision like that can only be made together with the director. Poland was also an exciting choice as a coproduction country. Zita had this enormous energy and naturalness about her, and some experience. But she couldn't have done it if the financing hadn't taken so long. Gedion had already appeared in *STYX*. For me, finding the right Amram was one of the biggest challenges. Jakob Fischer, a children's and acting coach, went to Nairobi to do this. He casted several boys there and worked a lot with Gedion before we finally chose him.

What was it like working with Zita and Gedion?

Fantastic. Both had made films before and knew very well what to expect. Zita was in every shot. She has a great emotional and acting intelligence, is incredibly professional and has ferocious energy. As does Gedion. And of course it was a lot more difficult for him, because he was in a completely different cultural sphere and could only talk in English, which is not his first language. Both of them have done deeply impressive work here. We had an enormous workload, and we always had to do it within the legally stipulated work hours for young people, so we had no time for bad moods.

Were you in Spain with them? If so, what was that like for you? Did it change your view of the Mediterranean?

I spent a lot of time at the shooting location. We lived in a little bubble there, a village that stretches along several kilometers of a very beautiful beach in the middle of a nature reserve - it used to attract tourists from all countries, but now there tends to be mainly Spaniards. But then, when we spent the last few days filming in Almería, where most Spanish vegetables are grown, we did get an inkling of how precarious living conditions are for the mostly African workforce there.

How close does the finished film come to your original concepts?

Very close. Of course, editing changes things again, and for various reasons decisions are made to cut certain scenes, because they aren't needed or because emphases have shifted. Sometimes, external constraints also mean that a scene develops differently from how it was planned. This means that almost every film differs from the screenplay and the former concept of the film. In any case, I'm very happy with the result.