

A film by **Jan van den Berg and Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann**

## **Press Information**



# SILENT SNOW

THE INVISIBLE POISONING OF THE WORLD

# SILENT SNOW

THE INVISIBLE POISONING OF THE WORLD



A film by Jan van den Berg and Pípaluk Knudsen-Ostermann



**Pipaluk, a young Inuit, starts a search for the silent assassin that slowly poisons her people. A journey through three continents makes it clear that persistent pesticides are not only threatening her own country, but the whole world.**

The white Arctic plains are an eminent example of nature's untouched beauty: an endless nothing in which only few know how to survive. But a silent assassin is destroying the Inuit community in Greenland. Chemical residues from all over the world accumulate here invisibly, poisoning both humans and animals. By ocean currents and attached to snow, pesticides like DDT are carried northbound into Inuit land, causing illness and premature death.

In *Silent Snow*, a group of experienced Inuit starts out on a dangerous dog-sledge expedition through their barren land. But while global warming and disappearing icebergs are problems they can perceive directly, the pollution of their land remains a hard to imagine threat.

Interwoven with the polar expedition, *Silent Snow* follows a young Greenlandic woman (Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann) on her journey around the world to find the local causes of the contamination that is quietly

poisoning her people. Her journey takes her to three

different continents, where she is confronted with conflicting interests when it comes to short-term gains and healthy solutions for agriculture, industries and health care. She meets the people behind the sources of pollution and discovers the heartbreaking dilemmas that lie at the heart of it. For example in Africa, where some people are looking for alternatives for DDT, however its grey poisonous clouds are a cheap way of saving millions of lives in malaria prevention. The disastrous health issues that result on the long term are conveniently put aside. In Central America, Pipaluk meets plantation workers who suffer from various diseases as a result of the use of dangerous pesticides. In India, a riverkeeper who fights against the contamination of the river tells her that people from his own community threaten him, as they depend financially on the chemical factories there.



## The Silent Snow project

The Silent Snow project aims to raise awareness of pollution caused by persistent pollutants and consists of both a short film and a feature length documentary by Dutch filmmaker Jan van den Berg, educational material for schools and a website: [www.silentsnow.org](http://www.silentsnow.org). Silent Snow is a documentary project investigating, together with the people who are affected the most, what turns out to be a structural pollution of the entire global environmental system. The Silent Snow project offers a platform to people who fight for healthier alternatives for pesticides.

In the short film the subject is introduced by following two young girls in Greenland and the way in which they are confronted with the pollution of their environment. Since its premiere at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) November 2007, the 14 minute Silent Snow short film has been selected for over 100 international film festivals, such as Sapporo Short Fest Japan, Los Angeles Film Festival and World Wide Short Film Festival Toronto. The short film won several awards for Best Short Film (i.e. at the Green Film Festival Seoul and Slow Food on Film Festival Bologna). It has been embedded in educational packages on human rights and the environment in Japan, the Czech Republic, The US, and South Korea and was broadcasted in several countries. In



the US alone it reached about seven million viewers. In the Netherlands it was included in educational material linked to the International Polar Year. The feature length documentary continues where the short film has left off. Besides the consequences on the Arctic, it shows the sources results of the silent pollution in the rest of the world.

## The director and co-writer's opinion



**Jan van den Berg:** "The discrepancy between the magnificence of this seemingly untouched white land and the steady but invisible destruction of this area by developments elsewhere in the world is the essential drama I wished to capture. Together with Pipaluk, I wanted to find out why this is happening and understand the perspective's of the different people involved; the victims, the producers, and those who try to fight for solutions".

**Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann:** "Our life is threatened by dangerous pesticides. They travel up North by ocean currents and winds and have horrifying effects on people's health, causing all sorts of cancer and fertility problems. As a young woman who would like to have a child in the future, I was very worried and wanted to make this film in order to search for answers and solutions. The work and traveling that I did in order to make Silent Snow really opened my eyes in many ways. I met many interesting and brave people who literally invited me into their living room to tell me their personal stories. These people are living a life influenced by man made threats but



they fight and don't give up the dream of a better and healthier life. We are all affected by this pollution, but we can actually fight it".

## Quotes from the film



**Don Timoteo Jackson, indigenous Bri Bri leader in Costa Rica:**

“They use mercury and contaminate our rivers. We lived in harmony with nature but greed is destroying it all. “

- **Ellady Muyambi van Toxic free Uganda:**

“Chemical companies from the US paid people here to spray DDT instead of promoting healthier alternatives, like mosquito nets.”

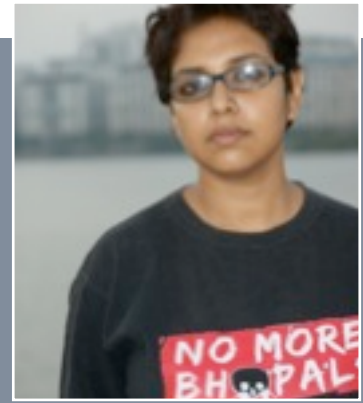


- **Henriette Rasmussen, former minister, Greenland:**

“Our natural diet has been polluted so much that the doctors are warning us that breast-feeding or pregnant women should not eat it any longer.”

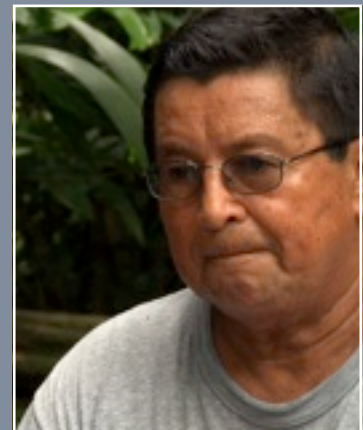


- **Jose, river keeper for Greenpeace in India:** “ Most polluting factories are owned by the government. Who will take action against them? They use the water and, after the production, dump the effluence in our river. They have illegal pipes. All the fish die. They have no right to pollute the river like that.”



**Shweta Narayan fights against pesticides in India:**

“I’m scared even to have a baby because I might have been exposed to chemicals. They are capable of causing many birth defects.”



**Nemesio Tores Torres**

**plantation-worker in Costa Rica:** “They knew that this product was prohibited in the US, but they allowed the use of it here. Many of us became blind and impotent, or died of cancer. They transport these contaminated bananas and other fruits abroad.”



**Hunter in Greenland:** The ice is thinner every year. We hardly see polar bears anymore.”



• **Anjana, cotton farmer in India:** “We thought the new seeds would be an improvement, but it didn’t turn out the way we hoped. They’ve cheated us and my husband had to spray even more pesticides.”



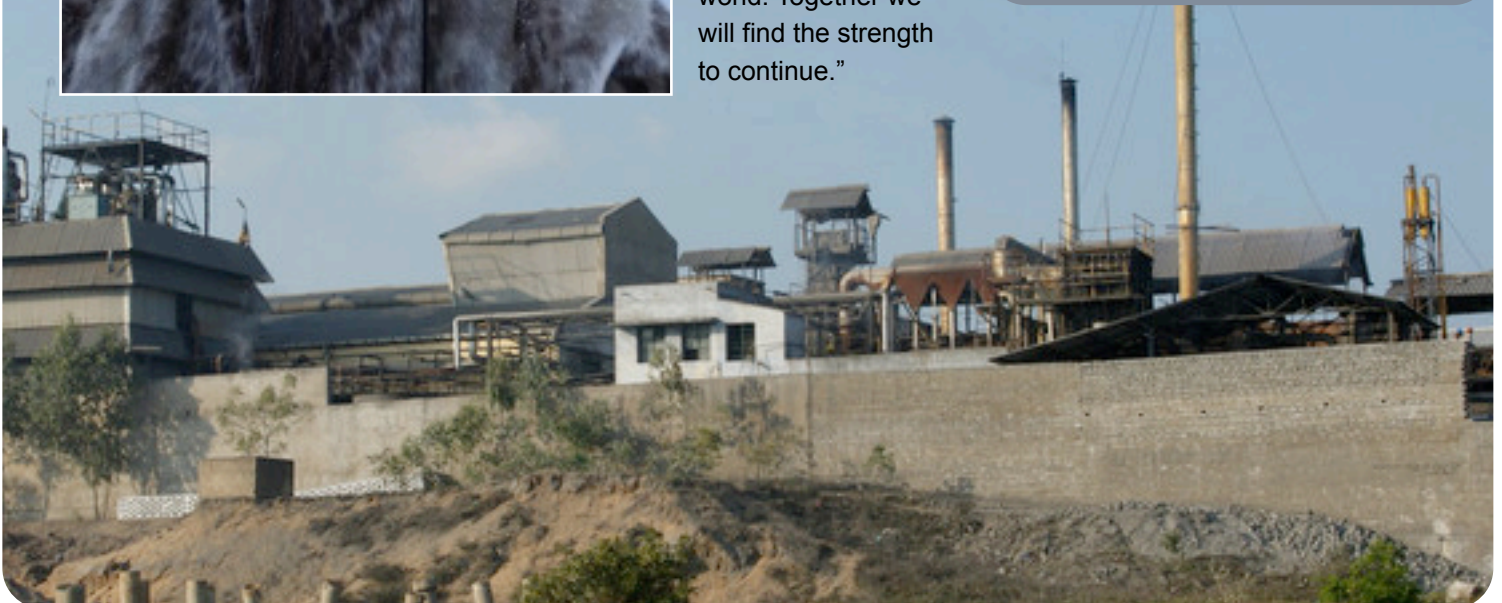
**Mother in Tanzania:** “The children are still getting malaria and nobody wants to buy our eco-cotton anymore because it contains DDT as a result of the reckless spraying.”



• **Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann, Greenland:** “My only consolation is that on my journey I met many wonderful people willing to fight against the silent poisoning of the world. Together we will find the strength to continue.”



**Srinivasan, cotton farmer in India:** “We need to cut back the use of fertilizers and pesticides but multinationals and the state produce new seeds that need even more pesticides. Farmers have no voice in this process.”





## Reviews

**"Many thanks for this important work!"**  
Kathryn Gilje, Pesticide Action Network  
New York

**"Thank you for the deeply touching and inspiring film. I feel really honored to have watched the movie in Nairobi. The film is very powerful and genuine."**  
Negusu Aklilu, Director, Forum for Environment  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**"Our warmest congratulations for this great movie. It is very educational and touching."**  
Aileen Yap and James Soh  
National Youth Achievement Award Council  
Singapore

**"Silent Snow is more than a beautifully photographed travelogue. It's a call to arms in the battle to save our planet."**  
Shirrel Rhoades  
Solaris Hill, Key West  
Florida

**"With breathtaking images of nature, Golden Calf winner Jan van den Berg emphasizes both the beauty and vulnerability of our world."**  
Movies that Matter festival, The Hague  
The Netherlands

**"A well meaning and instructive film. A melancholic reminder that environmental treaties only work if everyone complies: if they are spraying DDT somewhere, they are spraying it everywhere."**  
Talha Burki  
The Lancet Oncology  
London, UK

**"A fantastic and powerful movie!"**  
Sabina Bacia  
Cluburile de film One World, Roemenie.

**"A poetic, but also an activist film."**  
Wendy Koops  
Down to Earth! Magazine, the Netherlands



# Jan van den Berg and drsFILM

Writers, artists and filmmakers are working together in this production company, founded by Jan van den Berg, who in the early seventies started making films from his original field of study, cultural anthropology. Since that time drsFILM made many documentaries and drama productions. The films are mostly about people at the cutting edge between cultures. Jan van den Berg made several earlier films on environmental issues, like Gallow Creek (2009) and Taming the Floods (1999).

- **2007: SILENT SNOW**

Short film on the silent poisoning of the Arctic. Was screened in many countries after its premiere on IDFA 2007. Stop Global Warming Award and J-Wave Audience Award, Short Shorts Film Festival In Japan / First Prize Planet in Focus, Toronto / Best International Film, HRAFF Australia / Prix du meilleur court métrage, FIFFEL, Lausanne / Children Earth Vision Award, Japan / Golden Snail, Slow Food on Film Festival Bologna / Honorable Mentions at INKAFEST Peru and HR Film Fest. Buenos Aires / First Prize Green Film Fest Seoul. See: [www.silentsnow.org](http://www.silentsnow.org).

"The film is visually striking and uses the subtle, delicate and unsentimentally-told story of two young girls in an isolated and unfamiliar land to shed light on a powerful story of global significance"

- Jury Slow Food on Film Festival, Italy



- **2009: GALLOW CREEK**

A girl, fighting to preserve a unique forest comes up against a real estate developer in Limburg, The Netherlands. See: [www.hetgalgenven.nl](http://www.hetgalgenven.nl).

"The nature and cinematography of Gallow Creek resembles the documentary work of David Attenborough. The amazing acting qualities of the local theater ensemble and use of the local dialect, address your imagination. The film can be called non-Dutch in that way."

- Michelle Lentz in XI mediasite

- **2001: TAMING THE FLOODS**

Landscape architect Jan Dijkstra has a dream: the introduction of new nature on a large scale. When he is sent to Poland he grabs his chance and starts to work on creating a large river reserve on which man will exert no control. But he has not taken into account the needs and wishes of the local farmers. Nominated for a Dutch Academy Award. The jury: "A fascinating film on a fascinating topic."



## Human Rights:

Human rights are also an important theme in the work of Jan van den Berg. The series of "War after Peace" are an excellent example. It shows how people from different cultural backgrounds still fight the war in their minds, long after the actual war is over. Jan van den Berg made several films in a.o. Afghanistan, Sudan, East Timor and Cambodia for this series.

- **2004: DEACON OF DEATH, Looking for justice in today's Cambodia.**

Looking for justice in today's Cambodia. A Golden Calf at the Dutch Film Festival. The jury: "a moving story in which a Cambodian woman dares to confront the man whom she holds responsible for the death of her family. Convincingly and with respect the director has depicted this almost classic drama of good and evil, crime, punishment and forgiveness."

"A tale so intimate and suspenseful that it has the feel of a novel."

- Anne-Marie O'Connor in de Los Angeles Times

## Upcoming:

- **NO FIGHT NO VICTORY**

Documentary on the fight against hunger in Brazil.

- **UTRECHT AT SEA**

A series of portraits of Utrecht born artists e.g.; author and illustrator Dick Bruna, violinist Janine Jansen and architect Gerrit Rietveld. The start of the international distribution is planned in 2013, just before the celebrations of three hundred years Peace of Utrecht.

- **FIEN DE LA MAR**

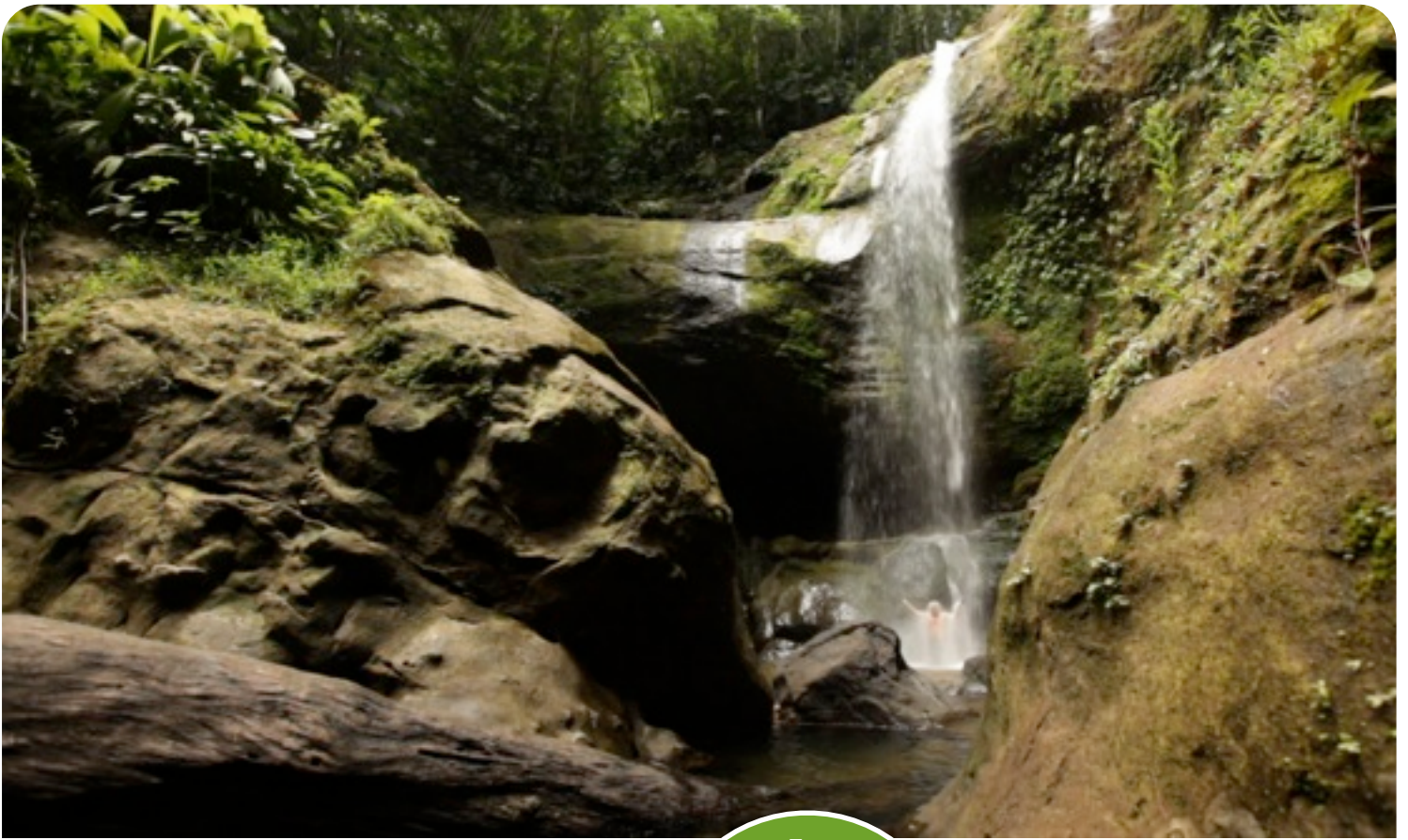
Film about Dutch actress Fien de la Mar.

## Awards:

many awards on international film festivals, a.o. a Golden Calf for Deacon of Death, looking for justice in today's Cambodia (Dutch Film Festival), Golden Snail for the short Silent Snow film (Bologna) and a Golden Key for Bye Jan (Lorquin, France).

More information on these films and drsFILM:

[www.drsvilm.tv](http://www.drsvilm.tv) en [www.silentsnow.org](http://www.silentsnow.org)



## SCREENING DATA 2011

- World premiere UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya: Feb 20
- Movies that Matter Festival: March 27 - 30
- Tallahassee Film Festival, US: April 8 - 9
- Tropic Cinema, Key West, VS: April 10
- Conference Stockholm Convention, Geneva: April 27
- ARGUS film-forum, Antwerp Belgium: May 18
- Parnu International Film Festival, Estonia: July 4 - 17
- Dutch premiere, Tuschinski Amsterdam: Sept 6
- HCH and Pesticide forum, Azerbaijan: Sept 8
- Dutch Film Festival, Utrecht: Sept 18 - 30
- Int. Film Festival Hamburg, Germany: Sept 29 - Oct 10
- Ekofilm, Czech Republic: Oct 3 - 9
- Pariscience, France: Oct 6 - 11
- Planet in Focus Environmental Film Fest, Canada: Oct 12 - 13
- Panama and Costa Rica: Oct 12- 25
- Inconvenient Film Festival, Vilnius, Lithuania: Oct 20 - 30
- Biovision Symposium Zurich, Switzerland: Nov 12
- Premiere Nürnberg, Germany: Nov 20
- Screenings in several Dutch cinemas: Oct - Dec

For  
more screening  
data check  
[www.silentsnow.org](http://www.silentsnow.org)



Executive producer John Padget, Jan van den Berg and filmmaker and journalist Shirrel Rhoades in Florida.



Jan van den Berg with Andreas Schriber (BioVision) and Michael Stanley-Jones (SafePlanet) in Geneva.



Polar explorer Ole Jørgen Hammeken, Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann and Jan van den Berg in The Hague.

## Credits

A film by Jan van den Berg & Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann

Partners: Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation (BOS), Lichtpunt (Canvas Belgium), Rotterdam Media Fonds, TVP Poland, Jade Foundation, CoBO fund, Jacob Gelt Dekker, NCDO, DHV, Limits to Earth, ASN Bank, Mosa Tiles, and Greenpeace.

Based on the stories of Ole Jørgen Hammeken, Ellady Muyambi, Henriette Rasmussen, Glory Mollel, Sophia, Anjana, Srinivasan, VJ Jose, Shweta Narayan, Don Timoteo and many others.

script & director - Jan van den Berg  
co-auteur - Pipaluk Knudsen-Ostermann  
camera - Viraj Singh & Jan van den Berg  
additional footage - Birgit Hillenius, Marc Plomp, Marro Kievit, Gordy Cox, Fabio Hidalgo  
editor - Boris Everts  
consulting editors - Srdjan Fink & Stella van Voorst van Beest



music advice - Paul Oomens  
sound design - Bart Jilesen  
live sound - Elangovan Ranga, Jillis Schriel & Radhakrishnan Sivarajan, Guadalupe González Novo & Judit Mol  
sound edit - Max Frick, Ank van Essen-Schouten, Elena Martín Hidalgo.  
country producers - Ann Andreasen and Ole Jørgen Hammeken (Greenland), Samuel Obae (Africa), Nina Subramani, Subrato Sengupta (India), Jorine Muiser (Costa Rica)  
commissioning editor - Babeth M. VanLoo

titles - Guido van Eekelen, Jaron Korvinus, Daan Mens  
color correction - Geert van Schoot

Executive producers: Jacob Gelt Dekker & John Padget  
drsFILM/ Jan van den Berg  
AS film/ Andre Schreuders  
Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation/  
Babeth M. Van Loo

More information: [www.silentsnow.org](http://www.silentsnow.org)

## CONTACT

For questions and additional information, please contact drsFILM. See [www.silentsnow.org](http://www.silentsnow.org) for more information on the Silent Snow project en for the movie trailer. [www.silentsnow.org](http://www.silentsnow.org) [www.janvandenbergtv](http://www.janvandenbergtv)

drsFILM  
Prins Hendriklaan 63  
3583 EE Utrecht  
[info@drsfilm.tv](mailto:info@drsfilm.tv)  
+31 (0) 30 25 14 154  
+31 (0) 6 218 26 888

Distribution: NPO Sales  
+31 (0) 35 6773561  
[info@nposales.com](mailto:info@nposales.com)  
For USA: Gerrie Timmermans Culture Wrap LA  
[info@culturewrap.org](mailto:info@culturewrap.org)  
+ 1 818 640 1806