

PIETER VAN HUYSTEE FILM in coproduction with EO presents

# THE LONG SEASON

*Waiting to return home*

a film by LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH



DIRECTOR LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH SCENARIO LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH PIETER VAN HUIJSTEE CAMERA LEONARD RETEL HELMRICH RAMIA SULEIMAN  
EDITOR JOS DRIESSEN JELLE REDEKER RESEARCH HANS DORTMANS MUSIC KHYAM ALLAMI SOUND DESIGN RANKO PAUKOVIC POST-PRODUCTION AMATOR COLOR GRADING MICHEL RUMMENS DATA HANDLER WATSE EISMA  
LINE PRODUCERS LOTTE GERDING ZOË DE WILDE LOCAL PRODUCER GEORGE AL KHOURY ORIGINAL IDEA & COMMISSIOING EDITOR EO FLOOR KOOMEN PRODUCER PIETER VAN HUIJSTEE

MEDIA FONDS

NL FILM FONDS PRODUCTION INCENTIVE

CoBo

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PIETER VAN HUYSTEE FILM & TV

Public Films

# **THE LONG SEASON**

a film by Leonard Retel Helmrich

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

Running time: 115 & 90 minutes

World Premiere

November 19, 2017 (IDFA)

Produced by Pieter van Huystee Film & TV

**INDEX**

Credits ..... 4

Synopsis..... 5

Director’s statement ..... 6

Leonard Retel Helmrich..... 7

Pieter van Huystee Film..... 8

Ramia Suleiman ..... 10

Images & Publicity Materials..... 11

## CREDITS

<b>Production company</b>	Pieter van Huystee Film
<b>Co-producing broadcaster</b>	EO
<b>Running time</b>	115 & 90 minutes
<b>Genre</b>	Documentary
<b>Land of origin</b>	The Netherlands
<b>Director</b>	Leonard Retel Helmrich
<b>Editor</b>	Jelle Redeker, Jos Driessen
<b>Production</b>	Pieter van Huijstee
<b>Line Production</b>	Zoe de Wilde, Lotte Gerding
<b>Camera &amp; Sound</b>	Leonard Retel Helmrich, Ramia Suleiman
<b>Sound Design</b>	Ranko Paukovic
<b>Commissioning editor &amp; original idea</b>	Floor Koomen, EO
<b>World Première</b>	November 19, 2017 International Documentary Film festival Amsterdam <b><i>Competition for Feature Length Documentary</i></b> <b><i>Competition for Dutch Documentary</i></b>
<b>Dutch distributor</b>	Mokum Filmdistributie – Rieks Hadders
<b>Sales agent</b>	Films Transit - Jan Rofekamp
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### **Short synopsis**

There are in Lebanon currently about 1.2 million Syrians living in the Beqaa valley, between Damascus and Beirut, there are many camps, sometimes no larger than 100 people. Before the war they came to Beqaa to work as seasonal labourers in agriculture. Now they are refugees in the same Beqaa and cannot go back to Syria. True to his unique camera style of single shot cinema, Leonard Retel Helmrich delved into the lives of the people in camp by living among them as one of them for a year and a half. He shows what daily life is like for those whose lives are postponed. He shows how they adapt to their seemingly hopeless circumstances and through their resilience are able to find hope and enjoy life.

### **Synopsis**

**The Long Season is a documentary by renowned filmmaker Leonard Retel Helmrich** about life in Majdal Anjar, a Syrian camp in Lebanon. The film takes us inside and shows what daily life is like for those whose lives are postponed and waiting to return to Raqqa.

**Currently**, there are about 1.2 million Syrians living in Lebanon. In the Beqaa valley, between Damascus and Beirut, there are many camps, sometimes no larger than 100 people. Before the war they came to Beqaa valley every year to work as seasonal labourers in agriculture. When the war broke out they remained in the Beqaa valley. They pay rent to the landowners in order to build tents on their land.

**The documentary focuses on a single camp** in a vast landscape of settlements. Through the intimacy of the camera, we are privy to many emotions and circumstances that make people tick. The film is driven by the characters; what they feel, how they move and how they react. We start to care deeply for the characters in the film. We are concerned for the destiny of **Maria**, the schoolteacher who is caught between following her own goals and obeying her father's wish for her to go back home to be married in Raqqa. We hold our breath when witnessing the bickering of the two wives of **Abu Hussain** while preparing a meal and both holding a knife. We are heartbroken when a young man's love is unrequited and is told by the girl's father to lay any intention to rest.

**We share the joy** when we see the happy faces of the children playing made by the teacher **Hamoud** out of a board, nails and elastic. All the time the people and their families are faced with the dilemma of waiting to go back or to stay. **With his typical single shot cinema vérité style** of storytelling, Leonard Retel Helmrich takes the viewer into the camp life. The camera doesn't observe the events from a distance, but moves along fluidly and intuitively using the energy that circulates among the people. **The film captures** the echo of global events nuancing the political context. What we see is people coping with its consequences. How they adapt to their seemingly hopeless circumstances and through their resilience are able to find hope and enjoy life.

**With his well-known unique style** Leonard Retel Helmrich delved into the lives of the people in camp by living among them as one of them for a year and a half. Just like he did in his award-winning trilogy **Eye of the Day**, **Shape of the Moon** and **Position Among the Stars**, the filmmaker shows us life from the inside.

## Director's Statement Leonard Retel Helmrich

I've never seen a film that pictures life in a refugee camp from the inside. How does it feel living there? Right now I think this is all the more important. Never before there have there been so many refugees. Many organizations and people are involved. People should know what it is like to be there. In order to do so, you have to share the experience with people living in a camp. Make them part of it, make them experience life from the inside.

The focus isn't on the past, on the conflict that made the people flee or the journey they have had to make. I want to focus on the 'here and now' and portray a family, in the bubble of the camp, a portrait of what daily life is for literally millions of people every day. Not sentimentally, but warm and emphatically. At the same time I have been moved by the human desire to be able to come very close to people whose life is very remote from your own. So that, despite the existing difference, it gives you the feeling that distance doesn't count any longer.

I'm not a long-winded person; I am a physical filmmaker. I do things by touch. I made my Indonesian trilogy without voice over, without interviews, without questions. I'd like to experience and register the human emotions from the inside by submerging into the community and be part of it. I do so by applying my diagnostic way of filming, like I did in Indonesia, in combination with blending into the surroundings.

For a long period (all seasons) we will be staying in the camp. Being there, sleeping and eating there, every day, we will create a strong bond of trust with our fellow-inhabitants. In this film I'd like to make tangible the tensions between private and public, between the camp and its surroundings, between the NGO-workers and the people in need. The camp is a microcosm where the small everyday issues are continuously related to the bigger universal themes like faith, hope and love.



## Leonard Retel Helmrich director

Leonard Retel Helmrich was born in the Netherlands in 1959. He graduated from the Netherlands Film and Television Academy in 1986 with his fiction film *The Drowning Man (De Drenkeling)*. In 1990 he made his first fiction feature film *The Phoenix Mystery*. In 1991 he filmed and directed the documentary *Moving Objects* which was a success in Netherlands cinemas.



Since his film *Eye of the Day (Stand van de Zon)* which he shot in Indonesia between 1998 and 2001, Retel Helmrich's films have screened and won acclaim at film festivals worldwide garnering major documentary film awards. These include the SUNDANCE inaugural Grand World Documentary Award 2005, the Special Jury Award for World Documentary 2011, the prestigious Grand Joris Ivens Award IDFA Amsterdam 2004 and 2010. He has served on the jury of many film festivals around the world, including Shanghai, Warshau, Norway, Seoul, Romania, Amsterdam. He has had major retrospectives of his work run at Visions du Réel in Nyon Switzerland, Rencontres Internationales Du Documentaire in Montréal, the ASTRA in Sibiu Romania, the NFCT in Tel Aviv, Israel, MOMA New York and currently at the Van Abben Museum in Eindhoven. He has also lectured and screened his films at numerous educational institutions including the Flaherty Seminar program in New York, and at Harvard University where he was on a Fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies. During his fellowship he was editing his latest film *Position Among the Stars* which is the third film of his trilogy on contemporary Indonesia.

Leonard shoots as well as directs all his own films and is best known for a philosophy and approach he calls "Single Shot Cinema" which involves long takes with a camera orbiting the subjects. Above all in his films it is the framing and movement of the camera that captures and leads the emotions of the audience. He has run over 60 workshop programs in his Single Shot Cinema technique for film festivals, television broadcasters, independent film makers, film schools and universities worldwide in Europe, Asia, Australia, North and South America and in Africa. He is currently writing a book on *Single Shot Cinema*.

## Health situation

During the editing of *The Long Season*, Leonard had a cardiac arrest on the boulevard in Beirut. As a result, he went into a coma for several weeks. After a month, he was flown back to the Netherlands. Leonard is currently recovering in Tilburg, the town where he is originally from, receiving special treatment. Since several weeks, he is making progress in communicating. However, it may take several months before he is able to express himself in speech or writing.

With the blessing of Leonard's family, producer Pieter van Huijstee decided to finish the film, in close collaboration with Ramia Suleiman, the Syrian camera woman with whom Leonard shot the film.

## Pieter van Huijstee producer



In 1995 Pieter van Huystee started his own production company. Since then he has produced many film projects, most of them documentaries, but also feature and short films and single plays – with both renowned Dutch filmmakers like Johan van der Keuken, Heddy Honigmann, Renzo Martens and Leonard Retel Helmrich and young talented directors. Many of its documentaries and features are screened at festivals all over the world and have been awarded many times. After 20 years of producing Pieter made his first feature length documentary. *Jheronimus Bosch, Touched by the devil* is his debut as a director.

### **PIETER VAN HUYSTEE FILM**

Documentaries include a.o. **AMSTERDAM GLOBAL VILLAGE** (Johan van der Keuken, 1995) *Prix des Cinémas de Recherche Marseille 1997, Dokumentärpreis des Bayerischen Rundfunks Munich 1997*, **THE GREAT POSTAL ROAD** (Bernie Ildis, 1995); **O AMOR NATURAL** (Heddy Honigmann, 1996) *Prix Italia 1997, THE UNDERGROUND ORCHESTRA* (Heddy Honigmann) *Prix SCAM Cinéma du Réel Paris 1998, Jury Award Yamagata 1999, THE LONG HOLIDAY* (Johan van der Keuken, 1999) *Silver Spire Award San Francisco 2000, Special Honorary Award Thessaloniki 2000, CRAZY* (Heddy Honigmann, 2000) *Audience Award IDFA 1999, Golden Calf Utrecht 2000; THE LAST YUGOSLAVIAN FOOTBALL TEAM* (Vuk Janic, 2000) *EBU Best Sports Documentary 2001; DUTCH APPROACH* (René Roelofs, 2000) *Comenius Sonderpreis Medaille Germany 2001, Dutch Academy Award 2001, FOR THE TIME BEING* (Johan van der Keuken), *Official selection 'Quinzaine des Réalisateurs' Cannes 2002, LAGOS/KOOLHAAS* (Bregtje van der Haak, 2002); **LA MANO** (Heddy Honigmann, 2003); *International première Museum of Modern Art New York, Official selection IDFA 2003 ; ARNA'S CHILDREN* (Juliano Mer Khamis / Danniël Danniël, 2003) *Official selection IDFA 2003; PUTIN'S MAMA* (Ineke Smits, 2003) *Official selection IDFA 2003, 'Best Dutch Documentary' HotDocs 2004 ; JOHAN CRUIJFF – EN UN MOMENTO DADO* (Ramón Gieling, 2004); **THE RED YEARS** (Leo de Boer, 2005) *selected for the Highlights of the Lowlands IDFA 2005; GOD IS MY DJ* (Carin Goeijers, 2006), shown at the *IFFR 2005 and in national theatres; IN EUROPE* (36 episode series based on the bestseller *In Europe* by Geert Mak); **THE DICTATOR HUNTER** (Klaartje Quirijns, 2007) *Nominated European Film Academy Award 2008, 'Best Documentary' Courmayeur Noir In Festival Italy 2007; JOAQUIN SABINA – 19 DIAS Y 500 NOCHES* (Ramon Gieling, 2008) *Official selection IFFR 2008; SWEETY* (Menna Laura Meijer, 2008); **CARMEN MEETS BORAT** (Mercedes Stalenhoef, 2008) *Official selection Joris Ivens Competition IDFA 2008, Dutch Entry Oscars 2009; THE NEW RIJSMUSEUM* (Oeke Hoogendijk, 2008) *Dutch Sound and Vision Award 2009; CRIPS* (Joost van der Valk & Mags Gavan, 2009); **FAREWELL** (Ditteke Mensink, 2009) *IDFA Competition for Feature-Length Documentary, Golden Calf best Documentary Film; SHOUT* (Sabine Lubbe Bakker & Ester Gould, 2010); **OTTO FRANK, father of Anne** (David de Jongh, 2010); **CLOSING IN ON TANJA** (Leo de Boer, 2010); **WILDERS, THE MOVIE** (Joost van der Valk & Mags Gavan, 2010); **DIVINE PIG** (Hans Dortmans, 2010); **PEOPLE I COULD HAVE BEEN AND MAYBE AM** (Boris Gerrets, 2010) *Winner Mid-Length competition IDFA 2010 and Visions du Réel Nyon 2011; TIGER EYES* (Frank Scheffer, 2011); **DEWOLFF** (Carin Goeijers, 2011); **GOZARAN** (Frank Scheffer, 2011); **THINGS THAT MATTER** (Frans Bromet, 2011); **CIRCUSHEART** (Leo de Boer, 2012); **HIV HIV HURRAY** (Peter Wingender, 2012), **FALLEN** (Robert Oey, 2012); **I WANT MY MONEY BACK** (Leo de Boer, 2012); **BLIND FORTUNE** (Ramon Gieling, 2012); **KARSU** (Mercedes Stalenhoef, 2012); **THE NEW**



**RIJKSMUSEUM** (Oeke Hoogendijk 2008/2013) *Beeld en Geluid Award 2009, Nipkovschijf 2012; special Juryprice NFF 2013*; **HIV HIV HURRAY** (Peter Wingender, 2012); **BAHAR** (Carin Goeijers, 2013); **NE ME QUITTE PAS** (Sabine Lubbe Bakker & Niels van Koevorden, 2013); **SHADO'MAN** (Boris Gerrets, 2013); **BORDERS** (Jacqueline van Vugt, 2013); **PHOTO-EDDY** (David de Jongh, 2013); **CLEAN SPIRIT** (Dirk Jan Roeleven, 2014); **NEW HEROS** (Dirk Jan Roeleven, 2014); **SEX FOR 5 EUROS** (Margit Balogh, 2014); **WOLFLADY** (Daan Willekens, 2014); **HOME** (Ramon Gieling, 2014); **THE YES MEN ARE REVOLTING** (Laura Nix, The Yes Men, 2014); **PERFECT HORSE** (Hans Fels, 2015). **JHERONIMUS BOSCH, TOUCHED BY THE DEVIL** (Pieter van Huijstee, 2015), **END OF LIFE CLINIC** (Hans Kema, Marcel Ouddeken, 2016), **WE MOSZKOWICZ** (Max Moszkowicz, 2016). **MIJN BOVENBUREN** (Colette Teurlings, juni 2016) **BUCH: VERDWAALD TUSSEN FEIT EN FICTIE** (Leo de Boer, november 2016) **DE CLAIM, ZOEKTOCHT NAAR ROOFKUNST UIT WOII** (Ditteke Mensink, november 2016), **MARIA, I NEED YOUR LOVIN'** (Martijn van de Griendt, februari 2017) **THE GAMECHANGERS** (Daan Willekens, maart 2017) **MANO BOUZAMOUR, DE BELOFTE** (Roy Dames, maart 2017) **VOGELPARADIJS – PETER VOS, TEKENAAR**, 87 min. (David de Jongh 2017), **DE JACHT OP MIJN VADER**, 59 min. (Gülsah Dogan 2017). **IK BEGON TE SCHRIJVEN TOEN IK DRIE WAS**, 41 min. (Ditteke Mensink 2017), **DOKTER CO**, 24 min. (Lysander Wiering 2017) **DEAF CHILD** 72 min (Alex de Ronde 2018); **INSTANT DREAMS**, 92 min (Willem Baptist 2017); **THE LONG SEASON**, 115 min (Leonard Retel Helmrich 2017)

**Ramia Suleiman** Co-camerawoman



After fifteen-year career as a freelance artist in Damascus, she moved to Beirut and worked as Designer and project manager at Artafif; a studio which works on long-term art and design projects. One of these projects is Mdawar; Up-cycled fine objects under this website [mdawar.com](http://mdawar.com)

During her residence in Lebanon her interest in film making began as an animator with a short film *My Name Is L*, and continued when she met the film director Leonard Retel Helmrich and worked with him on *The Long Season* as a co-camera woman, it was a unique collaboration and later she moved to Amsterdam to finalise the film with the postproduction team.



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