

Casting

A film by Nicolas Wackerbarth



91 minutes/Germany 2017 /German with English subtitles/Berlinale Forum 2017/ Cert tbc

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SYNOPSIS:

One week before shooting starts, the main protagonist has yet to be cast. Vera is about to make her first TV movie, a remake of Fassbinder's "The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant", and takes her time looking for her ideal cast. While the producer and the crew become desperate, Gerwin is happy about the extra work. He earns his money as a casting partner and exchanges lines with the famous applicants for the role. When the male lead leaves the production, Gerwin senses his chance to get a fresh start as an actor.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set for download [here](#)



CAST

Gerwin	Andreas Lust
Vera	Judith Engel
Ruth	Milena Dreissig
Hanne	Nicole Marischka
Manfred	Stephan Grossmann
Kostja Stahnke	Tim Kalkhof
Cinematographer Siri	Anne Müller
Gaffer Abel	Abel vom Acker
Best Boy	Toby Ashraf
Prop master Dragan	Dragan Vasić
Almut Dehlen	Ursina Lardi
Mila Ury-Tesche	Marie-Lou Sellem
Luise Maderer	Corinna Kirchhoff
Annika Grossmann	Andrea Sawatzki
Tamara Lentzke	Victoria Trauttmansdorff

CREW

Director	Nicolas Wackerbarth
Screenwriting	Nicolas Wackerbarth, Hannes Held
Director of photography	Jürgen Carle
Editing	Saskia Metten
Casting	Birgit Geier, Ulrike Müller
Production design	Klaus-Peter Platten
Costume design	Birgit Kilian
Props	Andreas Fassongé, Silke ten Hove
Make-up	Claudia Koch, Claudia Seidl
Assistant director	Annette Drees
Second unit	Christoph Schmitz
Original sound	Tom Doepgen
Boom Operator	Matthias Gündler
Sound design	Jürgen Kramlofsky
Sound mixing	Patric Melüh
Production manager	Dieter Streck
Line Producing	Michael Becker, Oliver Lehmann
Producer	Franziska Specht
TV Editorial	Katharina Dufner, Jan Berning
Production	Südwestrundfunk

Germany 2017

91 mins

NICOLAS WACKERBARTH

Born on May 31st 1973 in Munich. Nicolas Wackerbarth studied acting at the Bavarian Theatre Academy in Munich. After his first roles at the Frankfurt Theatre, he became a permanent member at the Städtische Bühnen theatre in Cologne. Afterwards, he studied directing at the German Film- and TV Academy (DFFB) in Berlin. Nicolas Wackerbarth teaches at several German Film Academies, curates film programmes and film talks and is co-editor of the film magazine "Revolver". He lives as director and writer in Berlin.



FILMOGRAPHY:

2017	CASTING	Feature Film, Berlinale Forum
2013	HALBSCHATTEN	Feature Film, Berlinale Forum
2011	UNTEN MITTE KINN	Feature Film, Filmfest München
2007	HALBE STUNDEN	Short Film 20 min
2006	WESTERNSTADT	Documentary Film 38 min
2006	ANFÄNGER	Short Film 30 min

Interview with Nicolas Wackerbarth:

This is already your second film in which you have worked in an improvisational style with your actors?

The actors are playing actors. This double play can result in an interesting interaction between documentary and staging. "Unten Mitte Kinn" ("Lower Upper Cut", 2011) was about young acting students who were exposed to an elitist education in a forced environment. Moving on to professional acting, actors are on their own and everyone has to find his or her own way to survive in the market. Thus, "Casting" was supposed to follow individuals in their 40s, like the unemployed Gerwin, during his rebirth as actor. On set, we jokingly called this our "Over 40s Party". The improvisational approach allowed us also to document the struggle to find expression, the searching movements of speech.

There was no screenplay with dialogue?

Prior to shooting, I had worked on an extensive description of scenes and an overall arc of the story with my co-writer Hannes Held, so we knew in which order the conflicts had to occur. On set, however, the actors were informed about the plot only little by little every day. Since nobody knew what their fellow actors were about to do, or how they would react verbally, it was not only an emotional, but also an intellectual challenge. It was fun. Much more fun than hitting the marks and saying lines...

What interested you about the topic of casting?

The fear to be sorted out at just 40 years of age, is widespread not solely in the media sector. In developing the plot, we were not so much interested in the economic pressure, than in the self-imposed pressure to succeed, which is not limited to the creative job world. "Casting" has maybe also become a movie about people who can't live up to society's expectations – and who can say that of himself? - , people who feel themselves as inadequate and criticize others as inadequate.

Why did you select Fassbinder's "The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant" as the film-inside-the-film?

The play interacts in many ways with the story of our film. Petra von Kant is a successful fashion designer. Since she has become a prominent, public person she cannot be sure anymore if people love her for herself or for her fame and the economic possibilities that come along with her power position. With our protagonist Gerwin, it's the exact opposite. He doesn't give a damn about his Self, that won't pay his bills. He finally sees his chance at the professional recognition that he had always been denied before. Everybody in the film fights for the chance to work. Nowadays, Fassbinder's work has become part of bourgeois education, of an agreed cultural canon. So the producer adorns himself with it, even if he has never grappled with his work. The occasion of Fassbinder's 75th birthday is for him just an opportunity to make a film again. The director has given in to the

wishes of the producer. For such an uncompromising director as Vera, it's probably not such a good idea to agree to a bad compromise. But it leads to an interesting tension. While Fassbinder happily dove into risky relations, provoked public opinion and had a fixed idea of a political body, Vera is a late bloomer, just like me, by the way. She carefully searches for an approach that allows her to keep her self- image as an artist and appear upright, and at the same time keep all options for a career in the film business. The scene partner for the casting is in a similar position. He clings to a straw, to uphold his chances of employment. Even for the invited, seemingly successful actresses, the necessity to keep applying won't stop.

In "Casting", we experience, sometimes in funny, sometimes in painful ways, how actors and their scene partners, e.g., Gerwin go to their limits to get cast. Is the deforming in a casting for actors more extreme than in other application processes, because the performers are asked to bring so much of their own personality? With Gerwin, it's downright painful to watch how submissive he becomes for what he thinks might be opportune.



When acting, Gerwin does not submit. On the contrary. He is stubborn and won't listen to advice. To deform in front of a camera would also be counterproductive, actors know that very well. What can be shown, in my opinion, in this profession is the contradiction within the arts, between holding up high artistic ideals and the original motivation, which is self-interest. I don't believe – and think that the film also shows this - that actors per se are more opportunistic than directors or producers ... or lighting technicians. Only athletes, they are sometimes really extreme (laughs) ... but well, they're not even allowed to paint their fingernails in rainbow colours without getting in trouble with their sports governing bodies.

You have worked as an actor, too. Did your own casting experiences have an influence on the movie?

I know both sides – the needs of a director and those of an actor. I wasn't only auditioned (although I could tell you some embarrassing anecdotes about it), but I have also worked as a scene partner once. This was for a friend who cast her feature film. While there was a coming and going of the great actresses of her generation, I was able to witness how hierarchy, fear and joy became visible in small gestures. It was also interesting to see how, for myself, the wish to become part of the film kept growing. This seems unavoidable to me for the position of scene partner, and gives this occupation a bitter note. You go through the script with professional actors, you joke and you try out going in different directions. The longer the casting process lasts, the more you feel part of the team. A deceit. As soon as the casting is over, the actors start working and the scene partner...he goes home. I also liked, by the way, the idea to film someone who usually is not filmed.

How did you cast the roles? Did you organize a casting?

I allow for a lot of time and make sure the hierarchies are as level as possible. Therefore, I mostly meet with only two actors alone in a rehearsal room. And then I have to come up with an impromptu improvisation. This way, the pressure to deliver something good is foremost on me and not on the actors.

How did you prepare the actors and how much do you interfere during the shooting? How much liberty do the actors have? And how much power do you regain in the cutting room?

In an improvisation, the actor goes out on an open field and surrenders himself, that's why I would never interrupt and judge his proposals. Feelings like shame or wrong ambition only lose their limiting powers when you face them head-on. Through their uninhibited playing proposals, the actors also help me to understand the functioning of each scene *en détail*. Once we've reached this point ...and this can take a while... the whole thing starts to take off on its own. From such a beautiful half-hour take, when cutting the film we can then form one scene and later watch how it will fit into the overall construction. Towards the end of shooting, by the way, when the characters and themes have been internalized and reflected by all involved, it all becomes much easier and we get to the point in less and less time.

Casting has become an extremely popular term in recent years through the genre of talent shows. But while these are designed purely for show, your film expects its audience to immerse themselves, but it rewards them with intimate revelations in the creation of character roles. What was the aesthetic design of your film?

In these talent shows, grand emotions like triumph or disappointment are triggered and then repeated in slow-motion with underlying music, once the producers think the tears

seem authentic. Authenticity is the highest goal, and yet it is taken to the absurd by over-celebrating it. I rather aim to penetrate a situation, than to present the quotation of it for the forthcoming of the story. In this, I'm not interested in the truth, but in faking it. I find a lie more interesting. People are, after all, talkative and social beings. Aesthetically, I want to make visible the playing process, the performance itself. That's why I work with very experienced actors, who can play a casting and at the same time can comment on it. I hope that this leads to a double bottom that makes the whole thing more interesting and also amusing.



You have created "Casting" in association with a TV station, using their studios and locations. Was this relevant for your film, does it relate foremost to television?

To make the competing interests in the decision-making of a casting transparent for the audience, it was necessary to locate the production. For example, the film does not show the chaotic, badly financed shooting of an independent movie, but the pre-production of a German TV movie. This creates very different conditions for the director and her producer. The opportunity to realize this film in the studios of SWR, with an SWR team, accommodated us. Only if you manage to describe a situation in precise detail, the universal character of a story can unfold. To focus on the unfulfilled desires of a mid-40s guy who always aimed to become "Bigger Than Life" as a young actor and finds himself with a second chance, I found very interesting, not least because the casting process has in the meantime taken hold even of our private communication. To show oneself with photos, to present one's life with cinematic means has become part of our everyday life. In this process, attention has become the value that not only actors or politicians strive for.