



NEW RELEASES

Where Is Anne Frank

Director Ari Folman on 'Where Is Anne Frank'

Why did you decide to use animation as a medium for your film?

As a way to reach young audiences. And it is exactly for that reason that the Anne Frank Fonds Basel approached me eight years ago and specifically asked for an animation movie. They were looking for a new dimension to tell the Holocaust story. Then came the idea to revive Kitty in the leading role and make her the protagonist of the movie – the narrator. Another two conditions were to connect past and present time and to follow the last seven dreadful months of Anne Frank's life.

So how did the new dimension turn out to look in the movie?

As I said, our main innovation was to turn Kitty from the imaginary friend of Anne into an actual, living person. She – and not Anne Frank – is the protagonist of our movie. She is going on a quest trying to find out what happened to Anne during the end of the war. How did she die, what happened to her? In doing so, she also discovers the current situation in Europe, flooded with refugees from all over the world, running away from war zones.

The animation has been visualised by Lena Guberman. Given that the medium avails you of boundless possibilities – how did the two of you decide on what the movie would look like in the end?

Sure, animation lets you reinvent the world. We had to start out by shaping Kitty and Anne. I believe we gave both very warm personalities. Lena is an exceptional artist and drew in a deeply beautiful way. But we decided at the outset to break with a certain pattern of the genre. Most war movies show the present in colour and the past as monochrome. We went the opposite way. Therefore, in our movie present-day Amsterdam is depicted in monochrome colours, the city is in wintertime and has been completely drained of colour. On the other hand, the past is seen through the eyes of Anne, it is very lively, colourful and rich in tones. That became the guideline of the movie. Moreover, we did not limit our palette in any way, as I had done in previous animation films. We just went wild with colours, especially when her imagination and dreams come up.

What techniques did you use for the film?

This movie is the first to tell the story of Anne Frank entirely in drawings. We are talking about 159,000 individual drawings that have been created in 15 countries. This technique infused the film with a vibrant, lively feel and the story flows without demanding any effort from viewers. To accomplish this, we developed a wholly new technique by combining static backgrounds with classic, animated figures in 2-D. Specifically, we recreated the 'Hinterhaus' as a miniature model. This allowed us to create images of real scenery recorded by actual cameras. We then placed drawn figures into these backgrounds as animation. This is a true innovation. Nobody has ever done anything like this before in cinema.

Kitty has always been there. But just in the Diary and not as an actual person. So how did you go about creating her as a figure in the movie while staying true to the ideas Anne Frank had about Kitty?

Anne Frank has left us many descriptions of Kitty: who she is, what she looks like, what kind of personality she is. And of course, there is her dialogue with Kitty. I then went a step further and made Kitty into an alter ego of Anne's. In some

respects, I ascribed an extrovert personality to her. She is a fighter, and she is not under the control of parents who set her limits, as Anne was. For Kitty, there are no fellow inhabitants in her hideout, criticising her. She is therefore free to do whatever Anne had wanted to do in her own imagination. That is just the way Kitty had to be – why else would Anne have invented her?

In the movie Kitty becomes an activist for refugees in the present day. Would you consider her to be part of new, political youth movements about climate and human rights?

She is indeed a child of our times. The character of Kitty started out as Anne's imaginary friend, basically. But in the movie she is building a bridge between the past and the present. As she ventures out into the world, she meets young people such as herself who are in danger – maybe because they have to flee from war zones. That reminds Kitty of Anne and the fact that Anne did not have an opportunity to flee during her relatively short time in hiding. This experience turns Kitty into an activist. At the same time, she realises her powers to promote a movement for children's rights. And these powers grow from her being a visitor in our world.

Alongside Kitty, audiences confront the Holocaust. Did those scenes pose particular difficulties for you? How did you handle them?

Realising the one scene where the Frank family arrives at the Auschwitz concentration camp was the hardest task in the whole movie. How can we show this specific moment in time to children? Animation as a genre does provide us with quite a range of options. But we had to choose wisely among them. In the end I found numerous parallels between the killing sites of the Nazis in World War Two and the Underworld in Greek mythology. Anne Frank was obsessed with Greek mythology. The Nazis had trains, transports, selections and death camps. In the Greek mythology beloved by Anne Frank there are no trains, but ferries; no land, but rivers. And we have selections there, conducted by Hades, the god of the underworld. There also are dogs there, just like the dogs the Nazis had on the platforms along the train tracks at the camps. I thought we would be able to create a montage to make everybody understand what the Frank family went through at the camp, by showing that experience in images derived from Greek mythology on the one hand and words telling the original story on the other. At the same time, we did not want this scene to become overly graphic and heavy-handed.

Were there any red lines for you in tackling the Holocaust?

For one, we did not want to show the end of Anne and Margot in a realistic manner as quite a few Holocaust movies have attempted to. Whether we are working with animation or in a regular feature film format: there is no cinematic form that is appropriate to show what happened. Because I believe none of us really understands what happened. To truly imagine what happened is just beyond our reach. I grew up in a family of Holocaust survivors and have heard the most horrifying stories a child can ever hear. But our minds are incapable of creating a visual connection to these stories and cannot fully grasp what happened. I would call this a task that is overwhelming to all of us. I therefore created an allegory to relate the story, using the tools animation and drawing provide us with to create imaginary worlds.

Production notes

WHERE IS ANNE FRANK

Directed by: Ari Folman

©: Purple Whale Films, Walking the Dog, Samsa Film, Bridget Folman Film Gang, Submarine Animation, Le Pacte, France 3 Cinéma

International Sales: Wild Bunch International

Executive Producers: Nathan Zomer, Sabby Mionis,

KUK Films Limited, AJH Films Limited

Produced by: Jani Thiltges

Producers: Yves Kugelmann, Ari Folman, Alexander Rodnyansky

Line Producers: Alona Davidsohn Schory, Olivier Bizet, Denis Walgenwitz

Production Accountant: Joana Pego

Accountants: Comptapro, Driss Ben Kouider

Post-production Supervisor: Alona Davidsohn Schory

Casting Directors: Gaby Kester, Grace Browning

Written by: Ari Folman

Based upon Het achterhuis dagboekbrieven 12 juni 1942-1 augustus 1944 *by:* Anne Frank

Based upon De dagboeken van Anne Frank *by:* Anne Frank

Based upon Diary of a Young Girl, the Definitive Edition *by:* Anne Frank

Director of Photography: Tristan Oliver

Animation Director: Yoni Goodman

Editor: Nili Feller

Art Director: Lena Guberman

Colourist: Peter Bernaers

Original Score by: Karen O, Ben Goldwasser

Sound Designer: Aviv Aldema

Re-recording Mixer: Michel Schillings

Voice Cast

Ruby Stokes (*Kitty*)

Emily Carey (*Anne Frank*)

Sebastian Croft (*Anne's Peter*)

Ralph Prosser (*Kitty's Peter*)

Michael Maloney (*Otto Frank*)

Samantha Spiro (*Edith Frank*)

Skye Bennett (*Margot Frank*)

Tracy-Ann Oberman (*Augusta van Damm*)

Stuart Millican (*Herman van Damm*)

Andrew Woodall (*Albert Dussel*)

Naomi Mourton (*Awa*)

Nell Barlow (*Officer Elsa Platt*)

Maya Myers (*Sandra*)

Belgium-Luxembourg-Israel-France 2021

100 mins

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