

Synopsis

"Blessed Are Those Who Grieve" is an experimental short that offers you a slice of an inner, surreal landscape of grief. Two performers torment with immense sorrow in sand and slime, while a Hong Kong writer attempts to articulate a trauma that cannot be named. Melting somatic work, multilayered soundscapes, and digital spheres, the movie explores a hybridity of mourning. The audience witnesses the birth of a creature—the grief that sits inside us—pushing towards the reconciliation of a collective grief.

Zora Arose Ritz (aka Zora Ritz/Zora Arose, born 1997 in Hünfeld, Germany) is a non-binary environmental anthropologist and artist. Inspired by theories in the humanities, they investigate subjects of post-humanism, water bodies, and genderfuck. Pursuing their studies in documentary directing, they carry a chaotic toolbox: filled with skills in performing arts, writing, farming, and massaging. In film, they work with experimental (audio-)ethnographic methods as a playground for (non-)human experience while seeking for audio-visual ventures. Their works *Alien Mama* (2023), *Saloua* (2022) and *Cutting* (2024) have been shown at Ethnocineca- International Documentary Film Festival Vienna, Oyoum (Berlin), and Gelegenheiten (Berlin).

Evgenia Chetvertkova (born 1985, Moscow) has a background as a dancer-performer and a choreographer. Besides, she has been creating spaces and immersive installations for unusual encounters, participative experiences designed in a way to invite states of poetic wonder and surprise in participants. She created her works in theatres, for theatres and galleries, cafe's, festivals, outdoors and often with a site-specific approach. Lately she found herself experimenting with videos and light design. Photography is her long term hobby. At the moment considers herself a multimedia artist.

Kayu Claire Yeung (born 1993, Hong Kong) graduated with a literature degree from the Chinese University of Hong Kong but encountered difficulties in telling stories with true words in her homeland. Currently based in Berlin, she is discovering her new voice through studies in scriptwriting and film editing. Weaving narratives with poetry and magic realism, she aspires to create a fictional reality for those who are constrained from expressing themselves truthfully, hoping that in the end, they will all be seen and heard.



Director Statement

We consider ourselves as three filmmakers. Even though we committed to different tasks, we also shared most processes of weaving this film together. It's a collective work and a tight collaboration between ourselves in different roles and beyond them. Dismissing strict labor divisions and hierarchies allowed us to complement our skills and creativity. We aimed to work within a small crew, making space for vulnerabilities and shared care work - which is truly needed working on something so emotional, triggering, and painful as grief.

Zora:

"For the last year, grief has lived with me as a bulky shadow. Watching the brutal genocide of palestinians daily on my phone and mourning the loss of a dear friend, I figured I didn't know how to grieve. I got curious. My admiration for 3D-creatures, especially those considered dark and ugly, queer (science) fiction, as well as my ongoing review of literature on post-humanism inspired me to think of a creature of grief living inside each of us - that can mingle with and be re-shaped by others. I was thrilled to auto-ethnographically investigate expressions and performances of grief through our bodies and to apply our findings to the digital embodiment.

I want someone to have an experience of grief watching the movie, to not move alone in the dark, to feel held. If it's not too much to ask, I wish to evoke a discussion about how we can share and connect our grief collectively."

Evgenia:

"In my life, I have learned to reject the feeling of grief and switch my attention to something else as fast as possible. However, I know it is there, that darkness, numbness at the end of the swirl... which makes you breathless and paralyzed. As a dancer and performer, I became interested in embodying this state, immersing myself in that dangerous moment until it took over and the 'fiction of performance' became the 'reality of the moment', tracing the inner visions it created. As a filmmaker, I wanted to transfer the 'surreality' of grief through images of textures and expressivity of the bodies entangled in the landscape."

Kayu:

"In the beginning were not the words, but body movement. When I was rolling on the floor with Evgenia and Zora during the body sessions, I found something inside me unlocked. For a very long time, I have been disassociated with my own body. But at that moment, I could feel the presence of my throat and my mother tongue, Cantonese, was spilled on the floor. How does one talk about a social movement that is prohibited to be mentioned in her own home town? When I talk about something extremely personal, is it a way to resonate with others, or did I put a barrier from others who haven't gone through the same events? In the film, the narrator never signified what exactly the trauma was, but the silence is loud. It invites imagination, a broader empathy that is only possible by understanding it beyond languages and filling in your own sorrow."