



AFTERLIGHT

Try Pitch **ATENACIOUS FILMS PRODUCTION 2024**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title	Afterlight (<i>Previous title The Returned</i>)
Length	Feature film
Genre	Drama
Status	Post Production

LOGLINE

A terminally ill mother and her three adult children are forced to confront mortality in this intimate story of life, love and loss. Broken into three parts, the contrasting grief journeys are seen through the lens of each child, as they all face their own struggle with impermanence.

SYNOPSIS

Vianne, a feisty – almost seventy-year-old has received a terminal cancer diagnosis and is determined to die at her home in regional Victoria. Her oldest child Connie, a detached and somewhat hard-headed individual has made the decision to be her mother's sole, end-of-life carer. The two younger children, Quinn and Amal, both come to keep vigil as Vianne's passing looms.

Each child has a different way of grieving – shaped by their individual circumstances and their courage or desire to confront the truth.

For Connie, denial and pragmatism allow her to hold grief at arms length. Quinn, a single gay father to Lachie is more of a quiet observer – who possesses an emotional maturity and innate ability to hold space for his mother so she can express her fears, reservations and beliefs.

Spirited and passionate Amal, adopted from Sri Lanka as a baby, is the last to arrive at his mother's bedside. The feelings of abandonment he holds for his birthmother suddenly begin to intermingle with the imminent loss of the woman who brought him up as her own. He desperately tries to reconcile his own sense of cultural identity and his place as a brown man who was raised in a white, Western world.

As Vianne tackles her impending death with humour and humility, the onus falls on each child to face the inevitable and choose presence and peace, or let this milestone moment pass them by.

"The film is broken into 3 parts with the same series of events around Vianne's passing seen three times over but from a differing point of view, each one through the lens of the children and their contrasting grief journeys. Within these character points of view different camera and filming techniques are used to capture the essence of each journey. Quinn's grief is healthy and fully expressed, so a smooth, mercurial, and fluid technique tells his story. For Connie, whose journey is one of absent grief and denial, the creative feel is more composed frames. And for Amal's complex grief journey, we explore the use of handheld shots, which gives a sense of the character feeling ungrounded and imbalanced".

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY BEN PFEIFFER

Ben is a born storyteller whose focus has always been on the human, heartfelt component and connection within each creation. Ben's work is always about the delicacy of the human experience, with a hope that audiences can walk away feeling seen, changed or closer to their fellow person.

Ben graduated from Melbourne's VCA Drama School in 2007 with a *Bachelor of Dramatic Art*. Since graduating, Ben has worked with prestigious companies such as the MTC, the Malthouse, Red Stitch Actors Theatre, Fabricated Rooms and Merrigong Theatre Co. Ben holds 15 directorial credits including the Victorian premiere of the Pulitzer prize-winning, 'Wit', 'The Collector' and 'If It Bleeds'. Ben has written 5 feature films and accrued nine international screenwriting awards. Within the Television and film industry, Ben has worked on projects with Foxtel, Warner Bros Entertainment, Legendary Pictures and the SYFY Network, USA. Ben's first screenplay, 'Chantou' was developed with support from VIC Screen and Screen Australia and was offered MIFF Premiere Funding. It was also the only Australia work selected to attend HAF (Hong Kong Asia Financing Forum) in 2017.



WHY NOW?

Grief is timeless, universal and an undeniable certainty in life. As a theme it's something I have often returned to in my work, eternally fascinated by it's mercurial and ever-changing nature. Humans experienced a collective grief of epic proportion during COVID - not just relating to the lives lost, but the loss of a *way* of life - of familiarity - of careers and industries. My own understanding of grief deepened during COVID when I was permitted to just sit in the present, contemplate the past, the future and existence itself. Now more than ever, grief has the power to unite. It needn't be kept behind closed doors and considered a private battle.

- Ben Pfeiffer, Writer & Director

WHY ME?

"The loss of a parent is a significant life moment; complex and incredibly specific to each person's individual experience. In 2005, both of my parents were awaiting a cancer prognosis within 2 days of one another. In that small window of time I contemplated two possible, yet very different grief journeys. The one with my dad would be complicated and multifaceted - and the grieving of my mum would be fully felt, expressed and understood. In the end, mum was fine, but dad's illness was terminal. He passed away in 2006 from Mesothelioma. In his final days, I remember watching my siblings - witnessing the various ways that they approached and moved through their grief; the defaults and distractions that seemed to help them survive or manage it. Afterlight was born from this."

CAST



LOUISE SIVERSEN
VIANNE

Vianne is the matriarch of the family; a quintessential mother. She is vivacious, spontaneous and loves her inner circle with great veracity.

[IMDB](#)



EDWINA WREN
CONNIE

Connie is Vianne's first-born child. She has a pragmatic and unsentimental air about her. She shows love through her actions rather than words.

[IMDB](#)



DUSHAN PHILIPS
AMAL

Amal is Vianne's youngest child. Like his Mum, he has a wild spirit and hunger for truth and justice. His tendency towards impulsivity can be both a gift and a curse.

[IMDB](#)



BEN PFEIFFER
QUINN

Quinn is Vianne's middle child - the gentle observer who tries desperately to hold the family unit together. As an eternal carer, he often forgets to take care of himself. He's a wholly devoted father to Lachie.

[IMDB](#)



JONAH PHILLIPS
LACHIE

Growing up with a single gay dad, Lachie is worldly and wise beyond his years. He has a beautiful ability to accept people at face value and cut to the truth of a matter.



REBECCA BOWER
MADDIE

Maddie is Amal's long term partner. She has an inner light that usually manages to keep Amal anchored. She is playful, sensitive and emotionally sharp.

[IMDB](#)

PRODUCTION STILLS



COMPS



OF AN AGE

Budget (undisclosed)

Box Office 557k



THE KILLING OF TWO LOVERS

Budget 32k

Box office 105k



BABYTEETH

Budget 1M

Box office 1M

THE AUDIENCE

**30-
60yo
Female
skew**

Generally, Afterlight will appeal to an audience that has an affinity for independent, international and auteur driven cinema and who regularly attend the festival circuit. They are educated and worldly, with an upper middle income, interested in art, travel, culture, philosophy and stories with heart and emotional nuance.

In regards to an impact campaign our audience sits within caregivers, end of life carers, those who have been touched by cancer, and those whose family includes mixed race adoptions.

As this film also centres on motherhood and fatherhood, as well as the fatherhood within the queer community this would be a secondary audience as well.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

One of our four principal characters is Quinn, a gay single parent to Lachie. We specifically wanted to place a non-nuclear family within the film without disclosing their origin story - therefore not having to view or understand how they came to be, through a heteronormative lens. Quinn is the middle child of the three siblings who sit at the centre of our story; he is the quiet observer, patient and emotionally available. One of the things that was of interest to us in Quinn's trajectory was exploring his people-pleasing tendency - also referred to as fawning, which is a common queer experience.

Amal, a Sri Lankan man adopted into the family as a baby is also one of the four principal characters. Our actor, Dushan Philips, played an integral role in defining the character of Amal and his trajectory within the film to ensure that the role was authentically portrayed. It was integral that ownership of the storytelling process for Amal was told from a POC perspective in order to understand the specific nuances that inherit the lived experience. Amal is the youngest of the siblings; a protector, successful, fiercely loyal and honest. As he deals with his adopted Mother's death, the question of identity, and that of a brown man living in a white world forces him to grapple with his truth.

PRODUCTION TEAM



JOSEPHINE CROFT
LEAD PRODUCER

Josephine is interested in subtle styles of storytelling that resonate with our emotions and show multidimensional characters. She has produced multiple short films and web-series. Her debut project *Hitting Zero* has over 60,000 views on youtube and is set to be released as a feature documentary shortly. In 2020/21 she produced *Grounded* and comedy web-series *In Newcastle Tonight*. *Grounded*, a short horror film set on an empty, disembarked plane gained many nominations and awards on the festival circuit. It is now available online and set to be developed into a feature. In early 2023 her short comedy *Love* was a semi-finalist in The Very Short Film Festival.

[IMDB](#)

Previous work: [Tenacious Stories](#)

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AHALYA MAHARAJ
PRODUCER

Ahalya's career path encompasses finance, tech startups, and creative ventures with her expertise extending into digital strategy, marketing, leadership and growth. In 2023 she produced her first feature, *Just A Farmer*, Directed by Simon Lyndon (his feature debut) which was released this year. Presently, she also manages a talented team for a global organisation. Parallel to her day work, Ahalya pursued Screen Acting, spending years immersed in the craft. Her academic background in law, social policy and the arts merge together to ignite her passion of bringing stories with purpose, heart and a strong social conscience to the big screen.

[IMDB](#)



Amanda LaBonte
PRODUCER

Amanda LaBonte, is a powerhouse in the Performing Arts Industry with over 25 years of experience as a highly skilled actor and producer. As the co-founder and manager of Essential Theatre a thriving independent theatre company, Amanda has played a pivotal role in shaping the Australian theatrical landscape for two decades. As Amanda continues to contribute to the vibrant tapestry of Australian theatre, seamlessly transitioning her wealth of skills into the world of screen. With a career marked by innovation, resilience, and a love for storytelling, Amanda LaBonte remains a luminary in the performing arts community.

[IMDB](#)

PRODUCTION TEAM



STUART MANNION
D.O.P

Stu works as a cinematographer, director and screenwriter, whilst also running Melbourne based production company, *How Far Films*. His first film, *Real Meal Deal* won *Best narrative* at the *Australian Student Film Awards* (2012) and his recent short film, *Eye Contact* was an official selection for Palm Springs, Rhode Island, and Flickerfest – it was also nominated for Best film at St Kilda Film Festival (2018). Stuart won the Melbourne 48 Hour Film Festival, has screened on the BBC and also had a director's attachment on Channel 7's, *City Homicide*. He has a debut feature film currently in late stage development, which is due to shoot in 2024.

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DINGO SPENDER
COMPOSER

Born in 1978 and based in Naarm, Dingo has composed and performed music in various medium's, both nationally and internationally. His work has been featured in feature films, games and live performances. Dingo's background in instrumental study has now been complimented by numerous music engineering and productions, including location recording, orchestral and choral arrangement, surround field recording and commercial music audio mixing. He also worked on a variety of projects with artists such as Goyte, Kimbra, M-Phases, Bertie Blackman, Mama Kin, Lior, Claire Browne, Ella Hooper, Claire Bowditch and Sahara Beck



MICHELLE ST CLAIRE
EDITOR

Michelle St Claire is an award winning editor known for working across a wide variety of styles, and ability to bring almost abandoned projects to completion. She has been the primary Post-Production Tutor at the Academy of Film, Television, and Theatre since 2016, and has been working as a freelancer for both Narrative and Commercial content since 2014. Some of the more notable projects include the feature film 'Kairos', which went on to receive numerous accolades for it's cerebral editing and portrayal of down syndrome, and co-hosting the podcast "Rating Descending".

Her work has frequently focused on inclusive storytelling, genre fiction, educational content, and technical excellence even at low budgets.

[IMDB](#)

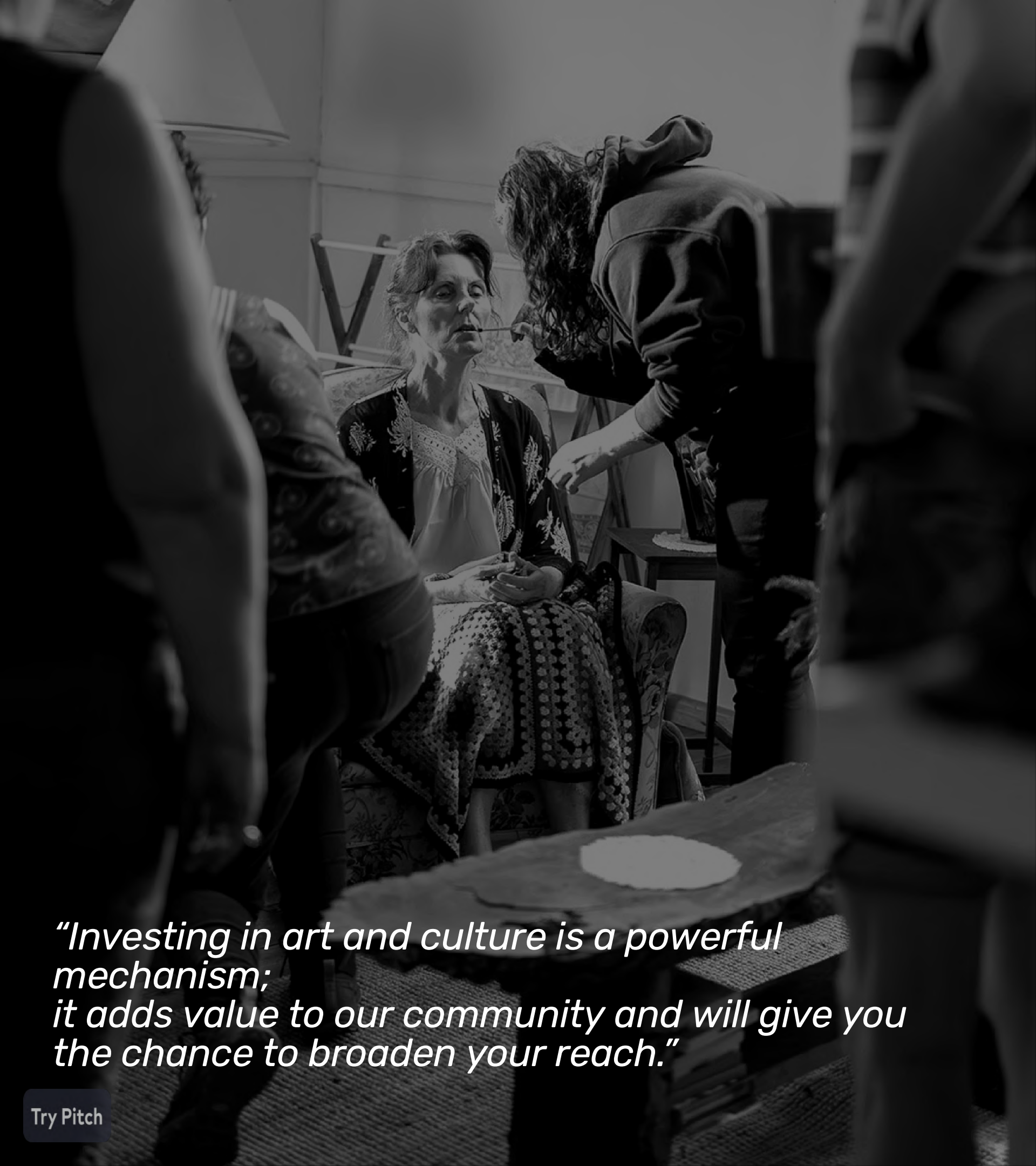
PRODUCTION TEAM

RICHARD MANSELL EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Richard is both a producer and executive producer. He is one of the producers on painted animation *A Winter's Journey* (mk2/Sony Pictures Classics), and is developing a number of projects, such as *Barnbow Canaries* with Alice Nutter and the BFI. He has a particular expertise in assisting other producers in structuring and closing film financing transactions. Since 2012 he has worked on a number of independent films as EP or closer, with producers like David Heyman, Duncan Kenworthy, Graham Broadbent & Pete Czernin, Finola Dwyer & Amanda Posey, Stephan Woolley & Elizabeth Karlsen, and Jon Kilik. Most recently he is working on Palme D'Or winner *Triangle of Sadness*, *God's Creatures* with Paul Mescal and Emily Watson (Cannes Directors' Fortnight), and executive-produced James Marsh's forthcoming *Dance First*. He is currently executive-producing Rebecca Lenkiewicz's feature directorial debut *Hot Milk*, based on Deborah Levy's novel. Prior to that he spent ten years working at Jeremy Thomas's production company Recorded Picture Company and sister sales agent Hanway Films. Focussing primarily on business affairs and production finance, he was involved in projects from inception until after realisation. He has released several critically-acclaimed but sadly commercially-unsuccessful albums of Mongolian throat-singing. An accomplished mountaineer, he has scaled all six of the famed Dragon's Teeth, the Netherlands' highest peaks.

[IMDB](#)





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*"Investing in art and culture is a powerful mechanism;
it adds value to our community and will give you
the chance to broaden your reach."*