Ken Bugul
Nobody Wants Her

A film
by
Silvia Voser

2013, documentary, 62 minutes, Switzerland/France

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http://www.kenbugulfilm.com/
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Nobody wants her

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Ken Bugul is a Senegalese writer, who has settled in Africa, where her soul is anchored.

Ken Bugul is style. Both in her works and in life.

She is pure energy and has a passion for freedom.

Novel after novel, she paints the picture of her life as a woman, of her loves, her sorrows and the relationships between her continent and the West.

Encounters, friction, sparks and beauty are everywhere.

No matter where we are from, where we live, her laughter is our laughter, her tears are our tears, her hopes are our hopes. They share the same sparkle, the same salty taste, the same freshness.

To write, according to Ken Bugul, is to dazzle the senses, and senses are colourless.
Ken Bugul is a Senegalese writer who lives in Africa, where her soul is anchored. She has had an exceptional life. Silvia Voser’s film shows her as an iconic figure of the female condition and of relationships between Africa and the West.

Ken Bugul is considered one of the most brilliant writers in Senegalese and French of these past decades. Over the years, thanks to her great command of the French language and the uncompromising care she takes with the wording of the meaning of Wolof vocabulary, her mother tongue, her novels have become absolute references in the realm of linguistic studies. “What you read in French in my novels is how we think and speak in Wolof in my village”.

Ken Bugul’s personal story is overshadowed by Africa’s turbulent history. She was born in 1947 in an isolated village in Senegal, at that time a French colony. Her father was 85 years old and her mother left them before Ken turned five. This was a fundamental event in Ken Bugul’s life. In spite of lacking a mother’s love, she was full of energy and a yearning for freedom, and she received an exceptional education for a village girl of that time. In 1971, she left for Europe to go to university and there she met people from the upper middle class and discovered new ideologies and liberties, modern art, drugs, alcohol, loneliness, incomprehension and disdain, and prostitution to relieve her need for affection. As she says in “The Abandoned Baobab”: “For twenty years all I had learned was their thoughts and their emotions. I thought I’d have fun with them, but I ended up even more frustrated. I identified with them, but they didn’t identify with me.”

She came back to Senegal, a broken, lonely and penniless young woman. People thought she was crazy and she was rejected by her family and society. For two years, she slept in the streets of Dakar, hanging out with outcasts, beggars, prostitutes and artists. Dirty, hungry, almost naked, she started writing her first novel, “The Abandoned Baobab”. Worn out, she decided to go back to her family. And there, in her mother’s village, she found refuge with the Serigne (marabout), a wise and much respected man. He took her as his 28th wife, enabling her to re-enter society, and he supported her in her desire to write and to be free.

He died in 1981, a year before the publication of her first novel, “The Abandoned Baobab”, which was an immediate success. Ken Bugul was invited to present her book all over the world. She met a doctor from Benin, married him and moved to that country, where she gave birth to their daughter Yasmina. Her husband passed away four years later.

For the past thirty years, novel after novel, Ken Bugul has painted a picture of her life as a woman, of her loves, of the relationship between her continent and the West. “To write”, she says, “is to dazzle the senses, and the senses are colourless.”

Silvia Voser leads us gently into the secret, tormented world of an artist whose writings show an understanding of the world that is rarely achieved.
Silvia Voser  
Director

Born in 1956 in Neuenhof, Switzerland  
Graduated in Journalism and as a German Teacher at the School for Applied Linguistics in Zurich.

1982-1988 Collaborated with the Freunde der deutschen Kinemathek (Kino Arsenal), in Berlin, and the International Forum of Young Cinema, within the Official Section of the International Berlin Film Festival.

In charge of editing catalogues and organizing film retrospectives in Cinema Arsenal:
“Horizons 85: Cinema in Asia” (Retrospective and Catalogue)  
“Berlin in the Movies 1965 – 1985” (Retrospective and Catalogue)  
“Retrospective of the Films by Jean Rouch” (Editor for CICIM/Revue pour le cinéma français, May 1989, Munich).

1983-1988 Co-controller for the preparation and organization of the “International Forum of Young Cinema” within the Official Section of the Berlin Film Festival.

1986-1989 Collaboration with the International Locarno Film Festival (Switzerland). In charge of the press office, the official catalogue and the “programmino”. Also in 1989, she presented and organized a program made up by films from Black Africa and was in charge of the catalogue “Films from Black Africa”.

1988-1989 Collaboration with “Christa Saredi World Sales”

1990 founder of the production company Waka Films AG.

1993 Assistant to the direction committee of the International Locarno Film Festival.

1993-94 Member of the directing committee of the “Montecimeaverità” foundation.

1996 Member of the jury in ACCT (Agence de la Coopération Culturelle et Technique) at the “Festival International du Film de Namur”, (Belgium).

2005 Member of the European Film Academy.

2006 Member of the jury at the “Festival de Cine Africano de Tarifa” (Spain).

2006 Member of the jury of the short-features festival “Rencontres Cinéma de Gindou” (France).

2013 Ken Bugul – Personne n’en veut (Ken Bugul – Nobody Wants Her)  
Documentary, 62 minutes, colour  
First film as a director

2014 Member of the short-film jury of the Conseil Général du Lot
Marietou MBAYE was born in Ndoucoumane (Senegal). Actually she divides her time between Porto Novo (Benin) and Dakar (Senegal). From 1986 to 1993, she worked for the NGO IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Foundation) in Nairobi, Kenya; Brazzaville, Congo; and Togo.

**Honorary recognitions:** Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres of the French Republic

She decided to become a writer in 1993 and published the following novels since then:

**Le Baobab Fou**
NEAS, Senegal, 1982
Translations: Lawrence Hill Books: The Abandoned Baobab (USA)
2007 Reprinted by Virginia Press (USA)
Unionsverlag: Die Nacht des Baobab (Switzerland)
Die Gekke Baobab (Netherlands)
Zanzíbar: El baobab que enloqueció (Spain)

**Cendres et Braises**
L’Harmattan, Paris 1994

**Rian ou le Chemin de sable**
Présence Africaine, Paris, 1999
**won the Grand Prix Littéraire of Afrique Noire 1999**
**Selected as one of the 100 Best African Books of the Century, 2002**
Translations: Zanzíbar: Riwan o el camino de Arena (Spain)
Castoldi Baldini Dalai: La Ventottesima Moglie (Italy)

**La Folie et la Mort**
Présence Africaine, Paris 2000
Translation: El Cobre: La Locura y la Muerte (Spain)

**De l’Autre Côté du Regard**
Serpent à Plumes Paris, 2003
Translations: Editor PIW (Poland)
Castoldi Baldini Dalai: Dall’altra parte del cielo (Italy)

**Rue Félix Faure**
Hoebbeke, Paris, 2005
Translation: Editor Piw (Poland)

**La Pièce d’Or**
UBU, Paris 2006
Translation: Castoldi Baldini Dalai: La Moneta d’Oro (Italy)

**Mes hommes à moi**
Présence Africaine, Paris, 2008

**Aller et Retour**
Athéna, Dakar, 2014

**Cacophonies**
Présence Africaine, Paris, 2014
Born in Paris in 1953.

After travelling all over the world, he studied Psychology and started working as a nurse before deciding to become an actor. He has worked for the stage, cinema and television, and as a clown with the Cirque ARCHAOS and the CABARET SAUVAGE (1995).

He directed the fiction *Madame Célat va bien* under the name Dominique Colnel.

For the stage he has written:

**Alpaga song; Jazz !**

**Libre choix: Trésor**

*Incentive Award of the French Ministry of Culture*

He has published the following novels:

**La vieille dame qui ne voulait pas mourir avant de l'avoir refait**
2009, La manufacture de livres, Paris

**Lola – Reine des barbares**
2011, Editions de la baleine, Paris

**Le Poulpe: Plier bien qui pliera le dernier**
2013, Editions de la Baleine, Paris
Felix von Muralt
Director of Photography

Born in 1963 in Locarno (Switzerland)

1982–83 Studies at the International Center of Photography NYC
1983–84 Linguistics and Sociology at the University of Zurich
1984–85 Internship at Cinerent Filmequipment Service in Zurich

Photographer and founding member in 1990 of the photo agency Lookat, in Zurich.
Exhibitions since 1984.

Publications:
1997 Indien sehen, Edition Lars Müller (Switzerland)
1998 Portrait, Schriftstellerportraits, Edition Lars Müller (Switzerland)
1999 In Olten Umsteigen, Edition Suhrkamp (Germany)

Director of photography since 1988:
Among others with directors such as: Xavier Koller (Academy Award 1991, Best Foreign Language Film), Rolando Colla, Paul Riniker, Vili Hermann, Stina Werenfels and Peter Reichenbach…

Director:
1994 Pflatsch, Short feature with Severin Müller
2005 Visite médicale, Short feature with Carlos Leal
2009 Brandstifter, Short film feature with Carlos Leal
Waka Films
Production Company
Founded by Silvia Voser in 1990

In development:

FREIHEIT IN DER KULTUR - KULTURENFREIHEIT
Silvia Voser
Documentary, 80 min, with the support of Aargauer Kuratorium (Switzerland)

KEN BUGUL – Personne n’en veut (Nobody Wants Her)
Silvia Voser
2013, documentary 62 minutes, Switzerland/France

HORS SERIE
Mariama Sylla
2007, fiction, 17 min., Switzerland/Senegal
In coproduction with Swiss Television and the Department of Foreign Affairs (Bern)

VISITE MEDICALE
Felix von Muralt
2005, fiction, 15 min, Switzerland/France
Cinéfestival Lausanne: Young Jury Award

NOCTURNE
Riccardo Signorell
2004, fiction, 90 min., Switzerland

HEROES NEVER DIE
Jan Arnold
2004, documentary, 85 min, Switzerland/Spain/France
In co-production with the Swiss Television

MADAME CELAT VA BIEN
Dominique Colnel (aka Margot D. Marguerite)
2003, Fiction 60 min, Switzerland/France

CASABLANCA, CASABLANCA
Farida Benlyazid
2002, Fiction 90 min, Morocco/Switzerland

HERR UEBER 40 RAUBKATZEN
Ute Casper
2002, documentary, 52 min, Switzerland/Germany
In co-production with ARTE and the Swiss Television

THE TOUR
Deborah Young
2002, fiction, 15 min, Italy/Switzerland/Croatia
ENERGY SHOW
Patrick Boillat
2001, Animation, 18 min, for PSI (Institute of Research Paul Scherrer), Switzerland

UN PAS, DEUX PAS...
Guy Désiré Yaméogo
2001, 13 min, France/Switzerland/Burkina Faso
Abidjan Film Festival: Best Actress (Aïssata Asmana), European Union Award
Milan African Film Festival (COE): International SINUS Jury, Special Mention

LA PETITE VENDEUSE DE SOLEIL (The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun)
Djibril Diop Mambety
1999, fiction, 44 min, Switzerland/France/Senegal
Bellinzona Film Festival: Special Mention for Lissa Baléra
Namur Film Festival: Special Jury Award, ACCT Award to Lissa Baléra,
PROCIREP Award
Nuremberg Film Festival: International Human Rights Day Award
Washington Children’s Film Festival: Ellen Award
Festival du Nouveau Cinéma de Montréal: Best Short Film Award
France: Quality Award of the CNC
Switzerland: Quality Award of the Federal Office of Culture

KEID ENSA (Women’s Wiles)
Farida Benlyazid
1999, fiction, 90 min, Switzerland/France/Morocco, Tunisia
Best Film in Morocco with more than 500,000 entries sold
African Film Festival Milan: Audience Award
Troia Film Festival: Best Actress Award (Samira Akarriou)
Marrakech Film Festival: Best Costumes Award
Ferney Voltaire Film Festival: Audience Award

CINEMA: REFLEXIONS SUR L’AVENIR:
1997, 7 short-features, fiction, 60 min, Switzerland/ARTE

"Le jour où..."  Chantal Akerman (Belgium)  
"Elena"  Marco Bellocchio (Italy)  
"The Birth of Light"  Abbas Kiarostami (Iran)  
"Ghost of Electricity"  Robert Kramer (USA)  
"Les parias du cinémaA"  Idrissa Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso).  
"Le film à venir"  Raúl Ruiz (Chile)  
"La Eta knabino"  Samir (Switzerland)
World Premiere at the International Locarno Film Festival

CHOISIS-TOI UN AMI
Mama Keïta
1996, fiction, 90 min, Switzerland/France/Guinée
Locarno Film Festival: Jury’s CICAE Award

IL SOGNO DELLA FARFALLA
Marco Bellocchio
1994, Fiction, 120 min, Switzerland/France/Italy
LE FRANC
by Djibril Diop Mambety
1994, Fiction, 44 min, Switzerland/France/Senegal
Carthage Film Festival: Golden Tanit
African Film Festival Milan: AGFA Award
Ouagadougou African Film Festival: Main Jury Award FESPACO.
San Francisco Film Festival: Golden Gate Award to the Best Short Feature
Cooperation Award granted by the French Ministry to the Best Production

SAMBA TRAORE
Idrissa Ouedraogo
1992, fiction, 80 min, Switzerland/France/Burkina Faso
Berlin Film Festival: Silver Bear
Carthage Film Festival: Silver Tanit

TILAI
by Idrissa Ouedraogo
1990, Fiction, 82 min, Switzerland/France/Burkina Faso
Cannes International Film Festival: Jury Award
FESPACO: Jury award: Etalon de Yennenga
Credits:

Directed by Silvia Voser
Voice over Margot D. Marguerite
Photography Felix von Muralt
Sound in Benin Arès Honvoh
Sound in Senegal Tom Weber
Editing Souleymane K. Seck
Mixing Samuel Beaucamps
Grading RogerSomm

Duration 62 min.
Format DCP, Blue-ray, DVD

Produced by Silvia Voser
Claude Gilaizeau
Beat Lenherr

Production Waka Films SA
Les productions de la Lanterne
Panimage

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Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (eed), Evangelisches Zentrum fürentwicklungsbezogene Filmarbeit (EZEF)
Katholische Kirche Kanton Zürich
Vosges Télévision Images Plus
CNC (Centre National du Cinéma et de l’Image Animée)