

PRESSKIT



YOU ARE STILL SOMEBODY'S SOMEONE

- A documentary by Esther Wellejus



International premiere at Sheffield Doc Fest 2017 (June 9-14th)

Original Danish title

Vi Lader Billedet Stå Et Øjeblik

Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/198964182>

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25 minutes



CONTENT

Page 2:	Introduction
Page 2:	Synopsis
Page 3:	Director's note by Esther Wellejus
Page 4:	Fact sheet on bipolar disorder
Page 5:	Statement from Psychiatrist Anne Lindhardt, Director of Danish Psychiatry Fund
Page 6:	Statement from Johanne Bratbo, One of Us-foundation, on destigmatising of mental illness
Page 7:	Short BIOS
Page 7:	About made in copenhagen
Page 7:	Supported by

INTRODUCTION

A film – a podcast and a visual piece of art. Esther Wellejus' new film takes a step in the opposite direction of the trend of documentary today. With this film you're able to close your eyes and listen entirely to the sound of the words, or lower the volume focusing exclusively on the images and their way of conveying the story. It's abstract and at the same time entirely present.

The film is about the person behind the diagnosis – that you are more than your mental illness. A personal story about a father who slowly disappeared but who still were there somewhere. The film has been several years underway for the debuting filmmaker. It hasn't been motivated by a desire to diminish a taboo on mental illness, but as she mentions in her director's note – she has hope that the film will attribute to that.

Creating art or film on the basis of your own life experiences has always been a sensitive area. Esther Wellejus tells the story of her father who broke off the contact with her and her siblings many years ago. According to the Danish Psychiatry Fund one out of four experience mental illness during a lifetime. One out of two Danes has relatives going through mental illness. In other words – mental illness are a public matter.

“In spite hereof mental illness is a strong taboo. We prefer not to talk about it and not to have anything to do with it. Anxiety and shame is a part of it. People fear those who are mentally ill. As a patient or a relative you usually feel shameful and less worth. Strong feelings are connected with mental disease. It's tied by ignorance, of prejudice that's stigmatising and a discriminative behaviour that segregates”, says director Anne Lindhardt of the Danish Psychiatry Fund (excerpt from our fact sheet).

SYNOPSIS

You Are Still Somebody's Someone is a documentary from a daughter to her father. A film on the blurry paths of memory and the love for the person behind the diagnosis.

In a dreamy realm of nature and with an abstract use of archival footage *You Are Still Somebody's Someone* takes us on a journey of the sensing and discovery of memory of a now estranged relation.

Sombre images of summer twilight and 8mm archive film from years past frame the universe along with the sound recordings from the director's childhood. The film tells the story of the director's own father who broke off the contact with her many years ago. Like a child absorbed in tiny details of plants and leaves, we are watching as she's creating her own world while experiencing her father engulfed in a newfound religious awakening.

The blurry paths of memory are revealing themselves like a painting of potent colours and unsettling shadows - unfolding the story of the religious father and his worsening mental condition as an increasing darkness. The past weaves itself in and out of the present along with the now adult daughter telling the story of her father's evolving illness.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

By Esther Wellejus

You Are Still Somebody's Someone is a film about and to my dad. How I remember him from the time I was little. From before he disappeared from my life and after he became ill. The absence of him echoes into the present.

Mentally ill get one label only. Their diagnosis is overruling any other personality trait. You become your sickness in the eyes of others. But behind the illness you are someone. And you're somebody's. And I wanted to make a film conveying this abstraction.

My dad is someone besides all the diagnoses. It's my memory of him who inhabits this film.

With this film I've attempted to capture the bewildered sense and blurry paths of memory and put into words and images the search and sense of loss connected to the love for someone who's missing without being deceased. I wanted to make a film about the father I remember - and how I've experienced the process of his illness and becoming estranged to one of the closest relative of all.

The film tells the story of a father disappearing in a newfound religious awakening and how he later becomes mentally ill, committed several times over the years. We experience the story from the perspective of a child along with an adult voice telling the story in the present. The child's irrational sense of carrying the world on her shoulders - of being an adult and still feeling responsible for your parent's illness.

The film has been created as a collage from a selection of old home movie travel clips and my own footage. The images form the search in a lyrical past, which to me is the place of memory. Through the archive footage we move between different layers of memory: We sense the elusiveness and the life with my dad you hear me narrate.

No diagnoses are being made; we see no doctors or hospitals rooms or wrecked kitchens or living rooms. I wanted the film to be open in a way that make people relate and experience the human being behind all that. The film is my way of getting close to him who I have lost and connecting to the harsh and sorrowful emotions, but also conveying how much he's given me - his view of the world. It's a film to and about my father, who has been so much more to me than his illness.

With this film I hope people will be able to relate to the feelings of loosing touch with a close family member and reflect upon their own relations through the story.

We need other stories of estranged relations and of mental illness. In our eagerness to diagnose and put reality into the right boxes, we sometimes forget that behind the illness - there's a person. We have to accept that life is ambiguous and that one doesn't only fit into one narrow category: You're more than a diagnosis in a doctor's journal.

FACT SHEET ON BIPOLAR DISORDER

Definitions, facts and consequences

Bipolar affective disorder is a mental illness characterised by excessive, periodical manic or depressive mood swings. Around 2-3% of the population suffers from being bipolar. The disorder equally affects men as women. Even with varying symptoms or degree, bipolar affective disorder regularly have severe social, work-related, financial and/or personal consequences from the disorder, including a suicide risk of 10-15% (source: <http://depressionsforeningen.dk/hvad-er-bipolar-lidelse/>)

Bipolar disorder is usually revealed at early adolescence or during puberty, but can be difficult to detect since

the symptoms are closely related to the immature mind. It is of great importance however that the disorder is being diagnosed and treated at an early stage, otherwise causing an increased risk of aggravation with more frequent and severe episodes.

Source: <http://www.psykiatrifonden.dk/viden/diagnoser/depression/bipolar-lidelse.aspx>

Living with bipolar disorder

Bipolar patients often have difficulty distinguishing between feelings of a normal range and symptoms of depression or mania. In the same way relatives and others may have difficulty understanding the patient's mood swings and change in energy levels and need for socialising. A lot of patients with bipolar disorder – and their relatives – experience the illness causing serious influence on their lives and opportunities in terms of education, work and family life. Relatives are usually the most important resource for the patient. Hence why therapists actively engage and persistently include the patient as well as his or her relatives in the treatment.

<http://www.psykiatrifonden.dk/viden/diagnoser/depression/bipolar-lidelse/bipolar-lidelse.aspx>

In concurrence with the depressive and manic periods of the disorder hallucinations may occur. This could be in terms of voices telling you how pathetic you are or delusions of 'rotting guts' as seen with depression. The manic patient could be convinced he's 'God's chosen one' or is on a specific mission to save mankind. Hallucinations and delusions are thus related to the actual mood. To the person experiencing hallucinations, they are perceived as real. Meaning it's impossible for the person to separate between these sounds and feelings and what's happening in reality.

Source: <http://www.netdokter.dk/sygdomme/fakta/maniodepression.htm>

Taboo

25% of the Danish population will experience a mental health problem in the course of his or her lifetime and 50% of the Danes have relatives who are mentally ill. In other words – mental health problems are a public matter.

Strong emotions

In spite hereof mental illness is a strong taboo. Taboo is forbidden – we prefer not to talk about it or have anything to do with it. Typically it's connected with serious social or religious control, accompanied by anxiety and shame. People fear those who are mentally ill. As a patient or a relative you usually feel shameful and less worth. Strong feelings are connected to mental disease. It's tied by ignorance, of prejudice stigmatising and a discriminative behaviour that segregates. Stigma means are mark on those who should be separated from others – visually or through opinions and behaviour.

Genes and biology

Mental illness is experienced from within and others are rarely able to 'see' it. Mental disorders influence your self-image, of your ability to relate to other people and engage in regular social interactions. It affects the mood and the way you think. It's terrifying to be suffering from a mental disease and it's frightening to be in the role of the relative because you often don't know what to do.

But most diseases are curable and it is possible to create better conditions for all. Talking about it should break the taboo: Through media, campaigns and in workplaces all over the private and public sphere. This will not eliminate the mental illnesses, but it will make suffering from a disorder easier and enable people to get through the hardships. The Danish Psychiatric Fund has attributed to this development for the past 20 years and we're seeing the results of that.

Source: <http://www.fremtidenssundhed.dk/psykiske-lidelser/tabu-og-psykisk-sygdom>

Being a relative of mental disorder

67% of relatives experience how lack of knowledge and stigma concerning mental disorder affect their quality of life. Study provided by: <http://www.bedrepsykiatri.dk/media/23084/til-vidensbank.pdf>

Source: <http://www.bedrepsykiatri.dk/vidensbank/paaroerende/belastninger/>

To be related to a person with severe mental difficulties typically results in chaos and the feeling of being alone. Feelings of insecurity and several years spent in search for explanations leads to a lot of speculation.

Source: <http://www.psykiatrienisyddanmark.dk/wm281609>

Anne Lindhardt, Psychiatrist and director of the Danish Psychiatry Fund, explains:

“Most people are related to or have close friends who experience mental illness at one point. Thus there are so many experiencing being relatives. Still ignorance, taboo and stigmatising are connected mental diseases. To be related with people with mental disorders is hard. Usually there is a time where the illness is slowly developing and where you as a relative will have difficulty understanding what’s going on. You may experience your family member beginning to change. May he or she gets sad or introverted – maybe he or she experiences anxiety without you understanding the reason for it. The incomprehensible, the unapproachable, the hope, the feeling of insecurity and powerlessness, the afterthought and the feeling of guilt are difficult ingredients. As a relative you need information about mental disorders - of the signs of mental illness and what causes it. And then you need to understand that the one who’s ill isn’t able to just pull himself together. Information is available through the website of the Danish Psychiatry Fund among other places. But the most important is attending appointments together with the health-official treating the patient and thereby get specific advice. Sharing your thoughts and experiences with others who may also be in similar situations is also important. We need a lot more focus on the relatives – politically in the health care, in the workplaces and in the circle of friends.

Esther Wellejus’ film is an insightful and poetic illustration of the conditions many relatives experience and live with. As such it should be brought to a wide audience”.

Anne Lindhardt

Psychiatrist, Director of the Danish Psychiatry Fund

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Stigmatising

Danes afraid of people with bipolar disorder.

Study carried out among 1005 Danish people for the Danish Depression Union, shows that:

- 1 out of 5 Danes think bipolar people are more dangerous than others.
- 1 out of 3 Danes feel uncomfortable by the thought of having a colleague who’s bipolar.
- Almost 50% of the Danish population feels uncomfortable driving with a bipolar behind the wheel.
- More than 50% of young adolescents between 15 and 29 wouldn’t feel comfortable going on a date with someone bipolar.

Source: <http://depressionsforeningen.dk/hvad-mener-vi/danskerne-er-bange/>

ONE OF US

The national Danish effort ONE OF USE is designed to the destigmatising of mental illness in Denmark – putting an end to the discrimination and exclusion of people suffering from mental disorder. It should be made easier for the individual living with mental illness to live as full and decent as an equal member of society: Everyone is and should feel like ‘ONE OF US’.

Johanne Bratbo, project manager at ONE OF US, says:

”No one is just their diagnosis. Silence, doubt and taboo are still part of the everyday life for many people suffering from mental illness. This goes for how the surrounding environment and relatives perceive mentally illness and the self-image of the person suffering from the mental disorder. Why does someone become mentally ill? Who or what’s to blame? Is it I as a relative who’s to blame? Am I ashamed? Is it possible to get well? If you experience mental disorder, you’re faced with so much more than the illness and the treatment alone. The risk of being stigmatised is a challenge rising from ignorance and prejudice. E.g. Only weak people gets depressed, people suffering from schizophrenia are dangerous per definition or the misconception that recovery isn’t possible. In other words the surrounding environment can maintain the person in a disorder-identity or worse attribute to an aggravation of the condition. These general misconceptions are caused by the way we traditionally identify a person with their mental disorder. It’s reflected in the way we speak about it: You are schizophrenic, depressive or bipolar. All is interpreted through the mental illness. But no one is merely his or her diagnosis. On the contrary the surrounding environment can make an effort on insisting acknowledging the person behind the illness and through that maintain the hope of recovery and support the person in mastering his or her challenges.

It’s only a natural response to be cautious and react with insecurity in situations unfamiliar to you – not at least when you experience incomprehensible patterns of actions or frightening reactions. But if we respond automatically when we hear about or meet people suffering from mental illness, we will never put an end to the prejudice. Instead we have to face our own insecurities, confronting our own ‘auto-pilot’ in terms of responses and ask questions to what we have difficulty understanding. When we speak with each other hope is created – and hope is always part of recovery. We can all make a difference.”

Project Manager ONE OF US, Johanne Bratbo

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SHORT BIOS

Producer Mathilde Hvid Lippmann

Mathilde Hvid Lippmann holds a BA in Film- and Media from the University of Copenhagen. Since 2006 she's been working at production companies such as Bastard Film, Plus Pictures and Monday Media as production manager and assistant director on various documentary films. Since 2011 she has been producing for made in copenhagen; premiering in 2014 with *Me and Dad: No Expectations of Applause* by director Kathrine Ravn Kruse awarded with a Robert and winning for Best Documentary in 2015 by the Billed-Bladet TV-Gold award. Currently she has produced the poetic essay documentary *You Are Still Somebody's Someone* by debut director Esther Wellejus, selected for the NEXT:WAVE competition at CPH:DOX.

Director Esther Wellejus

Esther Wellejus (b. 1977) makes her debut as the director of *You Are Still Somebody's Someone*, which premiered at CPH:DOX 2017, selected for the NEXT:WAVE competition for new talents challenging the observational documentary. She holds an MA in Film and Media Studies from the University of Copenhagen and since graduating she has held different positions in the Danish documentary film industry, as script consultant on *NIELSEN* (2015), directing and filming the short documentary (*The Girls and The Red Balloon*, 2015, assistant and sound (*Because We Also Are Everything We Have Lost*, 2015) and production manager and location scout on the feature documentary *The Carbon Crooks*, 2013 and other TV documentaries. She was the speak-scriptwriter and script consultant on the TV documentary *The King of Odder* (DR 2012) and works as a writer, previously as caster and in radio. In 2008-2011 she worked as a researcher of Danish documentary film at The Danish Film Institute. Through courses at The National Film School of Denmark she received training in documentary filmmaking (2013).

ABOUT made in copenhagen

made in copenhagen produces compelling stories from the real world to Danish and International audiences. The primary focus being on complex stories that reflects how reality is rarely one-sided or simple. In other words the films seek to take audiences beyond the news stream and through strong characters move the audience and generate debate.

During the past five years the company's become one of the most significant production companies of documentary film in Denmark with award-winning films like *Motley's Law*, *Warriors from the North*, *Putin's Kiss* and *Shady Chocolate*. made in Copenhagen works with a strong line-up of experienced directors and new talents. The company has a solid foundation within an expanding international network. Producer Helle Faber, who's also the managing director, founded the company in 2010.

<http://www.madeincopenhagen.dk/en>

THE FILM IS SUPPORTED BY

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