

# NO HOME MOVIE



# CHANTAL AKERMAN

PARADISE FILMS, LIAISON CINEMATOGRAPHIQUE & CHEMAH IS PRESENT - NO HOME MOVIE - A FILM BY CHANTAL AKERMAN - EDITING CLAIRE ATHERTON  
PRODUCED BY CHANTAL AKERMAN, PATRICK QUINET & SERGE ZEITOUN - CENTRE DU CINEMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FEDERATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES  
AN ICARUS FILMS RELEASE



A film by Chantal Akerman

## NO HOME MOVIE

North American Theatrical Premiere  
New York: Opens April 01, 2016  
Los Angeles: Opens April 22, 2016

*"It was heartbreaking when I saw it last week  
and it is devastating now."* –J. Hoberman, *The New York Times*

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<http://icarusfilms.com/filmmakers/chant.html>



## ABOUT THE FILM

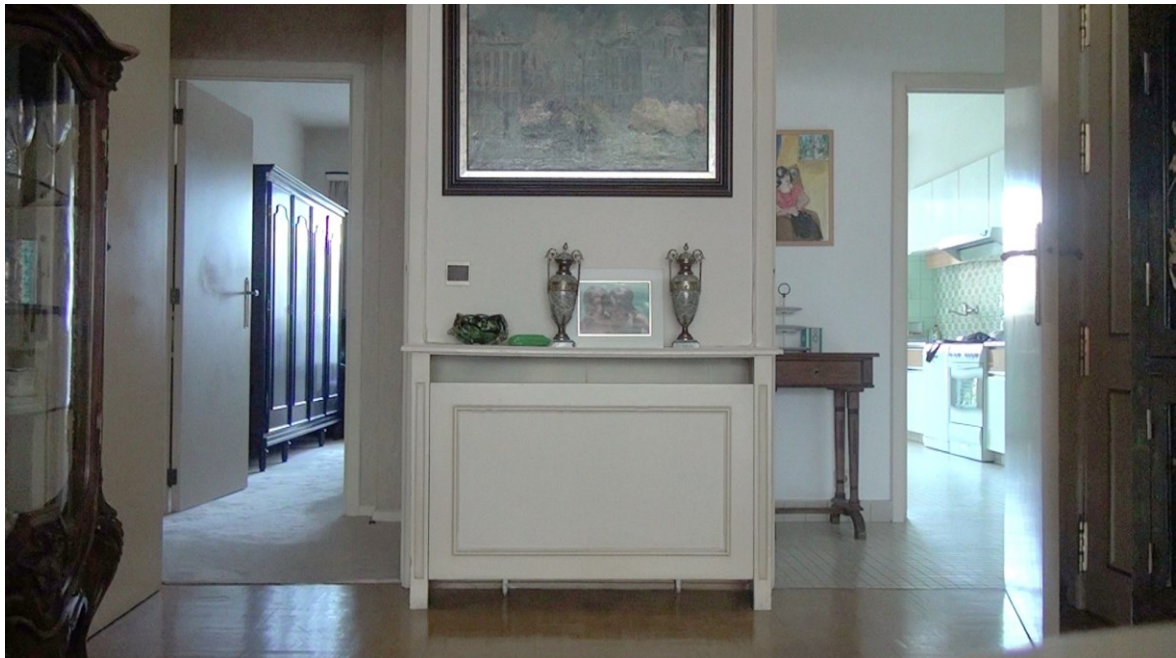
Chantal Akerman's masterful final film is a portrait of her relationship with her mother, Natalia, a Holocaust survivor and central presence her daughter's films.

## FILM FESTIVALS

World Premiere  
2015 Locarno Film Festival

North American Premiere  
2015 Toronto International Film Festival

U.S. Premiere  
2015 New York Film Festival



## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

I've been filming just about everywhere for years now, as soon as I see a shot. Not with anything specific in mind, just the feeling that one day, these images will make a film, or an art installation. I just let myself go, because I want to, and instinctively. Without a film script, with no conscious project in view.

Three installations have been created from these images and have been shown in many locations (at the Art Film Festival in Belgium, for example, etc.).

And I continue to film. Myself. Alone.

Last spring, with the help of Claire Atherton and Clémence le Carré, I brought together around 20 hours of images and sounds still not knowing where I was going. Then we started sculpting the material. 20 hours became 8, then 6, and then after a while, 2. And there we saw it, we saw a film and I said to myself: of course, it's this film that I wanted to make.

Without admitting it to myself.

If I'd had to admit it to myself, if I'd become aware of what was happening, if I'd set up a project from the very start, I probably wouldn't have made the film. I would have been afraid. Or not afraid enough.

Because this film is above all a film about my mother, my mother who is no longer. About this woman who arrived in Belgium in 1938 fleeing Poland, the pogroms and the abuse.

This woman who we only see in her apartment, nowhere else.

An apartment in Brussels.

A mother who was left all the time and then found again after long trips made by one or the other of her daughters, my sister and me.

So it's a film about my mother, but not only.

Interspersed in the shots, the moments spent with her, are moments spent far away, in lands that are sometimes arid.

And each time we come back to her, each time she's failed a little more. Until finally she can barely speak to us, falling asleep between each phrase.

But she mustn't sleep. The doctor told us: don't let her fall asleep.

So my sister and I try to keep her awake in a scene that is absolutely heart-wrenching. We call out to her: "Mama," "Mama," "Mama!"

She is deaf.

But she hears us anyway.

After that we leave her once more; we see deserts, we hear the wind.

And then I find myself in the apartment. In a little room I tie my shoelaces, I toss back my hair. I close the curtains.

This shot is followed by another, which will be the last. A shot we've already seen. A still frame. Looking towards the kitchen, towards her bedroom. But there's no longer anyone in this apartment.

The film is a film about the world that moves, which the mother never sees; she practically never leaves her apartment anymore. But the world outside is really there; it insinuates itself between the shots of the apartment, like a touch of yellow on the canvas that makes the rest of the painting exist.

It's also a film of love, a film about loss, sometimes funny, sometimes terrible. But viewed with an eye that keeps a respectful distance, I think. A film where a transmission occurs, discreetly, almost effortlessly, without pathos, in a kitchen in Brussels.

Of course right now the film is raw material, rough-hewn, like one speaks of *art brut*, or "outsider art." But it should never be polished; it would lose its force. The film is awkward at times, but here awkwardness is a plus. The film wanders without our really knowing where it's going. And yet, it can only lead us to one thing, death.

The death of the mother, which we will never see.  
Only the apartment, now empty, speaks of her in silence.

The film begins with a tree being shaken by a violent wind. The shot lasts forever.

I felt it like that, static, like a beginning. A fixed frame but filled with movement, noisy, howling. It looks like it will never stop, but it does. A sunless shot, with a grey light, diffuse, without contrast, a beige light. This shot is followed by a sunny shot in a Brussels park, probably filmed in the spring when the green of the grass shines so much it dazzles you.

In the foreground, an old man seen from the back, sitting on a park bench. This green was necessary after all that sand; calm was needed after the storm. And that's precisely how the film has been edited; the shots aren't there to give information; they work emotionally, affecting the spectator, touching him/her.

The narrative advances step by tiny step, a little like how we enter this apartment in Brussels, where a woman walks with the fragile grace of someone who is trying to maintain her precarious balance.

A woman who doesn't let herself go...

—Chantal Akerman

# The New York Times

“Chantal Akerman Takes Emotional Path in Film About ‘Maman’”

By Nicholas Rapold, August 5, 2015

By the age of 25, the Belgian filmmaker Chantal Akerman had made a three-hour-plus cinematic landmark with her 1975 film faithfully chronicling a housewife’s obsessive routines. But that was only the beginning. In the decades that followed, Ms. Akerman pioneered a cinema of patient observation through long takes, created essay films in ways that spawned legions of imitators, made a musical or two, undertook meditative surveys of the United State-Mexico border and the Eastern bloc, designed video installations for major galleries, and shot a film about Jewish jokes.

But her latest project — *No Home Movie*, an intimate extended visit with her mother, who died at the age of 86, in April 2014 — took her places she had not expected to go.

“I think if I knew I was going to do this, I wouldn’t have dared to do it,” Ms. Akerman said of the emotional experience in a phone interview last week.

On Monday, *No Home Movie* will have its world premiere in the international competition of the Locarno Film Festival, in Locarno, Switzerland, and marks a brave new direction for Ms. Akerman, who is 65. She shot the film herself in the Brussels apartment of her mother, Natalia (Nelly) Akerman, with additional images from travels in Israel. Candid and open-hearted, it mostly consists of conversations — whether in person in a neat kitchen, or over Skype from abroad — and serene observations of “Maman” puttering about. The quotidian chronicles and the wide-ranging chats together offer a snapshot of her mother’s daily life and pages from a personal history that reaches all the way back to her time in Auschwitz.

Spanning several months, *No Home Movie* is a fond portrait of the closeness between mother and daughter and of irrepressible maternal love, but also, as her mother’s health deteriorates, a reckoning with mortality. “Most of my films were touching on people but not in this direct way,” Ms. Akerman said. “They were more into implosion than explosion. I don’t think I can go back to do the type of things I did before.”

*No Home Movie* joins a filmography that has left a deep imprint on the vanguard of cinema, recognized most recently by a near-complete retrospective at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London (running to Oct. 1), extensive restorations by the Royal Belgian Film Archive, and a new documentary about her, also screening at Locarno. Her critical acclaim is variously affirmed by plaudits from leading critics such as J. Hoberman, book-length academic studies, a place on the *Sight & Sound* best-films canon, and Criterion Collection DVD editions.

Ms. Akerman’s 1975 masterpiece *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* casts a long shadow with its meticulous, distanced observation, finding beauty in banality but also expressing a fierce angst. Her pioneering nonfiction and essay work address memory and displacement with what might be called an ambiguous clarity and, always, a coolly lovely sense of composition, color and the presence of place.

The cinematic and ideological ferment of the 1970s was crucial for Ms. Akerman, who spent formative time in New York — the subject of her 1977 epistolary study *News from Home* — and absorbed work by avant-garde filmmakers. Yet the experiments in the decades to come were all her own, from the musical and rhythmic dramatic pastiches of the 1980s (*Tout Une Nuit*, *Golden Eighties*), through to her travels in post-Communist Eastern Europe (the travelogue [*From the East* aka *D’Est*], Israel [*Down There* aka *Là-bas*], the American South [*South* aka *Sud*] and elsewhere. She also directed two challenging novel adaptations: the

superb, sensuous *La Captive* from Proust; and her most recent feature, *Almayer's Folly*, a saturnine reframing of Joseph Conrad's debut novel, shot in Cambodia.

With *No Home Movie*, the themes of displacement that thread throughout her work finally come to a head. "Even if I have a home in Paris and sometimes in New York, whenever I was saying I have to go home, it was going to my mother," Ms. Akerman said with the deep, lilting tones familiar from the voice-overs and monologues that define many of her films. "And there is 'no home' anymore, because she isn't there, and when I came the last time, the home was empty."

*No Home Movie* is an especially moving testament because of the devastating history that lay buried in her mother's past. During World War II, after fleeing to Belgium from Poland, Nelly Akerman was sent to Auschwitz; her husband was hidden in Brussels, but other relatives died. The trauma left anxious aftershocks throughout the filmmaker's oeuvre, often expressed obliquely. In the newest film (whose title echoes the uprooting and devastation caused by the Holocaust) Chantal Akerman tries to address the subject head-on, but her mother's reticence is deep-seated.

"She never wanted to speak about Auschwitz," Chantal Akerman said. "I asked her once to tell me more, and she said, 'No, I will get crazy.' So we could speak around, or after, or before, but the real moment, never. Not directly."

Instead, in the film Ms. Akerman and her mother range through a variety of topics big and small: family anecdotes, stories of a secret love affair, recollections from rowdy school days, the shifting place of Judaism in their lives, and whether the dinner meat tastes good. It's a fond back-and-forth, with Chantal Akerman taking a playful swipe now and again; her mother only ever loses her poise to gush with compliments.

"So much love is coming out of her, and I was not aware of that," Ms. Akerman said. Referring to her mother's unwillingness to let one long-distance chat come to a close, Ms. Akerman said, "I knew she loved me, but when I see that Skype moment, it's really like a love affair between us."

*No Home Movie* brings mother and daughter closer together on screen than they had ever been in past works, even though the final separation of death looms. Finding fresh technique to express the circumstances, Ms. Akerman employs handheld camerawork — instead of a tripod, she left her small camera on tables and other surfaces, like "another kind of furniture" — and even uses a Blackberry for landscape shots in Israel. The most audacious moment might be the film's opening: a nearly four-minute take of a tree loudly buffeted by the wind, an arresting metaphor for stamina.

Whittled down from 40 hours of footage, *No Home Movie*, which runs 115 minutes, makes its debut at a festival whose ambitious selections often owe a stylistic debt to this director's work. With her latest film, Ms. Akerman forges ahead once again. And far from creating a safe, static elegy, she has found "a passage into something else," as she put it, in what sounds like both cinematic and emotional terms.

"I was not mourning when I was doing that," she said of the process of editing the film and its many images of her mother. "It was the other way around: I was living, and not mourning."

## FILM CREDITS

Title: *No Home Movie*  
A film by: Chantal Akerman  
Running time: 115 minutes  
Year: 2015  
Country: Belgium/France  
Language: In French with English subtitles  
Image: 16:9 Color HD Stereo  
Produced by: Patrick Quinet, Serge Zeitoun and Chantal Akerman  
Edited by: Claire Atherton  
Assisted by: Clémence Carré  
Mixer: Eric Lesachet  
Calibration: Peter Bernaers  
Post-production: Julien Melebeck  
Subtitles: Babel Subtitling with the collaboration of Chantal Akerman

*Note: The "No Home Movie" English subtitles overseen by Chantal Akerman have not been altered.*

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