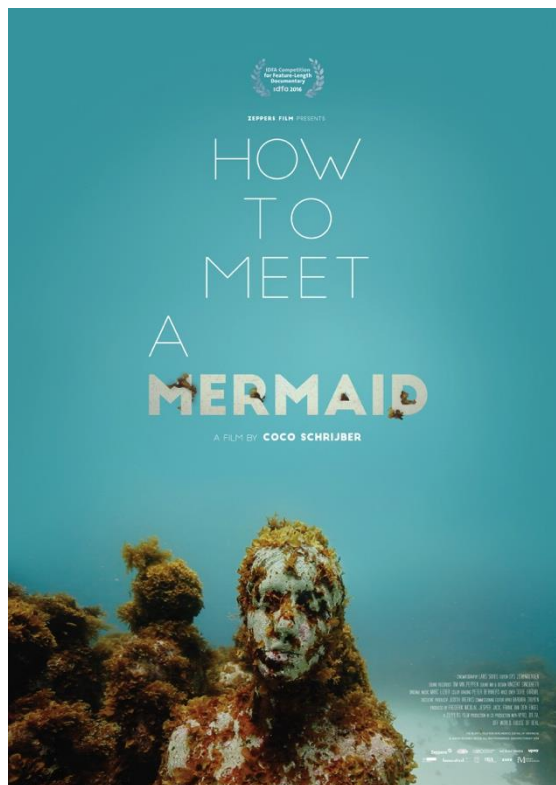




HOW TO MEET A MERMAID by Coco Schrijber



Competing for Best Feature-length Documentary, Best Dutch Documentary (IDFA)
Finalist for the AWFJ EDA award for Best Female-directed Film.

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MAIN CREDITS

<i>Original Title</i>	How to meet a Mermaid
<i>Length</i>	90 minutes
<i>Language</i>	English, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic
<i>Subtitles</i>	Dutch, English
<i>Year</i>	2016, world premiere at IDFA
<i>Genre</i>	Documentary
<i>Format</i>	HD stereo 5.1
Written & directed by	Coco Schrijber
Voice of the Sea	Sofie Gråbøl (<i>The Killing</i>)
Cinematography	Lars Skree (<i>Armadillo, The Art of Killing</i>)
Sound recordist	Tim van Peppen
Editor	Gys Zevenbergen
Sound design & re-recording mix	Vincent Sinceretti
Executive producer	Judith Vreriks
Producer VPRO	Brigit Dopheide
Commissioning editor VPRO	Barbara Truyen
Delegate producers	Frederik Nicolai Off World Jesper Jack House of Real
Produced by	Frank van den Engel Zeppers Film BV

A production by Zeppers Film in co-production with VPRO TV, DRK, Off World and House of Real.

This production is supported by The Netherlands Film Fund & The Netherlands Film Production Incentive, CoBO, Dutch Cultural Media Fund, The Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) and the Danish Film Institute.

IDFA Screenings:

Press & Industry:

Mon, Nov 21, 11:45 at Munt 12

Public screenings:

Fri, Nov 18, 20:00 at Tuschinski 1 (world premiere)

Sun, Nov 20, 19:00 at Ketelhuis Zaal 1

Tue, Nov 22, 18:30 at Munt 10

Wed, Nov 23, 15:30 at Eye Cinema 1

Sun, Nov 27, 16:00 at Lux IDFA 6

How to Meet a Mermaid

Logline

In *How to Meet a Mermaid*, the sea becomes a haven for mankind, locked in its struggle with its 'indifferent universe'. Lex, Rebecca, and Miguel each have their own reasons to lay their lives in the hands of the capricious waters. The question remains, however, whether they will find what they so anxiously seek underneath the surface of the waters.



Synopsis

In *How to Meet a Mermaid*, the sea breaks its silence as it unveils the stories of Lex, Rebecca, and Miguel. These protagonists, each with their own reasons to entrust their lives to the water, find refuge in the sea in search of a better place.

The sea's unpredictable nature reveals its many faces: aspects of friendship, beauty, solace, and strength, alongside its psychopathic traits, as it extends a strangler's helping hand. The sea is precisely what we choose to see in it, and what the characters try to find in its depths. Through their adventures, the film explores the obstacles in their lives and those that transcend their personalities: cruise-ship violence, suicide, and illegal immigration. The perception of reality, which is constantly in flux, determines why Lex, Rebecca, and Miguel make drastic changes to their lives, seemingly motivated by hope or despair.

'I would prefer breathing to not breathing', declared the American writer William Faulkner. Humanity, locked in its ceaseless struggles, appears to have two options: either to live, or not to live. Even though there may not be clear reasons for the pain we can experience, it is a continuous torment for many nonetheless. Under what conditions is the will to live stronger than the urge to end life altogether?

Award-winning Dutch director Coco Schrijber conquers her fear by taking a plunge to the bottom of the sea in search of an answer: why did her brother Lex kill himself in the water? Did he fear life more than death? Life under water is a close approximation of the paradise we seek so desperately in our 'indifferent universe'. However, the primal condition of life - breathing - is impossible under water.

"Get out!" the ocean snaps at Coco and the viewer, "- and live!" The sea addresses us, imploring us to keep breathing, come what may. Or is this voice our own, bidding us to survive suspended between the charm of life and the attraction of death?



('Silent Evolution' – © Jason deCaires Taylor/DACS/PICTORIGHT)

Director's statement – Coco Schrijber

“Life of Pi, All is Lost, Dead Calm, Cast Away; all are stunning films, each with the sea as their subject. Nonetheless, they all deal with 'the will to survive', as emphasized in their trailers. How to Meet a Mermaid, by contrast, deals with 'the will to die', which exists alongside the former and triumphs over it on occasion. Just as with survival, this will to perish requires its own share of courage and strength of will. My protagonists have made their choice; for Lex and Rebecca, grim determination takes them past death's doorstep, whereas Miguel rushes headlong into a desperate adventure, as thousands upon thousands of illegal immigrants are doing at this very moment.

"To me, all human behavior is unpredictable, and considering man's frailty in the ramshackle universe he functions in, it's all irrational. It couldn't be very rational because this universe is not a very rational one, it seems to me" - William Faulkner, Nobel-prize winning American writer.

In *How to meet a mermaid*, we hear the echo of Faulkner's words, leaning over a lectern back in 1958. Having decided to put aside his beloved bourbon for a minute, he treats his audience to dissemination on our human struggle through a crackling microphone. I am a great fan of Faulkner, and the fifty-year-old recordings I've uncovered provide the motivations of Lex, Rebecca, and Miguel with a sense of perspective. The Faulkner quote stated above has served as the foundation for this film.

In **How to Meet a Mermaid**, we are hurled down onto earth by the universe, as portrayed in the stunning opening shots of the film: at times, in a paradise we no longer recognise as such; sometimes, in hell, and then there are times when there is nothing to it but to figure it out for yourself. Lex, Rebecca, and Miguel all reside in their respective paradises that have become a hell to them. Loneliness amidst thousands of fellow human beings (Rebecca on her Disney cruise), alone among friends (Lex at the diving resort) or Miguel (teaching surfing classes to tourists who are blissfully unaware of the fact that he uses his surfboard for purposes other than fun: an escape from destitute poverty and a gateway to that other paradise, America, his way barred by a fence.)

It appears as if I have produced a trilogy on the human struggle, without ever realising that the subject harbors my deepest fascination: how do we keep going? In retrospect, this trilogy started out with *First Kill* (2001): am I personally capable of killing a human being? *Bloody Mondays & Strawberry Pies* (2008) addresses the question of how to live without getting killed either by your job or by boredom. And now, *How to Meet a Mermaid*, on the battle to remain alive.

With *How to meet a mermaid* I stand up for the glorious beauty of our existence. This is a film about courage, doubt, difficult decisions, the lure of the sea, and the splendor of life in its occasional ineptitude at dissuading us from acts of recklessness. In the closing shot of the film, a footprint set in the concrete of a sun-drenched sidewalk, I join Faulkner by sharing in his vision: *"I have great faith in man."*

Biography Coco Schrijber



Initially trained as a visual artist, Coco Schrijber is one of Holland's leading, most adventurous documentary makers, having built an award-winning body of work that has been recognised in Holland and internationally.

A graduate of Amsterdam's art school the Rietveld Academy in the audiovisual department, she worked as a first AD for films by reputed Dutch director Theo van Gogh. Her debut film *In Motion* (1996) premiered at IDFA and won the first prize in Rome. Her short documentary about children, *Not Big, Not Small*, won the pubcaster VPRO's Golden Statue award in 1998.

Her first feature documentary, *First Kill*, was selected for the Joris Ivens Competition IDFA 2001 and won the Dutch press award at the Dutch Film Festival. Her short film *Beautiful World* was screened at festivals in Rome, Spain, Houston and New York, and won six international awards. Her second feature-length documentary *Bloody Mondays & Strawberry Pies* won the Dutch industry award Golden Calf for Best Feature Documentary and was the official Dutch entry for the Oscars in 2009.

Besides filmmaking, Coco coaches upcoming directors and teaches MA film students in The Netherlands, Mexico, Greece and Sweden.

Biography Sofie Gråbøl (Voice of the Sea)



Danish actress Sofie Gråbøl she achieved international fame as a detective—the cool and distant lead character Inspector Sarah Lund in all three series of *Forbrydelsen*—*The Killing*—played on BBC4 with great success, resulting in a BAFTA award.

In 2013 she appeared in the British TV series *Fortitude*. In August 2014 she made her English language début on stage in Edinburgh, appearing as Margaret of Denmark in *James III: The True Mirror*, the third of [Rona Munro](#)'s historical trilogy *The James Plays*.

Zeppers Film

Zeppers Film is an independent film production company based in Amsterdam. It has produced over 100 films in the last 20 years and is specialized in creative documentaries. Our documentaries are generally co-produced with Dutch and international public broadcasters. Many of these films travelled the world to international festivals and arthouse cinema's and some films have been awarded at festivals including: IDFA's prizes for best Long Documentary and best Mid-length Documentary, Grand Jury Prize at the Tribeca Film Festival and Golden Calfs at the Netherlands Film Festival.

Off World

Off World is an independent production company based in Brussels, capital of Flanders, Belgium and Europe. Off World's main goal is to produce international author documentaries. Over the last few years, the company has built up a large portfolio and a solid reputation as delegate producer and co-producer of many creative and original documentaries. Off World's trademark is a contemporary and wayward look on the world, which springs from the passion and talent of the documentary authors.

House of Real

House of Real is a groundbreaking factual cross platform media house based in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Malmö Sweden. House of Real focuses on high-end documentary filmmaking, tv-series, and transmedia, with a focus on innovation in creative development processes, value creation by exploring different platforms and international collaboration. The company works for a number of Denmark's most important museums in creating content and have provided provides strategies for partners like The Swedish Film Institute and Britdoc.

Partners and supporters

