

17th September

‘A daughter in the freezer’

Infertility Inspires Plot for Catherine Linstrum’s Latest Film Project ‘Perish’

A young couple struggling to keep their marriage together following the loss of their four year-old son are suddenly facing further trauma when they are contacted by the infertility clinic through which their son was conceived. Their son’s unborn twin sister, frozen for the last five years, is about to reach the end of her shelf-life...

This is the highly-emotive starting-point for ‘Perish’, the latest script in development by one of Wales’ hottest writers, South Wales-based Catherine Linstrum, along with her artist husband David-John Newman, which the Film Agency for Wales have boarded, providing financial and creative support.

Having made her Cannes debut this year with the Romanian feature film ‘California Dreamin’, which was selected for the highly sought-after Directors’ Fortnight screenings, Linstrum has a 15 year track record of writing and directing feature films, dramas and documentaries. ‘Dreaming of Joseph Lees’ was her first feature as a screenwriter, a Twentieth Century Fox production directed by Eric Styles. She has also written and directed two notable shorts, ‘The Boy with Blue Eyes’ and ‘The Black Dog’ starring David Threlfall.

This is the first formal collaboration on a film project between Linstrum and Newman, a successful artist and life-coach with work having been held in collections at Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, Photographers’ Gallery London and private collections in Paris, New York, Tokyo and London.

“As a couple, Catherine and I have enjoyed a strong partnership that allows us to work together but not compete. We are very similar yet so different. It is so liberating to work together, particularly when it involves such a highly-charged subject. While we have no personal experience of infertility or strong views on the ethical debate of assisted reproduction, our own marriage has enabled us to take a very balanced perspective – as the writer, Catherine then translates these visions and thoughts into words on paper.”

As well as collaborating on the script, Newman is producing a series of video and photography work which will be featured in the film; the character of Aiden – a visual artist – is working on an exhibition which is central to the film’s dramatic climax

The inspiration for ‘Perish’ came from a chance remark made by a contributor to a radio programme on infertility and IVF, referring to a couple’s frozen embryo as a ‘daughter in the freezer.’

“The concept of considering this embryo as a real child seemed remarkable,’ explains Linstrum. “It only takes one further leap of imagination to consider the child being capable of actually desiring to be born. The notion of an unborn child held on ice and waiting to be born struck us as having huge potential for a rich and chilling drama centred on the highly emotive and contemporary subject of infertility and IVF.”

“We’ve been aware of Catherine’s significant talents for some time, and are delighted both that she has been quite rightly recognised at Cannes this year and that we have been able to find a suitable project through which to support her future work and career progression. The collaborative process on this project, with David’s artistic, visual strengths, is particularly appealing, as is the engaging and thrilling approach to a subject of real substance that the creative team are taking” adds Pauline Burt, Chief Executive of the Film Agency for Wales. “This is a very contemporary story-line that has the potential to be visually and emotionally compelling. We expect strong interest from production companies later this year.”

The Film Agency for Wales is funded by the Arts Council of Wales, the UK Film Council and the Welsh Assembly Government, via Creative Business Wales, the latter of which was set up to support, encourage and increase the range and number of films being produced in Wales and to foster the abundance of creative talent in Wales.

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Notes to Editors:

About the Film Agency for Wales

1. Established in July 2006, the Film Agency for Wales is the sole Agency for film in Wales, with a remit to ensure that the economic, cultural and educational aspects of film are effectively represented in Wales, the UK and the world. As a strategic agency, the Film Agency aims to facilitate the emergence of a viable and sustainable Welsh film industry and to promote a vibrant and dynamic film culture.
2. The Agency's priority is to identify and nurture Welsh filmmaking talent – particularly writers, directors, writer-directors and producers – by supporting and encouraging the development of their work, accomplishments and ambitions.
3. We support a broad policy on film education to complement our central priority of creating and maintaining a dynamic film culture across Wales. We aim to enhance film literacy for all and stimulate an appetite for specialised, cultural and non-mainstream films.
4. The Film Agency for Wales wishes to increase the range and number of films being produced by new, emerging and established Welsh talent. We have a particular interest in supporting Welsh writers, writer-directors, directors and producers.
5. The Board of Directors is chaired by Peter Edwards and includes Sybil Crouch (Vice Chairman), Elan Closs Stephens, Angharad Evans, Stephen Cleary, Nerys Lloyd and Ynyr Williams. Pauline Burt is Chief Executive.
6. Further information is available at www.filmagencywales.com

* Source – Greenpeace UK