

Long Synopsis:

What does it mean to be human ...?

The three-part documentary series "Only Human" answers this question from the vulnerable, profound and artistic perspective of migrants with refugee experience and domestic participants who are part of a revolutionary project of the non-profit association "music4everybody!".

The first episode of "Only Human" focuses on the moving struggle of refugees who have fled their homeland to Germany, where they seek a home without losing their cultural identity.

Using an innovative, artfully crafted interview technique, her harrowing journey through danger and despair to her difficult start in a foreign culture is told, driven by the universally human and fundamental desire for safety, dignity, and acceptance.

The piece begins with a mysterious opening scene in which the actors:inside are unrecognizable; they move about in different colored bodysuits that disguise their identities. The actors are trapped in their individual isolation until they step out into the unknown to meet each other. Only through their community as artists do they begin to recognize and understand themselves, each other, the power of self-expression, empathy, and ultimately community. The face of each participant is gradually shown with human emotions as they ask the same question:

"What does it mean to be human?" ... expressed in the one word they each chose:

Love, friendship, equality, compassion, empathy, trust, awareness and love.

After this introduction, the film shows an interwoven series of artistically designed interviews, dance sequences and musical performances.

The music was composed and recorded by the participants under the guidance of their professional instructors. The completely free and surreal space from which the art emerges is symbolized by the white sand pit, which reflects the individual struggles of the participants. At first, the sand appears to be ice cold. Only upon closer observation of the protagonists do we realize that our first impression was wrong. Only through touch, the familiar reality of human footsteps in the sand, does the image lose its coldness. The elemental beauty of the scenery is enhanced by the simple color scheme of the costumes: red, black, and white. The colors symbolize basic human needs and experiences: Love, loneliness, struggle, and purity.

A low-budget production, "Only Human" imaginatively and metaphorically demonstrates the power of art to create a community where participants can experience true freedom; the freedom to communicate directly from the heart, without judgment or fear. The participants' strong bond is evident in the song "Angekommen." It was composed by them in collaboration specifically for the documentary series. Their performance is fittingly the first time we see them all together on stage in the film, singing in the same language - German. They emerge from the darkness, dressed in black, wrapped in a warm, sunny light, which is deliberately meant to represent a new beginning, where they all come together without prejudice, so that together they can form a diverse and tolerant society.

The creative process activates the inner capacities of each individual for unbiased curiosity. Our search begins beyond socially constructed pigeonholes, norms and stereotypes, and requires the examination and rewriting of previous imprints in order to create something new together. This makes performative art the perfect medium to foster true tolerance and cross-cultural empathy. United by the common goal of sharing their experiences beyond the safety of their small community, the participants, instructors, and production company worked with the director to create the film "Only Human."

The guiding principle of the documentary series was simple: to promote healing and agency. The audience experiences intimately and directly what it means for all of us to be human, regardless of cultural conditioning.

The creation of "Only Human" required not only unconventional work, but also many hours of thorough preparation and educational guidance for the participants to ensure their emotional well-being as they told their stories outside their community for the first time.

Episode one of "Only Human" movingly introduces us to ten people - ten cultures - ten destinies and shows how they have worked together and continue to work together to strengthen each other.

The film was shot and edited to focus on the aesthetic aspects of the interviews themselves as a non-fictional but dramaturgical element. The body language, facial expressions and voices of the ten multicultural participants create maximum intimacy for the viewer. The overall rhythm of the film was carefully tuned to convey the information not only on an intellectual level but above all on an emotional one.

"Only Human" uses elements of slow cinema and a thematically appropriate color palette to give the audience pause. The participants give a deep insight into their emotional lives and through this openness awaken something that leads us to each other - empathy.