

Film writer and director Uga Carlini talks new film, *Angelienna*

By  Daniel Derksen

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As the founding member of Towerkop Creations, a boutique film production company that has been specialising in female-driven heroine stories since inception in 2010, filmmaker Uga Carlini's *Angelienna* story is about the self-love of a formerly homeless parking attendant who is diagnosed with a fatal disease and dares to put her lifelong dream of traveling the world into motion.



Source: Supplied

Tell me about what inspired *Angelienna*?

A story gets a hold of me, resonates with me and then I cannot let go until it's done. I give birth. *Angelienna* was conceptualised out of an argument between two then lovers who did not get each other's vocations - the creative versus the nine-to-five - but tried nonetheless.

So, an article about an urban legend in the UK was presented to me. It was about a car guard who one day after 25 years of not missing a day's work, just didn't show up, and how and where they found him became *Angelienna*'s big secret. I was told to write that.

Combine that with how I grew up with a single mother working in a local hospital often taking her two daughters (my sister and I) with during our school holidays where we got a taste of the inner workings, trials and tribulations of the hospital and the people who worked on the inside and the outside (our local car guard there). Well, the blueprint for *Angeliena* was drawn up and the colouring could begin. That was in 2011.

On the outside the inspiration is from what we got right as the rainbow nation since 1994 and on the inside it's about how self-love really is the greatest middle finger - about how we owe it to ourselves to love ourselves so fiercely, that when others see you, they know how it should be done.



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■ ***It's a story about self-love, making money, terminal illness, friendships, hardships, plants, beauty, loving Nelson Mandela, dreams and being good enough. More about this?***

Finding the magic in the madness is what this film is all about because it is a film about underdogs, and I love a good underdog. There's nothing more inspiring to me than an underdog or listening to how many times you failed and how bad it was and now here you are.

The 'here you are' is not what heroes are made of, 'how you got there' is the stuff they are made of and how you keep going to get there depends on your self-love. Self-love means being at peace with yourself. It's loving yourself so fiercely that when others see you they know how it should be done.

■ ***You mentioned that Angeliena's spirit lives in all of us too. Tell me more about this?***

Angeliena, her friends and her world of crazy, beautiful colours stands for me for the spirit of South Africa. South Africa is my biggest inspiration - just look at our flag, rainbow is the favourite colour there.

I also drew a lot from my love for South African retro and kitsch, South African pop art as well as my Italian influences (my dad is an Italian from Rome). Combine that with influences from travels and how that (memories) gets reworked into that which inspires us visually in the way we decorate to find and make our little place under the sun - like Angelina our heroine too.

So Angeliena's spirit is visual as much as it's spiritual. South Africans are a cultural mixing pot of influences. I love that

about the spirit of our visual side and then we all have our 'Angelienna moments'. Her being unapologetically herself is refreshing and a reminder that that's where true freedom lies. There is only one you.

“ Adelaide, AUSTRALIA set!

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■ While she leaves footprints for us to try on for size, her story can ripple into the psyche of the rest of the world so that we can inspire them while we inspire ourselves for a change again. Tell me more about this?

Self-love is a very valuable thing because if that was intact we would not be the damaged human race that we are at the moment - because we really are. We are all horrible to each other because we are horrible to ourselves. And Angelienna needs to learn or rather remind herself that she is worth it too.

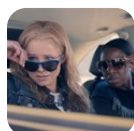
She can do it too and that if her dreams don't scare her they are not big enough. And while she and those around her journey through this theme in their own unique ways, they rediscover each other again and more so themselves. As a nation and as global citizens, we need to start getting to know each other a little better.

And *Angelienna* - the film - is inviting everyone. Let's get to know each other. We might be different, but we are all pretty awesome if we just remind ourselves and each other every now and again.

■ You mentioned that it's safe to say “never judge a bergie or a South African by her cover...”

Because there's more to most of us than what meets the eye, especially in the Photoshop-obsessed world that we currently seem to live in. The layers are what I love about humans. Beauty is fickle, when we love someone they become the most beautiful person in the world to us anyway. And my Angelienna is an 'older woman'.

Some have said an 'unconventional heroine'. Older women have so much to give, so many lines and wrinkles being testimony to so many adventures, good and bad, that only life experience and age can buy. And that's a superpower, life experience. It's a gift. A wealth of knowledge of a body and soul that has been lived in. Like good shoes, walked in to fit just right. Something only time can do.



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Daniel Derksen 23 Sep 2021



Youth is not the only audience out there. I'm a late bloomer myself. My 'youth' was complicated and difficult. I want to go back to that person in her twenties and thirties and promise her it will get better. Talk *Mare of Easttown*, Andy MacDowell in full grey (locks) on the red carpet or Halle Berry who found love in her fifties again and says, "I am proud of the woman I am today because I went through one hell of a time becoming her".

Now, I'm listening. You have my full attention and that you only get with an older woman as an awesome heroine that I for one can really identify with. You only get by by not judging a bergie by her cover and by not judging and making assumptions before you have done the homework - the getting to know each other.

■ What do you hope audiences will get from watching *Angelienna*?

That if your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough; friendship is more important than revenge; never judge a bergie by her cover; self-love is the greatest middle finger; and, love yourself so fiercely that when others see you they know how it should be done.

Experience *Angelienna* on Netflix from 8 October worldwide.

Read more about South African filmmaking [here](#).

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za

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