

In group strength-training classes, people breathe in unison every day. Charlyne lifts weights alongside three retired women who love to sing. What if a cheerful gym could be the place to break our family curses?

BREATHE ONE TIME OUT OF THREE

A FILM BY CHARLYNE GENOUD

PRODUCED BY CLIMAGE AND ECAL / ECOLE CANTONALE D'ART DE LAUSANNE

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SYNOPSIS

To ward off the curse of osteoporosis that hangs over the women in her family, Charlyne joins a gym frequented by older women who love to sing. From one burst of laughter to the next, they transform this ordinary place into a refuge that nurtures both body and mind. In their company, the filmmaker explores her relationship to her mother's fragility, her fear of death, and the very idea of a family curse.

TECHNICAL INFORMATIONS

Documentary, 17', Switzerland

Color, 16:9, DCP, 5.1

VO French

English, German and Italian subtitles

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

‘Our body is like a black box, whose contents and workings remain unknown to us’ writes Martin Page in his recent book “Douceur de la musculation”. This is where I begin: with a body I do not fully know, and with a warning my mother gave me after being diagnosed with osteoporosis. From her hospital bed, where she suddenly appeared to me in all her fragility, she urged me to train my body so that, when I reach her age, it will not break at the slightest impact.

From “Rocky” in 1976 to “The Smashing Machine” this year, cinema has offered countless representations of bodies strengthened through sport. Yet these stories have largely belonged to men in the prime of their lives. In contrast to these familiar images, Swiss gyms reveal a very different reality – one I discovered when I joined group fitness classes. They are filled with women between sixty and eighty years old, who come to strengthen their bodies not to sculpt them aesthetically, but to continue inhabiting them fully.

Rarely represented on screen, these women embody an approach to ageing that runs counter to dominant cultural imaginaries, which too often treat the female body as though it had an expiration date. My film places bodily functionality rather than appearance at its centre. It seeks to represent these women’s lived, sensory experience from within, far removed from the dominant male gaze.

A century after Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own”, some feminist thinkers have proposed the idea of “a room within oneself”: an inner space independent of material possessions and therefore of financial means. For the protagonists of my film, strength training appears to be precisely such a space – an intimate resource, a source of support they command, a place they shape and control.



The film observes how this physical practice is accompanied by psychological strengthening. Through movement as much as through conversation, the women collectively develop a form of everyday resilience in which I gradually become involved myself. Katy, Flore, and Michelle meet four times a week to lift weights, but also to share coffees animated by stories from their lives. They often speak spontaneously about traumatic experiences they have endured. Within this atmosphere of sisterhood, these shared narratives seem to transform: carried by collective movement and disarmed by laughter. The gym gradually emerges as a place where something is repaired, both physically and mentally. Through the conversations that unfold there, a subtle yet profound form of solidarity takes shape. The collective experience makes these stories and memories lighter, more bearable, and more inhabitable.

By filming this sisterhood that enables speech, I sought to show how an ordinary place can become a refuge. Simple practices can strengthen bodies and help preserve personal integrity in a world that tends to render ageing female bodies invisible. Fitness thus appears as a space for self-realisation, far removed from the clichés of superficiality with which it is so often associated.

Initially, I imagined making a documentary haunted by the question of death—my mother's death, and my own. But when I met Katy, Flore, and Michelle, it became clear that the film would move towards life instead. It emerges from that shift: from a private anxiety to an attentive gaze directed at their presence, their energy, and the way they inhabit their bodies in the present. The short film thus takes shape as a sensitive and attentive collective portrait of a singular and quietly charming place: a gym understood as a space of gentle resistance. A place that has touched me deeply, ever since I too found refuge there – in the workout room as much as over coffee, and always alongside them.

CREDITS

CAST

Cathy Jolly
Flore Tchatchou
Michelle Clot
Laïla Genoud

ADDITIONAL CAST

Jean-Pierre Ginggen
Frédéric Bertholet
Roberto Dos Santos

WRITER / DIRECTOR

Charlyne Genoud

DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT

Camille Anker

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Fabian Kimoto

ADDITIONAL IMAGES

Camille Anker
Charlyne Genoud

EDITING

Cécile Lemarchand

DRAMATURGICAL CONSULTANT

Olivia Frey

SOUND ENGINEER

Julian Egger
Daniel Gendre

SOUND EDITOR

Louise Bercher

MIX

Johan Toubin

MUSIC

Clovis Roustan et
Jean Coutau

SINGING

Mireia Lallart-Navarro
Mathieu Lazuli

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Jacopo Atzori

CALLIGRAPHY

Laïla Genoud

COLORGRADING

Fabian Kimoto

A Climage and l'Ecole
cantonale d'art de
Lausanne
coproduction

With the support of
l'Office fédéral de la
culture (OFC),
Cinéforum and Loterie
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ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Born in 2000 in Geneva, Switzerland. Charlyne Genoud earned a Bachelor's degree in Modern French, Art History and Film Studies from the University of Lausanne (UNIL) in 2022, and a Bachelor's degree in Film Directing from ECAL (École cantonale d'art de Lausanne) in 2026 with her graduation film *Breathing Once Every Three Times* (*Respirer une fois sur trois*). Alongside her studies, she has worked as a film critic, distribution assistant and press officer for Swiss production companies.

FILMOGRAPHY

***Cuxhaven*, fiction, 18', 2025**

Alma wants to get away from her Christmas family reunion. She takes a carshare ride to the North Sea, with a camcorder full of images from her childhood. Memories start to come along the way.

***Next Stop : Fontenay*, Doc., 18', 2026**

In a local bar, time gets tied up in knots. It ebbs and flows with the habits of the regulars and the passing buses. Framing a majority of men over the age of sixty, the director enters the image in an attempt to find her place, until she gets bogged down in this refuge of sociability.

SWISS PRODUCTION

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