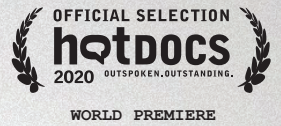




# BARE



A film by Aleksandr M. Vinogradov



«...BARE celebrates the male body in all its complexity, might, and vulnerability.»

Pat Mullen,  
POV, Point of View magazine

«...This film looks at how difficult it is to pull together contemporary dance, from inception to vision and execution, honoring nudity without sacrificing artistic integrity.»

Nadja Sayej, FORBES





GENRE **DOCUMENTARY**; LENGTH **'91 (CINEMA) '52 (TV)**;  
FORMAT **2K 16:9 COLOUR**; SOUND **5.1**.

MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.BAREMOVIE.COM](http://WWW.BAREMOVIE.COM)

## Crew & Cast

Written and directed by  
**Aleksandr M. Vinogradov**

Produced by  
**Aleksandr M. Vinogradov**  
**Thierry Smits**  
**Fabien Defendini**

Original music by  
**Aleksandr Vasilenko**  
**Francisco López**

Cinematography by  
**Aleksandr M. Vinogradov**

Additional cinematography by  
**Thomas Szacka-Marier**  
**Alyx Ayn Arumpac**  
**Jean Counet**  
**Benjamine Wolf**

Edited by  
**Aleksandr M. Vinogradov**

Sound mix by  
**Freek Vrijhof**

Choreographer of Anima Ardens  
**Thierry Smits**

Assistant to the choreographer  
**David Zagari**

Voice creation  
**Jean Fürst**

Dancers

**Valentin Braun** / Germany  
**Peter De Vuyst** / Belgium  
**Michał Adam Góral** / Poland  
**Jari Boldrini** / Italy  
**Gustavo Monteiro** / Portugal  
**Bruno Morais** / Portugal  
**Emeric Rabot** / Belgium  
**Nelson Reguera Perez** / Cuba, France  
**Theo Samsworth** / UK  
**Oliver Tida Tida** / Congo, France

*...I believe that little by little, worldwide, we are losing the space of freedom. The tendency in the world is right-wing, neo-liberal, and people are more controlled. We have less liberty even if we think we have more. The last territory where we can be ourselves and where we can have full freedom is our bodies. I believe that is the statement of nudity on stage today.*

*- Thierry Smits*



## Synopsis

Eleven naked men audition, rehearse and perform for the premiere of master Belgian choreographer Thierry Smits's new contemporary dance piece *Anima Ardens*. Mixing intimate rehearsal footage with extensive and breathtaking dance sequences, *BARE* follows the choreographer and his team as they work to explore difficult, often taboo subjects through nudity and dance. In this bold exploration of artistic conflict, gender, and sexuality the one constant is the conceit that the body is the last bastion of personal freedom.

## Director's Note

Our body is much more than just a natural, anatomical and physiological entity, but it is a complex and a changeable social element. Social and human sciences started to investigate a human body in connection with the philosophical task related with material and non-material culture, and much later within the history of art. Then art is probably one of the tool for the researchers which adjusts more complexity and excitement through the process of exploring the subject. Keeping that idea, I started my research within the male nudity in the performing art, which has more controversy, compared with the female nudity, as it has been explored more often. This research became a foundation for my further reflection in a documentary film *BARE* by dealing with male performing nude on the stage.

Making a documentary about the making of a nude dance performance has been quite a job in itself already, because there are so many clichés connected with this genre. It was important for me to document with this film the original working method of Thierry and his unique choreography. But it was even more important to reveal his relationship with the dancers, their reactions to new challenges through the process, and their transformation by the end of the creation. Additionally, with this project I want to express that nudity is not trivial. In a society that tends towards absolute control and prudishness, artists must react. That is why Thierry Smits said about his performance that: *"... this is my attempt to prove that using nude male dancers will make them look more human, and it strengthens the identification process."*



It's quite obvious why many choreographers are using nudity in their performance. Some of them see this as a good marketing move, while others simply distract attention from a weak production. Including "nudity" in the performance in any case will sell more tickets. For me it was interesting to try to understand the issue with Thierry Smits better.

A while ago I worked on my documentary about butoh dance, in which the dancers are performing nude most of the time with a coat of white paint all over their bodies. While creating this film I learned that butoh's technique is much more concerned with what is happening inside the body and the consciousness of the dancer than with how his body looks before the public. So after a few minutes of seeing a nude body, that nudity is somehow disappearing. The continuous internal process of interaction between the body and consciousness is always the most significant. This experience helped me to look deeper to the male nude body in contemporary visual arts, and to problems or obstacles that a nude performance might introduce.

What I finally really came to admire in Thierry Smit's performance was that the movements were proposed and created by dancers themselves in collaboration with Thierry. They made a performance in which dance as we've been used to see it no longer exists. Performances with nudity are created by choreographers from different countries and cultures, with different perceptions of aesthetics, and different influences of various religions and political situations, and in completely different choreographic styles. But despite the differences, the effect of their work is similar and obvious: a decrease in theatricality and the appearance of a naked body in the modern avant-garde performance significantly complicated what until recently, so habitually and quietly, has been referred to as "dance."

The main question of the choreographer today - what kind of thought do you carry when you undress people on stage? The purer and clearer the statement, the easier it will be for the viewer to connect. After all, the viewer is intelligent: if a naked body is shown to him, which is clamped, he immediately reads it. So it is necessary to uncover and be liberated both sides: the performer and the viewer.

## Artistic Approach/ Topic Summary

The nude body is not surprising anyone in modern art since a long time already, but this stance only trickled down on cinema more recently. At present, a nude performance symbolizes vulnerability and has become a constant theme in modern theater and dance. Perhaps this is due to the desire for minimalism: a minimum of a show, a minimum of brightness, a minimum of artificial "beauty," a minimum of scenery and costumes. This process is accompanied by the natural exposure of the body, and nudity arises, as a rejection of the unnecessary. With these ideas the visual language of the film is very clean, with a white dominating color. Also, to support the visual approach, the shooting was made with a tripod.

It's true that the viewer begins to peek at a nude body while watching the show. We can not do anything with the fact that we perceive a naked body as a sexual object, evaluate it and compare it with our own. Especially when it comes to the male nude body, which is much less represented. That is why I was trying to use more an observation style while creating scenes, and that has truly given documentary its claim on 'reality' and 'authenticity'. With this approach my film developed into the cinema verité style of observational documentary. While shooting my materials for the film, I could see reactions of friends of Thierry or some random visitors who were watching the dancers rehearsing nude. Sometimes they were pretending that it was absolutely normal to be next to a nude dancer and to talk about the weather, for example. But for many, the choreographer's nudity on the stage is a way to create for the audience some form of discomfort.

The main method is to use the ultimate emotion. Exposure - this is probably the last step in striving to be honest with the audience, the limit of expression is like shouting. Our body is hidden under a shell - to remove all the husks, to see the authenticity, a person must be uncovered. We always look at the body as a figure moving in space, we read movement as a pattern that displays our body. We do not look at the dancer as ourselves. And the dancer suddenly says: *"I am the same as you, and I have the same body, but I want to say something with this body that you do not expect."*

The performance of Thierry Smit was built on perceptions that we can catch only when we see a naked body: the minimalistic movements are enlarged and we see how the belly moves, the ribs, the shoulder blades appear; and of course, in the case of male nudity we also see the movement of the delicate parts of the anatomy. The movement becomes much more important than the image of the body itself.

# Male Nudity

The artistic representation of the male body already has a long history. The main stages of it were the Ancient Greece and Rome, where the naked male body was depicted more often than the female body and was the object of worship; and Medieval Christianity, tabooing any manifestations of corporeality. The early male nudes were also usually depicted in religious or mythological contexts, as heroes, and not in any overtly sexual way. Rehabilitation of the naked male body in the art appeared again during the Renaissance time. Revival, rediscovering the beauty and eroticism of the naked body; and later the classicism, which created images of the heroic male body, and romanticism, which presented this body not only as beautiful, but also as tender and sensitive. With the realism and naturalism of the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century began the depiction of ordinary men in real conditions of their life, thanks to which the painting appeared not only naked, but also presented the naked body. Herein a specifically sexual male body also appeared, which used to exist only in pornography. In the focus of the artistic image is directly the male genitalia, as in the famous self-portrait of Egon Schiele (1918) depicting the act of the masturbation.

Things shifted in the early 1900s to photographic depictions of nude bodybuilders and athletes, and nude, realistic self-portraits. "Muscular masculinity" of the first third of the 20th century, associated with the development of athleticism and physical culture, and its militarization by totalitarian regimes ("fascist body"); the deconstruction of these images by modern art, the rejection of a single normative canon of masculinity. In the second half of the 20th century in the avant-garde art an openly homosexual and sadomasochistic body started to appear. In the 70s, "a growing number of female and openly gay or bisexual male artists like Andy Warhol interpret[ed] their sexual fantasies via art."

And of course, rituals, visual images and theatrical performances have their own canons, which as a rule do not coincide with each other. It may seem a strange time for men to disrobe on any public stage. Yet, while we reckon with the terrible men who violate colleagues by exposing themselves (and far worse), male nudity increasingly pervades the culture we consume.

Male nudity in cinema, it makes us reconsider the look at the image of our bodies in the cultural field. But for a long time film directors were more likely to portray naked women than men. In the 60s of the last century there were full frontal images of the naked male body. Men's nudity on the screen brings the chance to shift the focus of our attention even stronger. The nude body allows you to tell a lot of stories without superfluous words, absolutely not necessarily concerning sex or cruelty. It seems that modern cinema and television are entering the territory of male nudity, as far as possible they try not only to restore the balance of power, but also to use it wisely.

## ARDENS ANIMA | the performance

For this ambitious project, Thierry Smits has chosen to work with eleven male dancers on natural, organic movement to create a progressive choreographic composition inspired by the dynamic of hurricanes.

The starting point for the choreographer is to explore the motif of crescendo and to conduct research, particularly through improvisation, into raw movement, instinctive or impulsive but above all, not codified; a work deliberately distant from his previous large-scale works such as D'Orient, To the Ones I Love or Clear Tears | Troubled Waters.

Placing music at the centre of this creative process, Thierry Smits has chosen to collaborate with the composer Francisco López (Subrosa) whose sound- scapes and field recordings will form the basis of the choreography in a long crescendo.

Based on the physical experience of sound, but also the experience and singularity of each dancer, Thierry Smits intends to create with them a piece about the intuitiveness of the body and bodies together, reminiscent of the evolution of a hurricane which, starting from nothing, attains wild strength, both violent and fascinating, before dissipating and returning to silence.





## Thierry Smits | choreographer

For about 25 years, Belgian choreographer Thierry Smits has asserted an artistic approach that is well off the beaten path in many respects, one that is frequently controversial and often goes against the tide. Alternating pure dance productions with more performative pieces, his work explores our relationship to the body - as an object of desire, pleasure and finiteness - which Smits considers, today more than ever, as a political space, «the only free territory left to us».

Since the setting-up of his company in 1990, Thierry Smits has created over thirty dance performances. Among them *Eros délétère* (1991), *Red Rubber Balls* (1999), *D'ORIENT* (2005), *V.-Nightmares* (2007) and *To the Ones I Love* (2010). His creations, while characterized by an acute visual sense, oscillate between sober contemporary lines on the one hand, and pop, queer and often provocative aesthetics on the other hand. But, whatever the form, Thierry Smits' performances constantly bear witness of a high technical rigour and gestural inventiveness, of an undisputable frankness and generosity.

Over the years, Thierry Smits has evolved into one of the mainstays of the Belgian dance scene and has, with his *Compagnie Thor*, garnered itself an international reputation touring extensively in and outside Belgium. His creations have been presented in Europe, America, the Middle-East and North-Africa, in venues and festivals including the Barbican in London, Trafó in Budapest, the Schriittmacher Festival in Aachen, the Opéra de Rouen, the BIPOD Festival in Beirut, the Teatro de la Ciudad in Mexico and the prestigious Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York.





# Aleksandr M. Vinogradov

Film director / Producer

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Aleksandr M. Vinogradov is Karelian film director. His first short film "Five Steps of Butoh" about a contemporary Japanese dance "butoh" was released in 2012. The film got Grad Prix, Best Documentary and Best Cinematography awards at Telemania Film Festival in 2012 and went to few other festivals. In 2013 he started documentary filmmaking master program DocNomads. His graduation film "Call Me Chaos" was premiered at Visions Du Reel in 2016. The same year Aleksandr applied to LUCA School of Arts to the visual arts master program. Meanwhile he was developing two feature documentaries: a character-driven story "BEFORE WE MOVE" about LGBTQ+ migration and an experimental observational film "BARE" about nude male dancers in the performance of the Belgian choreographer Thierry Smits. His graduation work from LUCA School of Arts was a short film "Under the dress" about a personal story of the director dealing with the sexual identity. The film was premiered at Visions Du Reel in 2019.

## Filmography:

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**2020** "BARE" / feature documentary / English, French, Dutch/  
World Premiere HotDocs 2020, Asia Pacific Premiere at Doc Edge 2020.  
Website: <http://www.baremovie.com>

**2019** "UNDER THE DRESS" / short film / Russian, English /  
Premiered at Visions Du Reel, International Short Film competition 2019.  
Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/322772750>

**2016** "CALL ME CHAOS" / documentary / French, English /  
Premiered at Visions Du Reel, Medium Length Film competition 2016.  
Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/133560596>  
- Listapad 2016 (Minsk, Belarus) / Student films competition  
- Message to men 2017 (St.Petersburg, Russia) / National competition

**2015** "THE DREAMERS' CLUB" / documentary / 17' / Hungarian, English  
- DocLisboa 2015 (Portugal)

**2015** "SOUNDS OF KAZINCBARSIKA" / documentary musical / 14' / Hungarian, English  
- 4th Dublin Doc Fest, short film competition 2016 (Dublin, Ireland)  
- Selection of DocFeed Film Festival 2016 (Eindhoven, Netherlands)  
- Best Short Documentary Award at the Beginning Film Festival 2015 (Russia)

**2013** "ROBBIE WILLIAMS: FANS JOURNEY TO TALLINN" / documentary BBC / second unit  
director

**2012** "FIVE STEPS OF BUTOH" / creative documentary / 17' /  
- Grand Prix of Telemania 2012  
- Best documentary and Best Cinematography of Telemaniya 2012  
- Best Art Documentary, Int. Festival „MENSCHEN UND LÄNDER“ (Germany)

More about *BARE*:

<http://baremovie.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/baredocumentary/>

<https://www.instagram.com/bare.film/>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/VamFilms>



**VAM  
FIL-  
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