

# Free State

A FILM BY ETIENNE KALLOS



FESTIVAL DE CANNES



## Etienne Kallos

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Since 2000, the Festival Residence has provided each year accommodation and support to twelve selected young directors in order to help them prepare their first or second feature film. A jury presided by a film director sits twice a year, selecting these young filmmakers on the basis of their short films, or even first

feature film, and the merits of their feature film project. During their 4-and-a-half-month stay in Paris, they work on the writing of their feature film project, have meetings with professionals and try, with the support of the Cannes Film Festival, to bring their project to co-production status.

## Technical Information

**Working title:** Vrystaat (Free State)  
**Director:** Etienne Kallos  
**Screenplay by:** Etienne Kallos  
**Nationality:** South Africa  
**Film Language:** Afrikaans, English  
**Format:** HD  
**Length:** 100 min.  
**Shooting location:** the Free State, South Africa

**Producer:** Izidore Codron  
**E-mail:** [icfilms@netactive.co.za](mailto:icfilms@netactive.co.za)

## Director Bio and Selected Filmography

Etienne Kallos is a Greek-South African who first studied theater in South Africa and then made documentary films in California before graduating from the New York University graduate film program in 2009. In conjunction with the Cannes Cinéfondation Residence program, his feature project 'Free State' has been selected for the 2012 Sundance Screenwriters Lab where he was awarded the 'Sundance Institute Mahindra Global Filmmaking Award'.

**Eersgeborene (Firstborn)**, 28 min. 2009 – Selections and Awards: Venice Film Festival ('Corto Cortissimo Lion' for Best Short Film), Telluride Film Festival, Atlanta Film Festival (Jury Award for 'best narrative short'), Corona Cork Film Festival, National Board of Review (N.B.R) (Student Film Award).

**Doorman**, 18 min. 2006 – Selections: Sundance Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival (Cinefondation), OUTFEST, distributed by Strand Releasing.

**Jane's Birthday Trip**, 16 min. 2005 – Selections: Berlin International Film Festival, Palm Springs International Festival of Shorts, Corona Cork Film Festival, national finalist for the Student Academy Awards.

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## Synopsis



Sixteen year old Johan is the dutiful Afrikaans son, the firstborn heir, the devout believer.

When his parents bring home a mysterious orphan to their African maize farm in the Free State to foster, Johan is forced to accept him.

He does what he is told and makes this sullen adolescent, Pieter, a brother not only of the heart but of the spirit. Through Pieter's eyes he watches the world he knows be replaced by a secret realm of isolation, rage, drugs and prostitution.

As his memories and even his identity unravel before his eyes, Johan tries to pull away – but it's too late. His odyssey into the underbelly of a country in crisis has begun.

## Note of Intent



Where I come from, the past is constantly being re-written. Beauty, violence, fracture and the threat of extinction are a way of life.

Post-colonial Africa is this place of constant transformation, dizzying fragmentation and the context for my first narrative feature, 'Vrystaat'.

To be shot entirely on location midst the Afrikaner farms of the Free State, the film will explore a way of life spinning out of control. Sexuality, desire, faith and loneliness are core to this secret world where adolescent Afrikaans boys struggle to challenge the past and forge new rites of passage into manhood and an unknowable future.

'Free State' ('Vrystaat') is a place, a state of mind, a way of being.



'Free State' ('Vrystaat') est un lieu, un état d'esprit, une façon d'être.

## Synopsis



Jeune Afrikaner, Johan 16 ans est le fils obéissant, l'héritier premier-né, le croyant pieux.

Lorsque ses parents ramènent un mystérieux orphelin pour l'élever dans leur ferme de maïs du Free State, Johan est obligé de l'accepter.

Il fait ce qu'on lui dit et cet adolescent maussade, Pieter, devient un frère non seulement de cœur mais d'esprit. À travers les yeux de Pieter il voit le monde qu'il connaît remplacé par un monde de solitude, de rage, de drogues et de prostitution.

Au fur et à mesure que sa mémoire et son identité se révèlent à lui, Johan tente de s'éloigner mais il est trop tard. Son odyssee dans le ventre d'un pays en crise a commencé.

## Note d'intention



Là d'où je viens le passé est ré-écrit constamment. La beauté, la violence, la rupture et la menace d'extinction sont un mode de vie.

L'Afrique post-coloniale, lieu de transformation constante et de fragmentation vertigineuse, constitue le contexte pour mon premier film de fiction "Vrystaat".

Tourné entièrement au milieu des fermes afrikaners du Free State, le film expose un mode de vie échappant à tout contrôle. La sexualité, le désir, la foi et la solitude sont au cœur de ce monde secret dans lequel les adolescents Afrikaners se battent pour défier le passé et forger de nouveaux rites de passage vers l'âge adulte et un avenir imprévisible.