

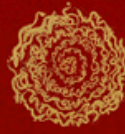
# Meg Rickards: A Leading South African Filmmaker

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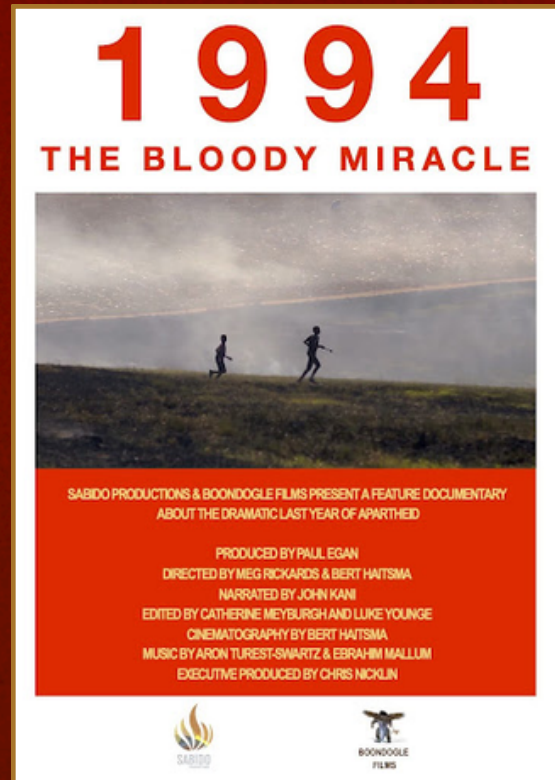
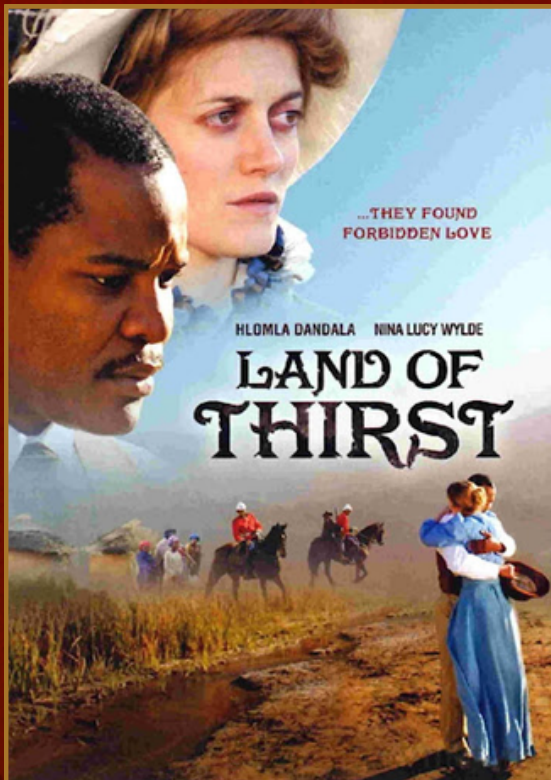


**Leading South African Filmmaker Meg Rickards**

Source: SAFF and Boondogle Films

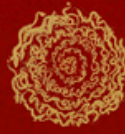


Meg Rickards is a leading South African writer and director hailing from Cape Town's Claremont suburb. She has studied at the London Film School and completed the writers' and directors' programs at Amsterdam's Binger Lab. She also studied fine arts and English and holds a PhD in film studies from the University of Cape Town. She began her directorial journey with the drama *Land of Thirst* (2008), which was adapted from *Margaret Harding* (1911), a novel written by Welsh journalist Perceval Gibbon. Set in South Africa in 1913, it follows the story of a budding romance between a black man and an Englishwoman that causes a huge uproar. It was broadcast as a three-part series and also as a 94-minute television film.



Posters for *Land of Thirst* and *1994: The Bloody Miracle*

Source: IMDb



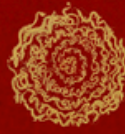
Her next film was the documentary *1994: The Bloody Miracle* (2014), which she co-directed with Botswana-based cinematographer Bert Haitsma. The film focused on the situation leading up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. It came out twenty years after the first election, serving as a "poignant reminder of what South Africa's metamorphosis from Apartheid to 'Rainbow Nation' cost, and a sobering reflection on just how close it all came to falling apart" (Muller, 2014). The film won the Documentary Audience Award at the Durban International Film Festival and the Writers' Guild of South Africa Award for Best Script in the Documentary category.



**Tess was Rickards' Debut Feature Film**

Source: IMDb and Critifan

Rickards made her feature film debut with *Tess* (2016), the story of a twenty-year-old sex worker whose life takes a sudden turn when she is assaulted and becomes pregnant. Based on Tracey Farren's novel *Whiplash*, *Tess* has been described as "harrowing and important" and a "timely and brutalizing film" enhanced by Rickards' journalistic gaze, solid direction, and majestic cinematography (Blignaut, 2016). The movie won the Best South African Film, Best Editing, and Best Actress awards at the Durban International Film Festival, as well as three awards at Silwerskermfees. It also earned nominations for Best Scriptwriting and Best Actress at the South African Film and Television Awards.



***Tess* was Stylistically Inspired by *Fish Tank* and *Biutiful***

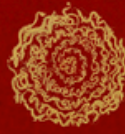
Source: Fiction Advocate and The Canberra Times

Rickards listed Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank* and Alejandro Iñárritu's *Biutiful* as her stylistic inspirations for *Tess*. Most of the film was shot using a handheld camera, which Rickards says was done to "create the feeling that the camera is present with the actors, moving, reacting, and breathing with them" (Nicola, 2024). The movie uses 'found' rather than constructed locations, natural lighting, and native-dialect dialogues. The score blends pensive instrumental music with "naturally occurring rhythms like heartbeats and train tracks" (Nicola, 2024).



***Atlantis*: A Crime Thriller Inspired by *Antigone***

Source: Prime Video and IMDb



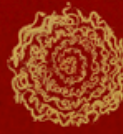
She released two films in 2021: *Atlantis* and *Kaalgat Karel*. *Atlantis* is a crime thriller featuring a taxi driver who sets out to find her missing younger brother. This film earned nominations in the scriptwriting and sound design categories at the South African Film and Television Awards. Rickards shared in an interview that *Atlantis* was inspired by Sophocles' Greek tragedy *Antigone*.



***Kaalgat Karel*: An Award-Winning Rom-Com**

Source: IMDb

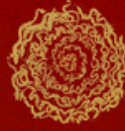
*Kaalgat Karel* is a rom-com about a stalker who falls in love with a paramedic who is a single mother. He sets out on a hilarious journey to win her over. The story for the film was conceptualized by Rickards' husband, Paul Egan, who also wrote the script together. Although the film may appear breezy and light at first glance, it delves deep into themes of single parenting, hope, and genuine human connection amidst its sprawling scenery and upbeat score (Dercksen, 2021). The film has won multiple awards on the international festival circuit, including the Lit Laughs International Comedy Festival, Gelos Comedy Festival, and Poor Life Choices Comedy Festival, along with the Writers' Guild of South Africa Muse Award for Best Screenplay.



### Posters for *Snake*

Source: IMDb and Blake Friedmann

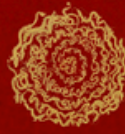
Rickards' latest film is *Snake* (2024), a thriller that has been described as “a riveting story on a small canvas, confronting big issues” (Ferreira, 2024). The film is centered on Stella, a nine-year-old farm girl. When a sudden spree of murders coincides with the arrival of a mysterious flute-wielding man in their town, Stella sets out to put an end to the man’s crimes. Tracey Farren originally wrote the screenplay for the film in 2009. She wrote a novel version of it in 2011 and then came back to work on the screenplay with Rickards. The film was selected as the closing film of the Joburg Film Festival and is currently streaming on Prime Video.



### Stills from *Snake*

Source: Dances With Films, Rabble Rouse News, and LinkedIn

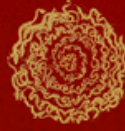
The cinematography of *Snake* mostly consists of aerial drone shots of the land and ‘micro’ shots closer to Stella’s perspective, along with “painfully beautiful scenes of poverty and decay” in rural South Africa (Ferreira, 2024). The film, Rickards says, is about the depiction of poor people who are often considered not glamorous or interesting enough to be depicted in mainstream media, especially fiction. So, she wants to shine a light on them, but not in a didactic way akin to social realism. She just wants to show that this is how they live. She says that, while *Snake* “can have universal appeal as a little girl’s journey,” the team’s intent was to make it for a local audience” (Ferreira, 2024).



**Rickards on Set**

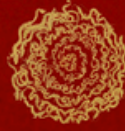
Source: The Writing Studio and Southern Suburbs Tatler

Rickards is “committed to telling authentic local stories across different genres and is passionate about skills transfer, regularly training young filmmakers” (Boondogle Films). She is also an “incredible role model for young South African filmmakers, as she always tackles projects with a strong social message” (Nicola, 2024). Meg Rickards is thus a significant filmmaker who is propelling South Africa’s cinema industry to the international spotlight.



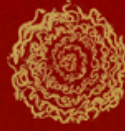
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