A man with short brown hair, wearing a white shirt and a green and white plaid shirt, is sitting in a wicker chair on a boat. He is looking out over a large body of water towards a bridge in the distance. The scene is captured from a side profile, with the man's back to the camera. The background shows a clear blue sky and a calm lake with a bridge spanning across it. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

A MOMENT OF LIFE

The legacy of ROBERT LINHART
A moving film about life

a documentary by ANITA NATMESSNIG
director of TIME TO GO

PRESSKIT

A MOMENT OF LIFE

A documentary by Anita Natmeßnig
Austria | 2014 | 89 minutes

CINEMA RELEASE: 31. 10. 2014

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

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Documentary | DigiBeta | iPhone | DVCam | HD | Austria | 2014

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Length: 89 minutes



CREDITS

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Editor & Dramaturgy:	Adam Wallisch
DoP:	Helmut Wimmer, aac
Additional Camera:	Adam Wallisch, Anita Natmeßnig
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Script Consultation:	Erich Dworak
Executive Producer:	Johanna Scherz
Producers:	Alexander Glehr, Franz Novotny
Produced by:	Novotny & Novotny Filmproduktion GmbH
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PRESS RELEASE (SHORT)

A MOMENT OF LIFE is the moving legacy of Robert Linhart. Psychotherapist and filmmaker Anita Natmeßnig (TIME TO GO) had a series of conversations about very personal topics with 53-year-old cancer sufferer Linhart in the last few weeks of his life. The result: a moving film about life.

A MOMENT OF LIFE, in Austrian cinemas from 31 October

A MOMENT OF LIFE – PRESS RELEASE (SYNOPSIS)

A MOMENT OF LIFE is the moving legacy of Robert Linhart. His message for posterity: People should like themselves more, then they'll like others more, too. Anita Natmeßnig met up with 53-year-old Linhart in the last few weeks of his life and had number of unusually frank conversations. Linhart, who was suffering from lung cancer, was to become a role model for the director: to calmly accept what you cannot change. The film communicates the lesson she learned from meeting Linhart: Separation is an illusion. Fellowship is our true nature. Death is an illusion. Life is eternal. Now. The result: a moving film about life.

Natmeßnig made the documentary to honour a promise. Robert Linhart had been in her documentary feature TIME TO GO (A, 2006, 95 minutes) about terminally ill patients in CS Hospice Rennweg. His wish was to live on in posterity and the director promised – a week before his death – to make a film about him. He gave her per-

mission to keep the camera rolling after he had died.

A MOMENT OF LIFE – a kaleidoscope of emotions: sad and beautiful, humorous and anxious, cathartic and wise. Life's major questions and the banality of our daily existence. A testament to an extraordinary meeting between two people and a connection beyond death. The documentary draws us into Robert Linhart's world and also gives us space to think – about our own lives.

The title of the documentary, A MOMENT OF LIFE, already gives us insight into Anita Natmeßnig's take on life: viewed from a metaperspective, our life on earth only lasts a moment, and we can only experience it now, in the moment.



PRESS RELEASE (LONG)

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Robert Linhart allows us intimate glimpses of his life and his soul: the telecommunications engineer made such a good recovery at CS Hospice Rennweg that he was sent home to receive home-based palliative care. He is single, has no children and lives in a 25-square-metre council flat in the district of Simmering in Vienna. With a dry sense of humour, he talks about his cancer diagnosis and the little time he has left to live. There are still many things he would like to do and he is thinking about going on a cruise. At the same time, he takes a candid look back at his life, discussing a range of topics, from his family and his speech impediment to his relationships with women and his fascination with intoxication. Robert Linhart has a very matter-of-fact attitude towards his death: he faces it head-on with a great sense of calm.

A MOMENT OF LIFE is an incredibly personal documentary and excellent portrayal of the relationship between protagonist and director. The interviews feel more like informal chats and Anita Natmeßnig's voice is always present as the other half of the conversation. The way she phrases her questions bears testament to her



experience at the hospice and her training as a psychotherapist. Natmeßnig decided not to reformulate any of the questions in the postproduction phase – a conscious decision to keep the film as authentic as possible. At three key points in the narrative, we hear the director sum up how meeting Robert Linhart has affected her and what she has learned from this experience. Natmeßnig's poetic words are accompanied by music and footage from a train travelling through Vienna, adding another level to the film: a moving, comforting and heartening dimension.

The director's approach of "less is more" resulted in a slow-moving, rigorously structured film – reduced to the bare essentials. Its main priority was to paint an authentic picture of Robert Linhart. Adam Wallisch, who also edited *TIME TO GO*, skilfully created a film with minimal cuts, a coherent rhythm and a clear narrative. The film lives from its contrasts: inside and outside, still and dynamic. While Robert Linhart is shown throughout in static shots (director of photography: Helmut Wimmer), mostly in his room at home or at the hospice, footage on the U-bahn and S-bahn trains portray the filmmaker's perspective and add movement and space. The train footage was taken by Adam Wallisch, who filmed every week over a period of two years just for this documentary. These scenes offer an unusual perspective, always looking out onto water: onto the Danube Canal and the Danube River in Vienna – an analogy to Robert Linhart's trip along the Danube and his wish to go on a cruise. These journeys are like little oases for viewers to catch their breath and get some space before they carry on down this emotional path with Robert Linhart and accompany him through the last stage of his life.

The location sound (Bruno Pisek) plays a key role in the film. It begins with the clearly audible noise of Robert Linhart breathing in and out, long before he comes into shot. These breaths form a kind of acoustic thread running throughout the film. Viewers instinctively start to breathe in time with Linhart – this is the film's aim and it succeeds. Breathing equals living – that is clear here. But also: breathing creates a bond. Robert Linhart's coughing, on the other hand, breaks this connection. It is painfully loud, while his illness has made his voice hoarse and fragile.

The documentary uses music composed by Herbert Tucmandl to convey various emotions. He created a musical theme especially for Robert Linhart – with two parts: melancholic and comforting, designed to highlight how life can be both sad and beautiful. The composer's aim was to communicate the film's philosophy. Instead of interpreting Robert Linhart's thoughts and actions, the music therefore underpins the emotions of the viewers. The instrumentation consists of a string orchestra with a very small wind section, plus a piano, harp and marimba. Throughout the film, Herbert Tucmandl uses the bassoon to symbolise Robert Linhart.

Natmeßnig decided to close the film with a waltz – an ending that is full of hope, reflecting her spiritual view of the world. When the final shot shows Robert Linhart sitting on a boat going up the Danube, it is deliberately alluding to the "final journey". Just like the Ancient Egyptian belief in the ferryman who carries the deceased across the river into the next dimension.

A MOMENT OF LIFE culminates with death. As if asleep, Robert Linhart is beautifully laid out in his bed at CS Hospice Rennweg (filmed on DVcam by Anita Natmeßnig). The decision to use death as the climactic point in the film was made in consultation with dramaturge Dr Erich Dworak. He was an éminence grise behind the scenes of all of Natmeßnig's major projects. During the editing phase of *A MOMENT OF LIFE*, he discovered he was suffering from cancer and, like Robert Linhart, died in CS Hospice Rennweg. Anita Natmeßnig dedicated the film to him.

A MOMENT OF LIFE – a kaleidoscope of emotions: sad and beautiful, humorous and anxious, cathartic and wise. Life's major questions and the banality of our daily existence. A testament to an extraordinary meeting between two people and a connection beyond death. The documentary draws us into Robert Linhart's world and also gives us space to think – about our own lives.

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1.

What is life?

What is important in life? How do I want to live?

I've often asked myself these questions since I met Robert Linhart. Coincidence? Fate? Destiny.

He's finished courses of chemotherapy and radiotherapy and has lived at CS Hospice Rennweg for two months.

I am there to shoot my documentary feature TIME TO GO and I want to shed light on the destiny of dying people.

He joins in immediately and with enthusiasm – and I'm touched by him.

"Affinity?" is what I write down in my diary.

2.

The soul embarks on its path to its true home.

Death – a transition to another dimension.

I wish him a safe journey.

What is left behind is just a shell – like a butterfly that has to leave its cocoon to fly.

Dying. Having to die. Not just theoretically or sometime. It is bound to happen.

To him – to me – to all of us.

Robert Linhart went ahead of me.

His wish: to live on in posterity.

My promise: to make a film about him.

A legacy.

A connection beyond death.

3.

Robert Linhart is a role model for me – calmly accepting what you cannot change. I'm grateful that we met each other.

Meeting him was a gift.

Ever since I met him, I've tried to live consciously as if it's always the first and the last time –

because it's always the only time. Now I know:

Separation is an illusion. Fellowship is our true nature.

Death is an illusion.

Life is eternal.

Now.

BACKGROUND STORY

I first had the idea to make *A MOMENT OF LIFE* in the autumn of 2005. Back then I was at CS Hospice Rennweg in Vienna shooting my documentary *TIME TO GO* (A, 2006, 95 minutes) about people with terminal cancer who were reaching the end of their lives. Of the six patients in the documentary feature, I had most contact with Robert Linhart and the way he approached death touched me deeply. Accompanying him on this journey was a big challenge for me on a personal and professional level. Robert Linhart still had many things he wanted to do, but he would not have the time to do them and he went through some highly emotional phases, experiencing denial, fear and depression. Yet he always faced death head-on with a sense of calm. At 53, he was eleven years older than me and at the same time the youngest person in the hospice who had agreed to take part in the film. We were also able to film him for the longest period. Whereas all the other protagonists died after two to four weeks, Robert Linhart survived until a few days after the three-month shoot was over – and taking part was incredibly important to him. The hospice team even created the term “film therapy”

to describe the positive impact the shoot had on him. Robert was suffering from lung cancer and on several occasions he expressed a desire to live on in posterity through film.

After we finished shooting, I visited Robert Linhart at CS Hospice Rennweg and decided to carry on filming with a DVcam. It was during this period that he gave me his consent to make a film about him and agreed to let me film him after he had died. At the same time, I promised him I would see the project through.

There were a lot of things Robert Linhart still wanted to do when we met each other: he wanted to go on at least one cruise, move into a retirement home and organise his affairs. However, his illness progressed so quickly that he was not able to do any of these things. I'm grateful that I was at least able to fulfil his wish to live on after death through the medium of film and honour my promise to him.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

A master once asked his students: "How long does life last?" They thought about it but had no idea, so he gave them the answer: "It lasts a moment."

A MOMENT OF LIFE is an invitation to stop and think about life. Our life, which – viewed from a metaperspective – only lasts a moment and we can only experience it now, in the moment. I view death as a great teacher and the process of thinking about dying and death – the Memento Mori – as a chance to experience and live life differently. We all know that our lives are finite and death is inevitable and yet it seems to be standard to forget about and suppress these facts. I need this constant reminder that my time in this body on earth is limited. Not because I am infatuated with death, but because I love life.

A MOMENT OF LIFE makes us conscious of our mortality. By becoming conscious of my mortality, I view my life as a gift instead of taking it for granted. And this gives me gratitude and joy.

This creates an extreme sense of personal responsibility. It is up to me to decide how I use this gift and shape my life, how I use the time left to me: whether I forget or remind myself, whether I "wake up" or "stay in a slumber", whether I react unconsciously or act (more and more) consciously. Since I started exploring these issues in depth, I've made fundamental changes to my life and taken a new direction. Meeting Robert Linhart reminded me to take my wishes and dreams seriously and to do everything necessary to realise them as quickly as I can. Now that I am conscious of my mortality, I have a much clearer idea of what is good for me and I distance myself from anything that does not feel right.

Being conscious is always about the moment, the here and now. This is why I am trying more and more to live in the here and now, to be present. I spent many years exploring the topics of dying and death and in 2007, after making my documentary feature TIME TO GO (A, 2006, 95 minutes), I discovered a new motto in life: "Time to live – now". But what is "now"? It is essentially the same as eternity. In his work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein put it like this: *If we take eternity to mean not definite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.*

A MOMENT OF LIFE is a rallying call to live in the present. An experience we are all familiar with. To completely abandon yourself, like a child playing a game. The moment you devote yourself to something or someone, linear time seems to stand still. I experience this sometimes when watching the sun rise, when meeting people in my work as a therapist or in intimate moments where I've been particularly happy in love or achieved something artistically, or while meditating or doing yoga. To put it in modern terms: when we have peak experiences. Psychologist Abraham Maslow coined this term to describe the momentary feeling of being part of the greater whole.

A MOMENT OF LIFE examines the idea of life after death, a belief that Robert Linhart and I share. Dying means living – until your last breath – and is a transition to another dimension. I don't know what this dimension is like, but I feel connected to Robert Linhart and others who have passed away. This feeling of a spiritual fellowship gives you faith in the vision of a greater whole. Separation is an illusion; fellowship is our true nature.

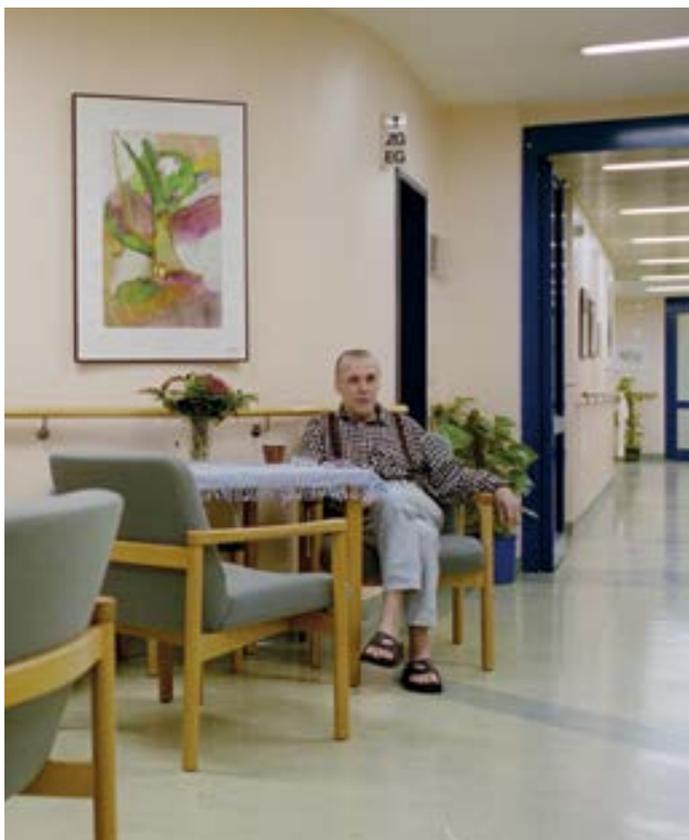
Over the years – hugely inspired by my encounters with dying people – I realised that I knew one thing for sure: I am both mortal and immortal, finite and infinite, separated and connected, an individual and a part of the whole. I imagine it like the two sides of a coin, which are inseparable and equal. Body and soul are of equal value – unlike the Christian-Hellenistic concept of soul, spirit and body, which perceives matter as inferior.

A MOMENT OF LIFE has a clear message: dying is a phase of life. Like childhood, it is part of life. The well-known researcher into death and dying Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identified the five phases of dying: 1. denial, 2. anger, 3. bargaining, 4. depression, 5. acceptance. Not all people go through all of these phases when they are facing death – and they are not always experienced in that order. These phases can also be applied to friends and relatives of the terminally ill. It is common to have strong emotions and to switch between conflicting feelings such as fear (of the unknown and losing control) and hope (that a miracle may still happen). Seemingly contradictory behavioural patterns can emerge almost simultaneously, which can be confusing for those providing care and support.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

At times I felt like Robert Linhart and I were in different phases: while he was going through phases 1 and 4 (denial and depression), I was experiencing phases 2 and 3 (anger and bargaining). While shooting the film, I often experienced feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. I found it hard to accept the inevitable and not to be able to change a thing. When I look back, I'm impressed by the way Robert Linhart accepted his death and lived out his last few months: with composure and dignity and a great deal of humour and self-awareness. In all of our many conversations, he never once indicated that he wanted anyone to help him to die.

Indirectly, *A MOMENT OF LIFE* takes a stand on an important issue in society and thus endorses a particular political viewpoint. The hospice movement sees dying as something natural and helps critically ill people live out their last few weeks or months in a dignified manner. This contrasts with groups who advocate active euthanasia and assisted suicide.



I favour a palliative approach and am critical of the current direction of our achievement-oriented society with its ethos of "everything is feasible" and obsession with controlling everything, even how we end our lives.

I believe that life comes with suffering – this is also what Buddhism teaches us – and this applies to everyone, without exception. Illnesses are inevitable. We grow older and cannot escape death. Suffering and happiness, pain and joy are inextricably linked. I believe that our society is wrong to try and deny this fundamental aspect of our existence. Any attempt to only experience the positive side of life is doomed to failure in the long run.

The experience I've gained in my personal life and working as a psychotherapist has shown me how hard it can be to accept what we cannot change, the inevitable – death – as a part of life. Robert Linhart is a role model for me. His attitude reminds me in many ways of the concept of Wu wei in Taoism: action without action, effortless doing. Accepting instead of fighting, surrendering oneself instead of trying to changing oneself.

I made *A MOMENT OF LIFE* to honour my promise to Robert Linhart. I have fulfilled his wish to live on through the medium of film and have sent out his message into the world: People should like themselves more. Then they'll like others more, too. – Dear people, don't smoke and love yourselves. For me, these statements represent the essence of the bond we developed and Robert Linhart's actual legacy. At the end of life, the values of our consumer society such as money, power and success turn out to be worthless. Love is the only thing that counts.

A MOMENT OF LIFE aims to encourage people to accept what cannot be changed, change the things we can and live in the here and now. I firmly believe that facing mortality takes away your fear and helps you gain a zest for life.

BIOGRAPHY ANITA NATMESSNIG

Anita Natmeßnig was born in 1963, studied evangelical theology, and lives and works in Vienna as a filmmaker, author, psychotherapist and coach (giving seminars and lectures on a freelance basis). She made numerous TV documentaries for the Austrian national public service broadcaster, the ORF (up until 2005); film: documentary feature *TIME TO GO* (A, 2006, 95 minutes); books: *Adolf Holl – Der Erotische Asket* (Adolf Holl – The Erotic Ascetic, Molden Verlag, 2007), *Was Zählt, Ist Dieser Augenblick – Leben Lernen im Hospiz* (This Moment is all that Matters – Learning to Live in a Hospice, Herder Taschenbuch, 2012).

www.anitanatmessnig.at

INTERVIEW WITH ANITA NATMESSNIG

After finishing TIME TO GO, you made a second documentary, A MOMENT OF LIFE. Both films deal with dying people. Most of us suppress and avoid the topics of death and dying. Woody Allen summed it up excellently when he said, „I’m not afraid to die. I just don’t want to be there when it happens“.



What fascinates you

about this topic so much that you decided to make films about it?

A. N.: Death and dying have fascinated me as far back as I can remember. I now view death as a great teacher: if I frequently remind myself that my own life has an end, I approach it in a completely different way. Then I live in the here and now. I think it makes a huge difference if I try to live consciously or if I simply let my life happen to me. I try to shape my life. Spending so much time with dying people has made me live more consciously – in the moment.

Just like the title of the film.

The title *A MOMENT OF LIFE* sets the tone of the film. If I view life from a metaperspective, then it only lasts a moment and at the same time can only be experienced now, in the moment.

Adam Wallisch, who edited the film, came up with the title. I was telling him a story: "A master asked his pupils, 'How long does life last?' They had no idea, so he gave them the answer: 'It lasts a moment.'" and Adam suddenly said, "*A MOMENT OF LIFE* – that's the title!" And that was that.

How did A MOMENT OF LIFE come about?

A. N.: Robert Linhart was taking part in *TIME TO GO* and he wanted to live on in posterity through the medium of film. I was very moved by this and promised to make another film about him. And I'm very grateful that I was able to do that.

How is this film different from TIME TO GO?

A. N.: In *TIME TO GO* I wanted to show that when faced with death, you're dealing with life. Dying is a phase of life. And *A MOMENT OF LIFE* is the legacy of Robert Linhart. The film communicates his message to love ourselves and also the lesson I learned from meeting him: to accept what I cannot change.

I noticed that in your conversations with Robert Linhart, you rarely took a classic journalistic approach to asking questions. It wasn't a therapeutic approach either in the sense that you weren't aiming to uncover something. But it was very obvious that you had won Robert Linhart's trust. How did you gain his trust and get him to open up?

A. N.: Trust is a gift. And Robert Linhart placed his trust in me from the very first moment. When I asked him if he wanted to be part of the film *TIME TO GO*, he was enthusiastic from the word go. And I was really moved by how open he was and how he told me more and more about his life – gradually baring his soul. These weren't conventional interviews; we had real conversations. And, of course, I trusted him, too.

In my experience, conversations at the end of people's lives, conversations with dying people, are always incredibly open. While I was an intern at CS Hospice Rennweg, I learned that if you want to really speak to dying people, you have to be completely authentic – there's no other way. And this opens up endless possibilities. It's a really enriching experience for me – the intensity of meeting someone at the end of their life has a quality that I find incredibly fascinating.

INTERVIEW WITH ANITA NATMESSNIG

You get the feeling that the whole film team really engaged with Robert Linhart, that they really built a bond with him. What was it like for the team to accompany Robert Linhart for those three intensive months?

A. N.: Filming Robert Linhart for that period was a huge challenge for all of us, for the cameraman, the sound designer and me. Because Robert Linhart was only a few years older than us and we empathised with him and also suffered and mourned with him to a certain extent. So it was a pretty major emotional challenge. And at the same time, it was also an immense joy and relief for me to see how well Robert Linhart – as far as I could judge – had come to terms with the fact that he was dying. How he lived out the last few months of his life with such dignity. And so peacefully, too.

At the beginning of A MOMENT OF LIFE, we hear Robert Linhart breathing heavily. The sound of breathing features throughout the film. And not always in a pleasant way. What does breathing mean for you as a stylistic device and as a symbol?

A. N.: Breathing signifies life and this has been part of meditation for thousands of years. I wanted to express this formally in my film. As long as we breathe, we're alive. As Zen Buddhists say, "I die" when I breathe out. And when I breathe in, "I am born". And it was important for me to help the audience physically experience the secret of life that lies in the act of breathing and is also part of religious teachings. I hoped that the audience would even start to breathe in time with Robert Linhart.

The film moves at a slow pace. As a director, you ask a lot of your audience. You expect them to suddenly leave the stress of everyday life behind them and almost enter a different time frame. Why did you choose this pace?

A. N.: Finding a fitting tempo for A MOMENT OF LIFE was a challenging part of the editing process. I'm incredibly grateful to Adam Wallisch for finding the right pace. He really put his heart into it and gave it his all. He spent five months in the cutting room, tirelessly trying to find what fitted and what didn't. It was a hugely emotional experience for both of us to sit facing Robert Linhart for such a long time – more than alive on the monitor and then to see him on his death bed...

For me, the slow pace of the film was necessary to really connect with Robert Linhart. Terminally ill people are weak, which makes them slower. And Robert Linhart paused to breathe and to reflect a lot – but so did

I. And that's normal when you're having such intense conversations. The slow pace allows you to feel what's happening. To really sense what you can see in Robert Linhart's eyes, but which remains unspoken.

When I made this film, I wanted to draw people into his world. And also to give them time to think and to reflect on their own lives.

Robert Linhart had a speech impediment throughout his life. He only lost it when he was diagnosed with cancer. When you're watching the film, you would never imagine that this person had a stutter for 50 years of his life. How do you explain the fact that Robert Linhart obviously forgot to stutter when he was talking to you?

A. N.: Robert Linhart told me about his speech impediment and I made a conscious decision to include my reaction in the film – I was gobsmacked. I was so moved by the fact that he'd stopped stuttering when he got cancer. And that I'd clearly gained his trust and he didn't feel under pressure, because he was completely relaxed in front of the camera. I don't know how important I was in that process. But he was definitely cured of the impediment at the end of his life.

I can tell you another story that doesn't feature in the film. When I asked Robert Linhart if he wanted to be part of the shoot for TIME TO GO, he said, "Yes, I'd love to. But my mother wouldn't like it." And that really moved me because at the end of his life he decided to go against his mother's wishes and do something that was really important to him. And he saw it through.

Do you think that Robert Linhart became a fuller person when he was faced with death? That he thought: there are no barriers anymore, nothing is forbidden and there are no rules that can stop me being who I really am, now I'm about to die?

A. N.: I experienced something in the hospice that really made an impression on me: dying people generally take off their masks. They stop playing roles, stop trying to please people and conform. They become very genuine. And of course this helps me to be genuine, too. And this was certainly the case with Robert Linhart. I mean, he had nothing to lose anymore and so much to gain.

INTERVIEW WITH ANITA NATMESSNIG

If Robert Linhart had wanted you to film him dying, would you have done that?

A. N.: Well, Robert Linhart made it very clear that he didn't want to be filmed dying. And what he wanted was always my top priority. Every single day of the shoot. And I always asked him if he wanted to be filmed that day, although I already had his consent. I'm sure that played a part in creating trust in our relationship, the fact that I respected his wishes 100 percent of the time. If Robert Linhart had wanted me to document the moment of his death on film, then I would have done it.

You say that Robert Linhart is a role model for you. In what way?

A. N.: Robert Linhart became a role model for me in a very important way: namely, in the way he accepted his death. With an incredible calm and a wonderfully dry sense of humour. And for me, being able to do that is a real art. I would also like to approach my death with such an incredible sense of calm.

Edith Stein once said, "In life, each of us faces the challenge of finding our inner selves." Robert Linhart managed to do that in the last few months of his life. In your opinion, what food for thought did he leave to posterity? Apart from encouraging us to stop smoking?

A. N.: I believe that this is the core message of Robert Linhart's legacy: "Like yourselves more, then you'll like others more, too." Essentially, that's the commandment to love your neighbour as yourself, but it puts the focus on loving yourself, which is a prerequisite for loving your neighbour. But I think that Robert Linhart left us a greater legacy than that. He showed us we should seize the chance that we still have: to take our hopes and desires seriously and not to postpone them like he did.

Is there a connection between someone not taking their needs seriously and their health deteriorating?

A. N.: Robert Linhart saw a link between his lung cancer and his negative mindset, his negative view of the world. And maybe also the fact that he hadn't achieved a lot of the things he'd wanted to do. And I firmly believe that if I grab life with both hands, have a positive attitude towards myself and take my wishes and needs seriously, this will have a positive impact on my life and perhaps even improve my health.

Nietzsche once said, "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." Would you agree with that?

A. N.: Yes. Having a purpose in life is extremely important for me. I always have some vision or other and making my documentary feature A MOMENT OF LIFE allowed me to fulfil a really important wish: to shake things up. I want to inspire and encourage people to really live their lives – in the moment. To love life and to make it what you want and achieve your goals.

You pose very basic and fundamental questions in the film: "What is life? What is important in life?" What does it mean to you? How do you want to live your life?

A. N.: The question about what's important for my life is an existential and not a rhetorical question. A question I've examined lot more seriously since I met Robert Linhart. My answer for now is: to love life. That is the most important thing. That is the essence. And for spiritual people, this can also mean loving God. And of course, loving yourself and loving others. Essentially, it's one and the same thing.

What does a person love when they love life?

A. N.: For me, loving life means reminding myself of my own mortality and making myself conscious of the fact that I shouldn't take being alive for granted. I live my life as if it were a gift. I view it as a gift and not as



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something to be taken for granted. And I embrace this gift, with gratitude and joy.

If you explore the matter in greater depth, it becomes clear that gratitude is the source of every kind of authentic spirituality and religion. Is this an important dimension for you as well?

A. N.: I also see gratitude as the source and the basis of any kind of spirituality. Because if I stop taking my life for granted, I see it as a gift. And then I have an amazing opportunity: the opportunity to take responsibility for my life.

And this realisation also brings me a great sense of joy because I've been given this gift.

So I view life as a wonderful opportunity to experience all that life has to offer. This includes experiences we describe as nice or pleasant and also difficult ones, which I can either view as negative or as a challenge. It depends on how I'm feeling at the time. But it's always an exciting experience. And if A MOMENT OF LIFE can help people appreciate their lives and give them a zest for life, then I will have achieved one of my greatest wishes.

Some people say that the meaning of life is life itself – along the lines of: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." How would you respond to this? Do you believe

that there's a part of our existence on earth that is able to transcend this life, as it were?

A. N.: Well, Robert Linhart and I both believed that while death is the end of this life in this body, it's not the definitive end: we live on in some form or other. And from a purely dramaturgical perspective, it was important to make his death the climactic point of the film instead of placing it at the end. Because this alone signals that life carries on and my voiceover also communicates this belief. When I saw Robert Linhart after he had passed away, in the night at CS Hospice Rennweg, I firstly said my goodbyes to him. Then I got out my camera, a DVcam, and I filmed him as we'd agreed. It was a very touching moment for me because it was just so clear that his body was a shell. Robert Linhart as a person was no longer in this body. And to experience this is a real gift. To see someone who has passed away, and perhaps even touch them, makes you realise that death merely means the end of our earthly body, but nothing more. I could just see this image before me: his soul had set off on a journey. Obviously that's just a metaphor. But it was something you could really feel. And this sense of fellowship was still there, a connection that lasts beyond death. So for me, death means the end of life, but not the end of a connection. And my bond with Robert Linhart has been particularly strong – over all these years.

"Separation is an illusion, fellowship is our true nature" – we hear you express these thoughts through a voiceover in the film. What do you mean by this?

A. N.: I believe it's an illusion that most people are under: that we're separated from one another. That each person is individual and self-contained. I believe that we're connected to one another. And there's a nice image to illustrate this: the semi-permeable membrane that we all have in our veins is a really simple and striking metaphor for this connection. And there are other things, like when the telephone rings, for example, and I know who it is. But it goes far, far deeper than that. As humans, we're connected to all living organisms. With every other human and with all living organisms. And just as I believe that separation is an illusion, I also believe that death is an illusion. Death is a transition to another dimension. And life carries on there. We may not know how, but it carries on. I think it will be an exciting new dimension. A realm beyond time and space. The physical body is gone, but you're still able to experience things. I'm curious to see what it will be like!



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I'll phrase the question a little differently: "Separation is an illusion, fellowship is our true nature." Is this a belief of yours or something you've discovered through experience?

A. N.: It was a conscious decision of mine to make a personal film – an account of two people meeting and connecting and what I learned from this. So the thoughts I formulated for the film don't really express my theoretical knowledge; instead, they communicate my wealth of experience. And the experience of being connected beyond death is one I've been lucky enough – thank God – to have over the years. It's just an incredibly exhilarating experience and not based on any theory. And it's more than remembering someone. It's more like perceiving and feeling. A kind of certainty that someone is there and I find that incredibly comforting; it's something very beautiful and enriching. Because... I may not be able to hear, see or touch these people that meant something to me, but I know they're still nearby.

Robert Linhart isn't a well-known figure. Did he become so special to you because of the huge amount of time you spent together in your role as a filmmaker?

A. N.: I have wondered why our paths crossed. When I made TIME TO GO, I had the choice between a few different people who said they were interested in taking part. And he was one of them. Whether you see this as a chance meeting or fate or destiny is just a matter of interpretation. Looking back now, I'd say it's probably the latter. Because having the chance to create someone's legacy is really something very special. And when I promised to make a film about him, I did ask

myself sometimes – why him? But Robert Linhart was someone who moved me from the moment we first met. And fascinated me to some extent. And I'm really grateful that I was able to fulfil his wish – perhaps his last wish – after he died.

When you asked him what else he'd like to do, he said he'd like to go on a cruise – a cruise or two. But in the end, it became clear that this wasn't going to happen. And so you created an interesting dramaturgical moment. You showed some footage of cruises through Vienna. At various points in the film, the camera takes us down the Danube, over water and waves. What was your motivation there?

A. N.: I was really moved by the fact that there were so many things Robert Linhart still wanted to do – so many wishes left unfulfilled. Especially his wish to go on at least one cruise. And at the beginning of the shoot, it still looked like he might be able to go on a cruise. But then his health suddenly deteriorated. I kind of saw this coming and so I suggested going on a trip down the Danube. And it was very moving. Because that was his last trip ever. I also felt sad that he wasn't able to fulfil this wish anymore.

From the very beginning, I took Robert Linhart's wish seriously – his longing for the sea, for water – and I wanted to create a formal element in the film that symbolised this. And the editor who worked on the film, Adam Wallisch, had the brilliant idea of filming the boat trips for me, over a period of two years. In every season. Always along the Danube canal and the River Danube. So the theme of water, which was so important to Robert Linhart, found its way into the film in



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the shape of the Danube – looking out over the water again and again. Danube Island was a kind of “paradise” for Robert Linhart. And the film ends with Robert Linhart travelling up the Danube. On the one hand, this was real footage, but it also had a metaphorical side for me. Just like the ferryman brings the deceased to the other side of the river in Ancient Egypt – I wanted to evoke these kinds of associations. Or to put it in very mundane terms: the final journey.

Last but not least: I told the film score composer, Herbert Tucmandl, that I'd like to end the film with a waltz – which sparked lengthy discussions. And I'm really happy that he composed such a lovely waltz. And so this film – which is seemingly about death – comes to a close with a cheery piece in three-four time.

Mag. Johannes Kaup conducted the interview.

TESTIMONIALS ON A MOMENT OF LIFE

Dr Michael Bünker,
Bishop of the Austrian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession

Can a film about dying convey a sense of joy and optimism? Yes, it can if Anita Natmessnig is directing it and documenting the last stage of someone's life through a series of conversations, which she conducts in her sensitive and gentle manner. The Christian faith is all about revealing the person within. Robert Linhart, visibly suffering from cancer, reveals this very clearly in the short time that has left and I feel connected to him. To his pain and sadness, to his desperation and hope, but also to his joy and humour. A MOMENT OF LIFE makes a powerful case for humanity and dignity, which stays with us until the end.

Gerhard Weißgrab, President of the ÖBR,
Austrian Buddhist Society

I was very moved by this film. Although it depicts death, it is really about life. The title A MOMENT OF LIFE nicely sums up how our entire life merely consists of moments. The crux of the matter is not that a person dies at the end of their life, but rather whether they've lived their life to

the full. A MOMENT OF LIFE challenges us to think about this question.

What particularly fascinated me about the film was the sound of breathing, which is clearly audible for long stretches throughout the film: breathing in and out.

As long as we're breathing, we're alive. Breathing is at the core of Buddhist meditation. Breathing accompanies us in every moment of our life and when we stop breathing, it signifies the end of this life, the end of this body.

This film may not have a huge entertainment value, but the ultimate message is incredibly important for our lives, if we are open to hearing and understanding it. This message is not only expressed verbally in the film; it can also be sensed on an intuitive level.

An educational film on life!

Waltraud Klasnic,

President of Dachverband Hospiz Österreich,
the umbrella organisation of Austrian hospices
A MOMENT OF LIFE demonstrates very clearly how important it is to provide support to those who are terminally ill. How good it is to have someone you can share your

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thoughts and ideas with, and a place where you can just BE, warts and all. That can be a palliative care unit, an in-patient hospice or at home with the support of a home-based palliative team and voluntary carers.

Birgit Meinhard-Schiebel,
Spokesperson for Senior Citizens, Vienna Green Party
"The soul embarks on its path ..." A cleared-out cupboard, a full plastic bag – leaving the hospice to join the outside world again, to experience another moment of life. Questions about your past, about wishes left unfulfilled, pain caused by opportunities missed. A completely normal life approaches a completely normal death. And we see the face of a man reflecting the "landscape" of his life as he clicks from slide to slide. "It's a pity I won't be seeing this nice film about me..."

A symphonic film about eternal life after death. "I don't think people are really interested in dead people ..."
Poignant images, simple words: a powerful and respectful portrayal of a man at the end of his life.

Dr Regina Hofer,
Psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, cabaret artist
At the beginning, I thought: This film is too slow for me! And then after a while I realised that I'm too fast, the way I observe, expect and experience things.
The longer I watched A MOMENT OF LIFE, the more I noticed how much good it did me: the authenticity of emotions, the emptiness, the waiting, the looking back and facing death.

I'm grateful to Anita Natmeßnig and Robert Linhart for taking me so far down the path towards death. As if I'd been given the chance to look down at my own life from above and from so many different angles. I slowed down and I felt much better for it!
Anita Natmeßnig forged a wonderfully compassionate bond with Robert Linhart, accompanying him as his cancer progressed, sharing in his sadness about dying, in his reconciliation with life – without a hint of pathos. As the film progresses, we catch a glimpse of the different sides of his life: the cosy, safe council flat, the joy of the festival on Danube Island, the eroticism of past lovers, his favourite flowers, Carthusian pink. In his tender, cool and mischievously likeable way, Robert Linhart becomes a real hero as he embraces his life and his death.

*In my cabaret show "Living the high life" I ask this question: What is the most important thing in life?
Thank you, Mr Linhart, for your clever response: "Don't smoke and love yourselves!"*

Wolf Werdigier,
Painter, writer

While I was watching this film, I kept thinking of a painting by Salvador Dalí. In the picture, there are these huge animals with long, spindly legs. For me, this symbolises old age. You withdraw from life on long, spindly legs. And looking back, you don't feel like you've experienced very much. But in reality, you've had an incredibly full life! There are moments throughout the film that illustrate this. The photos, the music, the slides. Only then do we get a sense of the feelings, the happiness and the suffering that this man has experienced, even though he's so distant from all this now. This is the wonderful quality of the film: we feel a need to connect with these emotions again and a desire to create ways to keep these memories alive, like these photos and this music.

Perhaps the elderly need more people around them – friends and companions – so they can tell stories about the "good old times" and stop the legs that put such a distance between them and the world from growing quite so long and spindly.



NOVOTNY & NOVOTNY FILMPRODUKTION GMBH (FILMOGRAPHY-SELECTION)

SUPEREGOS (2014)	Directed by: Benjamin Heisenberg; Berlinale, 2014 – Panorama-Special; Diagonale, 2014
TAKING IT BACK (2013)	Directed by: Andreas Schmied; Diagonale, 2014
SICKFUCKPEOPLE (Documentary, 2013)	Directed by: Juri Rechinsky; Hot Docs Film Festival, Toronto, 2013; Heart of Sarajevo for Best Documentary Film 2013; Best Documentary Feature Raindance Film Festival, 2013; Vienna Film Award; Best European Independent Documentary ECU Film Festival, Paris, 2014 u. a.
THE STRANGE CASE OF WILHELM REICH (2012)	Directed by: Antonin Svoboda; eine Gemeinschaftsproduktion mit coop99; in Koproduktion mit Lotus Film, Viennale, 2012
THE FATHERLESS (2012)	Directed by: Marie Kreutzer; in Koproduktion mit Witcraft Szenario; in Zusammenarbeit mit KGP Berlinale, 2011 – Panorama; Diagonale, 2011 – „Bester Spielfilm“, „Beste Kamera“ und zwei Schauspielerpreise für Marion Mitterhammer und Johannes Krisch; Bozner Filmtage, 2011 – „Bester Spielfilm“
CHALET GIRL (GB/D/A, 2011)	Directed by: Phil Trill; in Koproduktion mit Kaleidoscope Films, CrossDay Productions und Neue Bisokop Film
JEW SUSS - RISE AND FALL (A/D, 2010)	Directed by: Oskar Roehler; eine Gemeinschaftsproduktion mit Clasart Filmproduktion und Tele München; Berlinale, 2010 – Official Competition; Festival des Deutschen Film, Ludwigshafen, 2010 – Preis für Schauspielkunst für Moritz Bleibtreu; Österreichischer Filmpreis, 2011 – „Beste Maske“
INITIATION (2010)	Directed by: Peter Kern; Berlinale, 2010 – Panorama
SMALL FISH (2009)	Directed by: Marco Antoniazzi; Publikumspreis bei der Diagonale und Bozner Filmtage, 2009
ALL THE INVISIBLE THINGS (2007)	Directed by: Jakob M. Erwa; Großer Diagonalepreis, 2007; Internationales Filmfestival Oldenburg, 2007 – German Independence Award
BORDER POST (BiH/SLO/MK/SRB/GB/HU/F/A, 2006)	Directed by: Rajko Grlic; Festroia IFF – FIRPRESCI-Preis
OUT OF HAND (A/D/IT, 2005)	Directed by: Eva Urthaler; Locarno IFF; Max Ophüls Preis – Best Young Actor
SUMMER IN THE GOLDEN VALLEY (BiH/F/GB/A, 2003)	Directed by: Srdjan Vuletic; Rotterdam, IFF – Tiger Award
GORI VATRA (BiH/ A/TR/F, 2003)	Directed by: Pjer Zalica; Locarno, IFF – Silver Leopard
011 BEOGRAD (A/SRB, 2003)	Directed by: Michael Pfeiffenberg; Max Ophüls Preis
THE PUNISHMENT (Dokumentarfilm, 2000)	Directed by: Goran Rebic; Diagonale – „Bester Film“
SLIDIN' (1998)	Directed by: Barbara Albert, Michael Grimm, Reinhard Jud; Karlovy Vary, Rotterdam

