Angels in Africa

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Filmmaker Louise Hogarth, who directed the polarizing 2003 documentary *The Gift*—about "bug chasers," gay men who purposely contract HIV—is back with *Angels in the Dust*. This documentary, now in limited release, follows the Cloetes, a South African family who have housed more than 550 AIDS orphans over the past 18 years. She gave us a preview.

POZ: This film is very different from *The Gift*; why did you make it?
Hogarth: I live in Africa part of the year, and you see a lot of children begging there. I started to see them as annoyances; that made me want to make a story that personalized them. Then my friends told me about the Cloetes family, who started the Boikarabelo orphanage in hopes of stopping the cycle of victimhood. We [in Africa] are in an unprecedented time in history; in just two years there will be 25 million orphans, and these children go home to dark, scary places.

POZ: The Cloetes took in kids before they officially opened their orphanage. How did the neighbors react to that?
Hogarth: It was during Apartheid, so needless to say they didn't like it. The Cloetes [who are white] were forced to move to a small village because the neighbors did not approve of having homeless children in their wealthy Johannesburg suburb.

POZ: How would you say *Angels* challenges people's perceptions of African children?
Hogarth: [Usually] they are portrayed as [runny]-nosed or potbellied, but I tried to show them as kids, as people like us. I saw that despite living in a war zone of poverty, rape and AIDS, they had such joy. And I think that got across, because during the film's screenings, people laughed 50 percent of the time and then cried the other half.

Learn more about *Angels in the Dust* at dolfilms.org.

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