

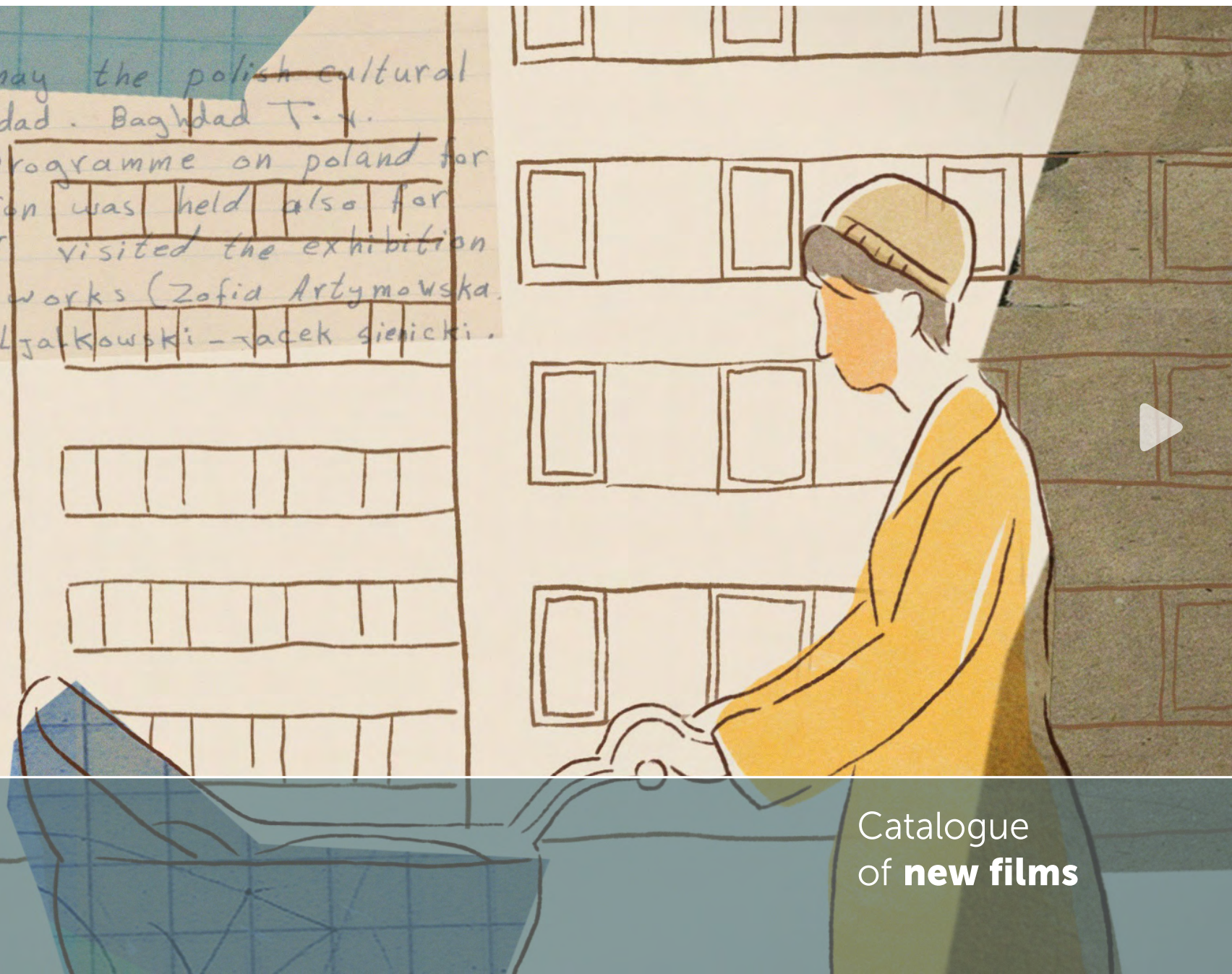
FOCUS

O N P O L A N D

PUBLISHED BY THE KRAKOW FILM FOUNDATION
WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE POLISH FILM INSTITUTE

Dear
from 31 - 19 may the polish cultural
week was held in Baghdad. Baghdad T. v.
presented a special programme on poland for
two hours. An exhibition was held also for
polish plastic arts. I visited the exhibition
I liked your artist's works (Zofia Artymowska,
Jan Tarasin, Stanisław Fljalkowski - Jacek Sienicki.

We Have One Heart by Katarzyna Warzecha



Catalogue
of **new films**



The photographs used in this issue have been obtained from film producers and the Krakow Film Foundation archive. The publisher made all efforts to identify copyright owners. In case of doubts, please contact the Krakow Film Foundation.



We are probably going to spend the coming months at home. No trips to festivals, no real-life industry meetings. But life does not stop. It moves online, which is slowly becoming an increasingly familiar home. We are also moving our magazine online. Despite the lockdown, Polish creators and producers have continued working on projects, look for new ways to reach viewers, and are ready to promote their films. What can we look forward to in the near future? Read our reviews and watch video interviews with the creators whose films are soon going to be screened at international festivals, both offline and online. Krzysztof Gierat interviews Tomasz Wolski about his latest film *An Ordinary Country* and asks about the use of archival materials, which Polish filmmakers do increasingly often. Animation is still dominated by women, with their films shown around the world and winning numerous awards. Short film directors present their fresh takes on important, publicly debated topics, and Dagmara Romanowska creates an alphabet out of them. Once you have read everything, we invite you to watch the latest Polish films online – just send us an e-mail asking for an access code. Enjoy your reading and watching!

We wish you the best of health!

Barbara Orlicz-Szczypuła
Katarzyna Wilk

Contents

NEWS & NOTES

POLISH DOCS

HOW TO WORK WITH ARCHIVE MATERIAL?
A CONVERSATION WITH TOMASZ WOLSKI
ABOUT HIS FILM *AN ORDINARY COUNTRY*

POLISH DOCS IN PROGRESS

RELEASES IN A TIME OF PLAGUE –
UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL PREMIERES.
FOCUS ON POLAND TALKS: DOCUMENTARY

FROM THE TRAVEL DIARY. MACIEJ CUSKE'S
MEMORIES FROM SHOOTING HIS DOCUMENTARY
'THE WHALE FROM LORINO'



REVIEWS

FILM CATALOGUE

POLISH ANIMATIONS

KRAKOW ANIMATION CENTER
GUEST PRESENTATION

FOCUS ON POLAND TALKS: ANIMATION

LET'S PITCH ONLINE. A SUMMARY OF THE
ANIMATED IN POLAND PITCHING



REVIEWS

FILM CATALOGUE

POLISH SHORTS

ISOLATION CAPTURED IN IMAGES.
ON HOW FILMMAKERS HAVE TACKLED
THE SUBJECT OF THE PANDEMIC



THE SHORT FILM ALPHABET: FEATURES

SHORT Q&A: AN INTERVIEW WITH OLGA BOŁĄDŹ

SHORT Q&A: AN INTERVIEW WITH TADEUSZ ŁYSAK

REVIEWS

FILM CATALOGUE

A composite image featuring a bat's wings and head superimposed onto a man's face. The man has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the side. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

FIND THE MOST RECENT NEWS
ABOUT WHAT'S GOING
IN POLISH CINEMATOGRAPHY

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious, contemplative expression. The lighting is soft, highlighting her features against a dark background.

**WATCH
THE LATEST**
AND MOST
INTERESTING
TITLES ONLINE

A group of people wearing full-body white protective suits, hoods, and large goggles. They are standing in a dimly lit room, possibly a laboratory or a film set. The image has a grainy, high-contrast aesthetic.

KEEP UP TO DATE
WITH POLISH FILM SCREENINGS
AT INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS

Two birds, possibly pigeons, are shown in profile against a light blue background. Each bird has a large, circular white hole cut out of its head, revealing a dark interior. The image has a stylized, almost graphic quality.

SUBSCRIBE
TO OUR NEWSLETTERS VIA WEBSITES
(the subscription window can be found at the bottom
of the webpage)



From the perspective of

a Polish secret police officer

A CONVERSATION ABOUT TOMASZ WOLSKI'S FILM **AN ORDINARY COUNTRY**

KRZYSZTOF GIERAT: You were considered a great observer, watching your heroes patiently, following them day and night. Then you suddenly burst into an archive, which took many of your fans by complete surprise, although a mostly positive one. As the film critic Tadeusz Sobolewski wrote: 'An Ordinary Country is an outstanding achievement of the found footage genre'. Where did this change come from?

TOMASZ WOLSKI: If you mean the Kazimierz Karabasz style of filmmaking, i.e. long-time observation, without interfering with the filmed matter, then actually none of my previous films have been made one hundred percent

in this fashion. Even *The Clinic* had scenes that were directed and played out. I accept such a creative approach as long as the audience doesn't notice it. Where did my transition from these films to found footage come from? Eight years passed since *The Palace*, which I made in 2012, and *An Ordinary Country*. *Festival* was between them – a cinematographic entrance into the world of music, somewhat creative, somewhat observational but mostly visual. When making these films, I was close to the protagonists, but I never entered into their private lives and crossed the border of privacy that I would not want anyone to cross in relation to me. I tried to make these films different, despite utilising a similar method. However, these differences

were no longer enough for me. I felt that I either had to quit making films or find something else in order to start enjoying my job again. You cannot keep stepping into the same river all the time. I need something new, some new experiences. I have never planned to tell stories through archives, but the things which started happening in our politics worried me a lot, such as young people's categorical reactions to the case of Lech Wałęsa and his cooperation with the Security Service. Voices of condemnation and unequivocal declarations that they would have refused any contact with the secret police prevailed. I was touched by this reaction of people, especially those younger than me, who did not experience the People's Republic of Poland. I decided to check if the Institute of National Remembrance had any materials that could show the horror of those times, that this huge state apparatus kept watch over our lives as if for our safety, but in fact – to entrap us.

KG: But did you know right away that you wanted to make a film about ordinary people in an ordinary country?

TW: Yes, the life of a common citizen under surveillance by the secret services seemed much more interesting to me. The fact that Lech Wałęsa is followed and recorded somehow seems natural. As an enemy of the system, he had to be watched, but since his children's completely banal and

irrelevant conversations had been recorded alongside him, I found it fascinating, absurd, and terrifying at the same time.

KG: When you listen to two opposition activists under surveillance, it is sort of understandable, but when they waltz into kitchens, or even bedrooms, armed with microphones, it starts to smell Orwellian.

TW: I approached this film three times, deleting everything I had edited twice; I was trying to find the language of the story. It was only on the third attempt that I clearly focused on ordinariness and started to tell the story a bit like in observational cinema, i.e. patient in a way. At the beginning you said patience was the domain of my job. I guess it's still similar, except that

this job was done for me by the security service officers who had to sit for hours and record these materials, hunt for people, and I got the finished result of their work just waiting to be edited.

KG: Reviews unanimously emphasise that you used this secret police footage to create a thriller, that this Poland is documented through their eyes, but they would certainly accept the scary message of your film without enthusiasm, because you've shown how this system corners people, how it drags its victims into unwanted cooperation.

TW: What's more frightening is the fact that it's just a tiny portion of what was destroyed after '89. The recordings used in the film are mostly leftovers made while watching someone or something else, but for me they were the most interesting ones because I could utilise them for my story. Besides, this is how I understand the idea of found footage – adding new meanings to materials often made with a different purpose in mind.

KG: Did you have any points of reference? You were looking into that topic for the first time, one that you have not explored before.

TW: I have great respect for Maciek Drygas and his archival films. The subject is similar, but I am speaking from a different point of view. With Drygas, it is an objective observation of the People's Republic of Poland, and here we have a subjective camera with a specific representative of this system behind it, an employee of the Security Service. When it comes to the audio layer, it's Sergei Loznitsa... I remember watching *Blockade* at one of Krakow's festivals and how profoundly impressed I was by the use of sound. The added sound layer put me much closer to this story, although there was more than 60 years between us. That is why I invited Marcin Lenarczyk, a true wizard who conjured up this auditory world in *An Ordinary Country*, and Paweł Juzwuk brought in music exactly from that time, which puts a kind of parentheses around this story. It is this use of music that distinguishes my film from those by Loznitsa. By the way, I envy him a bit, because the archival footage he uses looks as if made just for him. Usually, he tells his stories with long shots and finds exactly those in archives.

KG: The fact that you didn't have such long shots allowed you to make a different film.

TW: That's because the officers of the secret police used film cameras like still ones. When someone stepped in front of the lens, they turned on the recording only for a moment. In the back of their heads, they knew they had to save film. The most important thing was to capture the face as potential evidence.

KG: Were the original materials recorded without sound?

TW: Most materials stored at the Institute of National Remembrance, until the appearance of analogue cameras, is captured on film and lacks any direct sound. By their very nature, audio recordings are not accompanied by image. Interestingly, the later analogue materials on VHS tapes, which have both image and sound, and could be recorded without any restrictions, are generally much worse and less interesting.

KG: Now tell me what the other way looked like – you had sound but no image. What happened then?

TW: You had to start being creative about making archival footage. I don't want to spoil the 'fun', so I will not reveal





7 exactly which scenes have been recorded by me. Some of them featured both professional and amateur actors who received a transcript of the audio track. I assumed it would be very easy to make, a bit like karaoke. It turned out that the manner in which those secret officers were speaking, their syntax; it was all so out-of-date that the actors had serious trouble remembering, repeating their lines, staying in sync. As the person responsible for these scenes, I had to start thinking like an officer of the secret police, I had to become slightly sloppy, learn to take ugly, crooked shots, which was difficult for me since I always care about visual aesthetics.

KG: It's as if you animated that scene, which is quite common in documentaries. Instead, you decided to get down to the very nature of the archival footage, creating something new in its image. Your artistic choice is very convincing to me because it is also a moral choice. After all, we are dealing with a shameful attempt at blackmailing people into collaboration with the secret police.

TW: I would have done the same even if I had authentic footage in my possession, just to avoid identifying the people being filmed at that time. Especially in such a difficult time for them. Either way, it had to be staged.

KG: I would use another phrase: filled with image. Just as Marcin filled the image with sounds, you filled the sound

with images. These two areas have complemented each other beautifully here.

TW: You could say that we did the reverse of ADRs...

KG: It seems like you got stuck in the archives because you've already found an idea for your next film there.

TW: For two, actually. In the same archive I found materials about the events at the coast in December 1970. These are phone calls between generals and ministers at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw and the Tri-City, Elbląg, Szczecin, but also Kraków, Wrocław, and Poznań. We observe dramatic events from the point of view of those responsible for the massacre. The second project is a film about Leopold Trepper. I found over a dozen reels that concern an extremely intriguing character – the man behind the spy network called the Red Orchestra.

KG: I would like to close this interview by mentioning the Krakow festival. With the exception of *The Palace*, all your other films began their lives in Krakow. This is where you received numerous awards and won the audience award twice for *Goldfish* and *The Lucky Ones*. And now the Golden Hobby-Horse. Satisfaction?

TW: Well, I'll be honest and risk sounding immodest – it's huge. Despite all these previous awards, Krakow was such an impregnable fortress for me. This is the most important Polish award for a documentary filmmaker. I have worked for it for several years. It's like climbing Mount Everest several times without success, and finally conquering it. The satisfaction is much greater. Filmmakers often say the awards aren't that important. Of course, that's not true. They are extremely important. It's just that they're not the most important thing.

KG: You have one more thing to be satisfied with. Instead of the film schools in Łódź or Katowice, you graduated from the Jagiellonian University, here in Krakow. You had a brief stint at the Wajda School. Was that the tipping point? You receive awards as a director, cinematographer, editor...

TW: My stay at the Wajda School ended with an unfinished film. I tried applying to Łódź four times, and to Katowice three times. Now, I would probably reject myself at these exams. I felt inferior for not going to a film school for years, but today I think it was for the better. I avoided the whole academic superfluity, any direct influence, fighting the professors' ego, etc. Making films was my school. And I grabbed the camera not because I figured out that I wanted to be a cinematographer. I just had no idea how to work with one. I didn't know how to say that the camera should be pointed one way or the other at a given

point in time. Being the cinematographer, I don't have to consult anything with anyone. If I don't have a camera in my hand when we're shooting, I'm getting bored. I also quickly came to the conclusion that, being an amateur, I needed to control myself and review the footage every day. Watching my mistakes, I didn't want to waste any time, so I started making my own edits to see how to solve those mistakes, what to reshoot from scratch, what to expand upon. After I was finishing shooting, it turned out that I actually had the first rough cut ready. Giving it to an editor seemed completely pointless, because I knew more or less what to do with it. Besides, it turned out that I enjoyed shooting and editing a great deal. So why give it to someone else? Obviously, it has some limitations, because having someone from the outside, someone with new ideas, someone creative can bring new directions and give these materials a completely different meaning. It's always a trade-off, I guess. ■



TOMASZ WOLSKI – film director, producer, screenwriter, cameraman and editor. Born in 1977, he is a graduate of Journalism at the Jagiellonian University and a documentary course at the Wajda School. He has made several documentaries, including *The Clinic* (2006), *The Lucky Ones* (2009), *Doctors* (2011), *The Palace* (2012), *Not for Everyone* (2012), as well as short fiction films, e.g. *Daughter* (2015) and *Problem* (2020). His latest documentary film *An Ordinary Country* (2020) received the Clinique de Genolier Jury award for the best innovative middle-length documentary film at the Visions du Réel Documentary Film Festival, and was awarded with the Golden Hobby-Horse for the best Polish film at the 60th Krakow Film Festival. He is the winner of numerous awards, and is a member of the Guild of Polish Documentary Directors, Polish Film Academy and European Film Academy.

POLISH DOCS IN PROGRESS

KATARZYNA WILK



Wika! by Agnieszka Zwiefka

WHAT POLISH DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS HAVE IN THE PIPELINE



Is it easy to shoot documentaries during a pandemic? One definitely needs to review their production methods or – in the worst-case scenario – postpone the project, which is not always possible. It is much easier to present it to industry peers in a new online format.

Although the situation is far from easy, Polish co-financing institutions, such as the Polish Film Institute or regional funds, are operating in an unchanged manner. The same applies to industry events facilitating project development and seeking international partners. This year, both the DOC LAB POLAND workshops, including the DOCS TO START and DOCS TO GO! pitching sessions, and the CEDOC co-production market during KFF Industry were held online – similarly to numerous other international events where Polish projects were presented like Hot Docs Forum, CPH Forum, or Goes to Cannes, just to name a few. While the advantages and disadvantages of moving face-to-face meetings online remain debatable, previously recorded presentations – which have already become the norm at industry events – undoubtedly minimise the stress involved with performing live. This is one positive aspect of the pandemic. However, it is not easy to shoot a film remotely, especially if it is set in a different, and often distant, country, and there are many such films being made by Polish creators, as they frequently tackle stories that may not necessarily take place in their own backyard.

Edyta Wróblewska found Barbara, the protagonist of her film *When Harmattan Blows*, in Ghana. Despite her young age, the woman has experienced many personal traumas, but her strength and determination allow her to keep looking for a new way and her place in the world. She is supported in this by Father Piotr, a missionary who seems to be the only man Barbara has ever trusted. However, as they get closer to each other, their relationship becomes more emotionally difficult for both of them. Eri Mizutani, who is working in Japan on the film *The Daughter of Fuji*, also takes up the difficult matters related to the situation of women. In a way, it is a story of rebellion against an age-old tradition that condemns young women or, in fact, little girls to a life of self-sacrifice and complete commitment, making them lose their personality and ability to determine their own fate. Fate, and what little control we have over it, is also at the heart of *Siskin* – the new film by Zofia Kowalewska, author of the famous *Close Ties*, in which she showed her grandparents' difficult relationship. This time, the same grandfather takes her on a journey to far-away Siberia, where as a teenager he met true love, perhaps even the love of his life, but he had no way of knowing for sure, since he had to return to his homeland. Now he and his granddaughter travel thousands of kilometres to see if his life could have been different. Just like the life of the protagonist of Grzegorz Piekarski's film *White Queen*, who has been living in Germany for years, but – according to tradition – remains the king of one of the tribes in Togo, could have been different. He cannot return to his country for political reasons, so his German wife takes over his duties.

In times of a pandemic, it is much easier to work on films made up of archival materials. One such example is Tomasz Wolski's *The Big Chief*, which tells the story of legendary Cold War spy Leopold Trepper by using miraculously preserved footage from that era. In turn, Kuba Mikurda's *Escape to the Silver Globe* is a film about the outstanding director Andrzej Żuławski, who shot *On the Silver Globe* in the 1970s, a film shaping up to become a science-fiction masterpiece,

and which the then communist authorities did not allow him to finish, resulting in his departure from Poland and being declared a persona non grata. Monika Kotecka's *The Plague*, a creative documentary about the smallpox epidemic of the 1960s, examines the notions of fear, uncertainty, and control in relation to what is happening in the world today.

Another solution for avoiding the limitations of the pandemic is to point the camera at your loved ones. This is what the directors of these two upbeat films did. Andrzej Szypulski makes a light-hearted attempt at telling the story of the difficult and objectionable love between his mother, a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses' congregation, and a Catholic man, which is met with disapproval from her family and friends (*Nina Gets Married*). Daniel Stopa also watches his parents – this time in preparation for a big event, which is their son's wedding day, allowing them to take a look at themselves and their marriage after many years (*Until the Wedding*).

Polish filmmakers also do not shy away from current topics such as exclusion, searching for one's identity, confrontation, and being a stranger in one's own country. The motifs of 'alien' and 'own', ambiguous and complicated in themselves, can be found in Piotr Szczepański's *@miriamfrompoland*, which tells about an orthodox Jewish activist living in Łódź. In *I Am One of Them* Nadim Suleiman deals with the difficult subject of the complicated relationship between the director himself, who came to Poland from Syria, and a young supporter of the Polish nationalist movement, while in *Gypsy Gadji* by Dasa Raimanova, the half-Polish and half-Roma protagonist tries to find her own

place in today's difficult reality, feeling simultaneously alien and familiar in both communities.

Maria, the protagonist of Aleksandra Maciejczyk's *Debut*, comes from an aristocratic family, but grew up in a tradition far away from social divisions, has similar dilemmas. The milieu of the young Polish aristocracy and the way they cultivate traditions fascinate Maria so much that she wants to learn and see what the life of the social elite looks like. Loneliness and the hero's dilemmas are also the subject of Tadeusz Chudy's and Bartosz Luniewski's *A Few Good Days*. The directors look at a prison guard who conducts unusual resocialisation therapy sessions among prisoners consisting in training aggressive dogs. Although the job gives him a lot of satisfaction, the situation and relationships in the prison service bring him to the point where he wants to quit. Just like many years ago, Maciej, the hero of Paweł Wyszomirski's *House of Sand*, gave up his comfortable life to devote himself to his passion – ecology. He settled in a remote area, where, far from civilisation and its information overload, he and his sons are building the Earthship – a passive solar house made mostly of trash. In this way, he also tries to rebuild neglected family relationships.

Although the times are tough, as can be seen from these few examples, Polish documentary filmmakers are not lounging about. Several projects are still being shot, but many creators are already finishing the last assembly cuts of their films. Therefore, it is very likely that next year we will be able to watch fascinating stories about varied topics and featuring inspiring characters on the silver screen – and not just computer displays. ■



When Harmattan Blows by Edyta Wróblewska

POLISH PROJECTS AT INTERNATIONAL FORUMS, MARKETS, PITCHINGS, TRAININGS

HOT DOCS FORUM

THE CURRENT BY RAFAŁ SKALSKI

BALTIC SEA DOCS

WHEN HARMATTAN BLOWS BY EDYTA WRÓBLEWSKA

NINA GETS MARRIED BY ANDRZEJ SZYPULSKI

WEITER'S GATE BY KONRAD SZOŁAJSKI

DOC INCUBATOR / EAST DOC MARKET / DOK PREVIEW /
DOCS IN PROGRESS KARLOVY VARY

THE PAWNSHOP BY ŁUKASZ KOWALSKI

EURODOC

THE DAUGHTER OF FUJI BY ERI MIZUTANI

DOCS BARCELONA INDUSTRY

GYPSY GADJI BY DASA RAIMANOVA

DOCUTALENT FROM THE EAST

TRUST ME BY JOANNA RATAJCZAK

THE GOES TO CANNES / IDFA FORUM

WIKAI BY AGNIESZKA ZWIEFKA

CPH FORUM

THE HAMLET SYNDROME

BY ELWIRA NIEWIERA AND PIOTR ROSOŁOWSKI

EAST DOC FORUM

KIOSK BY DANIEL STOPA

EAST DOC MARKET

CANDIDATES OF DEATH BY MACIEJ CUSKE



Nina Gets Married by Andrzej Szypulski



Until the Wedding by Daniel Stopa

RELEASES IN A TIME OF PLAGUE

KATARZYNA WILK

THE LATEST POLISH DOCUMENTARIES PREMIERING AT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

Although 2020 has been an extremely difficult year, spare a thought for films only starting their festival run. Many Polish filmmakers decided not to shelve their newly made films, but to share them with viewers around the world, even if participating in some festivals meant showing their films exclusively online. We present a short guide outlining some Polish documentaries which were released in recent months and ones you do not want to miss at upcoming international film festivals or fairs. Additionally, we recommend watching the video interviews with their directors.



Scars

DIR.: AGNIESZKA ZWIEFKA • 2020 • 79'

In her films, Agnieszka Zwiefka takes up the stories of remarkable, strong, and independent women. This was the case with the internationally-renowned *The Queen of Silence*, as well as the documentary musical *Wika!* which she is making right now. However, *Scars*, where she tells the story of Sri Lankan civil war veterans, female members of the Tamil Tigers terrorist organization, is shot in a different, more subdued and appropriate style. Her heroine, Vetrichelvi, devoted her entire life to the fight for independence. After many years, she has still not given up and returns to her former sisters-in-arms, wanting to write down their stories. At the same time, she dreams of starting a new life, which – having lived through so many extreme experiences – may turn out to be impossible. The film had its world premiere at the One World International Human Rights Documentary FF in Prague.



The Wall of Shadows

DIR.: ELIZA KUBARSKA • 2020 • 98'

Another film by documentalist and mountaineer Eliza Kubarska taking up the subject of the mountain environment. This time, however, the director focused on climbers' inseparable companions and aides on their way to the top. The film tells the story of a married couple of Sherpas living in a Nepalese village at the foot of the Himalayas, struggling with their son's dilemma who – instead of following in the footsteps of his parents – dreams of leaving the mountains and becoming a doctor. For his dream to come true, the father considers the lucrative offer to climb Kumbhakarna – the Sherpa sacred mountain, which would mean breaking a taboo, because according to tradition, reaching the summit means drawing the wrath of the gods. The film premiered at this year's Hot Docs Festival.

FOCUS ON POLAND TALKS: DOCUMENTARY

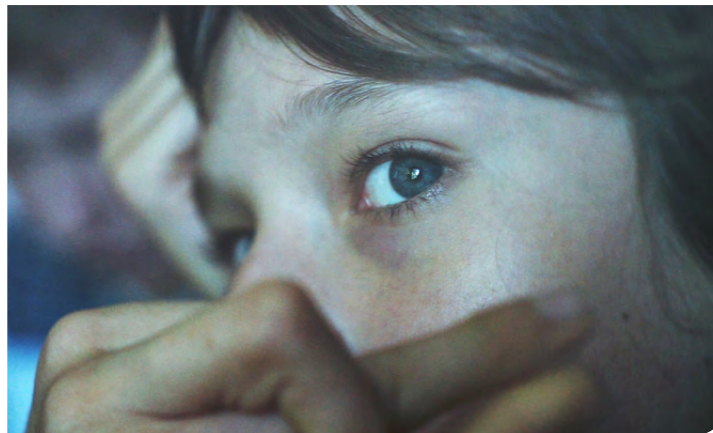




Butterfly's Dream

DIR.: JAROSŁAW SZMIDT • 2020 • 91'

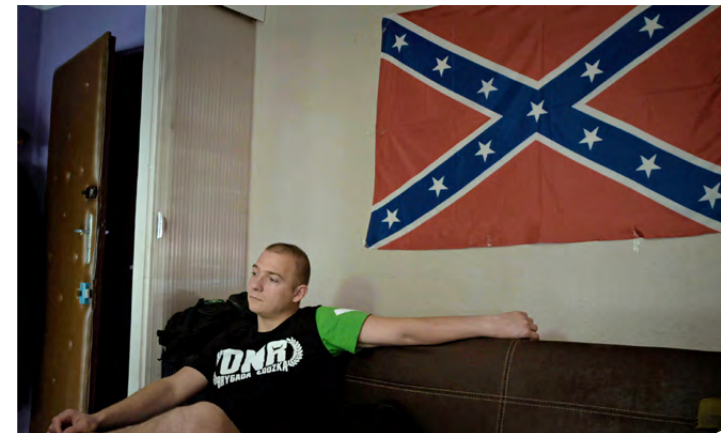
Young Zuzia suffers from a hard-to-treat genetic skin disease. Her only salvation is a series of surgeries and expensive therapy abroad. Documentary filmmaker Jarosław Szmidt accompanies Zuzia's family with his camera throughout the entire process of fundraising, travel, and successful treatment at a US clinic. Patiently, but with a great deal of empathy, he observes them in times of difficult decisions and doubt, but also witnesses moments of hope, smile, as well as a will to fight, which we observe in a girl who is extremely determined and mature for her age. The film, scored by the outstanding Oscar-winning composer Jan A.P. Kaczmarek, was first shown at the 60th Krakow Film Festival. The film will also be screened at the Flahertiana International Documentary FF in Perm, Russia, and the Listapad International FF in Minsk, Belarus in the near future.



Altered States of Consciousness

DIR.: PIOTR STASIK • 2020 • 52'

With the visual creativity characteristic of his films, Piotr Stasik, the author of such famous documentaries as 21 x New York or Opera About Poland, this time looks at a group of young people suffering from Asperger's syndrome – one of the forms of autism. However, Stasik's film is not just a passive observation. The author gives voice to his protagonists and lets them talk about their fears, joys, uncertainties, interests, and dreams in direct conversations in front of the camera. He does not judge or label them, which presents reality from a completely different, unusual, and extremely interesting perspective. The world premiere of Altered States of Consciousness took place at the 60th Krakow Film Festival. The film will also be shown as part of the documentary competition at the Camerimage IFF.



The Last Knights of the Right Side

DIR.: MICHAŁ EDELMAN • 2020 • 67'

Michał Edelman's feature-length documentary, created at the Lodz Film School, is one of the few films showing the contemporary social and political reality in Poland, which in recent years has been so strongly polarized in terms of worldview. The filmmakers accompany a group of radical nationalists, who strongly disagree with the views of the opposition, but also do not sympathize with and criticize the right-wing ruling party. They show their strength and create the image of uncompromising defenders of traditional values at rallies, marches, and demonstrations. It turns out, however, that behind the facade of particular beliefs, we are all similar in everyday life. After its world premiere at the 60th Krakow Film Festival, the film will be presented for the first time in front of an international audience during the Jihlava International Documentary FF in the Czech Republic.

FOCUS ON POLAND TALKS: DOCUMENTARY





Between Us

DIR.: DOROTA PROBA • 2020 • 53'

The film, made at the Munk Studio by a student of the Wajda School, presents three couples. They sit on opposite sides of a table. They confide in each other; talk about things they have in common. Although they are doing it in front of the camera, they seem relaxed and discuss even the most intimate topics. Perhaps they have never had the opportunity to analyze their feelings so directly and honestly before. Each of the couples has a slightly different baggage of experiences. The entire film shows what modern relationships are like. And what are they like? The attendees of the 60th Krakow Film Festival and Millennium Docs Against Gravity, where it received the main award in the Polish Competition, already had the chance to find out.



A Little Bit of Paradise

DIR.: ANDRZEJ CICHOCKI • 2020 • 19'

A Little Bit of Paradise is an unusual portrait of a family shown through the eyes of children and shot in a classically observational manner. Although they are living a poor life on a dilapidated farm on the outskirts of a large industrial city, the children seem to be happy, joyful, and interested in life. A pile of rubbish and scrap metal in their backyard serves as a playground while the domestic animals are great company for carefree frolics. The film was produced under Munk Studio's 'First Documentary' programme, and it will start its international run during Amsterdam's IDFA, where it will be screened as part of the Competition for Short Documentary.



We Have One Heart

DIR.: KATARZYNA WARZECHA • 2020 • 11'

An animated documentary telling a beautiful and touching, albeit extremely sad, love story – shown through letters written by the grandparents of the film's main character and narrator – the young Ignacy. Still in the early stages of their relationship, his grandfather Farouk, who had come to Poland from Iraq, was forced to return to his native country. Although he had hoped for a quick return to welcome his son into the world, it proved to be impossible as war broke out in Iraq and he was not heard from again. Ignacy was convinced that he would never meet his grandfather, but life had a huge surprise in store for him. The film had its world premiere in April at the Visions du Réel festival and since then it has been shown at several international festivals, including DOK Leipzig, the Leeds IFF, Docs Mx, or the Chicago IFF, winning awards for the best short documentary at the latter two events.

FOCUS ON POLAND TALKS



A person wearing a light blue cap, a patterned jacket, and a large black backpack is sitting on a wooden bench, looking out at the sea. A blue bicycle is leaning against the bench. A black and white dog is lying on the ground next to the bicycle. The background shows a vast, calm sea under a cloudy sky.

Maciej Cuske. From the **travel diary**

The Whale from Lorino, the latest documentary by Maciej Cuske, premiered at IDFA 2019. Since then, its festival run was temporarily halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it will soon resume screenings at upcoming festivals in Italy, Brazil, and Russia. Maciej Cuske and the film crew spent almost one hundred days on research and shooting. The project, filmed in far-off Chukotka, was an emotional one for the team. They touched the actual world's end, even though the Chukchi people consider it to be its beginning. The film received three awards at the 60th Krakow Film Festival and another one at the Millennium Docs Against Gravity. We invite you to read part of the director's travel diary which he wrote over the course of the film's production.



24.07.2015

In Lavrentiya, we arrive straight at a regional festival. I feel broken, another protagonist is out of the film. He doesn't like the camera and the camera doesn't like him. We meet Lizaveta, an older Eskimo woman who works at a regional museum. We invite ourselves to her house and start filming immediately. This is not the best way, but I'm afraid time is flying by. We also visit other residents. Then, we reach the municipal cemetery located on the seafront. Terrifyingly sad, surrounded by several hundred tons of scrap metal and rubbish from condemned Soviet buildings. I know I have to shoot a movie scene here. Definitely.



19.07.2015

We're setting out. I am a bit afraid of what we are going to find there. The crew consists of 4 people: Anastazja Kukaleva – my assistant, Piotr Bernaś – cinematographer, Jarosław Sadowski – sound engineer, and me.

Flight Warsaw-Moscow-Irkutsk-Anadyr. At the airport, we meet our first bear... one exactly like those roaming the tundra where we are going. The capital of the Chukchi District. Anadyr, doesn't encourage filming. Moreover, Lena who was supposed to be one of the protagonists, is not answering her phone... After three days, we set out for Lavrentiya on a small plane. We will start shooting the film there. At the airport, a huge sign: 'Chukotka. The day is born here.'



27.07.2015

Yandagay. Together with a group of Russian archaeologists, we walk through the tundra to a place where a human settlement was located one thousand years ago. We have reached the limit of our physical capabilities. Sixteen kilometres along the sandy shore of the Bering Strait and uneven grassy tundra, with a 12-kilo camera that allowed us to film in 4K, we were totally exhausted. However, what we saw on site was worth the effort. I don't know if it will be in the film, but I saw a piece of the primeval world. It's hard to describe in words.



30.07.2015

The archaeologists were running out of food, so we decided to go back to Lavrentiya alone. Four hours of walking on foot and striking a cup with a metal spoon to scare away potential bears on the road. They can be very dangerous when with their cubs. It was the only weapon we had. At our destination, we can feel the antipathy of the Federal Security Service and the Border Service. They know everything about us. It affects the film. The protagonists are afraid of us, they are starting to avoid us. We decide to take a desperate step and organise a Polish Evening at the community centre. Jarek plays Chopin, Piotrek talks about Poland, and I show my films made in Russia, with Anasztasia translating what we're saying. I think the ice is broken. We confirm a pact of mutual trust in the nearby hot springs.

3.08.2015

Finally, we are going to Lorino! It is a picturesque town located atop a tall cliff. There we want to film hunters and the hunt itself. Vova, whom I met two years ago, is supposed to be waiting for us there.

10.08.2015

We have already spent several days with hunters near Lorino. They do not want to reveal their secrets to us and only take rich guests from Lithuania, Moscow, and Norway on hunts. We are sitting in a wooden house and wringing our hands. Vova avoids the camera like the plague even though I brought him the beautiful analogue camera that he had dreamed about. We see whales, but only on the shore...



15.08.2015

We return to Lavrentiya. Genadij Zielenski is helping us. Until recently, his father was the district administrator. He grew up in the tundra, but his great-grandfather was a Pole from Krakow! Giena takes us on a 30-kilometre trip in his off-road car. It seems close, but it is the only stone road between towns in an area larger than twice the entire area of Poland! Here, the bus runs only once a week! On the way, we see abandoned greenhouses heated with water from hot springs in the USSR era. Ever since they are in this condition, you cannot buy fresh tomatoes or carrots in Lorino. Everything has to be brought from the hinterland. Tomorrow, we are flying by helicopter to Inchoun, the most distant village for us. Will we finally start our shooting there?!

17.08.2015

It's the third day we're coming to the airport and waiting for the helicopter with our luggage. It still can't fly because of strong winds. Has someone placed a curse on us? Here it is! We're about to leave soon!!!



17



2015 08 20

20.08.2015

Inchoun is remarkable. Located right by the sea. Only 300 people live here. The vast majority are Chukchi. We heard that a shaman is living among them. Time is running out, so we quickly climbed a high mountain with him to add some dignity to the conversation. He was surprised that people call him a 'shaman'. During our two-hour conversation, we didn't even find out if he believed in ghosts. However, at our request, he read his granddaughters a Soviet story-book from the 1950s titled 'The Chukchi Legend of Lenin'... We also visited a depressing place. An arctic fox farm. I am aware that it is a unique opportunity to make a living and survive for the local residents. Poland is well ahead of the Chukchi in this regard. It is the largest exporter of fur animals in Europe.





22.08.2015

I have finally felt like we are making progress. After one month of shooting!!! I think we already know how to tell it. The protagonists and this is a place is one thing. These worlds must be filmed in similar way. From a distance. Through a filter. Today, we filmed naked rocks torn apart by the rough sea. It was dangerous because we got as close as we could. It was like gazing at the world being created. It must have looked like that a billion years ago or so. This will probably be the beginning of the film. From that moment, we somehow manage to film everything differently. We started feeling the rhythm. We filmed some children playing their unusual games among the bones of ancient whales. I love short moments of peace when I can forget about everything and immerse myself in the green tundra. There is not a single tree for several hundred kilometres in every direction. The horizon is flat. You feel as if you were in the middle of the sea.

25.08.2015

The hunters took us hunting! They wanted to get walruses, but noticed a whale. The survival instinct prevailed. This way, despite aversion and prejudices, we managed. I felt that there would be no film without this scene. Whale hunting is necessary for survival here. The Chukchi can hunt them only as much as Russia allows them. Norway catches twice as many whales, not to mention Japan, even though the Japanese don't have to do it at all.



5.09.2015

Once we understood how to shoot our film, we began working tirelessly. There was also a full symbiosis between the crew (as evidenced by the photo of the cinematographer intertwined with the director while filming the shot!). We were supposed to leave a week ago, but the helicopter still hasn't arrived. We settle for a more expensive and reliable, but also more dangerous, return by boat over a distance of 300 kilometres along the coast together with the hunters. On the way we saw the real land of Mordor. Impossible that Sir J.R.R. Tolkien was not here before us...



17.09.2015

We are sitting in front of the airport with Genadij Zielenski. Shortly we will be returning to Anadyr, then to Moscow, and finally – home. The last few days have been very busy and tiring. What struck me the most? The unusual aurora in Lavrentiya, the moving history lesson in Lorino, Lenin still guarding the new order and – above all – an extraordinary place on the seashore, that we passed with the hunters on our way back from Inchoun. These were the remains of Naukan – once the easternmost settlement in the continent. It is difficult to imagine more difficult living conditions. However, Lizaveta, our Eskimo protagonist, spent her childhood there until Stalin ordered the settlement to be demolished in the 1950s. In her memories, it was paradise. According to an Eskimo legend, humans descended from the Whale and the first woman on Earth, named Nau. They met on the seashore a long time ago. I want to believe it happened right here in Naukan. The world begins and ends here. **We're going home.**



xABO. Father Boniecki xABO. Książd Boniecki

DIR.: ALEKSANDRA POTOCZEK • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2020 • 73'

It is not easy to make a balanced film about a priest in today's Poland. The strong politicisation of the Catholic Church and its image in the Polish cinema of recent years certainly does not help. Wojciech Smarzowski's *Clergy* as well as Tomasz Sekielski's investigative documentaries *Tell No One* and *Playing Hide and Seek*, both dealing with the systemic cover-up of paedophilia by the Church, had an extremely critical overtone and attracting huge audiences. As her debut, Aleksandra Potoczek decided to make a film as if to spite everyone – that is, by creating a documentary about a 'good priest'. About someone who seems to be a living and breathing antithesis of all the sins of the Polish Church.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Father Adam Boniecki is considered a black sheep by many of his superiors. In 2011, he was even banned from speaking in all media except 'Tygodnik Powszechny', where he served as editor-in-chief for many years. *xABO. Father Boniecki* shows the protagonist's attempts to bypass this ban by traveling all over the country and meeting the crowds of people fascinated by him in person. As a by-product, we get a picture of Poland that is vastly different from the one presented by radical zealots. Boniecki attracts believers and non-believers alike – those who cherish values such as mercy and dialogue with others, regardless of any differences in worldview. Someone in the film calls the priest's attitude a 'beautiful utopia', and it's precisely how Potoczek looks at the defiant priest – as the embodiment of ideals that are increasingly difficult to achieve in both the modern Church and today's world.

The director succeeded in showing how great the hunger for genuine authority is in contemporary Poland. However, she also notices the hidden burden of being such an authority. That is why the film's changing rhythm is dictated by the protagonist himself – sometimes it becomes a dynamic road film, then it turns into something more contemplative. Despite his old age, *xABO* (these are the initials that the priest used to sign his articles with) appears as a tireless traveler, a master of deep conversation, endowed with a sarcastic sense of humour and – at the same time – the camera accompanies him in moments of solitude and silence. Which side is more real? *xABO. Father Boniecki* leaves us with this question. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



The Whale from Lorino Wieloryb z Lorino

DIR.: MACIEJ CUSKE • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2019 • 59'

He seems to be the biggest star here – long-awaited and anticipated. Even if his body is then punctured, dragged from the water, quartered, consumed by people and animals, and his giant bones lie in the grass. Whale hunting lets the residents of Lorino live and survive; it is a necessity and at the same time a collective ritual that unites the local community. Maciej Cuske travelled to the Chukchi Peninsula for several years to observe the everyday life of the whalers and their families. On the one hand, they are guided by age-old tradition, but on the other hand they are forced to hunt whales by the difficult living conditions. The result of these journeys is an epic image of a unique microcosm – preserved by poverty, harsh climate, ancient customs and beliefs.

It is also marked by the memory of the relatively recent Soviet past. Its symbol in *The Whale from Lorino* is the statue of Lenin towering over the village, and it is not the only sign of a by-gone era. During a visit to a local school, the camera captures portraits of Soviet leaders still hanging on one of the walls – after all, we are on the outskirts of a former empire, where time seems to have stopped, allowing rust into more than just the giant meat barrels. Cuske, however, is not interested in a typically ethnographic or ecological approach to the problem. He observes characters deeply rooted in the rough seaside landscape with the eye of a humanist who tries to see that which is human in them. So, we watch how the Chukchi, the indigenous people of the peninsula, work and play, shop and celebrate, and try to cultivate their identity and history, also in the youngest generation. What gives these observations a wider dimension is also Piotr Bernas' sweeping cinematography, combined with the ambient music composed by Michał Jacaszek. Most importantly, despite its eradication and poverty, the local community is portrayed with discretion, mindfulness, and respect, without the typical exotic fetishism and cultural superiority of such films. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



Tony Halik

DIR.: MARCIN BORCHARDT • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2020 • 90'

How do you tell the story of someone who became a legend during his lifetime and still eludes simple judgments many years after his death? As a traveler and correspondent, Tony Halik was a larger-than-life figure during the era of the Polish People's Republic: a window into the world and simultaneously a cross between Indiana Jones and a Hemingwayan 'man's man'. In his TV programs, which attracted audiences in the millions, he took viewers to places inaccessible to them; he reported his extraordinary adventures with a twinkle in his eye, and back then no one was bothered that his storytelling was often nowhere near the truth.

As in his previous documentary *The Beksińskis. A Sound And Picture Album* (2017), Marcin Borchardt believes in the power of archival materials and uses them to retell the story of Tony Halik. And there is a lot to choose from: a Polish reporter, who once worked for NBC or 'Life' magazine, left a huge collection of recordings documenting his adventurous lifestyle. Among them, for example, a chilling recording of a jaguar attacking Tony's infant son sitting in a hammock somewhere in the heart of the South American jungle. From the outset, Borchardt makes one thing evidently clear: the power of archive footage can be deceptive. That is why, at every step, he weighs documentary recordings against witness accounts. Among them are Halik's relatives, his associates and friends, and their statements from off-camera shed new light on the film's protagonist.

Tony Halik was born from a fascination with a man who was present in the world's biggest hotspots, participated in a bull run, and sat down for a chat with the British Queen. Who was a Polish patriot and at the same time an agent of the communist security services. However, no less fascinating than discovering new contradictions or blank spots in the reporter's life is Borchardt's constant gesturing at the essence of the medium itself – be it film or photography. At its lack of opaqueness and susceptibility to manipulation. In this sense, Tony Halik appears to be a precursor of today's 'travelebrities', and today his archaic image of hunter and conqueror serves as an interesting contribution to the reflection on the condition of the 'man with the camera'. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



The Butterfly's Dream Efekt motylka

DIR.: JAROSŁAW SZMIDT • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2020 • 91'

You'll watch this film in disbelief and with a lump in your throat. It is not only a documentary about unimaginable pain, but also about the superhuman heroism of young Zuzia and her relatives. The girl with 'skin woven from suffering' has a rare genetic disorder called EB that involves blistering lesions on the skin. The camera is very close to her all the time – so that we almost feel every painful touch with the heroine. This is what distinguishes Jarosław Szmidt's film from many other documentaries on similar subjects: a compassion, which becomes almost a physical process.

The creators accompany the family several months before the turning point in Zuzia's therapy. An experimental bone marrow and stem cell transplant is to be performed in the United States, which can significantly improve the health of the young patient. Since the treatment costs as much as 1.5 million dollars, a large fundraising campaign is launched in Poland and abroad. The camera, with the director himself behind it, follows the daily treatment and care routine, preparations for the trip and stay in the US, records the hopes, crises, and dilemmas related to the disease, but Szmidt does not hide behind the camera at all times. Every so often, he behaves more like a family member than a filmmaker – he reacts emotionally, talks to the girl, although sometimes he is forced to turn off the camera. The heroine's conversations and monologues paint a picture of an extremely mature child. Even more than Zuzia's grace, we are moved by her wisdom and strength, without which the therapy would not succeed at all.

The Butterfly's Dream shows how serious illness in the family becomes a disease felt by the entire family. The parents and sister share the girl's suffering all the time. Szmidt also recreates the tension they are all facing when the result of the operation is still unknown, and the worst can yet still happen. The film itself, however, has an extremely therapeutic effect: it restores faith not only in modern medicine or people of good will, but also in the power possessed by individuals. All the stronger, since it emanates from a girl with skin as delicate as a butterfly's wing. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



The Wall of Shadows Ściana cieni

DIR.: ELIZA KUBARSKA • DOCUMENTARY • GERMANY, POLAND, SWITZERLAND • 2020 • 94'

The mountains don't hold many secrets for Eliza Kubarska. In her earlier documentaries, *What Happened on Pam Island?* (2010) or *K2 – Touching the Sky* (2015), she shared her great fascination with mountain climbing with viewers, while simultaneously trying to show its darker side. In her latest film, she also deals with a mystery but this time from the perspective of Himalayan natives. The story of a Nepalese Sherpa named Nada, who works as a guide and porter, is an opportunity to take a more comprehensive look at contemporary Himalayan mountaineering. While the mountains are a costly and risky passion for some, for others they may be the only source of income. And sometimes an untouchable sanctity.

The climb to the top of Kumbhakarna by a team of two Russians and a Pole is accompanied by a serious dilemmas for a Nepalese man and his family. According to local beliefs, the mountain is the seat of the gods, and to journey there means risking their anger. Thus, Kubarska confronts 'Western' ambition and pragmatism with 'Eastern' respect for taboos. But is it just about cultural differences? There is also a great economic disparity at the root of the cinematic conflict: if Nada wants to afford decent education for his son, he is going to have to embark on a difficult climb on a sacred mountains and thus he is taking a double risk.

The way in which the cinematographer and co-writer Piotr Rosołowski films the majesty of the mountain and the wilderness on the way to its summit has something of magical realism in it – as if he was looking through the eyes of a native, through the prism of local beliefs. The film also features numerous Buddhist rituals that emphasize the locals' attachment to tradition. On the other side, we have European climbers who experience completely different dilemmas. Tensions within the group come to the fore, arrogance reveals itself – classic first world problems. In addition, the mountaineers have little idea of the struggles their helpers must endure. Fortunately, the beauty of untouched nature dominates all this – the only bright spot in this poorly furnished world. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



Scars Blizny

DIR.: AGNIESZKA ZWIEFKA • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND, GERMANY • 2020 • 80'

'The Tamil Tigers have been killed off. It's all over. So who am I now?' – one of the ex-militants of the Sri Lankan separatist organisation wonders in the film. Although the civil war on the island ended in 2009, it is still going on in the minds of the protagonists. Disfigured, mentally and physically mutilated, imprisoned and under surveillance, the women in Agnieszka Zwiefka's film are still trying to live normal lives. But what does this mean for people who, in addition to their own scars, also have blood on their hands?

Dealing with one's past inherently requires a detailed description of it. This is the case for Vetrichelvi, whose mission became to collect the testimonies of living 'tigresses' and publish them in book form. Their wartime experiences sound shocking at times – when they reminisce about particular battles and try to tally up their victims. Especially since many of them were just teenagers at the time. The director emphasizes this fact by juxtaposing the veteran women with today's carefree schoolgirls and young women who act out the stories of their older friends on stage. The space of documentary theatre allows to partially process the collective trauma.

The issue of women involved in terrorist activities always arouses additional emotions. There are almost no men in this film and at times it's hard to believe that these gentle, smiling women in beautiful colorful saris fought for the cause on the front lines. Terrorists or heroines? Torturers or victims? The ambivalence of their former activity is evident in *Scars*. However, Zwiefka keeps their side – for better and for worse. She notices how complicated their political and gender situation was and how difficult it is for them to adapt to the current peace. She appreciates their mutual loyalty and solidarity, necessary in the new post-war reality. And, at the same time, the great courage it takes to break the universal conspiracy of silence and speak out about their experiences. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



Altered States of Consciousness

Odmienne stany świadomości

DIR.: PIOTR STASIK • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2020 • 55'

There have been many documentary attempts to enter the world of autistic children with a camera. However, I am under the impression that so far no one has managed to get as close as Piotr Stasik. Not only at the level of interpersonal contact.

At first glance, the director used a method proven in documentary filmmaking, known – for example – from Krzysztof Kiesłowski's *Talking Heads* (1980). He asks his subjects the simplest questions, such as 'what are you interested in?', 'what do you like doing the most?'. He combined the responses with observations of spontaneous behavior of the autistic children, as well as with footage recorded during occupational therapy. The result is not a collective portrait, but quite the opposite. We start realizing how diverse and individualized people on the autism spectrum actually are, how different their ways of coping with one another and with the world can be, and how big of a mystery their inner world remains to us.

The audio-visual layer is the most original aspect of *Altered States of Consciousness*. At the beginning, intimate conversations with the protagonists, shot in almost extreme close-ups and against a dark background, take place in complete silence. With time, the audio track becomes more and more rich, combining abstract sounds, as if taken straight from someone's head, with piano cascades performed by Hania Rani, one of the most interesting young Polish composers. At the same time, Stasik's cinematography often tries to imitate the way his subjects perceive the world: his shots can be deliberately blurry and out of focus, or fixate obsessively on particular details. The director himself does not hide his presence – one can hear the questions he asks and feel his closeness to the characters at all times. The result is a film that transcends the boundaries of documentary observation in favor of a very thorough study of otherness, which often carries flashes of genius. For Stasik, this meeting also becomes an artistic challenge, forcing him to seek new means of cinematic expression. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



Lessons of Love Lekcja miłości

DIR.: MAŁGORZATA GOLISZEWSKA, KASIA MATEJA • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2019 • 73'

Who said that a woman of around seventy cannot be beautiful, elegant, and in love? The protagonist of this film denies all female stereotypes, especially those related to old age. It may seem that she was a bit exaggerated and stylized for dramatic purposes, but this is probably not only about Jola, but about entire generations of Polish women who have devoted their lives to their husbands, homes, and children, neglecting their own needs in the process. In Małgorzata Goliszewska and Kasia Mateja's film, Jola becomes a spokeswoman for Polish mothers, Polish grandmothers, Polish wives and – above all – victims of domestic abuse. She speaks on behalf of the marginalized grey pensioners and those colorful birds who have the courage to pursue own passions in their autumn years.

In *Lessons of Love*, there is a dissonance between colorful creation and brutal reality. The latter is sometimes hidden behind the scenes, drowned out by dancing, singing lessons, traveling, and chit-chat. However, Jola does not hide the fact that she was abused and experienced numerous humiliations over the course of her forty-five year marriage. The priest advises her to grit her teeth and bear her cross, in the name of faith, love, and old commitments. But the heroine – seemingly tied to traditional roles and saturated with romantic fantasies about being together – declares war on them and wants to start fresh. With a theatrical haircut, make-up and outfit, Jola is undoubtedly the main actress in her own theatre of everyday life. There are many indications, though, that she is also becoming its screenwriter and director.

But life likes to write its own scripts, multiply obstacles or worries, setting Jola's adventures, both in Poland and in Italy, on a surprising course. *Lessons of Love* is one of those films that do not make you wonder how much actual life there is in it, or to what extent is Jola the real Jola. It is an extract from a somewhat model situation in which a woman tries to take fate into her own hands. It might be late, but it's better than never. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA



An Ordinary Country *Zwyczajny kraj*

DIR.: TOMASZ WOLSKI • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2020 • 53'

For documentary filmmakers, the archives of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, storing materials from the times of the communist regime, are a gold mine that still has not been fully explored. What would a film composed solely of communist records look like – from eavesdropped conversations and hidden camera footage? What picture of those times would it paint? Tomasz Wolski created such a film. Or assembled it, to be precise. It's called *An Ordinary Country* and there is, of course, a certain irony to it. We're looking at Poland in the years 1956-1989 as if from the inside out. The banal everyday life of millions of Poles reveals its dark, totalitarian underbelly right in front of our eyes, recorded covertly by the security services and the police. But these dirty recordings often have more than just historical value. They reveal the image of a Big Brother who did not die with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

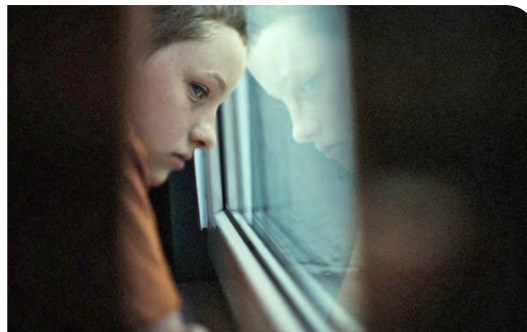
Following the found footage convention, Wolski creates a type of documentary thriller, showing the different faces of surveillance. We watch people get chased into a corner by the authorities, blackmailed, and broken, but also the absurd dimension of tracking citizens, making them accountable for the contents of their personal wardrobes and refrigerators, peeped at even in their beds and in church. An additional level of irony is brought about in the film by the inclusion of training materials used by the former security services. In these moments, the system shows its true face and makes a fool of itself, which – however – does not diminish the threat it posed. Especially since the film's has its own distinct suspense, and the finale leaves no doubt that the communist normality was built on a true nightmare. It's simply that average Poles did not even realize it when chasing after everyday matters.

Witnessing how the communist security apparatus violated its citizens' privacy, it is impossible to escape from modern connotations. After all, Big Brother is being reborn along with new technologies, more and more invisible, and thus progressively more insidious. Instead of treating archives in a literal manner, Wolski takes a rather conceptual approach, which allows his film to carry a universal warning. ■ ANITA PIOTROWSKA

POLISH DOCS

CATALOGUE OF FILMS

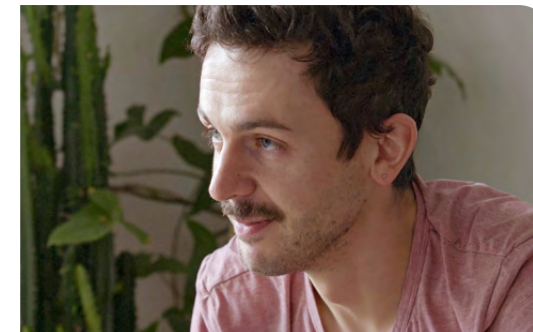
2020



Altered States of Consciousness

DIR.: **PIOTR STASIK** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 52' • PROD.: RUNNING RABBIT FILMS JOANNA RONIKIER • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

Altered States of Consciousness is a film about the possibilities of our brain. A poetic journey deep into the world of thoughts of people with autism and Asperger's Syndrome. Where do the boundaries of our minds lie and how much does culture confine or even extinguish our creativity in everyday life and even in love? In the film we meet people of various ages who experience autism to differing degrees on the spectrum of the illness.



Between Us

DIR.: **DOROTA PROBA** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 53' • PROD.: WAJDA STUDIO, MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MICHAŁ HUDZIKOWSKI, M.HUDZIKOWSKI@SFP.ORG.PL

Is there a recipe for a successful relationship? Can love withstand the test of time? Three couples, which differ in terms of their age, experience and duration of their relationship, reveal their fears and dreams related to their life together in front of the camera. Dorota Proba approaches her protagonists with great sensitivity and they respond with total frankness. The result is a very intimate and warm film, not without some difficult questions, surprising answers, intense emotions and humor, just like life itself.

25



A Little Bit of Paradise

DIR.: **ANDRZEJ CICHOCKI** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 19' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION, UNLIMITED FILM OPERATIONS, LIMES AVENUE PRODUKCJA FILMOWA • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

A documentary story from the border between realism and fairy tales, *A Little Bit of Paradise* is a film about a Silesian family. In an out-of-the-way corner of a metropolis, they reveal their world to the watcher and share moments from their lives which are inextricably bound up with the nature around them.



An Ordinary Country

DIR.: **TOMASZ WOLSKI** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 53' • PROD.: KIJORA FILM, TVP • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

A found footage creative documentary based on film and videotapes recorded by the officers of the Polish communist security services in the 1960s through the 1980s. They were everywhere, even though they tried to be invisible. Filming from hiding in restaurants, on the street, in shops. They registered the illegal bottling of regulated fuel, lovers meeting in hotels. They filmed interviews during which, by means of blackmail, they tried to break a detainee to persuade them to cooperate.



Bitter Love

DIR.: **JERZY ŚLADKOWSKI** • 2020 • POLAND, SWEDEN, FINLAND • DOCUMENTARY • 86' • PROD.: GINESTRA FILM, RAGUSA FILM, MADE • CONTACT: MAËLLE GUENEGUES (CAT&DOCS), MAËLLE@CATNDOCS.COM

A cruise along the Volga river may be an opportunity to heal one's broken heart, experience a romance or repair a failing relationship. A group of Russian men and women, primarily of an advanced age, are taking a rest from daily hardships, enjoying the attractions of the trip and flirting profusely. The film presents a gallery of common and uncommon characters, often with painful experiences, who never cease to hope. With tenderness, the camera captures their big and small dramas rooting for their efforts to find true love.



Butterfly's Dream

DIR.: **JAROSŁAW SZMIDT** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 91' • PROD.: CINEO STUDIO, TVP • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

7-year-old Zuzia, her parents and her sister seem to be a normal, happy family. Yet, from the moment she was born, Zuzia has suffered from one of the most diabolical, rare genetic diseases known to man – EB. After years of constant struggle, news of an innovative therapy developed by Prof. Tolar in the USA reaches the parents. This is a huge breakthrough, bringing real hope for salvation and a new life – a life without pain.



Everyday Grayness

DIR.: **CLARA KLEININGER** • POLAND, UK • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 33' • PROD.: BIG TREE COLLECTIVE, TRYTON PRODUCTION • CONTACT: CLARA KLEININGER, CLARA.KLEININGER@OUTLOOK.COM

Magda is 26 and has just left the closed rehabilitation center where she has spent the last year overcoming her addiction to drugs and alcohol. She is not quite ready to leave this magical, closed off space and her peers, so she makes up a workshop to go back and teach them analogue photography. Harsh reality and imagination mix in a space exempt from the rules of daily life.



Fortunata

DIR.: **PAWEŁ BANASIAK** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 80' • PROD.: PAWEŁ BANASIAK, TVP • CONTACT: PAWEŁ BANASIAK, PAWEŁ.BANASIAK@GAZETA.PL

An extraordinary life story of a Polish model and a celebrity who made a dazzling career in Italy in the early 2000s. The high-octane lifestyle has its price – addictive euphoria turns into depression. And when after many years she seems to have found her peace thanks to faith, the story takes an unexpected turn...



Dad You've Never Had

DIR.: **DOMINIKA ŁAPKA** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 30' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION, STUDIO OBRAZU, GDYŃSKIE CENTRUM KULTURY, FURIA FILM • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

A subtly and sensitively told story of a daughter's complicated relationship with her father. She sets off on a journey to see the man who abandoned her in the past. Her father lets her into his flat and tries to answer her questions. This is a film about a daughter's profound longing for her father and the acceptance of the fact that it is a longing which will never be sated.



Five Days of Fear

DIR.: **BARTŁOMIEJ ŻMUDA** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 12' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

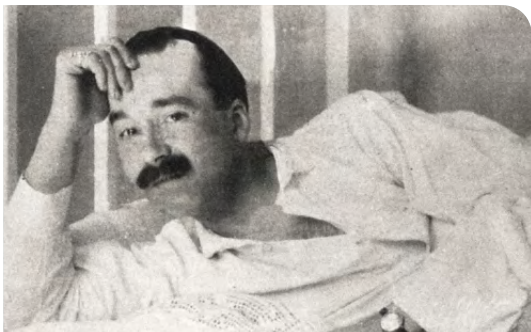
The central characters of the film are randomly selected residents of a capital city in a country that lies at the heart of Europe. Do they fear the same thing as you do? Look them in the eye. Listen.



Going for Gold

DIR.: **KSAWERY SZCZEPANIK** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 61' • PROD.: DAREK DIKTI BIURO POMYSŁÓW • CONTACT: DAREK DIKTI, DAREK@DIKTI.PL

A film about Władysław Kozakiewicz, the great pole-vaulter, gold medalist at the Moscow Olympics in 1980. He has come down in history for famously making an obscene arm gesture that became a symbol of opposition to the communist regime for millions of Polish people. We follow the story of an ordinary boy from the countryside who, despite a tough childhood, climbed the athletic ladder all the way to the top.



Guczo. Notes on Life

DIR.: **MARIA ZMARZ-KOCZANOWICZ** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 76' •
 PROD.: WFDIF – DOCUMENTARY AND FEATURE FILM STUDIOS • CONTACT:
 WFDIF@WFDIF.COM.PL

Full of archival delights, the film is a story of an aristocrat condemned by his family who lived in tumultuous times and was a man of many faces and talents. Who really was August Zamoyski? Was this admirer of female beauty, who enjoyed his life to the fullest, a sportsman, sculptor or a citizen of the world? Using unique materials, the film presents his life and work combined with the contemporary story documenting the return of Zamoyski's works to Poland.



Last Knights of the Right Side

DIR.: **MICHAŁ EDELMAN** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 67' • PROD.: POLISH
 NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES
 & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

Although they look almost identical in black balaclavas, they have arrived at their extremely right-wing views along very different paths. For six months Michał Edelman documented the activity of the National-Radical Camp brigade, ranging from propaganda events including an obligatory barbecue through attempts to disrupt the Gay Parade to the culmination of the Independence Day in 2019 when they marched along the streets of Warsaw.



Midwife

DIR.: **MARIA STACHURSKA** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 54' • PROD.: SQUARE
 FILM STUDIO • CONTACT: VICTORIA OGNEVA, VICTORIAOGNEVA@GMAIL.COM

The protagonist of the film is Stanisława Leszczyńska, a heroine of the wartime occupation who had worked as a midwife before the war and later helped Jews from the Łódź ghetto. She was captured by the Gestapo and sent to Auschwitz, where her mission began. She helped women to deliver their babies in the most sinister place on Earth.



I Need Your Handshakes

DIR.: **ANDREI KUTSILA** • POLAND, BELARUS • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 19' •
 PROD.: BELSAT TV, TVP • CONTACT: ANDREI KUTSILA, A.KUTSILA@GMAIL.COM

A small hamlet lost in the endless Belarusian provinces. Walentyna, who is 92 years old, lives in a little cottage off the beaten track where she takes care of her daughter who was born paralyzed. A frightfully beautiful film about limitless sacrifice, great power of imagination and poetry which can replace reality.



Let's Try to Jump into the Well

DIR.: **PIOTR STASIK** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 43' • PROD.: KIJORA FILM •
 CONTACT: ANNA GAWLITA, KIJORA@GMAIL.COM

The best plays cannot be directed. We witness Krystian Lupa's struggle in rehearsals for Kafka's *The Trial* in a film that reveals his intimacy and demand for complete trust. Lupa urges actors and viewers to leap with him, to hit the bottom or dive into the depths, to embrace a fear of failure, with a hope for the miracle of the Theater.



Once Upon a Time in Poland

DIR.: **VÍT KLUSÁK, FILIP REMUNDA** • CZECH REPUBLIC, POLAND, SLOVAKIA •
 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 98' • PROD.: VERNES S.R.O, PLESNAR & KRAUSS FILMS,
 HYPERMARKET FILM, ČESKÁ TELEVIZE, KRAKOW FESTIVAL OFFICE • CONTACT:
 ALŽBĚTA ŠERCLOVÁ, ALZBETA@VERNES.CZ

In the heart of Europe, two nations exist side by side, similar to each another in many ways and yet worlds apart. Czechs are dedicated atheists, while Poles are being baptized as soon as they are born. Czechs shake their heads in disbelief at Polish piety, while Poles hold Czechs in contempt for living without God. A Czech documentary crew sets out on a pilgrimage across Poland in order to investigate specific situations regarding linked to Polish religiousness.



Papa

DIR.: **MARYIA YAKIMOVICH** • 2020 • ANIMATED DOCUMENTARY • 29' • PROD.: ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN KRAKÓW, ANIMATION FILM STUDIO • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

The film is shaped as the diary of the author's memories, retelling the problematic relationship between a father and his daughter caused by his mental illness, and the troubles stemming from this condition during the author's development. The need for the author to free herself from the influence of the past and to break the shell of silence around this painful situation brings her back to Belarus, to shoot interviews with various family members and also collect their memories and points of view.



Pollywood

DIR.: **PAWEŁ FERDEK** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 85' • PROD.: EAST BEAST, HBO EUROPE • CONTACT: MAŁGORZATA KOZIOL (EAST BEAST), MALGOSIA.KOZIOLL@GMAIL.COM

It is no secret that Hollywood was created by Polish Jews. A contemporary director from Poland follows in their footsteps, trying to pursue his own American Dream. It is a self-referential road movie in which we visit the shtetls of the past and the Hollywood boulevards of today. It is also a documentary comedy in which supporting roles are played by the famous (like Steven Spielberg) and the notorious (Harvey Weinstein). The documentary focuses on the pursuit of dreams, which has always driven the film industry.



Scandal

DIR.: **BARTOSZ PADUCH** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 70' • PROD.: RABAN FOUNDATION, TVP • CONTACT: MACIEK OSTATEK, MOSTATEK@FUNDACJARABAN.PL

Scandal is a trip back in time to the grey concrete blocks of Warsaw's Ursynów district in the mid-1990s. A group of friends fascinated by MTV and American rap established Mistic Molesta as an expression of their rebellion against the grim reality surrounding them. They didn't know that their music would change the Polish hip-hop scene forever. Their first album – *Scandal* – immediately became a hit. Everyone listened to Molesta and they became the voice of their generation.



Pilgrims of Divine Mercy

DIR.: **PRZEMYSŁAW JAN CHROBAK** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 83' • PROD.: PRZEMYSŁAW JAN CHROBAK • CONTACT: PRZEMYSŁAW JAN CHROBAK, CHROBAK.PRZEMEK@GMAIL.COM

In this road movie four repeat offenders, who converted in prison, set off on foot to the Vatican, drawing a special trolley with a gift for the pope – a painting of Merciful Jesus. What they have in common, apart from their criminal past, is faith and the hope that their effort will help them to forget about the demons of the past. Heavy physical exertion puts their notions of community and faith to the test. They meet many interesting people on the way, but what is most important is what will happen between them.



Say Yes/No

DIR.: **PAWEŁ HEJBUDZKI** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 87' • PROD.: FOG FILMS • CONTACT: PAWEŁ HEJBUDZKI, PAWEŁ.HEJBUDZKI@GMAIL.COM

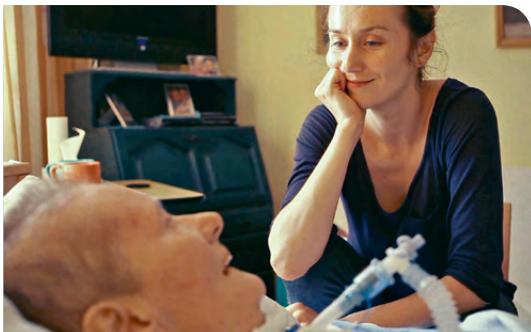
Ewelina and a few years older Grażyna support one another in everyday fight for the slightest sign of communication from their sons. Imprisoned for months, far away from home, husband and whole family, at Budzik, a Warsaw clinic famous for miraculous awakenings of over 50 children in a post traumatic coma.



Scars

DIR.: **AGNIESZKA ZWIEFKA** • GERMANY, POLAND, THE NETHERLANDS • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 79' • PROD.: KLOOS & CO. OST UG, CHILLI PRODCUTIONS, WITFILM • CONTACT: ANJA DZIERSK (RISE AND SHINE WORLD SALES), ANJA.DZIERSK@RISEANDSHINE-BERLIN.DE

During the civil war in Sri Lanka, Vetrichelvi was the propaganda radio voice of the Tamil Tigers. Filmmaker Agnieszka Zwiefka follows her on a road trip to find former comrades and discover what happened to them after war. But then a much darker truth unravels. *Scars* brings us a never before told story of forcibly recruited female fighters and sheds new and controversial light on the unresolved conflict in Sri Lanka.



Tell Me More

DIR.: **MARTYNA PESZKO • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 28' • PROD.: KOSKINO • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL**

Barbara (67) has been suffering from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis for five years and she is bedridden. Once a year, when Barbara's husband goes on vacation, the person responsible for taking care of her is her daughter – Martyna (36). She cooks, feeds, cleans and nurses her mother. Because of the loss of muscle control, Barbara is only able to communicate by moving her eyes. Letter after letter Martyna deciphers words, sentences, and meanings. They both long very much for those conversations, sensing that the end is near.



The Fear

DIR.: **PAWLINA CARLUCCI SFORZA • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 28' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MICHAŁ HUDZIKOWSKI, M.HUDZIKOWSKI@SFP.ORG.PL**

A terrifying story about a time of lawlessness and the fear which still helps to protect the identities of the murderers. Right after World War II people returning from forced labor camps in Germany were killed by their neighbors in large numbers. The propaganda footage from the epoch showing joyful returns from wartime exile is juxtaposed with bloodcurdling accounts of the people who witnessed the atrocities as children.



The Way

DIR.: **WOJTEK KOZAKIEWICZ • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 23' • PROD.: PROJEKTOROWNIA WOJCIECH KOZAKIEWICZ • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL**

The Krakow climbing scene has always been full of personalities from the fringes of science, culture and art. For many, the sport was a window to the world and the invisible force that draws you into it is like a drug. Sometimes, it doesn't seem to make any sense, but without it everything else loses its meaning as well. Work and passion. Sport and art. The contradictions that make up one personality. A black and white journey into the life of a man of many talents.



The Agony

DIR.: **TOMASZ KNITTEL • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 61' • PROD.: UNLIMITED FILM OPERATIONS, TVP • CONTACT: MARIA SINIARSKA, SINIARSKA@UNLIMITEDFILM.PL**

Traditional folk music knows no musical notes. It lives and plays as long as its performers, of whom fewer and fewer remain. We witness this world dissolving through the eyes of vocalist and instrumentalist Adam Strug. This is a cinematic story of an attempt at stopping time, but it is also about the gradual distortion of what once was a multi-farious musical experience and how the authentic is eaten away and simplified by the commercial. It is a road movie, taking its viewers across Poland's regions and numerous musical traditions.



The Wall of Shadows

DIR.: **ELIZA KUBARSKA • POLAND, GERMANY, SWITZERLAND • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 94' • PROD.: BRAIDMADE FILMS, CORSO FILM, TILT PRODUCTION, TVP, ZDF/ARTE • CONTACT: ANJA DZIERSK (RISE AND SHINE INTERANTIONAL SALES), INFO@RISEANDSHINE-BERLIN.DE**

Sherpa family breaks a taboo and takes part in the Himalayan expedition to Kumbhakarna – one of the most holy of mountains, to earn money for their son's school and save him from a dangerous and degrading work as a porter. The east face of the mountain (7710 m) is one of the most difficult challenges in alpinism today. The holy mountain confronts both the climbers and Sherpas with equal harshness.



Tigress of Menopause

DIR.: **HENRYK DEDERKO • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 50' • PROD.: KOLEKTYW FILM • CONTACT: AGATA GOLAŃSKA, AGATA@KOLEKTYWFILM.PL**

This blunt and naturalistic film is at the same time warm and extremely touching. The new picture by Henryk Dederko offers a closer insight into the phenomenon of a musical about menopause in which four eponymous 'tigresses' – with a pinch of salt but without beating around the bush – tell stories and sing about their lives after menopause. The record-breaking musical (more than 2 000 shows in Poland and abroad!) featured several magnificent Polish actresses. For some of them, it was their last appearance on stage.



Tony Halik

DIR.: **MARCIN BORCHARDT** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 90' • PROD.: FURIA FILM
• CONTACT: KAROLINA GALUBA, KAROLINA.GALUBA@FURIAFILM.PL

Evita's Peron private pilot, Richard Nixon's press officer, Queen's Elizabeth guest of honor, the first journalist to interview Fidel Castro. Living in communist Poland, where people have no passports. Meet Tony Halik – the legend and the liar. We could say that Tony Halik was an extraordinary explorer. Or a dreamer, who made all his dreams come true. Or a liar. Or a spy. All of the above are true. The film is an adventure documentary reconstructed from film archives, recorded by Halik during his numerous journeys all around the world.



We Have One Heart

DIR.: **KATARZYNA WARZECHA** • 2020 • ANIMATED DOCUMENTARY
• 11' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION,
SILVER FRAME • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION),
KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

After his mother dies, Adam comes across some letters his parents exchanged years ago. This is an opportunity for him to find out more about the father he never knew. The juxtaposition of animated drawings and archive material takes us back forty years and enables us to uncover an extraordinary family secret.



xABo. Father Boniecki

DIR.: **ALEKSANDRA POTOCZEK** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 73' • PROD.:
FUNDACJA TYGODNIKA POWSZECHNEGO, TVN, KRAKOW FESTIVAL
OFFICE • CONTACT: KATARZYNA WILK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION),
KATARZYNA.WILK@KFF.COM.PL

An intimate portrait of a man on the road. It shows a priest, aged 85, who can always find time for a meaningful conversation and, simultaneously, remains torn between his faith and concern about the condition of the contemporary Church, in particular in Poland.



We Are Not Friends

DIR.: **ALICJA SOKÓŁ** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 17' • PROD.:
WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON,
VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

Two women joined together by their prison sentences, find comfort in each other. They are almost inseparable. Every Friday they broadcast on the prison radio. When one's sentence is coming to an end, their friendship start being questioned. They become fully aware that life behind the bars is governed by its own laws. Is their relationship going to fail, even though for the last few difficult years they could only count on each other.



What If Nothing?

DIR.: **MONIKA KRUPA** • 2020 • DOCUMENTARY • 40' • PROD.: TRZYFILM •
CONTACT: MONIKA KRUPA, MONIKA.KRUPA89@GMAIL.COM

Professor Andrzej Niwiński is a Polish archaeologist who has been looking for the tomb of Pharaoh Amenhotep I in Egypt for over 30 years. Despite the doubts of his co-workers he still does not cease to pursue the goal he has set himself. He is about to make a final attempt in the last place that the tomb can be found. Will he finally manage to find the lost pharaoh?

Krakow Animation Center

In 2019, a new institution appeared on Krakow's film map and launched its film production activities on a grand scale. This was obviously the Krakow Animation Center, which was established to offer opportunities for various projects in the sphere of animation. 'This production studio is open primarily to artistic and original projects, but also provides the means for projects that combine animation with other film genres and selected stages of post-production or functional animation (motion/web design). The main goal of the Animation Center is to create a new space, a place on the animation market for authors, debutants, professionals, and the animated film industry on a national and international scale.' – says Robert Sowa, artistic director of the Animation Center.

HISTORY

Krakow has an extremely rich tradition and output in animation. Established in 1966, the legendary Animated Film Studio was based here, with numerous excellent original films in its portfolio which contributed to the legacy of the Polish School of Animation. The Studio's eventual demise caused a major crisis, preventing the continuation of Krakow's film tradition and further development of its artistic potential. Krakow was also where Poland's first studio for animated film education was established, in 1957 with the creation of the Animation Film Studio at the Academy of Fine Arts (not to be confused with the studio mentioned above). Its tradition, achievements, and a constantly growing interest in animation meant that it seemed natural to establish a new studio to help foster professional activity in this field.



Gonáve by Michał Soja and Róża Duda



ROBERT SOWA



ANETA ZAGÓRSKA



EWA GRZESIAK



WOJCIECH SOB CZYK



PEOPLE

The Animation Center focuses on those people who are the most important link in the creative process. 'Many people working in animation and film production – both those with extensive professionals experience as well as young, debuting creators – have become involved in this new initiative' – adds **Robert Sowa**, animated film director and producer. He is going to share his experience with authors working with the AC. Personally, he works on auteur animated films, painting, and photography, and collaborated on numerous feature and documentary films. He is also a teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow and at the Jagiellonian University's Institute of Audiovisual Arts. He is an expert of the Polish Film Institute and curator of the animation section of the Krakow Film Festival.

The CEO of the Center is **Aneta Zagórska** – a Krakow-based film producer, founder of the Barton Film studio, where, as the lead producer or executive producer, she works on documentary

and feature film projects. She is the president and producer overseeing the Kraków Film Cluster – a film production house in Małopolska founded on her initiative in 2015.

The board of the Animation Center also includes: **Ewa Grzesiak** – animated film director with close ties to the Animation Film Studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, **Wojciech Sobczyk** – animated film director, author of exhibition projects combining animation, graphics, and photography, producer and organiser of animated film events, long-time educator, doctor of arts, teacher at the Animation Film Studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, as well as **Żaneta Kominiak** – an experienced film production manager.

The Center works with many talented creators and animators who already have experience in both artistic and commercial animation projects, with connecting experienced animators and beginners being one of its goals.

PROJECTS

From the very beginning, the Animation Center has assumed the role of a moderator of animated productions made in Krakow. It has taken up various projects that were waiting for a suitable place to be created. The team is currently working on several concurrent projects.

One of them is *Gonâve*, an animation directed by Michał Soja and Róża Duda. It is an animated story inspired by the life of Faustin Wirkus, incl. his book *The White King of la Gonâve*. The events take place in the 1920s on Gonâve, a small Haitian island in the Caribbean Sea, where a colonial invasion is underway. The island is administered by Marine Sergeant Faustin Wirkus, son of Polish immigrants and friend of the island's queen – Ti Memenne. He is trying to make the plight of Gonâve's residents more widely known. Some festivals have already expressed their interest in the project, it has been presented at the Animated in Poland pitching session and received funding from the Polish Film Institute and the Krakow Regional Film Fund.

Betina Bożek's latest film *Dessert Dachshund*, funded in part by the Polish Film Institute, is also in production. It is an original and surreal story about a Dachshund which, while trapped in a wedding cake, foretells the young couple's wellbeing. The film maintains a light and humorous tone as it addresses the universal and significant contemporary problem of superficiality and ritualism in life's most important moments and decisions. It is based on a text by Weronika Stancel.

Betina Bożek is also responsible for the animation and screenplay for *There Was a Shoemaker*, which she is directing with Igor Kawecki. Directed by Wojciech Sobczyk, the film *Autumn* has also received initial funding from the Polish Film Institute. The project continues the director's previous work, which promises a film with high artistic value.



1970 by Tomasz Wolski

The Animation Center engages in projects implemented together with other producers as well as those that combine animation with other film genres. The animated documentary *1970*, directed by Tomasz Wolski and produced by Kijora Film, is in production. This unique project will premiere in December on Telewizja Polska. In the film, we will see previously unreleased archival footage of various events from the Polish People's Republic and stop-motion animation shot on a model built expressly for this purpose. The production team includes talented creators tasked with making the 1:6 model for animated scenes and designing dolls of characters appearing in the film. The model is going to show bureaus of communist party officials, with the dolls 'playing' its members. Another animation currently in the works is the EGoFILM-produced *Bezsenność Jutki* (*Jutka's Insomnia*), directed by Maria Görlich-Opyd and based on a script by Tessa Moulton-Milewska. The Center is also the executive producer of Katarzyna Kurop's directorial debut *Myodesopsia*, made as part of the Young Animation program run by the Munk Studio. The animation is made entirely in Krakow at the Animation Center's main office.

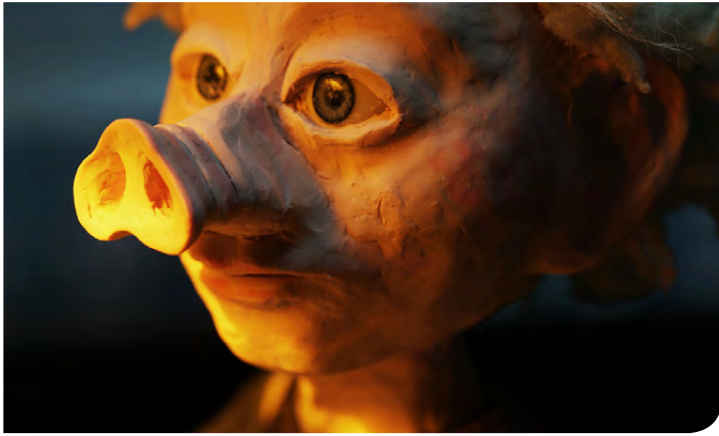
THE FUTURE

The representatives of the Animation Center assure us that – despite the numerous projects in the pipeline – there are still new opportunities and ample room to act. The Center is open to new and original film ideas, to cooperation with young artists as well as professionals looking for opportunities to create their projects. In addition to original and artistic films, the Animation Center also produces opening credits, ads, and motion designs – and does not limit itself solely to Polish projects. This presence on the international market facilitates cooperation with foreign co-productions. Plans are also being made in the area of education aimed at people looking for animation workshops and training. The Animation Center also collaborates with other studios in creating a new, comprehensive offer for the entire city of Krakow, and its partners include, among others, the Krakow Film Cluster production house and the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Art. The Animation Center's long-term goal is to create a strong, Krakow-based production centre in the animation sphere. ■

Dessert Dachshund by Betina Bożek



FOCUS ON POLAND TALKS: ANIMATION



Your Own Bullshit

DIR.: **DARIA KOPIEC** • 2020 • 6'

After its May premiere at the 60th Krakow Film Festival, where it received the Silver Hobby-Horse for best Polish animation, the latest film by Daria Kopiec is beginning its international festival run. It has just been screened at the Warsaw Film Festival, and in November the audience attending the Cork International Film Festival in Ireland is going to get the same opportunity. In her film, the director combines different styles, utilizes various techniques of animation, and creates a somewhat ironic film about the world of dos, don'ts, and stereotypes that accompany us every day.



I Am Here

DIR.: **JUKIA ORLIK** • 2020 • 15'

Julia Orlik's moving animation talks about what each of us will eventually experience or is already going through. Taking care of a dying person often requires their loved ones to change their lifestyle and organize everything around them as best as possible. Often forgetting the feelings of that closest person. The director gives voice to a bedridden elderly woman, whose almost motionless face is the center of the frame. The film has already been screened at numerous festivals, winning – among others – the Audience Award at the Animator Festival in Poznań, Poland and Golden Dove at DOK Leipzig in Germany. In the coming months, it will be featured at Uppsala International Short Film Festival in Sweden, the Bucheon International Animation Festival in Korea, PÖFF Shorts in Estonia, and other festivals.



My Fat Arse and I

DIR.: **YELYZAVETA PYSMAK** • 2020 • 9'

Yelyzaveta Pysmak's film had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival where it was awarded with Second Prize at Cinefondation. Since then, this humorous story about accepting one's own body has been shown at festivals all over the world, including the Drama Short Film Festival in Greece, the Central and Eastern European Film Festival CinEast in Luxembourg, or the International Animated Film Festival Animateka in Slovenia. The film's popularity is no surprise. Interesting visuals, numerous references to pop culture, and an excellent soundtrack that complements the atmosphere of the story all create a film that talks accurately about stereotypes in the modern world, and simultaneously proves that it is not worth giving in to them.



LET'S PITCH ONLINE

MARTA ŚWIĘTEK

Slow Light by Katarzyna Kijek and Przemysław Adamski

35



A SUMMARY OF THE **ANIMATED IN POLAND** PITCHING

The eighth edition of the Animated in Poland pitching, which took place during the 60th Krakow Film Festival, was vastly different from previous editions. Although the basic assumption – the presentation of Polish animations at the final stage of production, the time, and place of the event remained unchanged – its form changed entirely. Due to pandemic restrictions, both the pitching itself and the training session preceding it, as well as individual meetings with invited decision-makers, were held online.

The virtual form of the event was well received by the creators and producers of animated films, who submitted as many as twelve projects to Animated in Poland this year. Six of them were invited to participate in the pitching, among which there were both student and professional productions, representing very different animation techniques – from traditional drawing, through cut-outs and 3D animation, to stop motion.

All participants took part in individual project consultations led by Wim Vanacker – a member of the Cannes IFF's short film competition selection committee, former long-time head of the Script Department at NISI MASA and European Short Pitch. The project presentations were watched live by several dozen representatives of the film industry – festival selectors, distributors, and commissioning editors from TV stations. It was a chance for them to find interesting productions before they even enter the festival circuit. Each of the invited creators had 10 minutes to talk about their film and interest the audience in it. After the pitching, the participants were able to get feedback from the invited experts during individual meetings.

Human nature, emotions, and identity, as well as interpersonal relations constitute the main topics of the projects presented as part of Animated in Poland. Interestingly, in this context, the heroes of two of them were sea creatures. Piotr Chmielewski's film *Crab*, produced by the Łódź studio WJTeam, specialising in stop-motion puppet animation, makes the viewer look at the world through the eyes of a crab trapped in a restaurant aquarium, watching the cook at work and waiting its turn.

Momo and Lulu, a story about a constantly moving jellyfish that falls in love with a motionless anemone attached to the seabed, shows the great transformative power of love. *Momo and Lulu* is produced by LeLe Crossmedia Production and directed by Anita Kwiatkowska-Naqvi, whose previous films, such as *Ab Ovo* or *Locus*, had enjoyed numerous festival screenings and awards. The search for identity turned out to be the common denominator of student animated films. After losing a tooth, the protagonist of *Toothless*, a project made by Andrea Guizar, a student of the Lodz Film School from Mexico, becomes a patient of the surreal Electrodent clinic, whose interference goes much deeper than one might expect. In her film *The Place*, Sylwia Zawila, a student of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, observes the process of growing up, making one's own independent decisions, and gradually loosening parental ties.

Also from the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow are Róża Duda and Michał Soja, the creators of the Krakow Film



Crab by Piotr Chmielewski



Gonâve by Michał Soja and Róża Duda

Momo and Lulu by Anita Kwiatkowska-Naqvi

Cluster-produced film *Gonâve*, which at this year's Animated in Poland won an award sponsored by Sound Mind Studio – ran by the recognised sound director Michał Fojcik. The winning project is a vivid depiction of the story of Faustin Wirkus – a naval officer of Polish descent – who, as a colonial administrator of the Caribbean island of Gonâve, befriends its inhabitants only to be elected king soon after.

This year, the special prize of the Audiovisual Technology Center in Wrocław was awarded to the project *Slow Light*, created using an original, relief-based animation technique, a portrait of a man whose eyes let the light in so slowly that he sees the surrounding reality only after seven years, which results in his immaturity and difficult relations with his environment. Both the directing duo Katarzyna Kijek and Przemysław Adamski, and Animoon, the producer of the film, had enjoyed numerous successes earlier with titles such as *Debut*, *Noise, III*, or *Acid Rain*.

The Animated in Poland pitching, organised since 2013 as part of KFF Industry at the Krakow Film Festival, is a place where the festival career of Polish animated films begins. This was the case with films like Jola Bańkowska's *Story* and Mateusz Jar-mulski's *The Hunt* presented in previous years. The high quality of the projects invited into this year's edition suggests that they are also soon going to hit the festival circuit. ■





I'm Here Jestem tutaj

DIR.: JULIA ORLIK • ANIMATION • POLAND • 2020 • 15'

The main character would like to whisper the titular 'I am here' so that her loved ones would finally notice her feelings. All they see is her physical presence – a sick, bedridden elderly woman unable to utter a single word. She used to be their wife, mother, grandmother – today she has become a breathing part of the room that has to be looked after.

The woman is noticed by Julia Orlik, who makes her the focal point of the animation – both visually and in terms of the plot. The director made a risky move, using only one frame cantered on the motionless, lying heroine. Even her facial expressions do not change much during the several minutes of the film. And yet looking at the tired face of the protagonist, at the resignation in her gaze, the viewer begins to understand her helplessness and sense of uselessness. There is something piercing and touching about it that makes it hard to take your eyes off the screen.

Other characters also appear in the background – the husband, the daughter, the priest, the grandchildren. The daughter and the father constantly exchange comments on how to look after the mother, try coming up with new solutions. Everyday dilemmas and doubts emerge. How to reconcile working life and the mother's illness? Should she be put in a nursing home? How to relieve her suffering and at the same time take care of oneself?

The director does not criticise their attitudes. On the contrary – she shows the normality of these behaviours and conversations. The sentences uttered by the characters are those that each one of us has heard more than once in their families in the face of a loved one's imminent death. It is realism that is this animation's greatest strength. There are no metaphors here, there's no looking away – there is only a static camera looking at death and a record of conversations held over a dying person's bed. Its minimalism puts the viewer in the middle of the extremely intimate moment, that is death. ■ DAGMARA MARCINEK



Plantarium

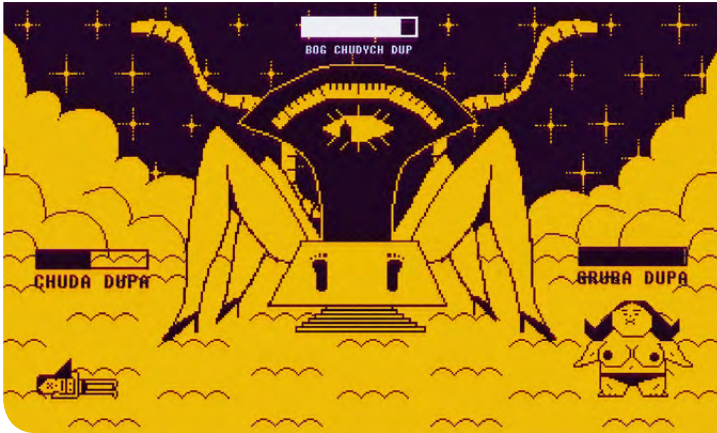
DIR.: TOMEK DUCKI • ANIMATION • POLAND • 2020 • 7'

Plantarium is an underground, magic garden carved in rock, managed by a lonely man. The gardener cares for his plants. He cuts, waters, and nurtures them. One day, in one of the pots... a little boy starts to sprout. This seemingly harmless child, however, has long and sharp nails. A relationship develops between both characters, at times reminiscent of innocent games and, at others, a fight to the death.

Plantarium is the new animated film by Tomasz Ducki, who has already participated in several dozen festivals and won over twenty awards for the film *Baths*. Although the new title differs in terms of technique and subject matter, these two animations are linked by hiding their true meaning under the surface – shown both literally (everything that is important happens under water or underground), and at the level of interpretation. What brings these two together is also the visual side – the use of fluorescent colours. In *Plantarium* there are actually two colours – green and purple, which sparkle with many shades. The rest of the cave is shrouded in darkness, illuminated by thin rays of sunlight. The viewer is fascinated by the bizarre shapes of the characters, made of rocks and roots, and the wrinkled texture of their 'skin'. It all creates an aura of mystery and unpredictability of the world Ducki invites us to.

Also fascinating are the anthropomorphic heroes made of plants, whose history reflects the natural circle of life. The relationship between the man and the child may resemble the hardships of upbringing, the tensions, and moments of affection between father and son, but it might also be a story about gaining power or the struggle between the 'new' and 'old'. Sacrifice for others? Growing up? Ducki makes sure that his animations do not have to be read in a one-dimensional way.

Fluorescent colours illuminating the dark cave, rough surfaces of materials, and skilful play with light create a visually extraordinary story, and the unexplained relationship between the characters ensures viewers' emotional involvement. ■ DAGMARA MARCINEK



My Fat Arse and I Ja i moja gruba dupa

DIR.: **YELYZAVETA PYSMAK** • ANIMATION • POLAND • 2020 • 9'

A woman's terrible shriek shatters the silence in an apartment building. What happened? A button does not want to fasten, the scale shows extra kilos, and the reflection in the mirror leaves much to be desired. The heroine, therefore, goes on a draconian diet, which soon allows her to enter the Kingdom of Slimbuttlania. There, however, she must face the God of Skinny Butts. Will she emerge victorious?

Slimbuttlania is a surreal world created by the director, resembling heaven and seemingly a land of eternal happiness. The bodies of all its inhabitants end at their buttocks. It is there that the eyes are located, with small wings growing out from behind. Sounds absurd? Yelyzaveta Pysmak's animation is just that. It lets her discuss problems with accepting one's own body or diseases tied to eating disorders with humour and perspective. Hundreds of identical characters show the problem of standardisation, also in the area of notions of beauty. It is an overexaggerated image of reality, in which a socially imposed canon of beauty kills individuality, and the desire to reach the ideal leads to the obliteration of one's personality.

The film features numerous references to popular culture for viewers to find. Its overall design itself resembles arcade games: fonts, backgrounds, and sounds reminiscent of arcade machines have been used. One scene is a fight that follows the conventions of fighting video games, such as *Mortal Kombat* or the Japanese *Tekken*. There are more references to Japanese culture here: there's also a sumo woman, as well as a transformation into a superheroine, which is a direct reference to *Sailor Moon*. As a matter of fact, the film is closest to the Japanese 'magical girl' genre – an ordinary teenager has miraculous powers that allow her to defeat evil.

In Yelyzaveta Pysmak's animation, a great scale that decides about life and death is the personification of evil, with the kingdom's inhabitants paying it tribute. Their fear is compounded by the soundtrack – Edvard Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King* builds tension and creates an atmosphere of horror. *My Fat Arse And I* is an abstract animated film saying that cellulite can actually grow on you. ■ **DAGMARA MARCINEK**



backstage_episodes

DIR.: **MARCIN WOJCIECHOWSKI** • ANIMATION • POLAND • 2020 • 11'

What happens backstage at concert venues? What is an artist to do when they lack inspiration? How to create when 'scattered sounds fly about the room and words fail to take any shape'? Marcin Wojciechowski's animation is not only a story inspired by the life of Ian Curtis, the singer of Joy Division, but above all a universal story about a man who cannot cope with reality. When the stage lights go out and the applause fades, the artist is left alone. The protagonist's loneliness, his alienation and feeling of being lost can be felt from the very first scene, in which he wanders through the corridors of a building, resembling an endless maze. The camera showing the world from the hero's perspective and non-linear space draw the viewer into the very centre of the artist's psyche. Somewhere along the way, a two-legged chair appears, and the camera begins to frame events nervously and chaotically, which intensifies the feeling of complexity.

backstage_episodes are drawn with black lines on white pages. The individual drawings may seem unfinished at times, and the lines are drawn very quickly, as if Wojciechowski wanted to draw attention to the protagonist's problems with the very technique of animation. The frames resemble successive sketches of songs created by the hero, which will end up in a garbage can instead of on stage. In turn, the editing, which gives the impression of a pulsating animation and image flickering, aims to signify epilepsy or nervous breakdowns which the artist was suffering from.

Two intertwining narratives emerge from the screen. The first aims to be a record of what is presented to the viewer. However, it often does not coincide with what we actually see, sometimes it skips ahead of reality, while at others it tries to retell it to the viewer. The second is the artist's own stream of consciousness, consisting of broken and repeated sentences. Together, it all forms a psychedelic animation about creative burnout and the intricacies of human mind, which will remain with the audience for a long time. ■ **DAGMARA MARCINEK**



Your Own Bullshit Własne śmieci

DIR.: DARIA KOPIEC • ANIMATION • POLAND • 2020 • 6'

The father commands to find a good job and get married, and the mother only wants her son to be happy. This is what a traditional family dinner looks like, where an adult son has to listen to his father's repeated critical remarks and his mother's concerns. It is hard to say whether *Your Own Bullshit* is closer to a musical and cabaret or a holy mass. On the one hand, animation is all about kitsch, music, and absurdity, on the other, there are the church songs, religious rituals, and calls to Christ. The combination of these styles brought a new quality to a well-known topic – living in the shadow of social expectations. The film has also adopted a classic division into acts: two dishes and a dessert, topped with religious sauce, seasoned with choral singing, and served on grotesque tableware. The music in the animation has become more than just a soundtrack – a metaphor: the parents' constant remarks repeated over and over, come back like song choruses. It is also filled with visual metaphors: the cassette tape flowing from the mother's breast is looped and plays the same phrases all the time, but at the same time it also constitutes a pre-recorded plan for the son's future. All it takes is to play it.

The son is not the only figure representing the generation of young people living according to rules imposed on them. His girlfriend also makes an appearance, silently repeating all the rules that a woman should follow. They are both trapped in a world of prohibitions, orders, and stereotypes. Daria Kopiec effortlessly combines iconic cultural images: *The Birth of Venus* is intertwined with a cancan almost straight from Moulin Rouge, and the titles of cult songs are juxtaposed with sentences from internet memes. She also freely combines various techniques of stop motion animation: claymation with a multiplane, making the film become a collage of meanings and symbols.

There is a lot of humour and irony in *Your Own Bullshit*, which allows this bitter and difficult topic to be viewed with a certain self-detachment, but also reflected upon. Combining various styles of animation, film genres, and cultural references, the animation is not only a caricature of a family dinner, but also a satire on life in which we are constantly acting under the pressure of others.

■ DAGMARA MARCINEK



Kill It and Leave This Town Zabij to i wyjedź z tego miasta

DIR.: MARIUSZ WILCZYŃSKI • ANIMATION • POLAND • 2020 • 88'

Mariusz Wilczyński's animation took 14 years to make. Over this period, the film kept developing, changing, maturing. The script evolved, gained new characters. In result, we have received a unique work – with a complex plot, abstract, and discussing the simplest of values. It is a film with a universal message, although a very personal one, allowing the director to settle with his negligence towards his parents.

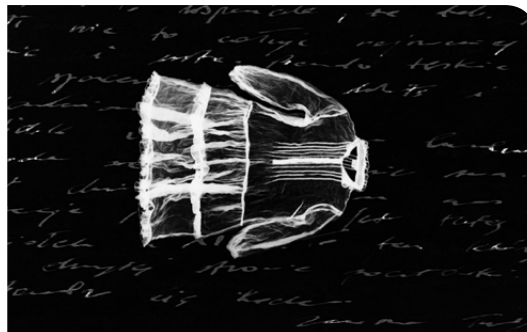
Jadwiga's husband goes on a seaside vacation with their son. The woman only asks for the son not to play alone in the water and to call her as soon as they arrive. However, the phone never rings. She doesn't get anxious just yet. Instead, the protagonist decides to take care of everyday matters and meets some rather colourful residents of Łódź along the way. At the same time, Mariusz is in hospital with his dying mother, his mind flooding with memories... This is how the plot of the film can be summarised, although the viewer quickly realises that arranging the events into a chronological order is not the most important thing here. The unfolding events are just a pretext to tell a story about loss and the irreversible passage of time. The film is a series of digressions, anecdotes, dialogues and plot threads taken out of context, where reality keeps getting mixed with dreams. Time is nothing but a convention, and the different worlds intertwine. In Wilczyński's surreal film, people talk to animals, protagonists shrink and grow, and the characters switch roles. His inspirations include *The Master and Margarita*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and the grey streets of Łódź. The city, as presented in the animation, is full of sadness, melancholy, and ugliness: the trams, housing projects, chimneys. Only the Polish flag, the bows in the hair of Mariusz's mother, and blood are red here, further intensifying the film's turpist visuals. Sometimes, the greyness of individual frames is illuminated by neon lights – a symbol of Poland in the communist era. Its aesthetics hark back to the history of Polish animated film, and the voices we hear belong to Poland's most notable artists and celebrities, including Krystyna Janda, Andrzej Wajda, or Anja Rubik. It is they who create a colourful panorama of society, revealing the everyday problems of ordinary people. Somewhere among them, the director himself recounts his own trauma, thus creating a mature autobiographical work. ■ DAGMARA MARCINEK

POLISH ANIMATIONS

CATALOGUE OF FILMS

2020

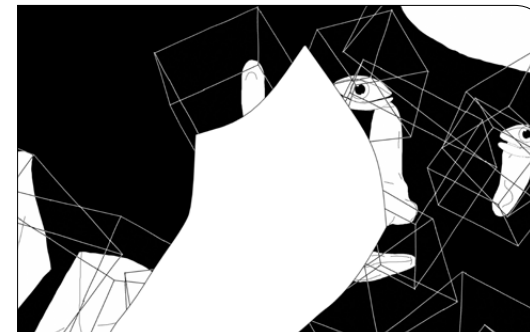
CATALOGUE



Ashes

DIR.: **JOANNA DUDEK** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 8' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

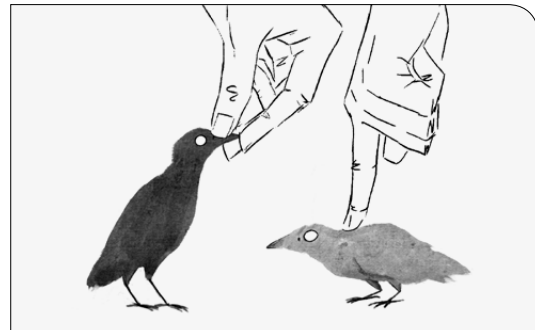
Letters from her husband arouse in Danuta the feelings she once had for the love of her life. She revisits old places and relives her youth.



Co-Ognition

DIR.: **PRZEMYSŁAW ŚWIDA** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 6' • PROD.: PARIS+HENDZEL CO, EGOFILM • CONTACT: ŁUKASZ HENDZEL, PRODUKCJA@PARISHENDZELSTUDIO.COM

The protagonist goes for a crazy run within his own consciousness, trying to recognize consecutive versions of himself. What will happen when his egos finally meet? In an abstract way, this animation shows the process of personality development by employing the visual play with a black line and the free merging of consecutive images.



And Something Else

DIR.: **OLGA KŁYSZEWICZ** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 7' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

Two birds are placed by strange hands in a completely new environment for them. A relationship between the animals is inevitable and the hands play a significant role in it.



backstage_episodes

DIR.: **MARCIN WOJCIECHOWSKI** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 11'30" • PROD.: ANIMA ART. FOUNDATION • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

backstage_episodes is a picture of the musician/poet/artist's struggle with the creative process. Short episodes happening off the stage in confinement, seclusion, away from the glare of the stage lights. Seemingly trivial, insignificant events that the artist has to face when trying to realize his creative intentions. It is an attempt to construct a portrait/sketch of the psychological unit using the form of a 1980s alternative music icon – Ian Curtis from Joy Division.



Cycle

DIR.: **JULIA BENEDYKTOWICZ** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 6' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

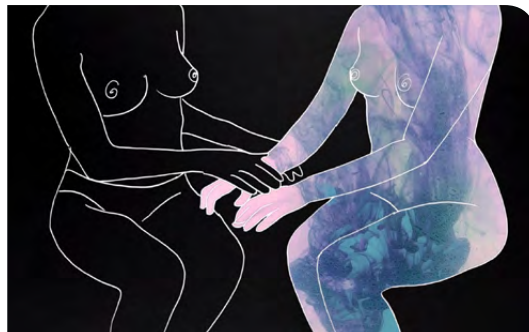
The main heroine lives trapped in the rhythm of the city. She is haunted by the recurring urban noise which prevents her from functioning in her regular routine. She breaks the cycle from her overwhelming nightmares to follow the moon and to experience a different world.



I'm Here

DIR.: **JULIA ORLIK** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 15' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

An elderly man is looking after his paralyzed wife. Despite his old age and health problems, he does his best to relieve her suffering, which is getting worse day by day. His daughter helps him, trying to balance care for her mother with her work in the hospital and family life. Everyone has a different view on how to properly care for the sick, which often causes arguments.



Lushfulness

DIR.: **WERONIKA SZYMA** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 6' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

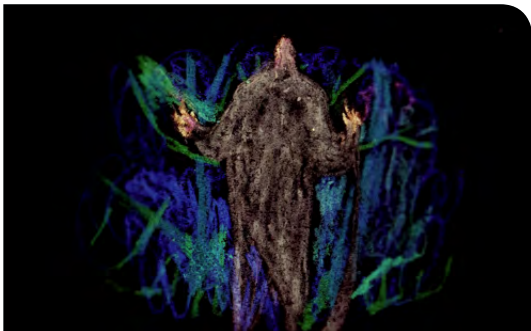
When a girl meets her mirror reflection, her fears and insecurities about her body turn into an unexpectedly passionate and free self-exploration. Her fantasies come to life but there is also a darker side to this game. Is it possible to become united with your own self?



Mr. Practical

DIR.: **MICHAŁ PONIEDZIELSKI, DOMINIK LITWINIAK** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 10' • PROD.: RUNNING RABBIT FILMS • CONTACT: SYDNEY NETER (SND FILMS), SYDNEY@SNDFILMS.COM

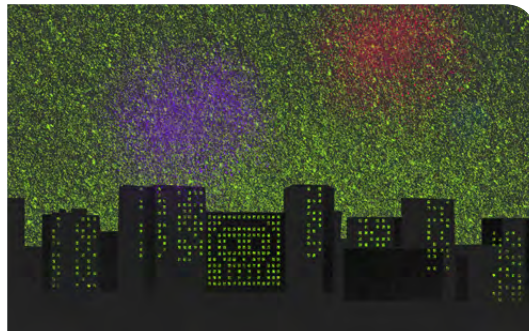
While going through his daily routine, Mr. Practical is suddenly reminded that being around a living creature would increase the joy of everyday life.



I See the Abyss

DIR.: **KAROLINA KAJETANOWICZ** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 5' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

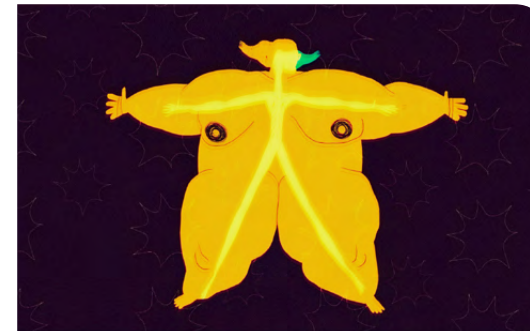
Inspired by the work of the Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian, this visual poem is about being alive and wanting the opposite. A man walks his dog in a dark forest. Thoughts and sensations are swirling in their heads, but they are unable to communicate them. They walk together yet apart.



Millenium

DIR.: **DARIA GODYŃ** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 8' • PROD.: ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN KRAKÓW, ANIMATION FILM STUDIO • CONTACT: ANIMATIONSTUDIO@ASP.KRAKOW.PL

For centuries, man has been accompanied by an anxiety about the new Millennium. It's New Year's Eve 1999 – 'the end of the world' is approaching. Catastrophe, uncertainty and a thickening atmosphere of millennium paranoia are the subjects of the animation. The film refers to the convention of criminal noir cinema.



My Fat Arse and I

DIR.: **YELYZAVETA PYSMAC** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 10' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

One morning a girl tries on a pair of new pants, yet they don't quite fit her. More precisely, they are impossible to zip up. The girl is bewildered. In the mirror she sees herself as the fattest piglet the world has ever seen. She decides to go on a strict diet as quickly as possible. The plan goes quite well, draining all of the fat away, but with that goes all the joy of life. At the moment of her last seduction by the fridge, the Angel of United Bitches of Slimbuttlania comes to her with a royal invitation to visit the Kingdom and to participate in a royal ceremony.



Now Listen

DIR.: **KIJEK/ADAMSKI • 2020 • ANIMATION • 4' • PROD.: PELICAN CAPTURE • CO-PROD.: ANIMOON • CONTACT: KASIA PANAS, PANAS@ANIMOON.PL**

An attempt at intergender dialogue turns into a symbolic occurrence. A woman goes into space and returns to Earth to bond with a man on a pedestal.



Plantarium

DIR.: **TOMEK DUCKI • 2020 • ANIMATION • 7' • PROD.: EGOFILM • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL**

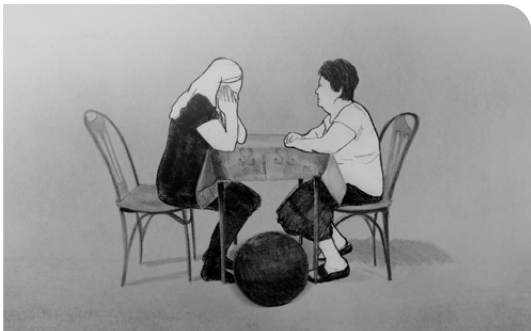
There is an unusual garden in a dark cave cultivated by a lonely man. One day, while he is pruning the plants, he finds a little boy in a pot. The child's nails are just as long as the offshoots of a plant.



Reason

DIR.: **SZYMON RUCZYŃSKI • 2020 • ANIMATION • 8' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL**

In a modern-day-town, the protagonist of the film witnesses the revival of belief in magic. Accusations of witchcraft are laid against a mysterious woman. Everybody has something to add on the subject, including local authorities, mass media, and the Church. And even the protagonist finds out that choosing sides may not be as obvious as they first seemed.



Paper House

DIR.: **MARTYNA HOŁDA • 2020 • ANIMATION • 5' • PROD.: ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN KRAKÓW, ANIMATION FILM STUDIO • CONTACT: ANIMATIONSTUDIO@ASP.KRAKOW.PL**

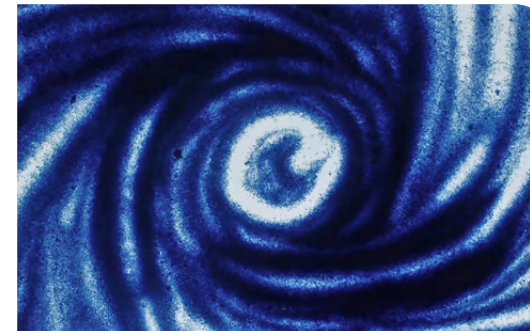
The film tackles the problem of an unwanted child. It concerns the child who grows without being accepted and struggles with the feeling of being lost. As a result, the child suffers from loneliness. The house in this context is a harsh facade, an illusion. The house becomes the reason for an escape, as well as inspiring an attempt to create an artificial world.



Portrait of a Woman

DIR.: **NATALIA DURSZEWICZ • 2020 • 5' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL**

A story about a woman who exists as an incomplete form of herself. She unknowingly goes through various emotional states and stages of life. Suddenly, her real nature awakens and forces her to fight for liberation. It is not known, however, whether she will win.



The Flood

DIR.: **SOFYA NABOK • 2020 • ANIMATION • 9' • PROD.: LIKAON • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL**

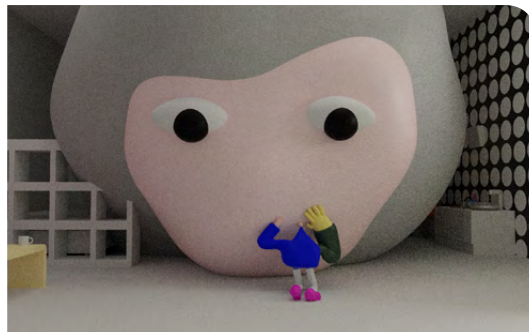
Three sisters go to the river on Kupala Night, as part of a rite to predict the Elder Sister's future. To do this, the girl steps onto the bridge where she hears a voice which prophesies her death in this river. Terrified, the Elder Sister turns round only to fall into the water.



Three Jumps to Happiness

DIR.: **ARTUR HANAJ** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 12' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

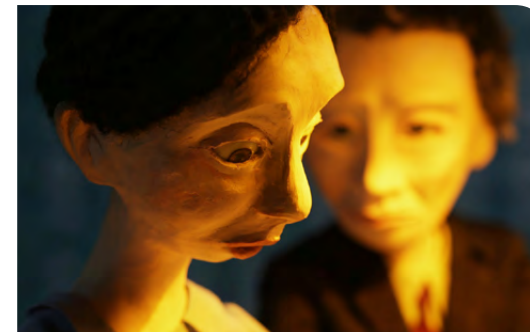
A black comedy describing one evening in the lives of several animals. A couple of turtles, a bear and a monkey who is a personal trainer want to see how able they are to control their lives. The story takes an Aesopian approach to narration, using the convention of the animal fable to consider contemporary existential problems and attempts to foster an understanding between the characters.



We Hope You Won't Need to Come Back

DIR.: **ANASTAZJA NAUMENKO** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 10' • PROD.: ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN KRAKÓW, ANIMATION FILM STUDIO • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

A young girl has immigrated. Having to function in a new environment is slowly transforming into a routine while she is growing into a modern Frankenstein's monster. The new approach and behaviour no longer match the old habits and patrimonial stereotypes. The decision to reunite with her family and return to more comfortable surroundings becomes a turning point and reveals the processes which modern immigrants experience.



Your Own Bullshit

DIR.: **DARIA KOPIEC** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 6' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

There's nothing better than dinner with family, even if it sometimes resembles a looped film that repeats itself infinitely. And even though, as well as the food, you have to swallow the words of your loved ones which are sometimes bitter and so repetitive that you want to vomit. Words that have been repeated in a sing-song voice for many a long year.



We Have One Heart

DIR.: **KATARZYNA WARZECHA** • 2020 • ANIMATION, DOCUMENTARY • 11' • PROD.: SILVER FRAME, MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

After his mother dies, Adam comes across some letters his parents exchanged years ago. This is an opportunity for him to find out more about the father he never knew. The juxtaposition of animated drawings and archive material takes us back forty years and enables us to uncover an extraordinary family secret.



Yesterday I Grew a Friend

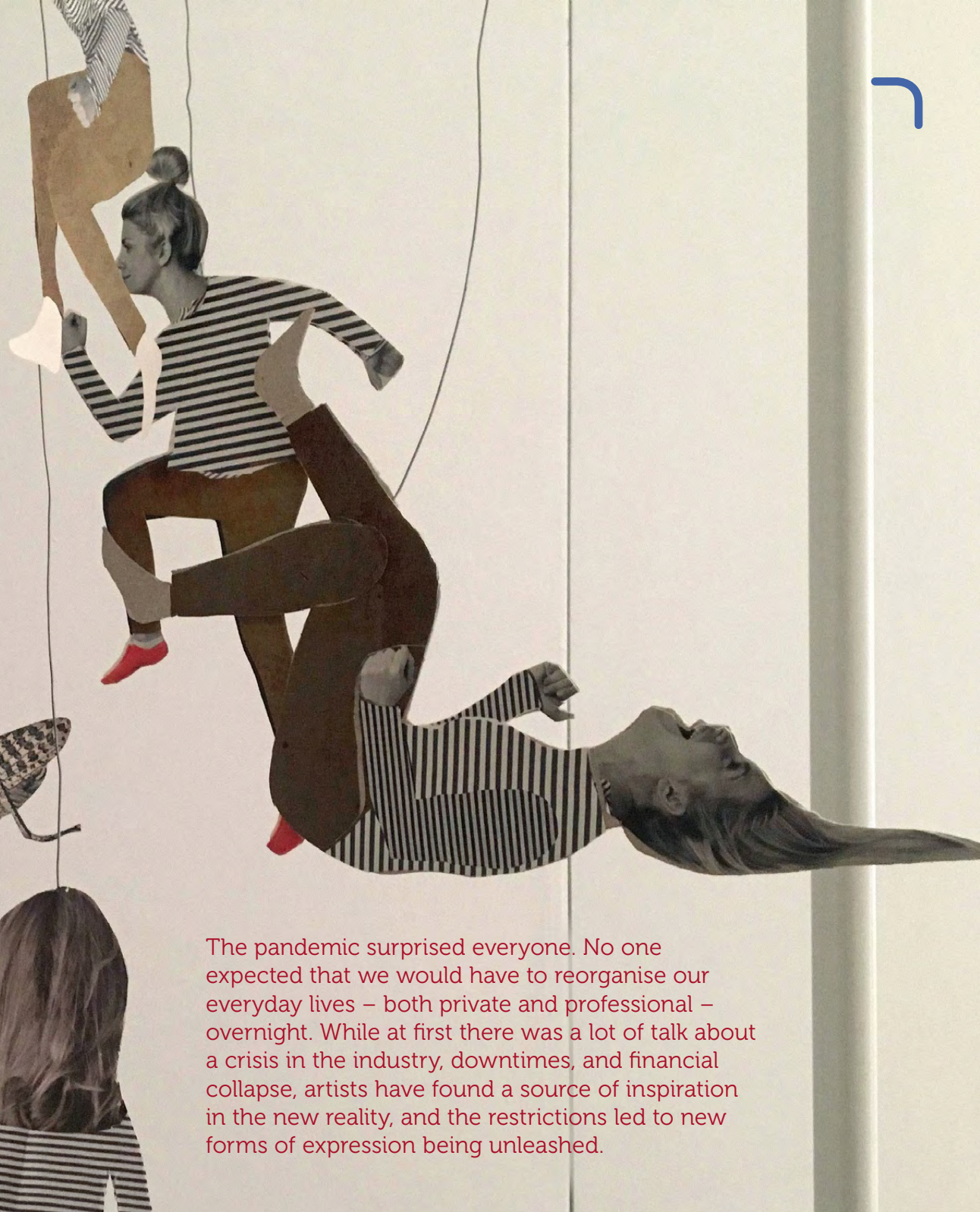
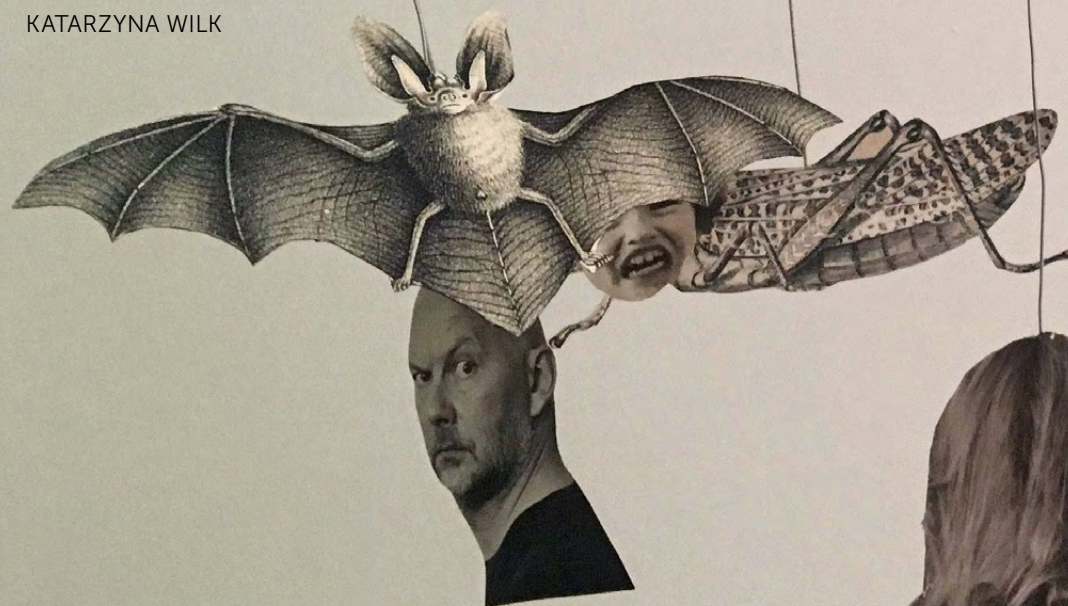
DIR.: **ADRIANNA MATWIEJCZUK** • 2020 • ANIMATION • 9' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

In a world where everything seems to revolve around friendship, a lonely man decides to try out unconventional methods to find his soul mate.

ISOLATION CAPTURED IN IMAGES

HOW FILMMAKERS HAVE
TACKLED THE SUBJECT
OF THE PANDEMIC

KATARZYNA WILK



The pandemic surprised everyone. No one expected that we would have to reorganise our everyday lives – both private and professional – overnight. While at first there was a lot of talk about a crisis in the industry, downtimes, and financial collapse, artists have found a source of inspiration in the new reality, and the restrictions led to new forms of expression being unleashed.

The results came quickly. Still in spring and in the heat of the moment, HBO launched the series *At Home*, inviting some of the greatest directors to participate. In Poland, an anthology was created consisting of fourteen approximately ten-minute-long films – documentaries, features, animations, and in VR – made by the most outstanding filmmakers whose previous films had been shown and awarded in Cannes, Berlin, Locarno, Venice, Sundance, and many other important festivals around the world. Masters such as Jerzy Skolimowski, celebrated middle-aged creators – Małgorzata Szumowska, Jacek Borcuch, Mariusz Trelński, Xavery Żuławski, and Paweł Łoziński, as well as the most talented and recognised young Polish directors – Magnus von Horn, Krzysztof Garbaczewski, Renata Gąsiorowska, Tomek Popakul, and Anna Zamecka – all got behind the camera. The form of expression had to reflect the restrictions and limitations imposed due to the pandemic, and the filmmakers had four weeks to make their films under slapdash conditions and on a tiny budget. The result is an extremely interesting, stylistically and formally diverse cross-section of short film forms, which can be called a kind of journal of today's difficult times. We see various versions – more or less funny, more or less

personal – of recorded images symbolising the emptiness, loneliness, isolation, distance, and longing, which we have all experienced, and which in the eyes of the creators took the form of a thriller, an observational documentary, psychological drama, video-journal, or a film essay. Some artists also undertook the task of documenting life during the pandemic using the Internet. It is online where you can watch *Plague Chronicles* – a nine-episode adaptation of Magda Hueckel's texts written during the first wave of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, and directed by Tomasz Śliwiński – a duo known from, among other things, the Oscar-nominated short documentary *Our Curse*. The series is part light and funny cut-out animation and part a sum of the reflections and experiences of a young woman, Malena – brilliantly played by Lena Frankiewicz – doomed to isolation with her husband and two children in a big-city apartment. Anyone in a similar situation will instantly recognise Malena's thoughts and conclusions as their own. 'The collective experience of isolation, fear for our loved ones, our future, and our job, using online culture, laughing at memes, cleaning and looking out the window spreads into millions of individual stories. Everyone seems to be alike, but everyone is different. That's because the coronavirus found each and every one in a different situation: pregnant, traveling,

depressed, in debt, or while moving. It sentenced us to joint imprisonment or divided families, lovers, and friends. It called off conferences, weddings, film premieres... and everything else. How many people will go mad? How many people will go bankrupt? How many relationships will be formed out of loneliness? How many married couples divorced? Children conceived? Suicides committed? And then the constant debates, who has it the worst: owners of restaurants, gyms, or escape rooms? Hairdressers, florists, businessmen, tattooists, dentists, or maybe artists?' – these words, so familiar to all who experience isolation, are uttered by the heroine in one of the episodes. There is no end to discussions about the effects of the pandemic. However, it seems that artists have decided to take the bull by the horns. Prohibitions and restrictions – forming a pandemic censorship of sorts, instead of a moral or political one – turned out, as it usually happens in such cases, to be both inspiring and liberating for creative expression. ■

At Home is available on HBO GO

Plague Chronicles is available on:

Home in a Shell (At Home) by Renata Gąsiorowska



Masks and Men (At Home) by Paweł Łoziński





The short film alphabet: features

A short is not only a student exercise; it is often a form of film art that reacts much faster to the problems that torment society and sometimes in a deeper and bolder fashion. What draws the attention of Polish directors?

From the sense of impending ecological doom to the rejection of all that is alien and different – new Polish shorts present a wide spectrum of problems to be found in public debates. However, they generally stay away from politics and prefer to focus on the fate of individuals plunged into a vortex of events, expectations, and pressures. They look at people, empathise with them, and simultaneously keep searching for their own artistic language. They experiment and surprise. Where do they see the most contentious topics?

A FOR ABORTION

Teenager Alice fell in love. With a friend. Together, they tried out these different funny positions that they had heard about. It was even fun, perhaps. However, the friend disappeared, and Alice was now alone with the problem. She had heard a little, in biology classes, about where babies come from, but the practical side surprised her. What now? The discussion on the termination of pregnancy has become a violent one in Poland and reached a level far removed from individual experiences. This is where Olga Bołądź comes in with her energetic debut – *Alice and the Frog*. The author presents the subject from the perspective of a girl who, against her will, gets caught up in the middle of an ideological war. However, it isn't the voice of abortion supporters and opponents that's crucial here, but hers. Bołądź strengthens its impact with a daring form in which a difficult reality intertwines with Lewis Carroll's world, musical, and comedy. All in line with the tenet professed by the director: 'Upbeat songs are written about sad topics'.

E FOR ECOTHRILLER

Artists are gifted with a special sense that allows them to feel the impending threat before others can name or even notice it. The idea for *Submission* came to Michał Ciechomski in a dream, before anyone heard the words 'lockdown' and 'pandemic', and began reading about the Wuhan zoonotic virus. Even if scientists have long been raising the alarm that the balance between Nature and Civilisation has been disturbed, *Submission* fits perfectly into this new, strange time in which we have been stuck since the winter of 2019/2020.

Ciechomski creates a very expressive vision, half post-apocalyptic, rooted in ancient beliefs, and half-grotesque, which may as well serve as a pretext for a discussion at a screening endorsed by Extinction Rebellion and delight viewers at a horror film review. Even at a fishing film festival, because the protagonist is... an avid angler who dares to commit a certain transgression.

I FOR INITIATION AND CONFRONTATION

Polish short films also examine the challenges faced on a daily basis by the LGBT community. In *Go and Tell Her*, Aleksandra Maciejczyk focuses on two teenagers from the Polish-Ukrainian borderland (which makes for an interesting setting in itself). During one of their meetings, the girls take a step that changes their relationship forever. Intimately and delicately, without being literal, the director touches on moments and formative emotions. Antonio Galdamez approaches the subject in the film *Noamia* in a radically different way, but also makes an already adult hero confront his own identity and its consequences. A homicide unit is a place filled to the brim with aggressive testosterone. Under these conditions, Commissioner Delman must investigate a victim with whom he is bound by secrecy and his colleagues cannot learn the truth of it. Unexpectedly, a bitter social observation emerges from under the veneer of criminal intrigue.

R FOR REJECTION

Friends, colleagues, family, media – and endless judgment. The more society and the environment exert pressure on an individual, the more radical the outcome of the conflict between the ‘I’ and the ‘world’ turns out to be.

This mechanism is explored in an intriguing way by Martyna Majewska – in her black and white formal call-out to the Polish

school *Maria Is Not Alive*, by Daria Kopiec in the stop-motion animation *Your Own Bullshit*, and by Tadeusz Lysiak in the socially-engaged *The Dress*. These are three entirely different films, but at the same time they are similar to each other in their empathy towards their protagonists, placing feelings and sensitivity higher than a cold vivisection. Told with affection and – in the case of features – with bold acting by Małgorzata Gorol and Anna Dzeduszycka (best actress award at the Rhode Island IFF). Maria committed suicide but remains in her living body for several days and searches for the causes of her own death. Julka dreams of being close to another human being, but her physical difference constitutes a barrier. A stop-motion tape player falls into a compulsive loop. Will it be able to reject the destructive code passed down from generation to generation?

V FOR VIOLENCE AND ASSAULT

Tosia from Klaudia Kęska's *Last Days of Summer* is put to an equally dramatic test – one reminiscent of the Dardenne brothers' films and simultaneously belonging to the #MeToo movement. The girl witnesses an attack on one of the seasonal workers hired at her parents' vineyard, an Immigrant whom she has befriended. However, helping her friend means betraying her loved ones, and such a dilemma could crush even an adult. It is her sense of justice versus the good of the family... Family versus strangers...



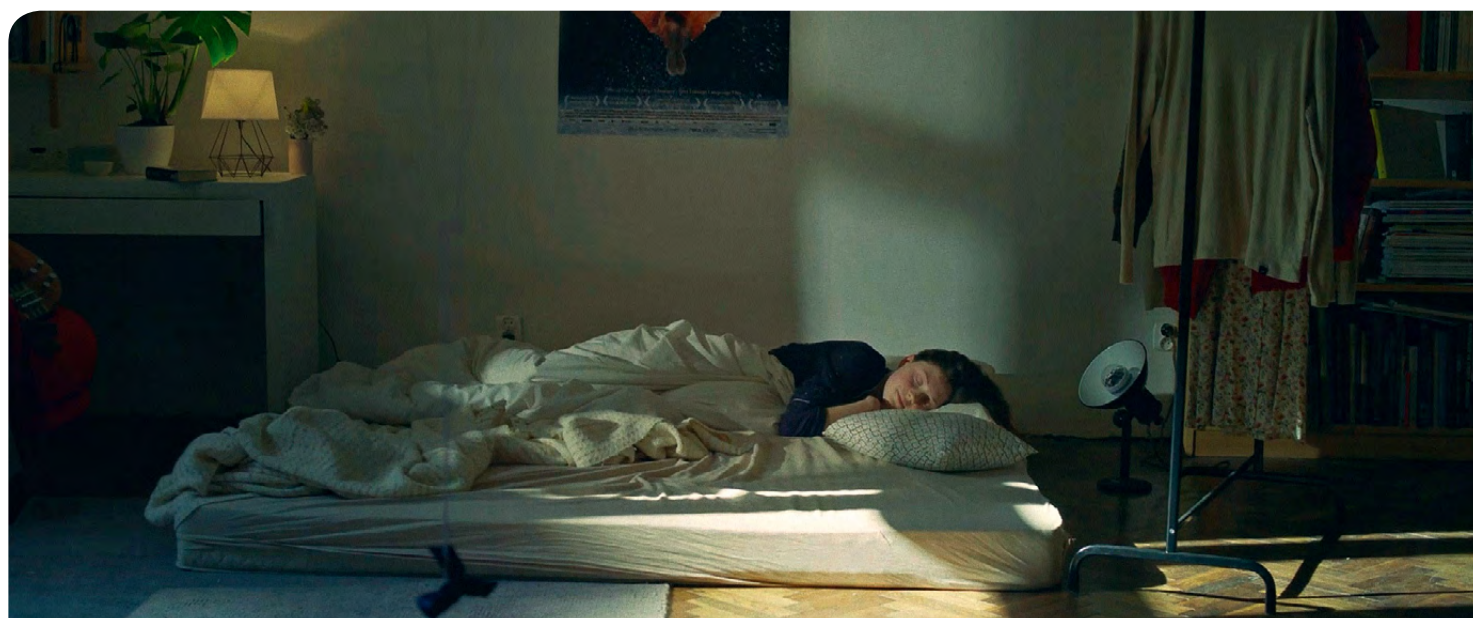
Go and Tell Her by Aleksandra Maciejczyk

X FOR XENOPHOBIA

The migration crisis may have been replaced by the pandemic in the media, but it has not subsided. And this is also what young filmmakers want to talk about. What is the life of an immigrant like in Poland in 2020? Masha and Vera from Krzysztof Chodorowski's *Masha* and Nazar from Natalia Koniarz's *East West* have managed to find illegal employment. Any semblance of stability vanishes when – respectively – an accident happens and salaries are to be paid out. Damian Kocur, who has been working with amateur actors from the beginning, looks at the problem in a slightly different manner in *Beyond Is the Day*. Here, an accidental meeting between Mohammad, who is escaping from the border guard, and Paweł, a loner working on a ferry connecting two river banks (sic!) gives hope for friendship and an understanding that transcends linguistic and cultural differences.

H FOR HOPE

The desire to find hope and good can be seen in shorts that take up even the most difficult of topics. The faster the world is spinning, the more young Polish cinema is looking for catharsis. ■



Last Days of Summer by Klaudia Kęska

SHORT Q&A



An interview with actress Olga Boładź, who debuted as a director with the film *Alice and the Frog*. The film featured in the national and international competitions at the 60th Krakow Film Festival.

UPBEAT SONGS ARE WRITTEN ABOUT SAD TOPICS

SOURCE: MAGAZYN FILMOWY SFP

DAGMARA ROMANOWSKA: Why did you decide to step onto the other side of the camera?

OLGA BOŁĄDŹ: It all started with writing and the Gerlsy Foundation, a grassroots initiative by Magda Lamparska, Julita Olszewska, Jowita Radzińska, and me. We want to write and create women's stories together, and *Alice and the Frog* is our first child. After finishing the script, I asked if the girls would agree to me directing it. I've been dreaming about it for a long time. They believed in me and I went to work immediately. I found a producer – Pola Łangowska. Together, we ended up at the Munk Studio, where they liked the idea, but I was asked to direct a scene first. I did it.

DR: The film deals with abortion. Was it inspired by an article in the press?

OB: It was about a teenager and her mother who found themselves trapped between supporters and opponents of abortion. The situation was very tense, all hell broke loose and the mother's custody rights were taken away for some time. Ultimately, the family defended its rights in Strasbourg. Immediately afterwards, the black protests broke out and we realized that we were writing about Poland – here and now. We wanted to speak out



without making a documentary or another heavy-weight drama. The perspective of a teenager was important to us, as a person who was not aware of many things yet, and was not ready for many of them. Thus, we settled on an abstract form.

DR: A crazy fairy tale mixed with a musical. It's a difficult task that requires lots of precision.

OB: 'Upbeat songs are written about sad topics,' as the Beatles used to say, and I think that's the way to go. I want to pursue genre cinema, one with an edge to it. I drew everything on a storyboard. I didn't order any additional shoots, only afterwards Mateusz Rybka and Sandra Ksepka, my editors, told me: 'Next time you're directing, Olga, don't be so quick to say "Stop, thank you", because we can't make extra frames from thin air.' I just knew what a given scene was for. I had it in my head. When the actors played it nicely, when the result was as I wanted, I just ended. But now I always wait until I say: 'Thank you, we've got it'.

DR: Julia Kuzka plays the main role. Where did you find her?

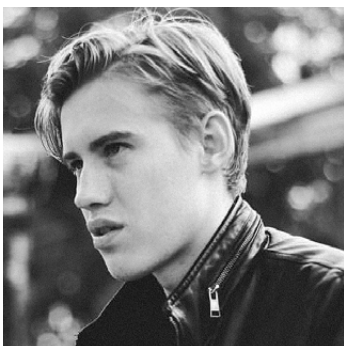
OB: Julita introduced her to me: 'You know, we have that girl at the modelling agency, you should check her out'. Together with Ola Gruber, we were already finalizing the casting when she

was available to drop by. As soon as she stepped in front of the camera, I was sure. 'You know it's you? It's you I've been waiting for. Don't be afraid. I'll teach you everything, I'll lead you by the hand.' – I assured her. We were in full symbiosis on the set. I was laughing when I watched raw footage with my voice from behind the camera. There is one difficult scene where Julka falls down. 'Something cracked there. It itches! Ouch, now the leg. Crouch. It hurts! Where am I, take a look around'. I am a fan of her – she's an extremely sensitive, articulate, hard-working, independent and simultaneously very modest girl who wants to learn. Everyone is great – the entire cast and crew. This film wouldn't have been made without them.

DR: I feel we haven't seen the last of you when it comes to directing?

OB: This film is my dream come true. I am happy that it was noticed by the Krakow Film Festival. I once told myself that if it turns out well, I'll keep doing it. Together with the girls we are finishing the script of a series about female sexuality, I'm supposed to play in it. I also have two ideas for a feature-length debut: a film about Tinder or about a female pastor in Poland. I'd like to direct these, but only when the time is right. ■

SHORT Q&A



An interview with Tadeusz Łysiak, the director of *The Dress* – produced at the Warsaw Film School and already recognized at festivals in Krakow, the US, Denmark, and India.

OPENING GATES

SOURCE: MAGAZYN FILMOWY SFP

DAGMARA ROMANOWSKA: How did you come up with the idea for a story about Julia, a girl who longs for love and has to face her otherness at the same time?

TADEUSZ ŁYSIAK: Although this story seems very individual, the starting point was the desire to tell about universal emotions: loneliness, rejection, the need for love; about matters understandable everywhere on the globe. Julia didn't show up until later.

DR: In your earlier film, *Techno*, you addressed similar topics...

TL: Both in humans and in cinema, I'm not interested in what is evident, pure, and joyful, but in what is subconscious, hidden. I am looking for desires, cravings, voids. At the same time, I don't want to become black or white, which is why flashes of hope, and even laughter, appear in *The Dress* and the audience notices them without fail. That's the idea. On the screen, sadness and seriousness must always be counterbalanced with some levity. Because that's what life is like: full of shades of grey.

DR: What strikes me in *The Dress* is that you're telling the story of a specific character, but you're not treating her like a weirdo. Anyone can identify with Julia.



TL: We wanted to make a film about a woman, and not social cinema per se, although this perspective was also important to us. Julia has identical desires to everyone else. This was our focus and it also dictated our form: the cinematography and editing. Together with the cinematographer, Konrad Bloch, we decided to always place the camera as close as possible to the heroine, never to judge her. We avoided the shots showing her height. As the plot unfolded, we wanted the viewer to stop paying attention to Julia's physicality, and follow her feelings and emotions instead. We're living in somewhat bleak times – many intolerant people have come to the fore. We must clearly oppose this and bring such characters closer to them in films. *The Dress* is a kind of a plea.

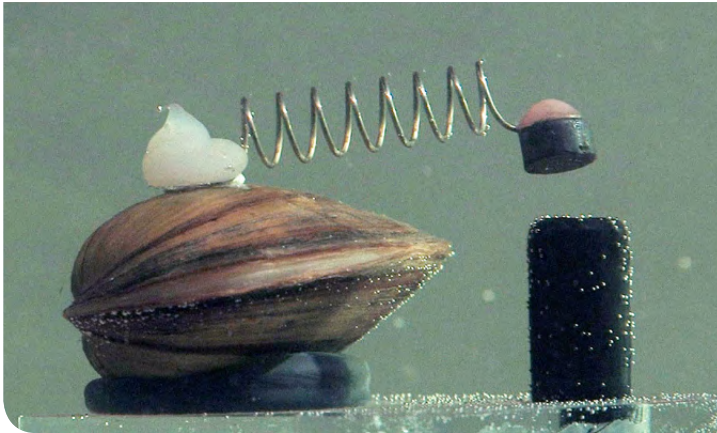
DR: Finding Anna Dzieduszycka, who won an award for her role as Julia at the Rhode Island Film Festival, seems like winning the lottery. Charisma and talent. How did you find her?

TL: Your comparison to winning the lottery is perfect. That's exactly how I feel. I met Ania when I was still a first-year student at the Warsaw Film School. Writing the screenplay for *The Dress*, I immediately thought about her. I did not know if she

would like this storyline and whether she had the skills necessary for the role – Julia is a difficult character, certain scenes in the film are very emotional and require a lot of courage. A second into our conversation, all my fears disappeared, and Ania herself, her energy and sense of humor greatly influenced the final shape of this character. I wish her all the best in her career. I also appreciate some improvisation on set and in this regard, I owe a lot to Ania and the other actors – Szymon Warszawski and Dorota Pomykała. Sometimes at rehearsals it turned out that some of the dialogues I had written sounded artificial; then they would take the initiative – and so together we were arriving at the results I had wanted to achieve in the first place.

DR: Cast is the key to success! What's next?

TL: *The Dress* is only starting its journey. Veronica Andersson from the Warsaw Film School is supervising distribution and we hope to visit many more festivals. It was certainly a very emotional and exhausting experience, but at the same time a revealing one that opened up something in all of us. And I would like to explore this further: opening certain gates present in heads and hearts – those belonging to me, to the crew, and to the audience. ■



Fat Kathy Gruba Kaśka

DIR.: JULIA PEŁKA • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2019 • 14'

'You grab a clam and it's completely defenseless. All you can do is start looking after it. It makes me want to care' says a Warsaw malacologist, who devoted 30 years of his life to catching approximately 20,000 mollusks from the Vistula River. After being caught, eight mussels are then connected to computers using special equipment. The whole thing resembles an intriguing gallery installation, while in fact it is quite an unusual security system designed to protect people from toxic poisoning.

It turns out that it is not the case of a man caring for mussels, but rather the mussels potentially saving the lives of the capital's residents. It's all thanks to a unique biomonitoring system installed in the capital's water pump called Gruba Kaśka ('Fat Kathy'). Although the facility itself attracts attention, it is not the main star of Julia Pełka's short documentary. The director aims her camera at a woman known as 'the queen of the cape', the abovementioned malacologist, and his inconspicuous pupils. The woman is a rather colourful character. She talks about her life freely, shares her thoughts on various topics, and also has her own opinion about environmental disasters. In turn, the man is extremely dedicated to his work, so much so that it also creeps into his dreams – reminiscent of apocalyptic visions. What would happen if the mussels failed to alert him to a toxic threat? How much do we, humans, owe to nature and how much to technological advancements? Although they are both quite different persons, they share the sense of inevitability in their daily lives.

Despite the depressing visions prophesied by the protagonists, it is difficult to come to the conclusion that the film has a pessimistic overtone. On the contrary, there is something reassuring in the awareness that a man who carefully observes nature and cares for it can save himself.

■ MAGDALENA WALO



Dad You've Never Had

DIR.: DOMINIKA ŁAPKA • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2020 • 29'

Hundreds of letters were meant to replace little Dominika's absent father. The man had abandoned her mother, cut himself off from his daughter when she was still a child, and tried to make up for his absence with correspondence sent from all over the world. Years later, a now adult Dominika decides to visit her long-unseen father in the company of a camerawoman. Already when meeting at the train station, there is a noticeable distance between them, their greeting is clumsy and lacks affection. Although they both try to be nice to each other, the situation in which they have found themselves is clearly a source of discomfort. It is not about the presence of the camera, but rather the lack of any bond between father and the daughter. In truth, Dominika knows nothing about her parent. Entering his apartment is the first opportunity to meet him in his everyday environment. There, she discovers various kinds of trinkets, a large collection of books, a green view through the window and sea in the distance, and then there is also the room in which she is going to stay. It is the room that belonged to her younger sister. The one who had a father. In it time seems to have stopped. The walls are decorated with a kiddie wallpaper, and there are still colourful binders on the shelves. The father cannot come to terms with her death. Addressing this extremely delicate matter becomes a breakthrough towards starting a dialogue between the man and his older daughter.

The director's decision to bring a camera into her life and tell such an intimate story certainly influenced the behaviour of both protagonists. Although the presence of third parties is unnoticeable, it is hard to resist the thought that the meeting between these two could have gone differently. The director does not try to tell a classic story about a parent's reconciliation with an estranged child; she does not care about creating artificial conflicts, but we do not know the extent to which the feelings she expressed – as the protagonist of this story – were true or hampered by the camera's presence. Instead of a violent confrontation, the documentary records an adult woman's encounter with the reality of an older, single man who was afraid to love deeply because such a love would take away his freedom. ■ MAGDALENA WALO



Tell Me More Powiedz mi coś jeszcze

DIR.: MARTYNA PESZKO • DOCUMENTARY • POLAND • 2020 • 29'

Martyna Peszko's documentary is an intimate record of her several-day stay with her sick mother. The woman has been suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and has been bedridden for many years, communicating with the world only through the movement of her eyeballs. She requires round-the-clock care, but the presence of a loved one is much more important. The visiting daughter is doing well as a nurse; she feeds, washes, and gives medications to her mother, but most importantly – she talks to her.

The hardships of everyday care over the ailing mother were contrasted with a family ceremony from several years ago. Archival footage shows her mum and little Martyna returning from church in a festive First Communion outfit. They come to the apartment where guests are already waiting for them with gifts. Now, the mother's participation in a similar event is impossible, only memories and modern technology, thanks to which one can connect with absent family members, remain.

The dialogue between the sick mother and her relatives resembles that from Julian Schnabel's famous *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*; it is very limited, requiring great patience and consideration. The mother's entire statement is reduced to a few words composed of letters from a sheet of paper held by the daughter. Despite these limitations, both women are holding serious conversations. Martyna does not shy away from difficult topics, especially those relating to motherhood and having children. It seems that the director breaks down the barriers of privacy to some extent, but very consciously refrains from showing us everything. Some of the answers to difficult questions are not presented to viewers, there is also no overt suffering or toying with emotions. What is most striking is the loneliness and helplessness of both women. The director presents herself to us in difficult moments of powerlessness, but does not expect sympathy, and instead goes for an emotionless record of facts. Perhaps the film will perform a similar function to the communion footage years later – it will document the mother's presence. ■ MAGDALENA WALO



Alice and the Frog Alicja i żabka

DIR.: OLGA BOŁĄDŹ • FICTION • POLAND • 2020 • 28'

The name of the title character is not an accident. Olga Boładź's directorial debut contains several direct references to the famous novel written by Lewis Carroll, but it is not going to be the only clue waiting to be found in this extremely original story. The director unleashes her imaginations, goes beyond conventions, and mixes genres freely. A socially-engaged drama meets an unconventional musical, in which there's no shortage of humour and fairy tale elements, despite the subject being serious, provoking emotional reactions, and even controversy.

The 14-year-old Alicja falls in love with her peer. Her first love, however, cannot bloom, because the girl unexpectedly finds out that she is pregnant with him. The teenager is not fully aware of what is happening to her, fortunately her mother comes to help. The woman supports her daughter, does not judge her, and even fights for her well-being when institutions fail. It is obvious to both of them that Alice cannot give birth, she is too young to be a mother. Along with the decision about which both have no doubts come representatives of various factions who want to use the girl's pregnancy for their own agendas. On the one hand – a Catholic organization with a meddlesome priest who wants to place Alicja in a single mother's shelter, and on the other – young, radical activists trying to turn the teenager into a hero of pro-choice movements. Confused, the girl escapes into a world of fantasy.

Although the director takes up an extremely important social topic, the effective, exuberant form lets her avoid a journalistic tone. The story is told very lightly, with humour and great sensitivity, without trying to be controversial. The bond between the mother and the adolescent daughter is much more important here than the medical procedure itself. ■ MAGDALENA WALO



Noamia

DIR.: ANTONIO GALDAMEZ • FICTION • POLAND • 2020 • 29'

A crime story? A drama? Or perhaps an existential melodrama? Antonio Galdamez's film combines all of these genres to create an extremely accomplished story about a mature commissioner who faces an unexpected confrontation with himself during his service. A group of policemen receives information about the murder of a young man. His body was found in the bathtub, there are no suspicious traces, but the apartment's furnishings raise indecent, homophobic comments from the investigators. Commissioner Delman is watching and listening to all of it. The man cannot recover after having seen the body. He had a shared night with the victim. Because of the discovery, the protagonist can't seem to focus on his work. Openly conflicted with one of his colleagues, he has to be careful about what he is doing, and despite everything, he takes the risk and decides to solve the criminal puzzle on his own, covering his tracks. What is he afraid of? Being ridiculed and rejected by other officers? Or, perhaps, he is feeling guilty for the young man's death? Or maybe it's not fear, but a longing for closeness, commitment. As he was leaving, the young lover said provokingly: 'I'm going to smoke your fat and disappear. And you? Are you going to be looking for me?'. Delman did not have to. The boy found himself and perhaps he will never disappear from his memory.

As viewers, we follow the commissioner at all times – a man who is clearly burned out professionally and tired of life. The death of his younger lover, with whom he spent a pleasant but perhaps insignificant night, comes as a shock. He begins to wallow in his misery, to obstruct the investigation, and finally goes to the boy's mother. At this point, an almost pure genre film starts heading in a completely unexpected direction. It is not the discovery of the truth about the murder that becomes the main topic, but the fascination and curiosity that drive the commissioner and the intrigued viewers along with him. A crime story turns into a tragedy of a lonely man. ■ MAGDALENA WALO



Problem

DIR.: TOMASZ WOLSKI • FICTION • POLAND • 2020 • 15'

A girl is riding a scooter, a couple are talking about their friends' vacation, a man and his wife are arguing over the price of a teddy bear. An ordinary afternoon on one of the streets of a small housing estate. Nobody expects an incident to connect the anonymous passers-by moments later. The time and setting are the same, there is also a single camera shot and a single man who turns out to be the titular problem. Known for his great and award-winning documentaries, in this short feature the director decided to take a closer look at people's behaviour in the face of human tragedy. An unconscious man is found in the street, there are no direct witnesses to the event, although the onlookers who gather around him make their first guesses. Nobody recognises him as a neighbour. Fortunately, some of the observers quite soberly decide to immediately call the appropriate services. Unfortunately, it's too late for him.

Thanks to the cleverness of one of the observers, the body is identified quite smoothly, while the Internet allows them to quickly find his address and contact the daughter, who feels no need and also simply cannot come to the place of the incident. The policemen begin to get nervous, they would like to close the case as soon as possible, but they have to wait for the ambulance to get a death certificate. The witnesses start to leave very quickly, no one cares about the death of a stranger.

This seemingly simple story, which attracts attention with its impressively long take, has the philosophical potential to make one reflect on the condition of modern man. The protagonists fall victim to indifference; no one, apart from the youngest observer of the events, stays with the dead man for longer than they absolutely have to. The body, covered with gold foil, waits for the appropriate services to take it off the street and relieve a bored policeman. ■ MAGDALENA WALO



Last Days of Summer Ostatnie dni lata

DIR.: **KLAUDIA KĘSKA** • FICTION • POLAND • 2020 • 26'

Two friends, Tosia and Yana, are spending the last days of their summer holidays together. The former comes from a privileged, affluent family running a vineyard, and the latter is a part-time grape picker at their plantation. Class differences do not seem to matter to them. On the contrary, Yana eats meals with her employers and spends every free moment with their daughter. Her friend clearly draws the attention of Tosia's brother. The boy watches her eat, fools around, but doesn't seem insistent or threatening. It's doubtful that anyone expects that their innocent frolics around the table will lead to a tragic finale.

Late in the evening Tosia hears a scream. Anxious, she decides to check what is going on. In the darkness, between the grapevines, she notices two figures. One is a friend and the other is her brother. What she saw was rape. At first, the teenager does not know how to react and takes a step back in shock, but when the perpetrator leaves, she rushes to help. Her aid is quite clumsy, the girl does not know how to behave in such a situation, she counts on the help of her parents, but their reactions are completely incomprehensible to her. Instead of supporting their employee, both of them are only concerned about their son's reputation. The film's subject matter falls into the extremely important #metoo trend, but instead of cheap journalism we get a very subtle story about the end of innocence understood in several different manners. The director does not shock with violence or brutality. The rape scene is filmed at a distance so that we can only guess what has just happened. From the very beginning, we adopt Tosia's perspective. The girl has a huge responsibility. Determined, she wants to help her friend, but faces unexpected resistance from her relatives who expect their daughter to take her brother's side. It's too much for the teenager. Losing a friend and lack of family support begin to overwhelm her. Will Tosia choose justice? Or will she give in to pressure and submit false testimony? Whatever decision she makes, she will have to face its irreversible consequences. ■ **MAGDALENA WALO**



Beyond Is the Day Dalej jest dzień

DIR.: **DAMIAN KOCUR** • FICTION • POLAND • 2020 • 26'

The Polish countryside. Fields, meadows, a river, and cows lazily wandering around, sometimes a postman will come to deliver parcels for Paweł, who works on the ferry. The man is alone, his wife left years ago, now he spends his free time watching TV; sometimes he'll talk to a neighbour, and on Sundays he goes to church. It seems that nothing will ever happen to him or surprise him anymore, until one day a mysterious man with a backpack emerges from the river. It's Mohammad, a refugee, a man the TV newscaster had warned him about moments earlier. Helping someone like this, one risks legal consequences and being ostracized by the local community. However, it does not discourage Paweł. He is not bothered by not knowing each other's languages, it is enough that he can talk to someone and spend time with them.

The new black and white film by Damian Kocur recalls Aki Kaurismäki's best achievements. Just like in his films, there is no shortage of a peculiar sense of humour, and the characters, despite their crudeness, capture us with their simple goodwill. There is something redeeming in this simple and extremely warm tale of human kindness. It isn't yet another film about the refugee crisis, but a parable about a meeting between two complete strangers. After all, both protagonists have almost nothing in common, from religion, through family, to language and culture. And yet they strike up a genuine friendship.

Mohammad soon has to leave Paweł, it is not safe in Poland, and his loved ones are waiting for him in Germany. His host is not happy about it, but ultimately the brutal reality knocks on his door. First there is a neighbour suspicious of the stranger, and later – armed officers storm his house in search of dangerous illegal immigrants. A tale of kind-hearted people comes to an end as narrow-mindedness and bigotry begin to prevail over human decency. ■ **MAGDALENA WALO**



The Dress Sukienka

DIR.: **TADEUSZ ŁYSIAK** • FICTION • POLAND • 2020 • 30'

A film about the desire to be loved and sexual needs without taboos. Julia is a dwarf. She has been working in a roadside hotel for eight years; she kills the routine with cigarette breaks, peeping on guests, and gossiping with an older colleague. From time to time, she has to face crass comments about herself, which further solidifies her belief that no one could ever find her attractive. Meanwhile, her need to be desirable and loved is as strong as in many healthy women. During another cigarette break, the girl notices a man looking at her. Much to her surprise, he approaches her and asks for a cigarette. Julia's initial hesitation fades away when the man does not get discouraged by her burly tone. They strike up a conversation quite quickly, which then leads to a meeting proposal. The date is scheduled to take place in four days, after Bogdan returns from the road. The girl cannot believe what has happened to her. Excited, she fantasizes, wonders about her outfit, and finally decides to sew a new dress. The titular outfit becomes a symbol of something better, a token of femininity, but also a source of frustration and disappointment. A tailor friend isn't going to make it in time, so Julia is doomed to shop at an ordinary store. There, she has to face a mean shop assistant and hangers with no clothes that suit her. The devastated girl is rescued by a colleague from work. The dress she brings fits her perfectly. But is it going to meet her expectations? The director shows us the brutal reality without touching up anything. The life of the heroines is devoid of any joy. Julia is bitter, her friend has also not had an easy life. It is only the appearance of Bogdan that excites both women, brings hope. Meanwhile, what was supposed to be the heroine's dream come true becomes yet another very bitter experience. ■ **MAGDALENA WALO**



Maria Is Not Alive Maria nie żyje

DIR.: **MARTYNA MAJEWSKA** • FICTION • POLAND • 2020 • 29'

Suspended somewhere between waking and sleep, the adaptation of Weronika Murek's eerie short story transports us into the world of lost souls. The eponymous Maria is actually dead, but she seems rather alive since she spends her entire time after death on Earth and among people. She visits her parents, strolls around the city, calls her fiancée, and even asks the neighbours and the disinfection team about the cause of her death. She can be sarcastic, she does not like the sweater in which she is to be buried and plans to skip her own funeral, because she has other plans. She chose death, yet she still feels alive, and won't fail to mention it. The living do not seem to be surprised by her presence, they are more bothered by her disobedience and grumpiness. Over time, her presence begins to irritate them, it becomes something inappropriate, especially after the funeral. Only souls lost just like Mary greet her with joy, inviting her to their community, which she soon leaves in search of something else, perhaps transcendence of some kind.

The subject of suicide is treated here in a rather non-obvious way. The heroine is not condemned for her actions, nor does she feel remorse. She knows it was her decision, but she can't remember how it happened. Perhaps one of the reasons for her several days of earthly exile is precisely this ignorance. Something that needs to be finished. Meeting her family, visiting the apartment or her own funeral is not it. The mystical experience of a transition. The world of the living and the dead intersect, the boundaries between them are blurred. Just as is the case with the heroine herself, whose ontological status is not entirely clear. Her physical presence is beyond any doubt, Maria herself tests it by having a one-night stand with an accidental man, and yet there is already something foreign, something dead in her. It fascinates, frightens, and repels, like death itself. ■ **MAGDALENA WALO**

POLISH SHORTS

CATALOGUE OF FILMS

2020



Alice and the Frog

DIR.: **OLGA BOŁĄDŹ** • 2020 • FICTION • 29' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

Fourteen-year-old Alicja accidentally gets pregnant. The film tells her story from the perspective of a child who escapes into the world of her imagination, fleeing a reality where doctors are unwilling to perform a legal abortion and everyone except her mother is against it.



Beyond Is the Day

DIR.: **DAMIAN KOCUR** • 2020 • FICTION • 25' • PROD.: TOMCAT, KINGHOUSE • CONTACT: MICHAŁ HUDZIKOWSKI, M.HUDZIKOWSKI@SFP.ORG.PL

Somewhere in Europe, somewhere in Poland, lives Paweł – a simple man working on a small river ferry close to his village. He spends most of his day taking the villagers to the other side of the river. Every day looks the same, but one day he notices somebody who has chosen to cross the river by swimming. This person is Mohammad, an immigrant from Palestine. Finally, Paweł has someone he can really talk to.



About a Man Who Bought Milk

DIR.: **JAGODA MADEJ** • 2020 • FICTION • 27' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MICHAŁ HUDZIKOWSKI, M.HUDZIKOWSKI@SFP.ORG.PL

Maciek wanted to be a journalist and to travel the world like Kapuściński. But adult life doesn't always turn out the way we imagine and so in order to at least gain financial independence, he accepted work at a local municipal office. After all, an Independent Promotion Specialist is almost like a journalist. Then, however, strange things start to happen. Maciek asks his long-time friend Tomek for help. Together they try to figure out what is going on and how to stay on top of things.



Ballast

DIR.: **DANIEL HOWLID** • 2020 • FICTION • 18' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

The setting is a family meeting where a lack of adult attention, upbringing mistakes, as well as unstable emotional ties and disrupted relationships, leads a small, bored, lonely boy to destructive behaviour from which there is no turning back. This tragedy hangs by a thread...



Flora

DIR.: **KAROLINA MONWID-OLECHNOWICZ** • 2020 • FICTION • 10' • PROD.: KRZYSZTOF KIEŚŁOWSKI FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: SŁAWOMIR KRUK, SŁAWOMIR.KRUK@US.EDU.PL

A short story focusing on the sensitive connection between the body and nature as a result of climate change. The director was inspired by Heidegger's quote from *Country Path Conversations* that 'sensing brings more fruit than self-confident seeing'.



Four Cups of Coffee or Three

DIR.: **SEBASTIAN ŁACH** • 2020 • FICTION • 12' • PROD.: SEBASTIAN ŁACH • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

Twelve hours in the protagonist's life. Her harmless fantasy transforms into a completely altered reality. It begins with a physical change to her body and a feeling which torments her incessantly. She will have to confront her interior world and check whether it's real.



Hotshot

DIR.: **NATASZA PARZYMIES** • 2020 • FICTION • 25' • PROD.: WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

After a drug-related accident, a young popstar ends up in prison where she's assigned to run a choir in which none of the inmates can sing.



Last Days of Summer

DIR.: **KLAUDIA KĘSKA** • 2020 • FICTION • 28' • PROD.: KRZYSZTOF KIEŚŁOWSKI FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

A summer idyll in a thriving family vineyard is interrupted by an assault on Yana, one of its seasonal workers. The victim's story can only be confirmed by one person, her friend Tosia. The teenager faces a difficult moral dilemma between justice and protecting her family. What will she choose?



Good, Elegant Boys

DIR.: **MAREK UŁAN-SZYMAŃSKI** • 2020 • FICTION • 25' • PROD.: WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

During a survival camp in the Polish mountains, a scout team meets a detachment of Ukrainian undercover soldiers, a war is coming.



Into the Night

DIR.: **KAMILA TARABURA** • 2020 • FICTION • 26' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MICHAŁ HUDZIKOWSKI, M.HUDZIKOWSKI@SFP.ORG.PL

Krysia, a teenage girl, leaves her home for the first time in a week. Her mother has invited her to a party. She doesn't want to be there, but she always does what others tell her to do. At the party, she runs into Majka. The two girls slip away and set off on a journey that takes on a dizzying pace. The emotionally wounded Majka tests how far she can go with her sexuality, while Krysia does everything she can to guess her secret. Will the new friendship heal Krysia?



Love

DIR.: **MICHAŁ CIECHOMSKI** • 2020 • FICTION • 25' • PROD.: KRZYSZTOF KIEŚŁOWSKI FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

Those serving time in prison are willing to do anything for their woman, if they have one, and even more so if the prisoner has been sentenced to 25 years in a high security prison. Paweł is 38 years old and has already served more than a decade in prison having been wrongly accused of murder. He is in love with his attorney and they are planning to get married. He is willing to sacrifice everything for what gives his life some meaning, in other words for love.



Marcel

DIR.: **MARCIN MIKULSKI • 2019 • FICTION • 26' • PROD.:** MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

No one ever notices Marcel. Invisible to a ticket inspector, overlooked by his boss, ignored by a couple smooching in the lift. One morning, this perfect, carefree life with no responsibility falls apart like a house of cards when Marcel prevents his female neighbour from jumping off a rooftop.



Masha

DIR.: **KRZYSZTOF CHODOROWSKI • 2020 • FICTION • 13' • PROD.:** WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

An Ukrainian woman working illegally in a Polish factory tries to help Masha – a friend who has suffered an accident at work.



Off-Season

DIR.: **MONIKA MAJOREK • 2020 • FICTION • 18' • PROD.:** WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

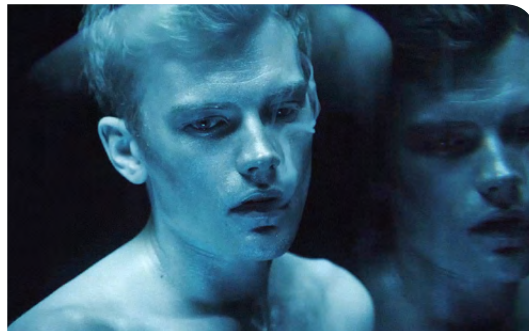
Fourteen-year-old Adam lives in a holiday resort by the sea run by his parents. When a mysterious older woman arrives in the resort, Adam is immediately captivated by her. Spying on her turns into an obsession, which makes him explore his sexuality.



Maria Is Not Alive

DIR.: **MARTYNA MAJEWSKA • 2020 • FICTION • 30' • PROD.:** MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MICHAŁ HUDZIKOWSKI, M.HUDZIKOWSKI@SFP.ORG.PL

Maria is dead, but she is alive. She committed suicide but remains in her living body for some days. How did she come to kill herself? While looking for the cause, she observes the world without her.



Noamia

DIR.: **ANTONIO GALDAMEZ • 2020 • FICTION • 29' • PROD.:** MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

A dead boy is found in Warsaw-on-Sea. Police Superintendent Delman arrives at the scene of the crime and quickly realises that he knew the victim and that the boy's secret is also his. His investigations lead him to the seaside district of Noamia.



Problem

DIR.: **TOMASZ WOLSKI • 2020 • FICTION • 15' • PROD.:** KIJORA FILM • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

A seemingly normal afternoon in the city is disrupted as passers-by are temporarily distracted from their daily routines. A man lying on the pavement becomes a problem not only for the local tenants, but also medical services and the police.



Settling the Score

DIR.: **ZUZANNA GRAJCEWICZ** • 2019 • FICTION • 13' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

The film tells a story of elderly woman Halina, who makes a difficult decision and stands up for justice and her own dignity. *Settling the Score* is an attempt to address the problem of the marginalization of elderly people's needs and their quality of life. In its form, the film is consistent and well thought through. It allows the viewer to freely interpret the plot and bitterness of its humorous finale.



Submission

DIR.: **MICHAŁ CIECHOMSKI** • 2020 • FICTION • 26' • PROD.: KRZYSZTOF KIEŚLOWSKI FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: SŁAWOMIR KRUK, SŁAWOMIR.KRUK@US.EDU.PL

Piotr, a good but unlucky angler lives in a disused Polish holiday camp. He catches the largest and most disgusting fish at the greatest Millennium Fishing Competition. Submission is an allegorical story of an angler who must save the entire island community from the end of the world.



The Dress

DIR.: **TADEUSZ ŁYSIAK** • 2020 • FICTION • 29' • PROD.: WARSAW FILM SCHOOL, DOBRO, MIŁO POST PRODUCTION, GŁOSNO • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

Lust, sexuality and physicality. These are the deepest desires which Julia, a virgin, suppresses while working at a wayside motel. Until, that is, her path crosses that of a handsome truck driver who soon becomes the object of her fantasies.



Something

DIR.: **KASIA BABICZ** • 2020 • FICTION • 13' • PROD.: WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

Two young boys, K and M, are driving through the Polish provinces to reach the Equality Parade. At night they stop at a gas station in the middle of nowhere and unexpected events occur which affect the fate of their relationship.



The Dreams of Lonely People

DIR.: **MAREK LESZCZEWSKI** • 2020 • FICTION • 23' • PROD.: WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

After twenty years in prison, a man returns to his homeland peacefully await his death. His world is completely changed when he accidentally meets a character from the magical world of nature.



The Last Whistle

DIR.: **KAROL LINDHOLM** • 2020 • FICTION • 30' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MICHAŁ HUDZIKOWSKI, M.HUDZIKOWSKI@SFP.ORG.PL

Somewhere on the coast of the Baltic sea. Two brothers are living in a camper on a beach. This vacation will be unique for the younger brother as his father is preparing him for his first start in a long-distance swimming marathon at sea.



The Stone

DIR.: **BARTOSZ KOZERA** • 2020 • FICTION • 26' • PROD.: MUNK STUDIO – POLISH FILMMAKERS ASSOCIATION • CONTACT: MARTA ŚWIĘTEK (KFF SALES & PROMOTION), MARTA.SWIETEK@KFF.COM.PL

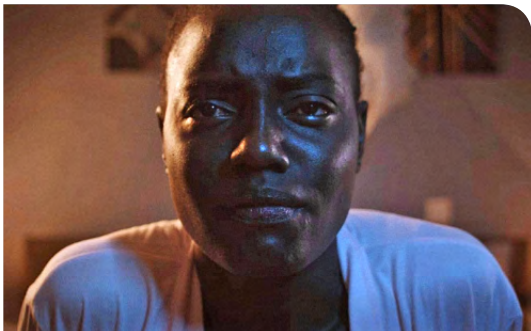
A nun who uses a wheelchair touches a common-or-garden stone in a park and is cured. In the archbishop's eyes, the stone is far too secular an object for the Vatican to recognise the event as a miracle. The nun's Mother Superior uses a bluff, convincing the archbishop that a saint appeared to her and affirmed the stone's divine origins. As bad luck would have it, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, who uses crutches, sits down on the same stone. He, too, is miraculously cured. The priests are left in no doubt: it's either a shared miracle or no miracle at all.



Venus of Willendorf

DIR.: **ZUZANNA GRAJCEWICZ** • 2020 • FICTION • 28' • PROD.: THE POLISH NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL IN ŁÓDŹ • CONTACT: KRZYSZTOF BRZEZOWSKI, K.BRZEZOWSKI@FILMSCHOOL.LODZ.PL

Kamila lives in a world where excess weight is a guarantee of success. When both her employer and her boyfriend discover that she is only pretending to be overweight, she is fired from her work and abandoned by her lover. Kamila decides to attend therapy in the Fit&Fat Clinic. Will she manage to go through the therapy, put on weight and adapt herself to the standards?



Till Death Do Us Part

DIR.: **DOLORES VUNDA** • 2020 • FICTION • 24' • PROD.: WARSAW FILM SCHOOL • CONTACT: VERONICA ANDERSSON, VERONICAANDERSSON@SZKOLAFILMOWA.PL

A Ugandan woman, Denise, fights against her husband's desire to marry another woman. Her journey becomes much harder when she realises that she is the only one in the family who is willing to stand up against the law that her culture still maintains.



Publisher: Krakow Film Foundation
ul. Basztowa 15/8, 31-143 Kraków, Poland
+48 12 294 69 45, fop@kff.com.pl

Editors-in-chief:
Barbara Orlicz-Szczypuła, Katarzyna Wilk

Editorial cooperation: Marta Świętek

Authors: Maciej Cuske, Krzysztof Gierat,
Dagmara Marcinek, Anita Piotrowska,
Dagmara Romanowska, Marta Świętek,
Magdalena Walo, Katarzyna Wilk

Video talks: Kaja Klimek, Artur Zaborski

Translation: Piotr Szczepański

Proofreading: Aeddan Shaw

Design: Katarzyna Skawińska

Supported by the Polish Film Institute

Special thanks: Magazyn Filmowy SFP

Polish Docs: Katarzyna Wilk, katarzyna.wilk@kff.com.pl

Polish Shorts and Polish Animations: Marta Świętek,
marta.swietek@kff.com.pl



POLSKI INSTYTUT SZTUKI FILMOWEJ
POLISH FILM INSTITUTE

POLISH DOCS, POLISH ANIMATIONS AND POLISH SHORTS
PROJECTS ARE CO-FINANCED BY THE POLISH FILM INSTITUTE





30% CASH REBATE NOW IN POLAND.
ARE YOU IN?

WWW.PISF.PL/EN

INCENTIVES@PISF.PL

www.polishshorts.pl

www.polishdocs.pl

www.polishanimations.pl



POLSKI INSTYTUT SZTUKI FILMOWEJ
POLISH FILM INSTITUTE