

# THE CINEMA OF

# IMPORTANT CONTENT...

**Polish Women's Films at the Transforming Women International Images Film Festival for Women**  
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The ambiguity of the term *women's cinema* is defined in various ways by researchers and historians of cinema. Should the determining factor of such a definition be the method of describing reality or the choice of subject matter, or rather the method of creating these films? *Can this cinema be seen as being a minority cinema, one that uses the same language as that of mainstream cinema, but for different purposes?* (A. Butler) And finally does the so-called *women's cinema* stand in opposition to *male cinema*? The artistic creations of the couple, **Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze**, escape such easy categorisations. The Krauzes choose the topics together, prepare the documen-



Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze

tation and work on the screenplay together, and, finally, make the films together. It is rather an artistic kinship connected to how they perceive the world and how they create their images, causing their films to be important stories about the human condition. They tackle contemporary issues, touching on the topic of existence itself. In addition, even though the films take place in a very specific space, they achieve a universal dimension. Without denying their input into the final version of the work, we can easily risk the statement that their artistic worlds, their sensitivity, and methods of creating images must mutually permeate each other and thus complete the whole picture.

Patriarchy holds an unwritten reign over professions within the film industry, with women having to constantly adhere to higher requirements. It is much more difficult for them to reconcile their family life with the fact of being a director - a profession which demands sacrifice, consumes a lot of time and engages the emotions completely. The increasing presence of women in cinematography breaks with the patriarchal nature of this profession. The strength and courage of these women in their confrontation with the male world proves that passion, talent and active involvement allow for

a crossing of such boundaries into territory previously reserved for just one gender. *In order to work as a director you need male qualities: a desire for power and an ability to exercise it. The ability to organize people, control emotions - emphasizes Agnieszka Holland*, who makes her films not only in Poland, but also in the USA, England, France. **Dorota Kędzierzawska**, who repudiates the division of cinema on the basis of gender, simultaneously makes the following comment: *Working on a film, I never think about the fact that I am a woman. Actually there is only one very specific thing about being a woman director: you can never show any physical weakness.*

The ways of thinking about women's cinema are often influenced by stereotypes, yet even though breaking such stereotypes is not easy, this is slowly changing. This type of cinema is often in the general perception identified with less ambitious works, those which are more sentimental, melodramas or subjective feminist statements. It is perhaps for this reason that Polish female directors so frequently emphasize the individualism of their works and do not agree to such a categorisation. They search for the sources of the solutions they use in their films within human sensitivity, not within femininity. *I am a woman and I accept my femininity in various aspects, which do not translate into universal issues - claims Agnieszka Holland. My films are films made by a woman. And this has to influence them. But what is so special about that? I was never interested in purely female cinema, one that would be monothematic, only interested in the topic of women. I do not analyse myself in such a way, so as to find in myself as a director qualities which*



Agnieszka Holland

would pass as being typically female.

would pass as being typically female.

In the post-war history of Polish cinema, female directors created films independently of men. The topics which remained within the boundaries of their interests were often connected to women and their problems. They searched for stories, a separate language, their own character of writing, so as to speak about topics, which lay outside the realm of the interest of male directors. **Wanda Jakubowska**, a leading representative of social realism, who throughout her life paid homage to this ideology, spoke of maternity and the role of women in society. **Agnieszka Holland** and **Barbara Sas** created their films during the times of the cinema of moral anxiety in Poland and drew portraits of heroines who were subject to the terror of the socialist regime and the conditions they lived under. Since transformation, aside from Holland, who had emigrated after the introduction of martial law in Poland and continued to make most of her films abroad, the following Polish female directors should also be mentioned: **Magdalena Łazarkiewicz, Dorota Kędzierzawska, Teresa Kotlarczyk, Magdalena Piekorz, Joanna Kos-Krauze, Małgorzata Szumowska**. The works of the selected female directors describe separate human worlds. The directors search for their own language to tell stories and gain an understanding of not only the social moods, but primarily of human attitudes and emotions. Their cinematography presents images of the condition of modern man. The films are very personal and they inspire to show various reflections of the world, films - mirrors, films, which tell stories about both women and men, about the individual need to search for and find oneself within complex human relationships. They are characterized by their penetrating



Dorota Kędzierzawska



Still from the movie "Saviour's Square"

vision of reality, in which the most important thing is not the pace of the narration but the main character, her psychological portrait and her thoughts on the human condition. We learn of her emotional makeup and life tragedies, the choices which have to be made, situations that must be dealt with: maternity - thus life, passing away - thus death. We follow her attempts to attach meaning to basic values and her struggles to identify them and to retain them. These films are made up of both stories taken straight from real life and imaginary ones. They take place in Cracow and in Warsaw, on Saviour's Square in the very centre of the capital and in a sleepy town somewhere in the peripheries of the country, in the house of an older lady and on a deserted boat, in a clinic and in the middle of a field. The events happen right here and now. They happen everywhere... because they could happen to anyone...

The cinema of Polish female directors often tell the stories of women and of their world in relation to other people. Since the films are addressed to a large audience, not limited in age, gender or their outlook on life, they carry a universal message. The only requirement imposed on the audience is that they have a deep and reflective outlook on the world, a personal sensitivity, independent of their gender. When **Joanna Kos-Krauze** says that she perceives the film character Nikifor as an incarnation from Krynica of the biblical prophet Elias, who appears in the house in the form of a beggar in rags, she emphasizes that *it is our responsibility, here on Earth, to recognize him, because if we throw the beggar out, we break our alliance with God. And then our life will be filled with fear, anxiety, aggression and uncertainty*. The director does not direct these words to women or to men. She directs them to all human beings.

Written by Katarzyna Kubacka

I hold the great honour of inviting you to watch a selection of animated movies, made up of a number of films created by women - directors, screenwriters, artists, animators connected to the TV Animation Studio in Poznań, Poland. The women chose the topics, including the music and art, they worked on the films as their directors and graphic designers, as well as often creating the animation itself through the use of various specific authorial techniques. The element which makes all these films similar is that they involve the creation of film stories with the use of specific "characters of writing", as well as the use of poetic means of expression, with subtle takes on the topics and the ability to incorporate emotion into the films' narratives. These are emotions which come into being both on the side of the creator and on the side of the audience. It also involves the passion of searching for one's own language of filming, the passion to convey one's fascination with music and art to the audience. These women are the authors of the screenplays, of the directorial conceptualisation, of the artistic and animated elaboration of the topics.



Still from the movie "Carmen Habanera"



Aleksandra Korejwo

All of the presented films were hand-made: either through a meth-



Joanna Jasińska-Koronkiewicz



Anna Dudek

**Aleksandra Korejwo**, in the volatile animated work of art created with the use of sprinkled powder (*The Swan, Carmen Habanera, Carmen Torero*) and **Joanna Jasińska - Koronkiewicz**, using oil paint on a canvas (*Dies Irae*), both, even though with the help of completely different tools and material, have created animated pictures for the big screen. They work alone. They sprinkle powder or paint to

od involving the sprinkling of powder, or simply painted - on a canvas, cartons or on celluloid. They were all created without the use of computers.



Tamara Sorbian

create each frame by frame, second after second. Each film frame was created personally by the author with the use of a (bird's) feather or a paintbrush.

With **Anna Dudek** (*Mazurka in e-mol, The Chinese Tambourie*), **Tamara Sorbian** (*Adagio Cantabile*) and **Aniela Lubieniecka** (*Marc Chagall*), though each one creates her films by making use of the abilities of teams of animators, graphic designers and painters, they however manage to leave their own characteristic imprint on each of the animated pictures.

These films surely can not be considered to be "women's cinema" in the typical sense of the term. In these movies, the authors from Poznań do not take a stand on issues connected with women or with the place of women in the contemporary world. They do not attempt to deal with burning social issues. They do not fit the tag of *cinema of moral anxiety*. The authors from Poznań create aesthetic films, ones that are artistically mature, they animate not the world of everyday problems, but that of their dreams, feelings and fascinations. They aim to give their audience some "breathing" space in a world constantly on the go, a moment for feeling emotions, thus what has been expected from women from the dawn of time...

Ewa Sobolewska  
Producer

# ANIMATING THE WORLD...



Still from the movie "Mazurka in e-mol"

## Dorota Kędzierzawska

Director, screenwriter. Born 1957 in Lodz, Poland. It is said of Kędzierzawska that she *immortalizes fleeting moments*. She does not base her screenplays on any books, but makes use of stories she has heard in passing, which she develops into a feature film. It is said of her that she turns on the camera at that very moment when others turn them off. When portraying children she most often shows the world through their eyes. It was only with *Time to Die* that she showed a different story, one which presents a vivacious and funny older lady, who has to deal not only with the present but also the past. She takes on reality with an ironic smile and tackles the issue of loneliness.

### Time to Die (*Pora umierać*)



Director and script: **Dorota Kędzierzawska**. Cinematography: **Artur Reinhart**. Music: **Włodzimierz Pawlik**. Cast: **Robert Tomaszewski, Danuta Szaflarska, Krzysztof Globisz, Patrycja Szewczyk, Kamil Bi-tauv**. Poland 2007. 104 min.

### Nothing (*Nic*)



Director and script: **Dorota Kędzierzawska**. Cinematography: **Artur Reinhart**. Music: **Michał Lorenc**. Cast: **Anita Borkowska-Kuskowska, Janusz Panaszewicz, Danuta Szaflarska**. Poland 1998. 74 min.

## Joanna Kos – Krauze

Director, screenwriter. Born 1972 in Olsztyn, Poland. Following *My Nikifor* – an unusual story about painting and the sacrifices made for art - she directed along side her husband, Krzysztof Krauze, the social drama, *Plac Zbawiciela*. This film comments on the reality of Poland following transformation, but its essence concerns the tragedy of human existence. It is a story told from the internal perspective, which causes that the emotions of the characters are deeply felt by the audience, who quickly begin to identify with the main characters. It is a story about guilt and redemption. It is a moving picture about human desires, dreams, a story about man, the solitude he feels even when surrounded by people and about the need for intimacy. It is also a story about love in all its forms. Both the critics and the audience have unanimously voted *Plac Zbawiciela* as one of the best Polish films of recent years.

### Saviour's Square (*Plac Zbawiciela*)



Director and script: **Joanna Kos-Krauze, Krzysztof Krauze**. Cinematography: **Wojciech Staroń**. Music: **Paweł Szymański**. Cast: **Jowita Budnik, Arkadiusz Janiczek, Ewa Wencel, Dawid Gudejko, Natan Gudejko**. Poland 2006. 105 min.

# Selected Polish Female Directors At The International Film Festival For Women

## Izabela Szylo

Director, screenwriter. She is the author of films and documentaries. She participated in the first edition of the Screenplay Laboratory of the Polish Film-makers' Association, the effect of which was the filming of *The Reliable System* – her feature film debut. The inspiration for writing this screenplay came from a story written by Alexander Puszkina *The Lady of Spades*. The film is a cheerful story about an older lady attempting to correct a mistake made in the past, while a lost necklace plays the role of a symbol of young love. *From the very beginning, the screenplay aroused positive emotions, everyone worked on it with enthusiasm, putting a little piece of their own goodness into the film. I hope that this positive energy will also be felt on the big screen and that it will stay with the audience for a longer period of time* – says the director.

### The Reliable System



(*Niezawodny system*)  
Director and script: **Izabela Szylo**. Cinematography: **Wojciech Staroń**. Music: **Grzegorz Turnau**. Poland 2008. 78 min.

POLISH WOMEN'S FILMS

## The Remaining Polish Women's Films To Be Presented At The International Images Film Festival For Women

### Demaquillage (*Demakijaż*)



Director and script: **Maria Sadowska, Dorota Lamparska, Anna Maliszewska**. Cinematography: **Jeremiasz Prokopowicz, Dorota Lamparska, Dominik Danilczyk**. Music: **Maria Sadowska**. Cast: **Anita Jancia, Adam Woronowicz, Magdalena Czerwińska, Łukasz Simlat**. Poland 2009. 111 min.

### Visit me in my Dreams (*Odwiedź mnie we śnie*)



Director: **Teresa Kotlarczyk**. Script: **Renata Frydrych**. Cinematography: **Krzysztof Pakulski**. Music: **Marek Bychawski**. Cast: **Danuta Stenka, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Joanna Jeżewska, Ewa Gawryluk**. Poland 1997. 69 min.

### Drowsiness (*Senność*)



Director: **Magdalena Piekorz**. Script: **Wojciech Kuczok**. Cinematography: **Marcin Koszałka**. Music: **Adrian Konarski**. Cast: **Małgorzata Kożuchowska, Michał Żebrowski, Krzysztof Zawadzki, Joanna Pierzak, Rafał Maćkowiak, Bartosz Obuchowicz**. Poland 2008. 105 min.

### Pestka (*The Pip*)



Director: **Krystyna Janda**. Script: **Maciej Maciejewski**. Cinematography: **Edward Kłosiński**. Music: **Wojciech Borkowski**. Cast: **Krystyna Janda, Daniel Olbrychski, Anna Dymna, Agnieszka Krukówna, Jan Frycz, Jan Englert**. Poland 1996. 88 min.

POLISH WOMEN'S FILMS

## Polish Women's Animations to be presented at the Transforming Women International Images Film Festival



### The Swan (*Łabędź*)

Director **Aleksandra Korejwo**. Music by **Camille Saint-Saëns**. Poland. 3:30 min.

### Still from the movie Carmen Torero



### Carmen Torero

Director **Aleksandra Korejwo**. Music by **Georges Bizet**, arranged by **Rodion Shchedrin**. Poland 1996. 3:45 min.

### Carmen Habanera

Director **Aleksandra Korejwo**. Music by **Georges Bizet**, arranged by **Rodion Shchedrin**. Poland 1995. 4:35 min.



### On the Beautiful Blue Danube Waltz op. 314 (*Nad pięknym modrym Dunajem*)

Director **Aleksandra Korejwo**, music by **Johann Strauss**. Poland 1993. 6 min.

### Still from the movie On the Beautiful Blue Danube Waltz



### The Chinese Tambourine (*Chiński tamburyn*)

Director **Anna Dudek**. Music by **Fritz Kreisler**. Poland 1994. 5 min.

### Still from the movie Dies Irae



### Mazurka in E Minor Op. 17 No. 2

Director **Anna Dudek**, music by **Fryderyk Chopin**. Poland 1992. 3 min.

### Still from the movie Adagio Cantabile



### Dies Irae

Director **Joanna Jasińska-Koronkiewicz**. Music by **W. A. Mozart**. Poland 2006. 2:15 min.

### Adagio Cantabile

Director **Tamara Sorbian**. Music by **Tomaso Albinoni**. Poland 1990. 5:55 min.

### Marc Chagall

**Aniela Lubieniecka**, artwork based on paintings by **Marc Chagall**. Poland 1994. 7:40 min.

## ORGANISERS:



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