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2022
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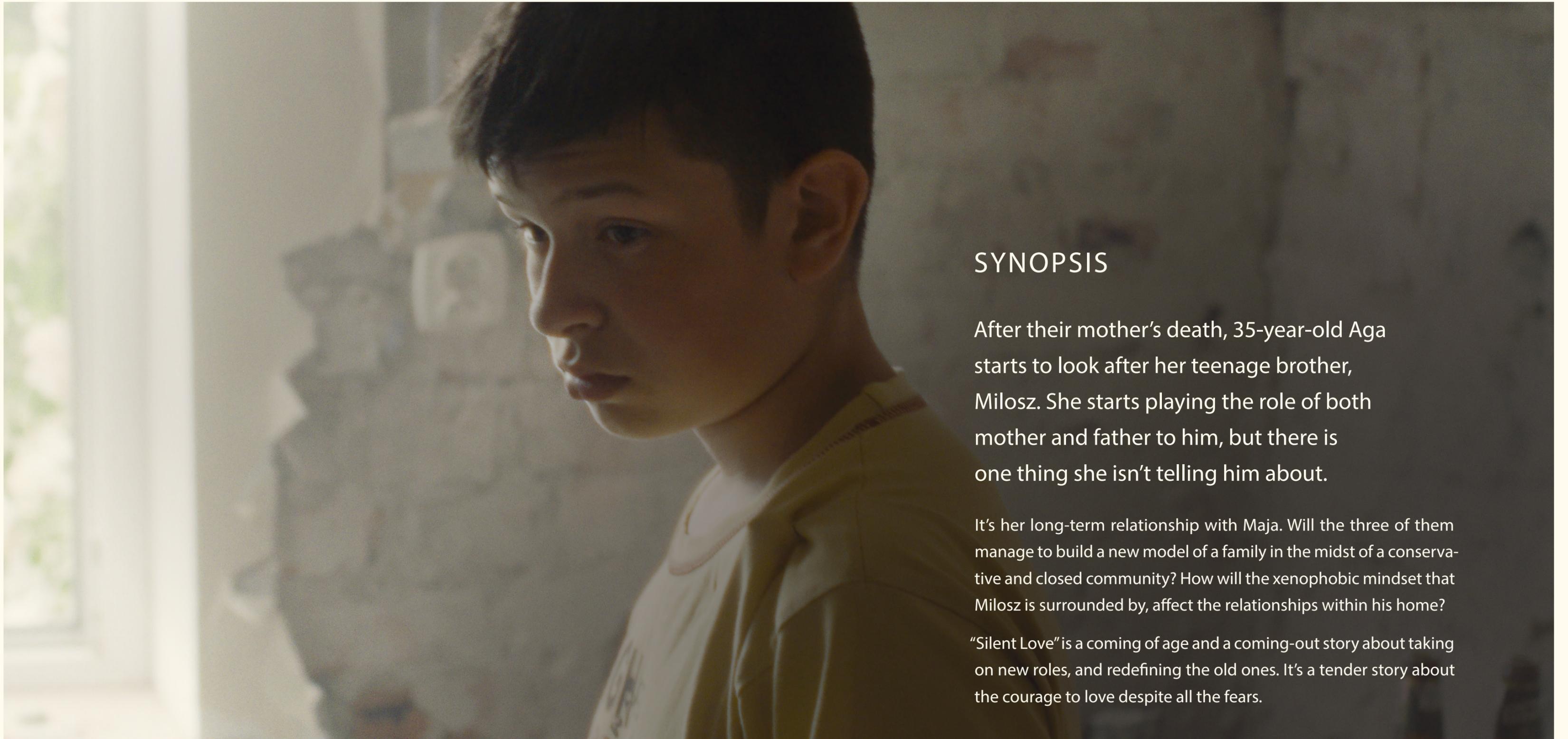
WINNER
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GRAVITY

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GRAND PRIX BANK MILLENNIUM AWARD 2022
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Silent Love

DOCUMENTARY FILM

by Marek Kozakiewicz



SYNOPSIS

After their mother's death, 35-year-old Aga starts to look after her teenage brother, Milosz. She starts playing the role of both mother and father to him, but there is one thing she isn't telling him about.

It's her long-term relationship with Maja. Will the three of them manage to build a new model of a family in the midst of a conservative and closed community? How will the xenophobic mindset that Milosz is surrounded by, affect the relationships within his home?

"Silent Love" is a coming of age and a coming-out story about taking on new roles, and redefining the old ones. It's a tender story about the courage to love despite all the fears.



'Silent Love' could also be titled 'Soft Love' on account of its delicate, elegant style and tone, showing the protagonists' private lives but not feeling voyeuristic at any point. Poland loves its families... Some more than others.

Ola Salwa, Cineuropa

WRITTEN & DIRECTED

by Marek Kozakiewicz

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Marek Kozakiewicz

EDITED

by Anna Garnarczyk, Agata Cierniak

MUSIC

Bartosz Bludau

SOUND EDITING

Mateusz Adamczyk

CO-PRODUCED

by Ira Tondowski, Alex Tondowski, Tondowski Films

CO-PRODUCERS

MDR/Arte, Lekko Films

PRODUCED

by Agnieszka Skalska, Koi Studio

FILM IS CO-FINANCED

by Polish Film Institute, Polish-German Co-production Fund,
MITTELDEUTSCHE MEDIENFÖRDERUNG Fund



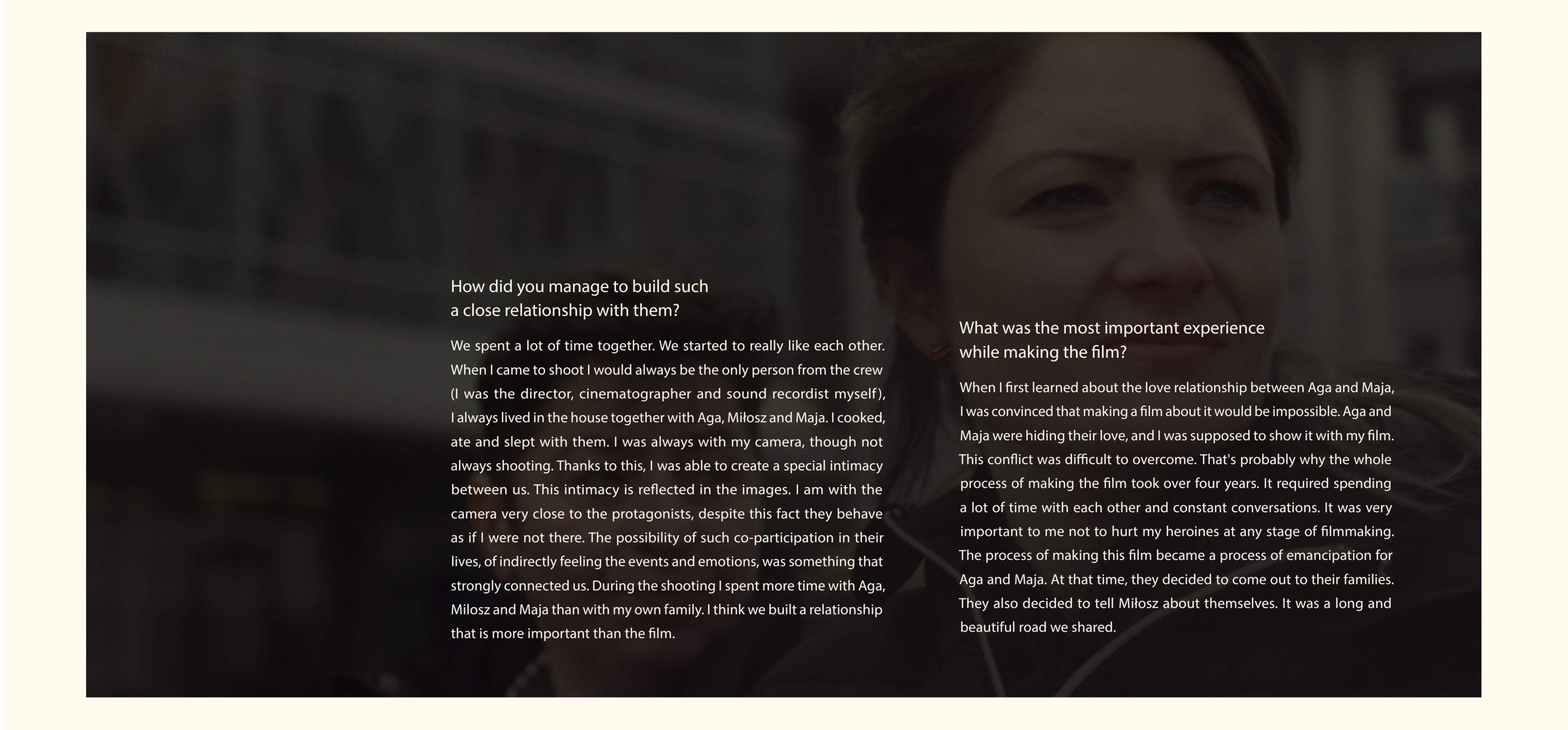
'Silent Love' delicately captures the inner tremors that feed the trio's discreet struggle, who little by little begin to live like a family, against the prejudices of an ultra-conservative and viscerally homophobic society.

Violeta Bava, Visions du Reel

FROM THE DIRECTOR

How did you meet your protagonists?

I decided to start shooting "Silent Love" right after my health crisis. I moved back to my parents' house to recover. That's how I met Aga and Miłosz. They visited my parents. My mother and their mother, Gabrysia had been friends for a long time. While I was recovering from surgery, Mrs. Gabrysia was suffering from lung cancer. Our illnesses brought our families closer together. After Mrs. Gabrysia's death, I visited Aga and Milosz and suggested we start a film project together. Back then, I didn't know where it would lead us. Aga replied: "You can always visit us in our house, we have nothing to hide". As it later turned out, this was not the whole truth. After one of my subsequent visits, Aga told me about her secret love relationship with Maja. Aga was relieved to be able to tell me honestly about everything without being judged. It was a special conversation that I won't forget.

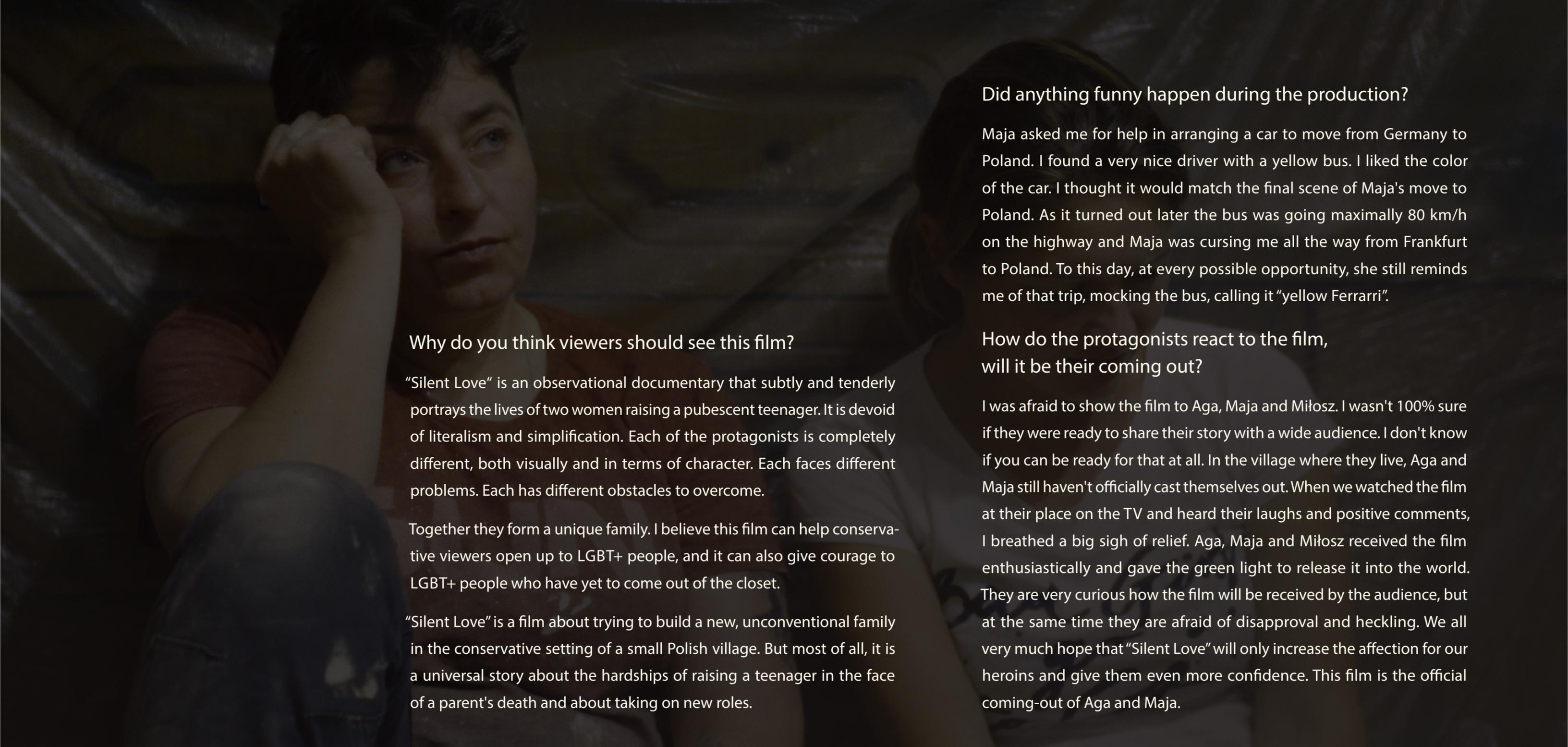


How did you manage to build such a close relationship with them?

We spent a lot of time together. We started to really like each other. When I came to shoot I would always be the only person from the crew (I was the director, cinematographer and sound recordist myself), I always lived in the house together with Aga, Miłosz and Maja. I cooked, ate and slept with them. I was always with my camera, though not always shooting. Thanks to this, I was able to create a special intimacy between us. This intimacy is reflected in the images. I am with the camera very close to the protagonists, despite this fact they behave as if I were not there. The possibility of such co-participation in their lives, of indirectly feeling the events and emotions, was something that strongly connected us. During the shooting I spent more time with Aga, Miłosz and Maja than with my own family. I think we built a relationship that is more important than the film.

What was the most important experience while making the film?

When I first learned about the love relationship between Aga and Maja, I was convinced that making a film about it would be impossible. Aga and Maja were hiding their love, and I was supposed to show it with my film. This conflict was difficult to overcome. That's probably why the whole process of making the film took over four years. It required spending a lot of time with each other and constant conversations. It was very important to me not to hurt my heroines at any stage of filmmaking. The process of making this film became a process of emancipation for Aga and Maja. At that time, they decided to come out to their families. They also decided to tell Miłosz about themselves. It was a long and beautiful road we shared.



Why do you think viewers should see this film?

“Silent Love” is an observational documentary that subtly and tenderly portrays the lives of two women raising a pubescent teenager. It is devoid of literalism and simplification. Each of the protagonists is completely different, both visually and in terms of character. Each faces different problems. Each has different obstacles to overcome.

Together they form a unique family. I believe this film can help conservative viewers open up to LGBT+ people, and it can also give courage to LGBT+ people who have yet to come out of the closet.

“Silent Love” is a film about trying to build a new, unconventional family in the conservative setting of a small Polish village. But most of all, it is a universal story about the hardships of raising a teenager in the face of a parent's death and about taking on new roles.

Did anything funny happen during the production?

Maja asked me for help in arranging a car to move from Germany to Poland. I found a very nice driver with a yellow bus. I liked the color of the car. I thought it would match the final scene of Maja's move to Poland. As it turned out later the bus was going maximally 80 km/h on the highway and Maja was cursing me all the way from Frankfurt to Poland. To this day, at every possible opportunity, she still reminds me of that trip, mocking the bus, calling it “yellow Ferrarri”.

How do the protagonists react to the film, will it be their coming out?

I was afraid to show the film to Aga, Maja and Miłosz. I wasn't 100% sure if they were ready to share their story with a wide audience. I don't know if you can be ready for that at all. In the village where they live, Aga and Maja still haven't officially cast themselves out. When we watched the film at their place on the TV and heard their laughs and positive comments, I breathed a big sigh of relief. Aga, Maja and Miłosz received the film enthusiastically and gave the green light to release it into the world. They are very curious how the film will be received by the audience, but at the same time they are afraid of disapproval and heckling. We all very much hope that “Silent Love” will only increase the affection for our heroins and give them even more confidence. This film is the official coming-out of Aga and Maja.



MAREK KOZAKIEWICZ

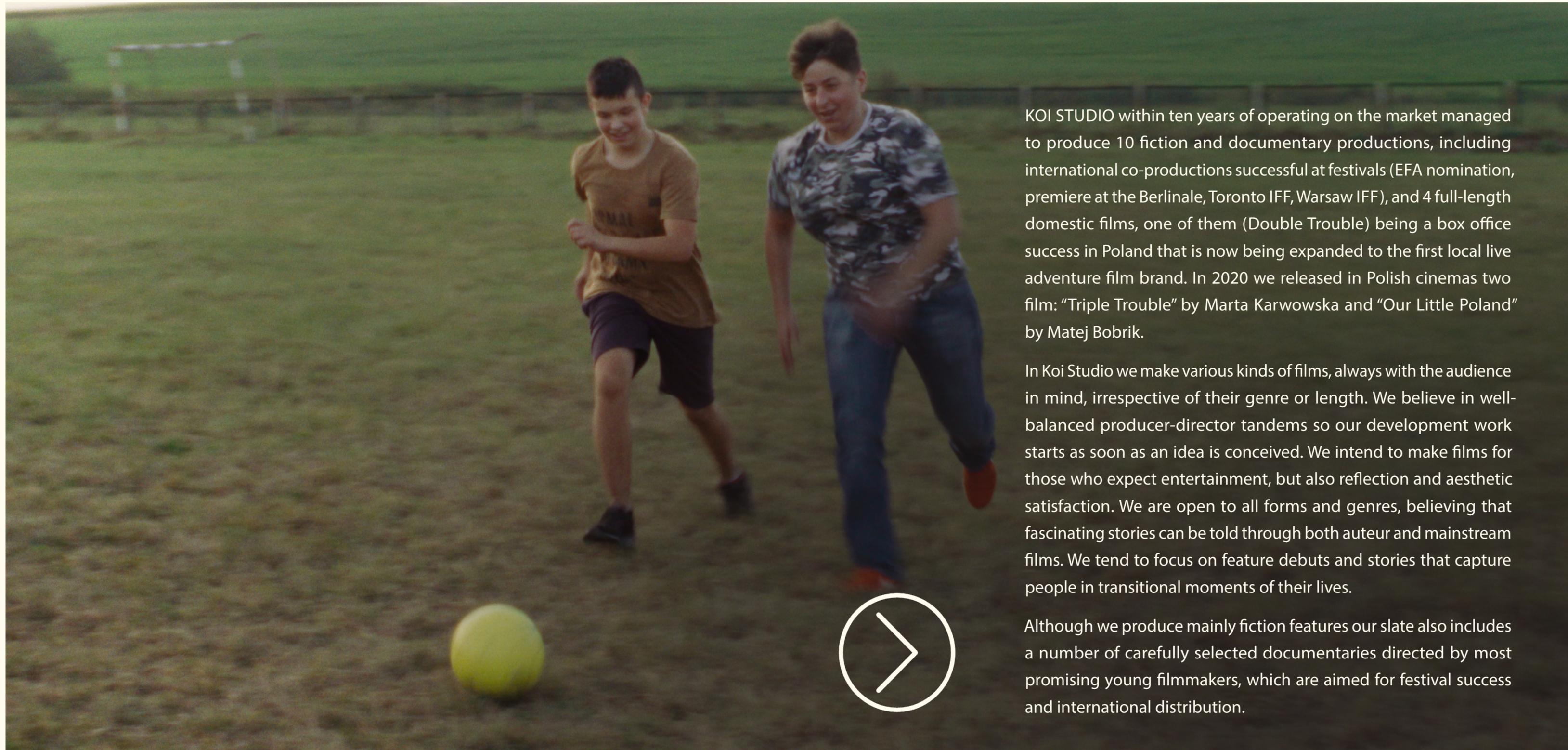
Born in 1986, film director and cinematographer; video and multimedia artist. He graduated from the National Film School in Łódź (PWSFTviT) at the Faculty of Cinematography. He also completed Film Studies at the University of Lodz.

His full-length documentary directorial debut "Silent Love" (for which he was also the cinematographer) was officially selected for Visions Du Reel and Hotdocs 2022. The film is co-produced by MDR/ARTE. The project was awarded at the DOC LAB POLAND and received the Accelerator Prize at DOK Leipzig 2019 Film Market.

Marek is especially dedicated to working on documentaries. Currently, as a director and cinematographer, he is working on the new film for a big streaming platform. The films he shot were shown at the largest film festivals around the world. He is the cinematographer of the full-length documentary "Diagnosis", which you can watch on Netflix.

The film was nominated for Polish Oscars ORŁY 2019 award in the Best Documentary Film category. For this film, Marek was nominated by PSC for the best polish cinematography award in documentary film 2019. He also shot the film "The Ugliest Car in the World", which had it's world premiere at IDFA 2017 (main competition) and received the Golden Hobby Horse, Grand Prix for the best Polish film at the 57th Krakow Film Festival.

Since 2012, Marek has been working as a light and video designer on the largest theater productions in Poland (he is the author of films/visualizations that are part of more than 30 performances and operas). Including to "Kordian" dir. Jan Englert for the 150th anniversary of the National Theater in Warsaw. He was the author of the video for "Soliaris 4" at the National Theater in Vilnius, directed by Grzegorz Jarzyna – one of the greatest stars of Polish theater. His next theatrical production will take place at the Munchner Kammerspiele in Munich. He collaborates with acclaimed Polish directors such as: Jan Englert, Krzysztof Garbaczewski, Grzegorz Jaremko, Grzegorz Jarzyna, Maja Kleczewska, Natalia Korczakowska, Paweł Miśkiewicz, Wiktor Rubin...



KOI STUDIO within ten years of operating on the market managed to produce 10 fiction and documentary productions, including international co-productions successful at festivals (EFA nomination, premiere at the Berlinale, Toronto IFF, Warsaw IFF), and 4 full-length domestic films, one of them (Double Trouble) being a box office success in Poland that is now being expanded to the first local live adventure film brand. In 2020 we released in Polish cinemas two film: "Triple Trouble" by Marta Karwowska and "Our Little Poland" by Matej Bobrik.

In Koi Studio we make various kinds of films, always with the audience in mind, irrespective of their genre or length. We believe in well-balanced producer-director tandems so our development work starts as soon as an idea is conceived. We intend to make films for those who expect entertainment, but also reflection and aesthetic satisfaction. We are open to all forms and genres, believing that fascinating stories can be told through both auteur and mainstream films. We tend to focus on feature debuts and stories that capture people in transitional moments of their lives.

Although we produce mainly fiction features our slate also includes a number of carefully selected documentaries directed by most promising young filmmakers, which are aimed for festival success and international distribution.





TONDOWSKI FILMS is an independent production company based in Havelland, Leipzig and Bonn, Germany. The company was founded in 2011 by the German writer/director/producer Ira Tondowski and the French/ English actor/producer Alex Tondowski. In 2020 writer/ marketing specialist and producer Raid Sabbah joined Tondowski Films for our office in Bonn, Germany.

For us at TONDOWSKI FILMS filmmaking is about the realization of strong stories in a simple and straightforward way with an impact on society and politics. From documentary to fiction TONDOWSKI FILMS produces with passion and creativity content for the international market. We work closely with writers, directors and freelance producers of diverse cultural backgrounds. We are strong in bringing content to its maximal potential and identifying its needs at an early stage.

Our productions have won major prizes among them the German Lola 2020 for BORN IN EVIN and the IDFA VOPRO AWARD 2013 for SONG FROM THE FOREST.

TONDOWSKI FILMS is present at major pitches, festivals and markets globally. Over the past 10 years we have built a solid network of partners around the world.





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