



SEMAINE  
DE LA CRITIQUE  
CANNES 2017

# ELA

## SZKICE NA POŻEGNANIE

A PRODUCTION OF THE **FILM UNIVERSITY BABELSBERG KONRAD WOLF**

**„ELA - SZKICE NA POŻEGNANIE”** WITH **KAROLINA ROMUK-WODORACKA** **BARTOSZ SAK**  
**KAROLINA PORCARI** **MIKOŁAJ TRZYBIŃSKI** AND **BJÖRN HEIENBROCK**

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **OLIVER ADAM KUSIO**



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# ELA

## SZKICE NA POŻEGNANIE

ELA — SZKICE NA POŻEGNANIE

ELA — SKETCHES ON A DEPARTURE  
ELA — ESQUISSES D'UN ADIEU  
ELA — SKIZZEN ZUM ABSCHIED

a short film

directed by  
**OLIVER ADAM KUSIO**

with  
**KAROLINA ROMUK-WODORACKA**  
**BARTOSZ SAK**  
**KAROLINA PORCARI**  
**MIKOŁAJ TRZYBIŃSKI**  
**BJÖRN HEIENBROCK**

a production of the  
**FILM UNIVERSITY BABELSBERG KONRAD WOLF**

GERMANY 2017 | FICTION | 25' 40" | DCP 2.39:1 | COLOUR | 5.1  
PL OV | EN FR DE SUBTITLES

**EVERY NEW BEGINNING  
COMES FROM  
ANOTHER BEGINNING'S  
END.**

**LOG LINE**





## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Ela lives in a small provincial town in Poland. Her daily life is stuck in a routine, balancing work and family. But Ela has a dream: Like many young Polish people, Ela, too wants to escape the tristesse of the council housing estate and move West, into a better life.

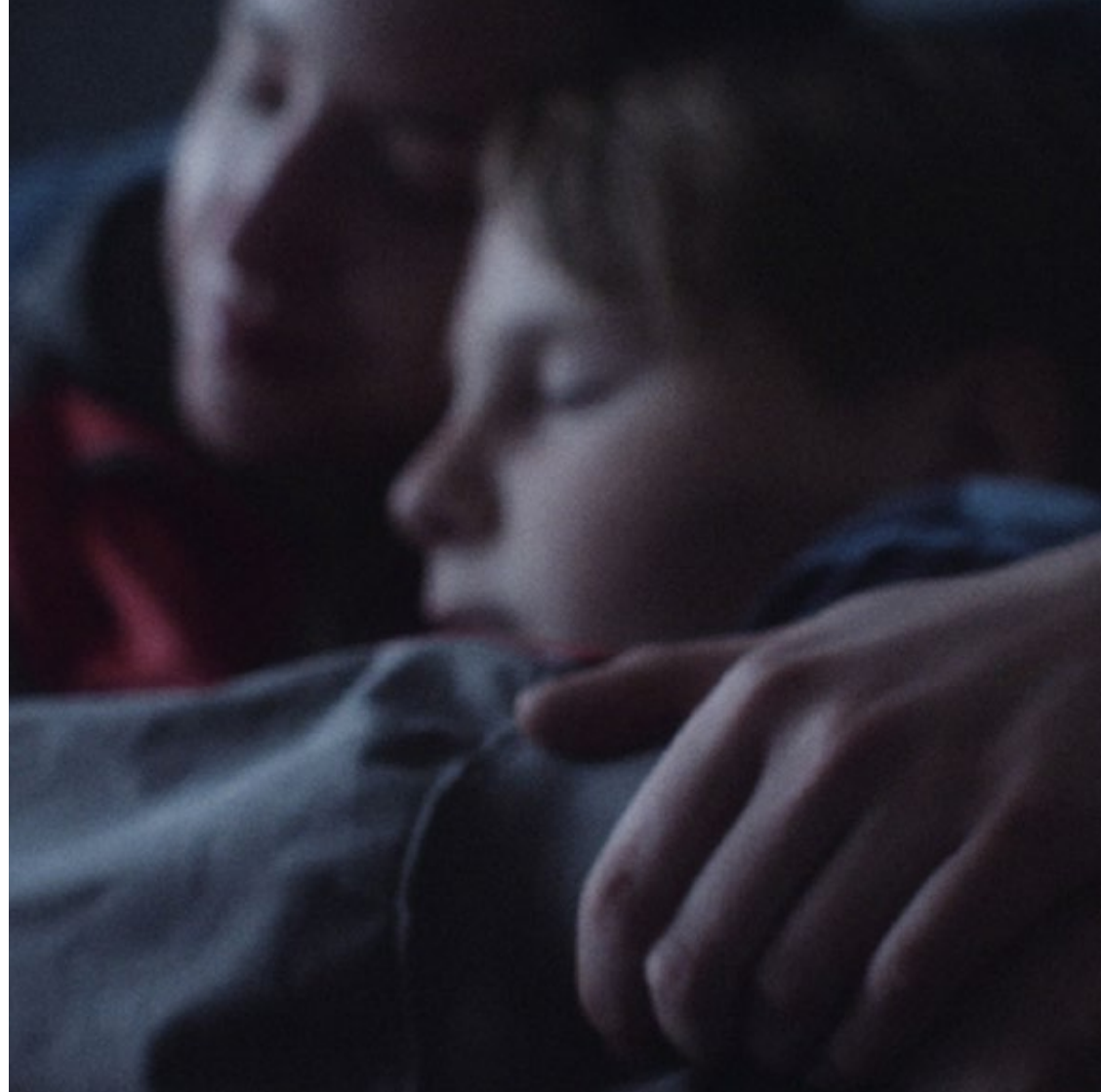
## LONG SYNOPSIS

Ela, a young woman, lives together with her older sister Janina and her nephew Mikotaj within precarious living conditions in a small provincial town in Poland. Her daily life is stuck in a routine, balancing work and family. At night she goes to work in an industrial laundry, where all the money she earns is spent on supporting her family. Her free time she spends with her longterm boyfriend, Jakub, the laundry delivery boy. Even though her sister disapproves of him, she enjoys the trust and love they share.

But Ela has a dream: Like many young Polish people, Ela too, wants to escape the tristesse of the council housing estate and move West, into a better life. Having

spent months saving up for a flight ticket to Ireland, Ela still can't bring herself to finalize her decision to leave. The thought of parting with young Mikotaj, whose loyalty for his aunt is even defended on the playground, breaks her heart. And even though Jakub offers to help her finance the trip, he still can't help showing his contempt towards Ela's dream of the "golden world". Only her sister Janina pushes Ela to believe in her longings and wishes beyond the borders of Poland.

Finally, Ela faces the bitter fact, that even the biggest stories of love, desire and devotion can end. And new stories must be found elsewhere.





**DIRECTOR  
OLIVER ADAM  
KUSIO**

Oliver Adam Kusio was born in 1988 in Frankfurt on the Main, Germany. After graduating from both a German and a Polish school, he studied Art History, Visual Studies and Philosophy in Berlin. Whilst doing internships in theatre and film, he began writing and directing his own short films. Since 2011 he has been collaborating with director Rosa von Praunheim. Currently he is studying film directing at the Film University Babelsberg *KONRAD WOLF*.

**2017**

‘ELA - SKETCHES ON A DEPARTURE’

(fiction, 26 min) — Film University Babelsberg

‘ANDY’S MY FRIEND’

(documentary, 16 min) — Film University Babelsberg

**2014**

‘PRAUNHEIM MEMOIRES’ as co-director

(documentary, 90 min) — Rosa von Praunheim Film, HR

**2012**

‘A HARD LIFE’ as co-director

(documentary, 15 min) — Rosa von Praunheim Film, rbb, arte



**INTERVIEW WITH  
DIRECTOR  
OLIVER ADAM KUSIO  
AND ACTRESS  
KAROLINA ROMUK-  
WODORACKA**

**What made you first want to make films?**

[OAK]: I grew up as the son of Polish immigrants in a suburban area of Frankfurt on the Main. I went to both a German and a Polish school in Frankfurt, but have never lived in Poland myself. Still, my parents always tried to bring the Polish culture home by showing me films of directors such as Kieslowski, Polanski or Wajda. For my

parents cinema was a means to shape my identity. Turning the tables and using the medium to try and shape the world around me seemed like a natural step.

**Where did you get the idea for this film?**

[OAK]: At its heart the film retells the story of my parents who emigrated from Poland to Germany in the early 80s, looking for

prosperity in the West. On their journey into a uncertain future they had to leave behind everything familiar - their parents, siblings and friends.

[KRW]: If you think about it it's a story that couldn't be more contemporary.

[OAK]: The film was also inspired by the



documentary 'Krystyna M. - Szkice do Portretu' ('Krystyna M. - Sketches for a Portrait') by Polish filmmaker Kazimierz Karabasz. As a nod to the film I chose to tell the story in chapters and also named the main character Ela after Krystyna's best friend in Karabasz's film.

**Was the difficult to shoot?**

[OAK]: The production process itself was turbulent and involved several script revisions. Mostly because every time I started investigating and digging deeper into the daily routines of the people living near the border between Poland and Germany, where the film was to be shot, I felt that what I had written wouldn't do justice to their reality. In accordance with my team and actors I decided to drop the script al-

together. Instead of following a well defined plan, we chose to improvise and integrate the world as we found it into the creative process.

[KRW]: Working on set was incredible and very challenging at the same time. Since we had no script Oliver asked us to watch a lot of films and read different kinds of texts. Oliver mainly paid attention to certain emotional states, emotional essences he was trying to depict. We began working on scenes by improvising, developing dialogue and arranging movement patterns. Only then the camera started rolling.

[OAK]: For example the original script

didn't include Mikotaj's character. And it wasn't until we started shooting scenes in the apartment shown in the film, that a curious and wonderfully charming boy started appearing on set. Out of nowhere! It turned out that he was the landlady's son. For us it became clear that he embodied a missing piece in the story that we were trying to tell. Making him a key figure in the film felt more than natural given our working method.

#### **What else did reality add?**

[KRW]: There are numerous examples of scenes that were shot spontaneously and only subsequently integrated into the narrative... Ela discovering the dying fish, the

family hiding from the hail storm, Kuba peeing off the boat, just to name a few.

[OAK]: Even though letting go of the structure of a script was a struggle, it gave us the possibility to react to the unexpected beauty of everyday life. Reality provided us with all the inspiration we required. Since we wanted to blur the lines between documentary- and fictional filmmaking, I would often ask my cinematographer Marco to keep rolling even though a scene had been completed. The resulting shots seemed more 'naive' and pure, especially when combined with other footage.

[KRW]: I'm truly impressed with the crew.

Technically speaking it wasn't an easy film to make. Also, their ability to capture the improvised scenes is even more baffling if you take into account that - apart from Oliver - almost none of them spoke Polish. They didn't know what we were going to say or do... what strange things we might come up with. And we came up with a lot of strange things!

#### **Your philosophy doesn't lend itself naturally to filmmaking...**

[OAK]: And that's what I think sets 'Ela' apart from more traditionally shot films. You could trace it back to my experience as a musician, I guess. We shot the movie less like a film crew and more like a jazz band!





## **KAROLINA ROMUK-WODORACKA**

was born in 1990 in Gdańsk, Poland. At the age of 15 Karolina started modeling in Poland and France which lead to her interest in acting. After graduating she studied psychology, whilst developing her acting skills at the ActorStudio (Warsaw),

Laboratorium Meisnera (Warsaw) and the Actors' Temple (London). Currently she is preparing to take on her first role in a feature film.





## CAST & CREW

### DIRECTED BY

Oliver Adam Kusio

### WITH

Karolina Romuk-Wodoracka  
Bartosz Sak  
Karolina Porcari  
Mikołaj Trzybiński  
Björn Heienbrock

### WRITTEN BY

Oliver Adam Kusio

### PRODUCER

Simon B. Stein

### PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Maja Nagrodzka

### CINEMATOGRAPHER

Marco Müller

### PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Fanny Welz

### EDITED BY

Anna-Lena Laura Engelhardt

### MUSIC BY

Azadeh Zandieh

### COSTUME DESIGNER

Janina Kuhlmann

### GAFFER

Jakob Reinhardt

### SOUND/ SOUND DESIGN

Azadeh Zandieh

### RE-RECORDING MIXER

Azadeh Zandieh, Ludwig Müller

### LINE PRODUCER

Ursula Kalb-Krieg



## CONTACTS

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[ELASHORTFILM.COM](http://ELASHORTFILM.COM)

[FACEBOOK.COM/ELA.FILM](https://FACEBOOK.COM/ELA.FILM)

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