

# matka (the mother)

—a film by Lee Mackintosh Jones



# scenes



# film synopsis

Young Artur a 9 year old boy and his mother have an especially close bond, compensating in their own way for a life without hope and without the father; he returns unexpectedly and takes Artur to an orphanage without the knowledge of the mother.

The harsh realities of the orphanage and fear are overcome by the comfort that his mother will soon come and take him away from this place, the one ray of hope is the caring Anna, whose own past is brought to the forefront on meeting Artur, is he the child she can help so that this can be the catalyst of change in her own life?

Meanwhile Maria (the Mother) left in her world full of demons fuelled by alcohol and drugs tries to come to terms with the loss of Artur as she begins a desperate search to find him;

As she disappears in a vacuum of hopelessness her desperation is revealed in a childrens playground, she is placed in a woman's refuge for her own safety, the realisation is a simple choice for her as she deals with her demons, knowing that she will someday be with Artur again if she can only sort out her destructive, abusive behaviour.

Their reunion turns into a test of humanity and hope which pushes the mother son (and the newly found influence and kindness of Anna) relationship to the limits as their reunion is brought to a premature end.

A mesmerizing human drama set against the broken industrial heartland of southern Poland.

## director's notes

Whilst working on a play in London, about the complexity of family relationships, and as part of my research I'd come across a photo of a woman who seemed to me to be full of contradictions, a distressed physical presence yet there was this calmness to her, a distance, so one starts asking questions, who is she, what does she do, is she married, is she a mother? This was the trigger for the story and of course I was then intrigued and continued asking more of these types of questions about her, then slowly a drama begins to unfold, an energy where by you simply have to do something about this idea. So once I had the an outline of the characters I began the writing process, but I wanted to create a sense of unpredictability, a sense that none of the characters are in control of their own destiny, incidentally, this is the thing that binds them together, the actors input during the rehearsal process, aided

by the research and visiting the locations prior to filming also added greatly to final scripted version as we were uncovering new things, new points of reference with which to explore in greater detail. The film essentially deals with consequence, if you keep doing the same then you'll keep getting the same outcome, this was the challenge for the mother character in the film. Cinematically we wanted to create a doc style narrative, not to highlight small details through the structure, to skim over the details in the hope that they will then become key elements of the film, we are just following the events as they unfold, I didn't want anything to interfere with the audience connection for the characters. I heard a saying from a Polish artist who said make a film like a sculpture that you have to enter, to be inside of, where everything there is important, that's my goal for the film.





## the actors



### Magdalena Czerwińska (Mother)

Born in 1978, Polish film and theater actress. A graduate of the Academy for the Dramatic Arts in Cracow. She has been nominated twice the Award of Zbigniew Cybulski – in 2009 for her role in film *Demakijaż* (Make up removal) – it's part titled *Room of quick dates* and in *Wojna polsko-ruska* (Snow White and Russian Red) and in 2011 for her role in *Kret* (The Mole). She also starred in such films and TV series as *Dublerzy* (Understudies), *Trzeci oficer* (Third officer), *Prawo Agaty* (Agata's law), *Glina* (Cop).



### Julia Kijowska (Anna)

Born in 1981. A graduate of the Theatre Academy in Warsaw. Polish theater and film actress. She starred in many theater productions also in plays produced by the Theater of Polish Radio and Television Theatre and in films such as: *Boisko bezdomnych* (The Offsiders), *Lincz* (Lynch), Oscar-nominated film *W ciemności* (In Darkness), the TV show *Głęboka woda* (Deep water), which won the Prix Italia Award.



### Olaf Marchwicki (Artur)

9 year old Olaf his adventure with acting began a few years ago. He had already played in few Polish TV series such as *Plebania* (Presbytery), *Komisarz Alex* (Inspector Alex) and *Rodzinka.pl* (Family.pl).

# interview with director

*Lee, where did you get the Idea for Matka (The Mother)?*

I was working on a great play about an Irish immigrant family based in London. During the research for the play I was collecting images and the idea for a film came to me from an image I found of a woman. She had this strange physical presence full of contradiction (the film subsequently almost unconsciously has similar themes). Something about her seemed distressed, yet there was a calmness also for example, and one starts to ask questions: Who is she? Why is she here at this very point in her life? What is she doing here? What's her story? Does she have a husband? Is she a mother? So this was the starting point. Then when you start asking questions about this person answers start forming and a drama begins to unfold.

Once I had outline of the main characters, I was able to begin writing, but I wanted this process to be a sense of discovery, of unpredictability, of a dynamic sense of momentum where by none of the characters are in control of their destiny, in a sense this is what binds them together. I wanted to uncover new things about these people during this process, so it started as a script based in the UK and ended up being made in Poland!

*How long did it take from writing the script to shooting the film?*

Quite some time, a few years in fact, far too long, mainly because I was out of the industry (actually not sure I was ever in the industry), I was off doing other things, building businesses in Europe, Middle East and Africa, dealing with other challenges in life! This is interesting in itself as it created a distance from the story and when I came back to it, the colours appeared differently to me and it kind of challenged me in a different way which felt was exciting and immediate, the thinking I had about the story now was somehow more layered, but the emotional pull of the story was as strong as ever. I would say two events were the trigger in making the film, firstly meeting Werner Herzog (Rogue Film School) in London, I left there with his impassioned fatherhood like plea wringing in my ears 'Lee, you must seize the opportunity to be

a film maker' (he'd seen a 5 minute teaser that I'd put together with Pawel Dyllus our DOP) and within 6 months the production company was set up, the finance in place and we'd begun pre-production, the second point was becoming a father, wow, yea, now that's cool.

*Why make the film in Poland, what was it like to make there?*

For me Poland was a discovery by chance, having being invited to work on a production of Macbeth at Theatre Slaski in Katowice, I ended up staying and am now based in Silesia. The region is so diverse, I felt an immediate connection here and it dawned on me one day that this is the perfect canvas in which to paint this story on; cinematically I wanted to create a documentary style narrative but to focus on the under layers of raw realism, so the events in the film are hidden in the documentary format, the locations in Silesia made this cinematically possible as well. The country after the collapse of communism and joining the EU has and continues to tackle and deal with the transition from old to new, and this energy including the uncertainty formed an interesting back drop to the film for me, more from a social economic

point of view, rather than a pure political perspective.

Also to make a film you need a lot of elements to come together, key people, actors, crew, location, these were available to me in a way I never imagined possible in Poland. I guess being an outsider helps! I have a second (film) family here now and the possibilities are very interesting moving forward on that one.

*What is the story about?*

Well, the obvious answer here is to say watch the film and if you have any questions, thoughts, observations afterwards then please email me, I'd be delighted to respond in person.

How was the shooting process? How do you feel about the project after the shooting period? Did you find anything interesting or new working with Polish film makers, crew and actors?

The whole process was a very enjoyable experience, I would say incredible really, sure making a film is hard but the journey was amazing. People involved were there because they wanted to come on an adventure with us. I made this clear before we signed them up! From finding the actors, which was a long process in which I travelled all over Poland watching them in plays or simply meeting them, to finding the crew. The main thing is that everyone brought into the process that we were trying to adopt for this project and added so much richness to the story. Our goal was to use the energy of the actor's performance to connect with the audience emotion, we were very clear about not wanting anything to interfere with the audience reaction, I also didn't feel the need to explain everything, and we were just following the events as they unfold. From a technical view we wanted the actors and the space to determine the movement of camera and we worked a lot at trying to explore and uncover new things which we'd previously never considered during preparation.



# facts

<i>Title</i>	<b>The Mother</b>
<i>Original Title</i>	<b>MATKA</b>
<i>Director</i>	<b>Lee Mackintosh Jones</b>
<i>DOP</i>	<b>Pawel Dyllus</b>
<i>Editor</i>	<b>Katarzyna Leśniak</b>
<i>Sound Editor</i>	<b>Zbigniew Malecki</b>
<i>Screenwriter</i>	<b>Lee Mackintosh Jones</b>
<i>Genre</i>	<b>Drama</b>
<i>Length</i>	<b>approximately 90 min.</b>
<i>Shot On</i>	<b>HD</b>
<i>Screen ratio</i>	<b>Cinemascope</b>
<i>Language spoken</i>	<b>Polish</b>
<i>Country of Origin</i>	<b>Poland</b>
<i>Year of production</i>	<b>2012</b>
<i>Producers</i>	<b>Lee Mackintosh Jones, Joanna Myszor, Marta Pielasz</b>
<i>Executive producers</i>	<b>Natalia Szwed, Peter Rawson, Mark McVeigh</b>
<i>Production Company</i>	<b>Diabolical Liberties</b>

# festival contact

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