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and Executive Producer **TIM ROBBINS**
Present



Festival del film Locarno
Official selection

OLMO AND THE SEAGULL



REALITY BEGINS WHEN THE ACT ENDS

A film by **PETRA COSTA** and **LEA GLOB**

INTERNATIONAL PRESS

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ITALIAN DISTRIBUTION

I WONDER
P I C T U R E S

AWARDS

Winner of CPH:DOX NORDIC PRIZE where it
was shown as a work-in-progress.

STILLS

<http://olmoandtheseagull.com>

TRAILER

<http://olmoandtheseagull.com/#trailer>

“OLMO AND THE SEAGULL is a captivating film by two exceptionally talented filmmakers and actors that explores the line between fiction and reality, with stunning visual storytelling. The film captures what it is to be in love and pregnant unlike any film I have seen. The filmmakers approach the subject in a non sentimental way while illuminating the mysteries, fears, and humor of this profound, transitional moment in a couple’s life.”

TIM ROBBINS, director of Dead Man Walking

“Beautiful, tender, and endlessly fascinating, OLMO AND THE SEAGULL explores with thrilling boldness a space between fiction and nonfiction that I never dreamed possible.”

JOSHUA OPPENHEIMER, director of The Act of Killing

“Petra and Lea have achieved a perforating film, the most solid and impalpable experience a woman can reveal. “

EDMUNDO DESNOES, writer of Memories of Underdevelopment

LOGLINE

OLMO AND THE SEAGULL is a journey through the labyrinth of an actress's mind during the course of her pregnancy. While rehearsing for Chekhov's play *The Seagull*, Olivia and her companion Serge sense that the line between their life and the roles they play as actors is swiftly disappearing.

SYNOPSIS

A journey through the labyrinth of a woman's mind, OLMO AND THE SEAGULL tells the story of Olivia, a free-spirited stage actress preparing for a starring role in a theatrical production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. As the play starts to take shape, Olivia and her boyfriend, Serge, whom she first met on the stage of the Theatre du Soleil, discover she is pregnant.

Initially, she thinks she can have it all, until an unexpected setback threatens her pregnancy and brings her life to a standstill. Olivia's desire for freedom and success clashes with the limits imposed by her own body and the baby growing inside her. The months of her pregnancy unfold as a rite of passage, forcing the actress to confront her deepest fears. She looks in the mirror and sees both female characters of *The Seagull* - Arkadina, the aging actress, and Nina, the actress who falls into madness - as unsettling reflections of herself.

The film takes a further twist when what appears to be acted is revealed as life itself. This portrait of the creative process invites us to question what is real, what is imagined, and what we celebrate and sacrifice in life.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

PETRA COSTA

In our film we sought to examine the things we celebrate and sacrifice in life. Our objective was always to inhabit the border of fiction and reality. Inside: a small apartment. Outside: a theater. A real couple, in a relationship of ten years. An actor, an actress. A real belly, a fictional narrative.

My interest in cinema began with the theater. In my teenage years the Theatre du Soleil was a source of inspiration. Later, when I started working in cinema, I longed to create a film with actors improvising in free-form and developing a story collectively. I found that too often fictional films I saw were constrained by the form, and so entangled in it, that they lost the subtleties of life itself. In November 2011, the Theatre du Soleil was touring in Brazil. There, I met Olivia and Serge, two actors in the company. We began a dialogue and decided to make a film together.

A few months later I was invited by CPH:DOX (DOX:LAB) to co-direct a film with the Danish filmmaker Lea Glob. After a week finding our common ground, we understood that we wanted to make a film where we would use a fictional structure to look into the life of a real person. The idea was to construct frameworks and situations that would allow our characters to investigate their memories, desires, regrets, habits, and secrets. We were particularly interested in the female subject, a day in the life of a woman carrying out ordinary tasks. How many unnamable and innumerable thoughts can inhabit one's mind? How are fragments and intimations of eternity scattered throughout one day?

Immediately, I thought of Olivia and Serge. For the past ten years, they were creating theater based on improvisation, and thus, would be the perfect artists to share in this investigation. Additionally, thanks to the generosity with which they shared so many intimate moments of their lives, shooting within documentary parameters allowed us to see those real moments of connection that existed inside the couple's partnership.

Lea's talents of observational filmmaking and my orientation towards improvisation allowed the film to move into territories that it would have never otherwise reached. In all stages, from shooting to editing, the work of the entire team was imbued with the spirit of a theatre troupe, where many of the ideas came to life through collaboration.

OLMO AND THE SEAGULL is in many ways also a continuation of the investigations I have been carrying out in my previous films. To a great extent, I approach my films as an archeology of affections, trying to reach into the deep levels of impalpable emotions. For example, my previous film ELENA tells the story of three women from different generations going through the rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood - my

mother, myself, and my sister Elena who tragically committed suicide at the age of twenty. The image which united them was that of Ophelia, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It was interesting for me to learn that Chekhov wrote *The Seagull* as an echo of *Hamlet*, where Nina would represent an Ophelia who does not commit suicide - a seagull that is attracted to the water, but instead of drowning in it, flies over it. Similarly, if Elena, both as the real person and the fictional character in the film, had survived her own drowning, her next challenge would have been to make sense of all that might have followed: aging, the survival of her art, the loss and maintenance of love in a relationship, and perhaps motherhood.

One of the things we are trying to do with *OLMO AND THE SEAGULL* is to relieve a tension I've always felt between the fact that every single human was brought into being by a pregnant woman and the reality that there is almost no interesting cinematic portrayals of the psychological processes a mother goes through during this period of life. Why are the only complex representations of pregnancy in horror films, such as *Rosemary's Baby*? Similarly striking is the fact that there are so few critical examinations of how our society deals with the relationship between a woman's commitments as a mother and as a professional.

While *ELENA* explored the process of finding and grounding oneself in the world - becoming a being, an adult, a woman - through *OLMO AND THE SEAGULL* my hope was to investigate the process of letting go of that being, and to a certain extent, making room for something else to be born, whether that be a baby or a new version of the self, be it rooted as 'olmo' (elm tree in Italian) or migratory as a 'seagull'.

LEA GLOB

In *OLMO AND THE SEAGULL* we investigate the beauty of acting as a way to come to terms with the real. When Serge first told us the story of how he and Olivia fell in love on stage, we knew that our film would feed from this rich space between the imagination and reality that figured in this couple's life. Serge told us how Olivia, in the middle of a scene about the liberation of Kabul, in front of a full audience, would tease him by sending another actress across the stage to deliver him love messages. For these two characters, the stage is itself a part of their actual, personal story.

My entry into cinema began with *MEETING MY FATHER KASPER TOP HAT*, a story that grew out of my own personal experience. My father disappeared when I was two years old, never to be heard from again. Then, when I was eighteen, I was notified that he had hanged himself in a prison cell.

In the film I lead the audience through a highly intimate detective journey, as I try to reconstruct my father's identity. I lay out my father's pipe, gloves and photos to the viewer as though I were pinning them up onto a bulletin board of sorts, sifting through all the clues. The film relies on classic fictional devices - reconstructions of certain

scenes, a narrator, humor, emotional distance, the consideration of a weighty subject - but at the same time the form never lets go of its documentary aspect. I move between chaos, spontaneous emotions, and, eventually, a kind of synthesis and crystallization.

Here, we opted to use, as a sort of baseline structure, formalistic constraints on the lives of our characters: our aim was to structure and order what seemed like spontaneously shot documentary footage. We entered an area with known contours and an established storyline, but it was also an opportunity for us to push past that and to explore new territory.

It was poignant for me to be able to play with the tensions between acting versus being, because it was the question Olivia herself faced in her life, never more poignantly than during her pregnancy. Engaging in this process with Petra, Olivia and Serge helped enrich my approach to documentary-filmmaking immensely.

Throughout the entire process of making this film, the actors, production team, and directors jointly entered this blurry space between the real and the imagined. As a collaboration between genres, cultures and personalities, this film became an intense interrogation of questions of form and storytelling.

A pregnancy is a very real transformation of a woman's body and mind. To watch and create a film with such generous actors, who were open and giving in such a crucial moment of their lives, has been a continual inspiration. Their generosity has brought me in touch with a deeply felt desire to look at the very basic things in life and to dare to embrace the ordinary. Our film opens with the life of Olivia, as she is about to leave the stage (albeit temporarily) to start a family. This resonated with me, naturally. I am thirty-three years old, an age when a woman has to decide whether or not to start a family, and how. This personal connection has driven me to look even more closely at the drama that unfolds in the film.

ESSAY BY EDMUNDO DESNOES

writer of the book and script, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

We live in uncertain times, uncertain of traditional ways of living and uncertain about the structure of narrative art.

In *OLMO AND THE SEAGULL*, a bilingual film by Petra Costa and Lea Glob, the body - with its demanding organs - embraces the mind with its ambiguity. The film opens in the middle of the unfolding lives of Olivia and Serge and ends before the future arrives. Halfway through the journey of her life, Olivia, age thirty-four and pregnant, suddenly loses her way. She is forced to interrupt her career due to a hematoma in her uterus, and is confined to the apartment she shares with her companion Serge, who leaves her behind and moves ahead (or backwards) with his acting.

The title is in two languages: “olmo” is elm in Italian, a tree that grows with its roots uninterrupted, while the seagull moves restlessly and flies freely. Olivia is Italian and Serge is French. The embrace and the struggle between the solid earth and the empty sky. He travels and pays the bills; she grows in a golden cage.

Olivia is a committed actress playing the role of Arkadina in a production of *The Seagull* about to open in New York and Montreal. She believes she can continue her acting while pregnant, but finds herself trapped in the apartment as the fetus grows in her womb. The seagull in Chekhov is free and independent until she is brought down, destroyed by a man envious of her freedom. But Olivia is not destroyed: she discovers the ambiguity of her existence, becomes aware of its elusive reality. Petra Costa and Lea Glob give us a total woman through a fragment of her life.

Through a throbbing woman we understand the plight of all women and the role of men in their lives. The presence, the weight, the gravitation of the body is at the center of *OLMO AND THE SEAGULL*. Few films envelop the viewer as Olivia's physical presence envelops us, with the feminine voice-over giving the body depth and meaning. Nothing is more real than the body of a pregnant woman – both as a nude or a clothed silhouette. You feel Olivia's gravity and understand the emotion, the language generated by the presence of her body in every scene. A thoughtful physicality stealing into our consciousness.

Where does she go from here? What will she do, who will she be? Already she's a many layered reality. The rest is silence.

Petra and Lea have achieved a perforating film, the most solid and impalpable experience a woman can reveal.

CAST & CREW

In collaboration with	Olivia Corsini and Serge Nicolai
A film by	Petra Costa and Lea Glob
Edited by	Tina Baz and Marina Meliande
Director of Photography	Muhammed Hamdy
Cinematographers	Lisa Persson Nadim Carlsen
Music by	Adam Taylor
Sound Design by	Cecile Chagnaud
Mix by	Christophe Vingtrinier Nathalie Vidal
Script Collaboration	Martha Kiss Perrone Moara Passoni David Barker
Producers	Charlotte Pedersen Luís Urbano Tiago Pavan
Co-Producers	Joaquim Carvalho Daniel Chabannes de Sars Corentin Dong-Jin Sénéchal Madeleine Ekman Bernardo Bath
Executive Producer	Tim Robbins

BIOGRAPHIES



PETRA COSTA's (Director) first feature *ELENA* (2012), premiered at IDFA and won several prizes in festivals worldwide. It was the most watched documentary in Brazil in 2013 and in 2014 was released theatrically in the United States. Executive Produced by Fernando Meirelles and Tim Robbins, *ELENA* unfolds as a mixture of fever dream and psychological thriller. It tells the story of two sisters - and as one searches for the other their identities begin to blur. The film was called “a cinematic dream” by the New York Times, “haunting and unforgettable” by the Hollywood Reporter and was defined as a “masterful debut that takes nonfiction where it seldom wants to go – away from the comforting embrace of fact and into a realm of expressionistic possibility” by Indiewire.

Petra started her training in theater in Brazil at the age of fourteen and later went to the Dramatic Arts School at the University of São Paulo. She then went on to study Anthropology at Barnard College, Columbia University. She completed her masters in Social Psychology at the London School of Economics focusing her studies on the concept of trauma. Currently pursuing her PhD at the European Graduate School, Petra is also writing a feature fiction film entitled *STRANGE FRUIT*.



LEA GLOB (Director) graduated from the National Film School of Denmark in 2011 with the film *MEETING MY FATHER KASPER HØJAT*. Through the film Lea takes the audience on a very personal detective journey. Lea's father disappeared when she was two years old, and later on died in prison. Reconstructing her father's identity by fitting objects and stories in a puzzle, the narrative operates on the border of reality and imagination. Among other acknowledgments, the film was nominated for The Robert Awards and received the award for most innovative documentary at the Chinese Sichuan TV festival.

Since then, Lea has received the main award at Nordic Talents for the development of the documentary project *HUMAN FEMALE SEXUALITY* in cooperation with director Mette Carla Albrechtsen, which went into production in the summer of 2014. She also received the Odense International Pitch Me Baby Award for the experimental documentary short *THE NIGHT MY MOTHER WAS BORN*. Lea is currently working as co-director on Eva Mulvad's film *A FAMILY ON THE RUN*.



OLIVIA CORSINI (Actress) was born in Italy in the city of Modena in 1979. She was awarded a diploma from the “Paolo Grassi” Academy of Dramatic Arts of Milano and has been independently training with artists such as Tina Nilsen (Odin Teatret), Julie Anne Stanzak (Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch), Kim Duk Soo (Samul Nori school, South Korea), Carolyn Carlson, and Emma Dante, among others.

After two years with the international company “Teatro de los Sentidos” of the Colombian Enrique Vargas she arrived in France with “Théâtre du Soleil”, the esteemed company of Ariane Mnouchkine. In 2002 she played important roles in the collective creations: “The Last Caravanesérail”, “Les Ephémères”, and “The Castaways of the Mad Hope”. Since 2012 she has been working with the international collective “If Human” (Brussels).



SERGE NICOLAÏ (Actor) was born in France in the city of Marseille in 1967 and studied in diverse drama schools in Paris and Krakow. In addition to being an actor, Serge is also a scenographer, movie director and theater director. He received his first award in scenography for the play “The Last Caravanse-rail”. Since 1997 he has been a collaborator with Ariane Mnouchkine in the theatre company “Théâtre du Soleil.” He has also starred in French Television and Cinema productions.

LUIS URBANO (Producer PT) was born in 1968 in Águeda, Portugal. He graduated in Economics at the Universidade Técnica de Lisboa. In 1996, he founded the cultural production co-operative, “Curtas Metragens, CRL” the organisation behind the Vila do Conde International Short Film Festival. In 2005, he joined Sandro Aguilar in the production company, O Som e a Fúria. Since then he has produced several films including GEBO E A SOMBRA, a feature film by Manoel de Oliveira, OUR BELOVED MONTH OF AUGUST, TABU and ARABIAN NIGHTS by Miguel Gomes, which premiered in Cannes in 2015.

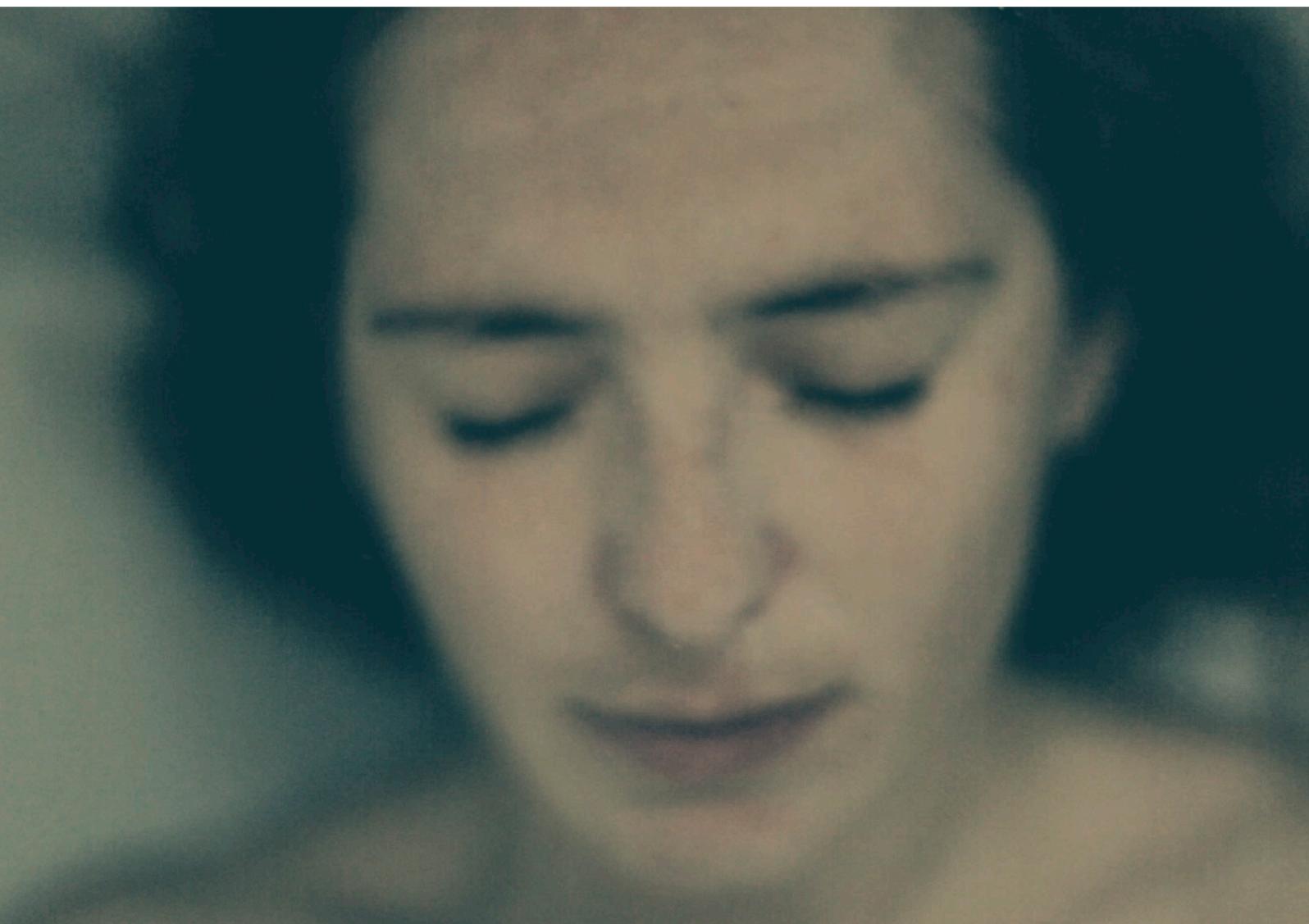
CHARLOTTE PEDERSEN (Producer DK) has been with Zentropa since 1992 and has worked as an associate producer on several of Lars von Trier’s films including the double Palme d’Or winner DANCER IN THE DARK as well as Palme d’Or contender DOGVILLE. She has worked as a co-producer for several films including Susanne Bier’s Oscar and Golden Globe Winner IN A BETTER WORLD, Thomas Vinterberg’s Cannes Award Winner THE HUNT, Nikolaj Arcel’s Double Golden Bear winner A ROYAL AFFAIR, and Berlinale entry SOMEONE YOU LOVE by Pernille Fischer Christensen, as well as Kristian Levring’s Cannes entry THE SALVATION 2014.

TIAGO PAVAN (Producer BR) is a Brazilian producer and the managing director of Busca Vida Filmes. Having worked as an associate producer on Brazil’s most watched documentary of 2013, ELENA (2012), as well as outreach and release campaign manager for both ELENA’s US release and LIRA PAULISTANA AND THE PAULISTA AVANT-GARDE (2013) release. Tiago is also a member of the board of directors of Brazilian bookstore 30porcento and works in his free time as a graphic designer and computer programmer.

MUHAMMED HAMDY (Director of Photography) is an Egyptian Emmy award winning cinematographer and filmmaker. Hamdy was the director of photography and the co-producer of the film “THE SQUARE” (2013) which was nominated for the Academy Award for best documentary, won the Audience Award at Sundance, the Best Documentary at Toronto Film Festival, and the top prize at IDFA. THE SQUARE was shot in Tahrir Square for two years and eight months. The film followed three characters through the events of the Egyptian revolution. Additionally, Hamdy shot and worked on documentaries such as AWAKENING, RAFAA SOLAR MAMA, and WE ARE THE GIANT, which premiered at Sundance in 2014. Hamdy was born in Michigan USA and moved to Cairo, Egypt at the age of three. He started his life as a cameraman for news agencies throughout the Middle East and then studied filmmaking in New York.

MARINA MELIANDE (Editor) was born in 1980 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Marina is both a Director and Editor. She studied at the University Federal Fluminense and at the Les Fresnoy in France. She co-directed with Felipe Brangaça the short films WATERBOUND and HIS NAME (THE CLOWN) and the feature trilogy HEART ON FIRE including THE ESCAPE OF THE MONKEY WOMAN, which premiered at Locarno Film Festival 2009, THE JOY premiered at Cannes Film Festival - Directors' Fortnight, NEVERQUIET (FILM OF WONDERS) a collective film, premiered at IFF Rotterdam 2011. As an editor she worked on 40 films including SWIRL and FOUND MEMORIES (both premiered at Venice Film Festival 2011).

TINA BAZ (Editor) is a French editor who has worked on more than 20 documentaries, both short-form and feature-length, including LES INVISIBLES and THE LEBANESE ROCKET SOCIETY. In fiction, two of her most famous films are Brazil's O CÉU DE SUELI (Love for Sale, 2006) by Karim Ainouz, and MAD DETECTIVE (2007) by Hong Kong directors Johnnie To and Ka-Fai Wai. She also was the editor of Naomi Kawase's two latest films: STILL THE WATER (2014) and SWEET RED BEAN PASTE (2015).



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