

# memory cards

a film by piotr cieplak

press kit



## Synopsis

A writer goes missing during a trip to Rwanda and Zanzibar. The only record of the journey survives in the footage she captured on a small camera and sent to her friend and lover, Tomé.

After years of obsessively trying to decipher the meaning of the footage, Tomé finally enlists the help of Pierre – the woman's companion on the trip – and Liz – a TV producer who is considering turning the disappearance into a blockbuster.

Watching the writer's journey from the foot of the Virunga mountains, through film screenings in rural Rwanda and genocide memorials in the south of the country, to the surreal beaches of Zanzibar where the trail goes cold, each of the narrators grapples with the same question: did she really go missing or did she *decide* to disappear?





## **Director's statement**

*Memory Cards* is an intimate story about memory and loss. It's about the way images and their meaning depend on the beholder as much as the person who captured them.

Indebted to the film-essay, and exploring the idea of found, reclaimed footage and personal archive, *Memory Cards* probes the boundary between documentary and fiction. Real-life images of Rwanda and Zanzibar are narrated by fictional characters, who talk about the journey of another fictional character. But the journey itself is real. It happened.

*Memory Cards* challenges and subverts the clichés and stereotypes present in how Africa appears to Westerners, especially those who claim to know the continent very well – like the missing writer at the centre of the film. It questions why and how Africa becomes a backdrop for a Western story. Where does the filmmaker decide to point the camera, and for what reasons?

In *Memory Cards*, I wanted to explore the connection between memory and raw digital image aesthetics. I wanted the graininess of the footage to contrast with the eerie beauty of the Zanzibari beach, the saturated greenery of the Rwandan hills. I wanted the viewer to actively participate in the hopeless search for clues undertaken by the narrators and contemplate what it means to "own" images.

Piotr Cieplak, April 2015

## **Piotr Cieplak – writer & director**

A director, screenwriter and photographer, Piotr has worked on projects in Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Argentina, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. His most recent short about the genocide memorial sites in Rwanda, *Memory Places*, screened widely, including at the Cambridge Film Festival, Thinking Futures Festival in Bristol and the Cambridge African Film Festival.

Piotr is also a fiction writer. In 2010, he was awarded the Harper-Wood Studentship for Literature and Poetry, a prestigious year-long bursary for promising young writers.

Piotr lives in London where he teaches filmmaking at Brunel University.



## **Credits**

Writer, director, producer  
**Piotr Cieplak**

Tomé  
**Matthew Flacks**

Liz  
**Kate Walsh**

Pierre  
**Victor Klein**

Editing & Sound Design  
**Romain Beck**

Director of Photography  
**Piotr Cieplak**

Special thanks to:  
**Emmanuel Mugenzira**

**Eugene Safali**

**Cyrille Ndegeya**

**Jacques Rutabingwa**

## **Film details**

Presented by  
**precieuses**

Production country  
**United Kingdom**

Completion date  
**April 2015**

Running time  
**19 mins 34 secs**

Language  
**English**

Picture  
**Colour**

Aspect ratio  
**16:9**

Shooting format  
**AVCHD**

exhibition formats  
**DCP, Blu-Ray, DVD, .mov**

Thanks to:

**Chris Brown, Eric Kabera, Helen Oyeyemi, Ayuub Kasasa Mago, Pierre Kayitana, Olivier Uwayezu, Emma Wilson, Kivu Ruhorahoza, Antonio Ribeiro, Ben Venfield, Emma Carroll, Alex Crampton, Sam Haddow, Rwanda Cinema Centre, Rwanda Film Festival, Murambi Memorial Centre, National University of Rwanda, Brunel University London**

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