a film by MILLA LEWIS
mercy
Written & Directed by MILLA LEWIS Starring KUBA KOCHANEK & MIROSŁAW HENKE & GRAŻYNA WALASEK
Produced by ADAM MYTNIK & MILLA LEWIS Director of Photography VINCENT PROCHOROFF Production
Designer OLIWIA GÓRNIKIEWICZ Editor ALICJA RYMAROWICZ Original Music AGATHE MAX Sound Design
INES ADRIANA Colourist SAM HOWELLS Made with support from THE NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL OF LODZ

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

Film Title: Mercy
Runtime: 00:13:05
Aspect Ratio: 16:9 (1.77:1)
Language: Polish
Subtitles: English

LOGLINE

In deep and dark Polish suburbia, a young sex worker meets a withdrawn client in thisexploration of social and sexual alienation, inspired by real events.

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

The idea for Mercy came when a friend and ex-sex worker told me the story of a client with whom he felt inexplicably paralysed with fear, trapped in a car driving to the client's home. This feeling did not go away - not when the client was naked and tied up, not driving back to the train station, and not even when he eventually handed over a wad of cash - far more than he had anticipated. There was something tormenting the client which seeped through him, into the car, and into my friend.

I used this story as the starting point to explore ideas around emotional inarticulacy and isolation, as well as repressed sexuality. I wanted to look at where and how shame manifests itself, and how we come to understand our own desires. Setting the film in Poland, where I was studying, allowed for a deeper expression of these themes; gay and trans people face high levels of stigma and violence, and the country has one of the lowest rankings for LGBTQ+ rights in the EU. But the relationship between sex, shame and alienation is universal; originating in repressive social and religious orders, these feelings transcend time and place, and arise from unknowable territories within.

Sex work is a deeply misunderstood and stigmatised profession. Directing a documentary about the sex workers rights' movement in North Macedonia has given me insight into how profoundly diverse and nuanced the experiences of sex workers and clients are. It has also revealed the degree to which fear and shame of our own desires play a role in our attitudes towards sex work and sexuality. People need touch, intimacy and real connections - but what can heal us is often fraught with doubt or pain accumulated over a lifetime. Mercy moves beyond a sensationalised depiction of sex work, instead exploring the at times tender humanity of these interactions, and the loneliness which we all search for ways to overcome.

POSTER
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TRAILER
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FILM STILLS
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DIRECTORS BIO

Milla Lewis (UK) is a filmmaker whose work focuses on the intersection of history, memory and myth. Drawn to the discord between the stories that form us and the stories we tell ourselves, her films explores themes including sexuality, belonging and isolation and how these manifest subliminally.

Starting out as an award-winning photographer, Milla was selected as the recipient of the Directing Mentorship Programme at the Polish National Film School in Łódź in 2021, where she wrote and directed Mercy, a short narrative exploring sexual alienation. Her short documentary about an annual gypsy fair facing an unclear future, Kings of Our Own Right, was selected for international festivals. She is currently co-directing a documentary following a trans sex worker fighting for decriminalisation in North Macedonia.

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CAST

Jan	Kuba Kochanek
Witold	Mirosław Henke
Anna	Grażyna Walasek

CREW

Director & Screenplay:	Milla Lewis
Producers	Milla Lewis & Adam Mytnik
Director of Photography	Vincent Prochoroff
Editing	Alicja Rymarowicz
Colour	Sam Howells
Sound Design	Ines Adriana
Original Music	Agathe Max
Production Designer	Oliwia Górnikiewicz
1st Assistant Cameras	Mateusz Nowak & Michał Szaranowicz
2nd Assistant Camera	Stephane Canet
Production Assistants	Bren Cukier & Maja Szklarska
Sound Recorder	Klaudia Klimczak
Assistant Sound Recorder	Martyna Łusiak
Script Consultant	Kirk Kjeldsen

This short film was made as a part of the Internship at the Directing Department of the Polish National Film, Television and Theater School in Łódź, Poland.