



# ŽEBRA

*czech republic, 2023*  
*dir. esben sloth*  
*fiction, 12', 16mm*

Index	Pages
1. <b>Logline</b>	2
2. <b>Synopsys</b>	4
3. <b>Key Members Bio</b>	6
4. <b>Director's Statement</b>	10
5. <b>Posters</b>	12
6. <b>Technical Information &amp; Credits</b>	13
7. <b>Contact</b>	14



## Logline

As a mother ascends a seemingly endless staircase, she plays a dark game with her son where nothing but their imagination sets the limits of how far it can go.



# Synopsys

The film open with an ethereal light burning in the sky while a seven-year-old boy breathlessly climbs the stairs of a brutalist apartment block with giddy abandon. He stops sharply at the ledge of the first floor and looks down.

Exhausted, his mother slowly joins him.  
He asks how many? She tells him zero.  
Disappointed, he climbs to the next level.  
He asks her how many this time.  
She tells him one, maybe two - possibly an 'ankle'.

As they ascend each level, they continue to play a dark game, counting off how many bones will break if they were to fall.

The further they go, the sense of past, present and future becomes blurred, and we start to see the mother on a parallel journey up the stairs alone. Her body is tinged with sadness and fear, and as Roberts disappears from her, we lose the understanding of what is real, what is memory, and what is her wishful thinking.



# Key Members Bio

## Esben Sloth

*director, co-producer*

Esben Sloth (1993) is a Danish filmmaker and editor working with fiction and experimental film in the genre and themes of the supernatural, surreal, existential and sensual. He is currently based in Copenhagen.

In 2022 he got a diploma in 'cinema' at The Danish School of Art Photography Fatamorgana. In 2023 he finished his studies 'directing fiction' at FAMU International Prague where he primarily made the documentary *The Greatest Love* and the fiction film *Žebra*, the latter being his graduation film from the school.

Over the years he has made several short films and video installations, in which some have been showcased at galleries and group exhibitions in Copenhagen.

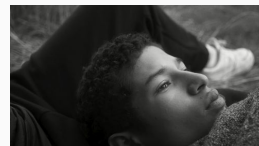
Esben is a filmmaker who seeks to hit the nerve on people. With his films he wants to challenge his audiences expectations, and their ideas of what a film is and can be. The film *Žebra* is his first film he is taking to film festivals.



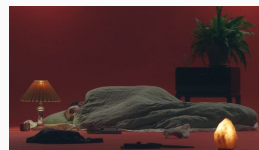
**The Greatest Love**  
short documentary  
director  
2023



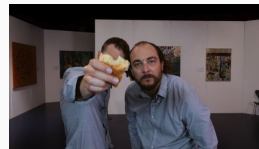
**Blackbird**  
short fiction  
writer, director  
2022



**Jeg så dem på de usete veje**  
**Seen on unseen roads**  
short fiction  
writer, director, editor  
2022



**En rød søvn**  
**Red Slumber**  
short fiction  
writer, director, editor  
2021



**Værket**  
**The Artwork**  
short fiction  
writer, director  
2018

## Daniela Esposito

*screenwriter*

Daniela Esposito (1995) is a passionate writer from London, United Kingdom working across a multitude of formats from short story and novella to film, TV script and playwriting, with particular interest in themes of memory and identity.

She graduated from the University of Warwick in 2018 with a First Class Honours Degree in Law, including a year abroad in English at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest.

Recently she has completed a one year intensive course in Screenwriting at FAMU in Prague. This is where Daniela and Esben first met and co-wrote Žebra. During her time in Prague she also co-wrote the script The Care You Give and interned with the National Film Archives in Prague.

Having studied a course in Creative writing at Goldsmiths in London, she has since published numerous short stories in journals and magazines across the UK, Europe and US. She is soon to participate in a writer's room workshop at Midpoint in Prague.

## Lucy Smith-Williams

*cinematographer*

Lucy Smith-Williams is a New York based cinematographer who received her BFA in Film/TV at New York University in 2019.

Since her graduation, she has worked in the Electric department for the Local 52 on productions such as 'The Watcher', 'The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel', and 'Only Murders in the Building'.

She has worked with some of the best gaffers in New York City, and soaks in the cinematography techniques of each film or tv show that she has been a part of.

During 2022-23 she attended FAMU's one year cinematography course in Prague and has enjoyed working mostly on film for the projects that she shot during the program.

Her most recent projects as cinematographer include a documentary on the overpopulation of wild horses in America, a 4 episode narrative series, 2 short films shot on 16mm, and her final film at FAMU which she directed and shot on 35mm film.

# Key Members Bio

## **Ariana Nasser**

*editor*

Ariana Nasser is an Iranian-American film and video editor based in NYC, graduated from Wesleyan University with a bachelor's degree in film studies in 2016 where she wrote, directed and edited her first short film "Frozen Flowers."

She went on to complete the prestigious NBCUniversal Page Program in Los Angeles, California after which she worked as a video editor for Snapchat and a social media manager at the production company Psyop.

In 2023, she completed her studies in editing at FAMU International Prague, where she edited twelve short films including Žebra. Over the years, Ariana has edited various different fiction, documentary and experimental projects, including a 5 episode comedy web series "Insignificant Other" and Madison McFerrin's music video "No Room."

## **Jakob Lundoe**

*sound designer & composer*

Jakob Lundoe is a sound designer and composer currently based in Copenhagen, Denmark. His past work covers the areas around audio post-production, ambient electronic music, interactive audio, as well as soundscape art. Therefore, his approach is heavily focused on creating sonic and compositional elements that feel as if they emanate from the world of the narrative itself.

Holding a master's degree (MSc) in Audio Design (2024), and a diploma from The National Academy of Digital Interactive Entertainment (DADIU) (2022) his primary field in sound design is within the area of interactive auditory art and experiences.

Regardless of whether the media is linear or non-linear, his aim is not only to convey the dramatic elements of the story, but also the spatial and physical feel and sense of place. His main style can be described as hyper-sensuous, pensive and surreal.



## Director's Statement

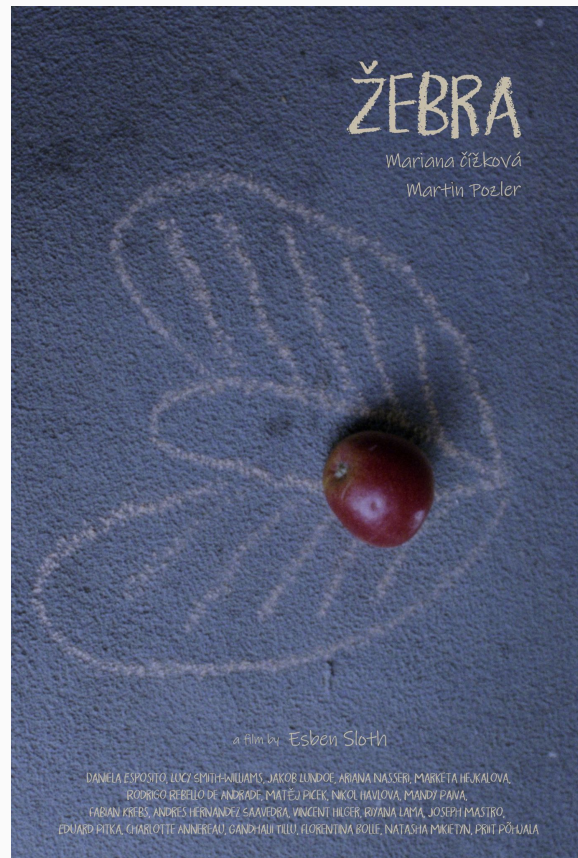
It is the darkness hidden inside us all. It is our fascination with the dark side of life, and our desire to dig deeper into things that we know are wrong or not good for us. Reading Danielas story made me realise that we somehow are born with this. No matter how hard we control, behave and structure around the light and comfortable life, we will always have this darkness inside of us and a desire to explore it. The film is an exploration into this peculiar curiosity and fear.

I'm also interested in how to make a space into a character. The idea of every step up the staircase can be used to visually and metaphorically to see the emotional development in the characters. With the film I want to challenge myself to create a mysterious world that is familiar and alien at the same time, and use the form of the film to tell parts of the story that the characters are not quite revealing themselves.





# Posters



# Technical Information & Credits

**genre**

short fiction

**completion date**

august 2023

**duration**

12' 35

**location**

prague, czech republic

**language**

czech

**screening format**

DCP 2K, Prores HQ, H264

**shooting format**

super16

**aspect ratio**

1.66:1

**framerate**

24 fps

**sound**

stereo

**Produced by**

*FAMU International  
Esben Sloth*

**Directed by**

*Esben Sloth*

**Written by**

*Daniela Esposito  
Esben Sloth*

**Cinematography**

*Lucy Smith Williams*

**Editor**

*Ariana Nasser*

**Sound design & composer**

*Jakob Lundoe*

**Production Design**

*Markéta Hejkalová*

**Cast**

Mariana Čížková  
Martin Pozler

**Crew**

Production Manager: *Matěj Pícek*  
Production Assistant: *Nikol Havlová*

1st AD: *Rodrigo Rebello de Andrade*  
2nd AD: *Daniella Esposito*

Continuity, assist. editor: *Mandy Paiva*  
Translator: *Natasha Mikiety*

**Runners**

*Gandhali Tillu, Florentina Bolle*

1st AC: *Fabian Krebs*  
2nd AC: *Vincent Hilger*  
Gaffer: *Andres Hernandez Saavedra*  
Sound recordist: *Joseph Mastro*  
Camera supervisor: *Riyana Lama*

MUA, Costumes: *Markéta Hejkalová*  
VFX: *Eduard Pitka*  
Graphic designer: *Charlotte Annereau*  
Colorist: *Felix Nevřela*  
Driver: *Jakub Strnad*

**Consultants**

Production Coordinator: *Pavλίna Adlerová*

Project Supervision:  
*Priit Põhjala*  
*Murat Emkuzhev*  
*Luboš Vála*  
*Věra Mühldorf*  
*George Cremaschi*  
*Tomáš Doruška*  
*Dimitrios Polyzos*

Shooting Schedule Consultant: *Katarina Zrinka Šarić*

**FAMU International pedagogical team**

Head of FAMU International:  
*Jitka Hejtmánová*

Deputy Head of FAMU International:  
*Karolína Kyselová, Terezie Kumar*

Program Coordinator: *Žaneta Čagášková*

Admission Officer, Incoming Exchange  
Coordinator: *Anna Šlajová*

Assistant of FAMU International: *Karolína Varvařovská*

# Contact

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## Esben Sloth

Director, producer, distributor

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