

Małgorzata Imielska about ALL FOR MY MOTHER

“A total reset by an injection of fresh air”

Few words have such strong emotional connotations as “mother”. For Olka in the Polish film ALL FOR MY MOTHER by Małgorzata Imielska, the word means everything. It represents her ultimate desire that she has pursued all her life, in the orphanage, in the reformatory, even in her dreams. Locked inside the 17 year old body that she hates, Olka has but one single goal: she wants her mother back.

Images in this film are often framed by bars and walls

Małgorzata Imielska: My characters are living in a closed environment, where iron bars, wires and a solid gate restrict their freedom, a place where strict control (and violence) is a permanent condition. I wanted the audience to sense that claustrophobic atmosphere. To remain authentic, we shot the film in natural surroundings, like a regular juvenile detention for boys. We created the girls’ rooms from scratch but the bathrooms, kitchen, dining room and sports court were authentic.

Has this project been ripening in your mind for a long time?

Imielska: For 20 years I’ve been making documentaries, many of them touching on these kinds of topics. Due to this background I was convinced I could tell a true story about girls in a juvie. My real challenge was in working with young actresses. We went through as many rehearsals as possible with main actress Zofia Domalik and the other girls.

Is it really a mother that Olka is longing for, or is the word rather used for its symbolic connotations?

Imielska: I met lots of girls in many juvies and they all had one thing in common: a dream of developing a close relationship with their mother. A mother for them stands for everlasting unconditional love, for not being left alone. Olka believes that a loving mother will make her life meaningful, and for that she is ready to sacrifice everything.

Where do you situate Olka on the scale between angelic and diabolic?

Imielska: She is strong and stubborn; quiet and introverted. I wanted her to somehow have peace with the fact that people do not understand her, that she has never truly been heard. Despite all tribulations she is fighting for her dreams to come true.

What gives her hope?

Imielska: Now that she found out her dream about being reunited with her mother will never come true, Olka has her hopes set on another love - Mania’s mother said that “she would love to have such a daughter.” She believes that someday she will be loved! Also sports have a positive impact on her.

Olka likes to jog, she often runs for hours. Does ‘running’ stand for ‘running away from’?

Imielska: For Olka, running is another attempt to find her mother, who was an athlete herself. Moreover running offers her a structure and helps her to forget about feeling furious or pow-

erless. Like a total reset of her mind by an injection of fresh air.

Did you have a specific way to film those running scenes?

Imielska: Olka keeps on running until her face turns blue, despite feeling tired or weak. We used special lenses, sometimes we filmed from a driving car, and also the locations had an impact. Just like a court with prison bars emphasises Olka being locked down, a narrow path in the woods reflects a dramatic dimension of her running (away).

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Gert Hermans

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