

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SALUTES AGNIESZKA HOLLAND
WITH MAJOR FILM RETROSPECTIVE**

**Filmmaker's Career Illuminated through Polish Films Never Before Shown
in the United States, Acclaimed English-Language Features, and Episodes
from HBO Series *The Wire***

***Agnieszka Holland: Europa/America*
December 10, 2008–January 5, 2009
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters**

Press Screening: *Kobieta samotna (A Lonely Woman)* (1981) on December 2 at 11:00 a.m.

New York, November 26, 2008—The Museum of Modern Art honors award-winning film and TV director and screenwriter Agnieszka Holland (Polish, b. 1948) with a month-long exhibition spanning her three-decade career, from her roots as a highly political contributor to Polish New Wave cinema, through major English-language releases such as *The Secret Garden* (1993) and *Washington Square* (1997), and her most recent work as a director for the American television series *The Wire*. As a filmmaker, Holland has traveled from Europe to Nova Scotia and the streets of Baltimore; she has tracked German culture from the sublimity of Beethoven to the absurdity of the Hitler Youth; and she has turned the keenest of eyes on Poland, with its many splendors and contradictions.

Agnieszka Holland: Europa/America runs December 10, 2008, through January 5, 2009, in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters. The exhibition is organized by Charles Silver, Curator, Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art, with the assistance of Hanna Hartowicz, Director of The New York Polish Film Festival.

Although today Holland ranks as one of Poland's most prominent filmmakers, she was rejected by the famous Lodz film school. At 17 she made her way to the Prague Film and TV Academy (FAMU), where she was exposed to the work of Milos Forman, Ivan Passer, and other figures of the Czech New Wave. Her political activities led to her arrest and brief imprisonment during the Prague Spring of 1968. In 1971, she returned to Poland, where she worked with such prominent Polish filmmakers as Krzysztof Zanussi and Andrzej Wajda, and soon began a close collaboration with Wajda's film unit.

Holland's first major film, *Aktorzy Prowincjonalni (Provincial Actors)* (1978), which won the International Critics Prize at the 1980 Cannes Film Festival, chronicled the backstage tension among actors in a small-town theater company as a metaphor for Poland's contemporary political situation. She directed two more major films in Poland—*Gorączka (Fever)* (1980) and *Kobieta*

samotna (A Lonely Woman) (1981)—before emigrating to France, just before martial law was declared in Poland in December 1981.

Holland's response to this turmoil—and to her native country's cataclysmic experiences with Nazism, Communism, and anti-Semitism—can be seen throughout much of her work. In *To Kill a Priest* (1988), made shortly before the fall of the Iron Curtain, Ed Harris plays Father Jerzy Popieluszko, a Polish priest who supported the Solidarity trade union movement, in which Holland was personally involved. *Europa Europa* (1991), perhaps Holland's best-known and well-regarded film, is based on the biography of a Jewish teenager who fled Germany for Poland following Kristallnacht in 1938.

Holland began directing episodes of the HBO drama series *The Wire* in 2004. *Agnieszka Holland: Europa/America* includes marathon screenings on December 28 and December 31 of the episodes "Moral Midgetry" (2004) and "Corner Boys" (2006), both written by acclaimed novelist Richard Price, and "React Quotes" (2008). Her recent television work in Poland can also be seen in a program featuring two episodes of the popular political-thriller show *Ekipa (Prime Minister)* (2007), on December 29 and 30.

Holland and actor Ed Harris, who is featured in three of her films featured in the first two days of the exhibition, will introduce the screenings of *Copying Beethoven* (2006), on December 10, at 7:00 p.m., and *To Kill a Priest* on December 11, at 6:00 p.m. and *The Third Miracle* (1999) at 8:30 p.m.

*******PRESS SCREENING*******

Tuesday, December 2

11:00 a.m. *Kobieta samotna (A Lonely Woman)* (1981). Poland. 110 min.

RSVP to pressoffice@moma.org.

Press Contact: Margaret Doyle, (212) 408-6400, margaret_doyle@moma.org

For downloadable images, please visit www.moma.org/press

No. 129

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019

The public may call 212/708-9400 for detailed Museum information.

Visit us on the Web at www.moma.org

Admission: Admission to film screenings is free with Museum admission (\$20 adults; \$16 seniors,

65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under). Admission is free for Museum members, and during Target Free Friday Nights 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Film only: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$6 full-time students with current I.D. Admission is free for Museum members, and during Target Free Friday Nights 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

SCREENING SCHEDULE

All films are directed by Agnieszka Holland, except where noted.

Wednesday, December 10

7:00 *Copying Beethoven*. 2006. Great Britain/Hungary. With Ed Harris, Diane Kruger, Matthew Goode.
In her third collaboration with Ed Harris, Holland tries to capture the mental and physical deterioration of Ludwig van Beethoven as he finishes his immortal Ninth Symphony and prepares to conduct its monumental Viennese debut. 106 min. **Introduced by Holland and Harris.**

Thursday, December 11

6:00 *To Kill a Priest*. 1988. USA/France. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. With Ed Harris, Christopher Lambert, David Suchet, Tim Roth.
Made shortly before the fall of the Iron Curtain, the first Holland/Harris collaboration explores the story of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, a Polish priest who supported the Solidarity trade union movement, in which Holland was personally involved. 117 min. **Introduced by Holland and Harris.**

8:30 *The Third Miracle*. 1999. USA. With Ed Harris, Anne Heche, Armin Mueller-Stahl.
In his second film with Holland, Harris plays a wavering priest investigating a purported miracle. Holland identified with her mother's Catholicism as a child, and the film reflects her own ambiguity regarding faith and religion. 119 min. **Introduced by Holland and Harris.**

Friday, December 12

6:00 *Bez Znieczulenia (Without Anesthesia)*. 1977. Poland. Directed by Andrzej Wajda. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. With Zbigniew Zapasiewicz, Ewa Dalkowska, Andrzej Seweryn.
Written around the time Holland was beginning her directorial career—and featuring a lead character based on her journalist father—the script skillfully dissects Polish society and values. The title refers to a scene of dental depravity reminiscent of the previous year's *Marathon Man*. In Polish; English subtitles. 115 min. **Introduced by Holland.**

8:30 *Europa Europa*. 1991. France/Germany. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. Based on the autobiography of Solomon Perel. With Marco Hofschneider, Julie Delpy, Andre Wilms, Halina Labonarska.
Holland's breakthrough into international acclaim, this true account of a Jewish adolescent's survival on both sides of the lines in World War II is poignant, terrifying, and frequently funny. Holland's screenplay received an Academy Award nomination; the film was widely expected to win the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar, but Germany refused to nominate it. Featuring beautiful performances by Hofschneider and a superb cast, the film brilliantly captures the absurdity of twentieth-century authoritarianism. In German, Polish, Russian; English subtitles. 110 min. **Introduced by Holland.**

Saturday, December 13

- 1:00** *To Kill a Priest*. See Thursday, December 11, 6:00.
- 4:00** *The Third Miracle*. See Thursday, December 11, 8:30.
- 7:00** *Copying Beethoven*. 2006. See Wednesday, December 10, 7:00.

Sunday, December 14

- 2:00** *Julie Walking Home (The Healer)*. 2002. USA/Canada/Poland. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. With Miranda Otto, William Fichtner, Lothaire Bluteau. Holland's sensitive handling of this melodrama about a woman with a dying son and a failing marriage reflects a deeply felt emotional complexity. In English, Russian, Polish; English subtitles. 113 min.
- 5:00** *A Girl Like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*. 2006. USA. With J. D. Pardo, Mercedes Ruehl, Leela Savasta. Filmed for the Lifetime Television network, *A Girl Like Me* explores the tragic true story of a transgender adolescent in contemporary America. 105 min.

Monday, December 15

- 6:00** *Wieczor u Abdona (Evening with Abdon)*. 1975. Poland. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. Holland's professional debut is a poetic exercise in surrealism. In Polish; English subtitles. 39 min.
- Cos Za Cos (Something for Something)*. 1977. Poland. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. With Barbara Wrzesinska, Iwona Biernacka, Tadeusz Janczar. An early exploration of Holland's ambivalence about balancing a career with family obligations. In Polish; English subtitles. 61 min.
- 8:15** *Niedzielne Dzieci (Sunday Children)*. 1976. Poland. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. With Zofia Graziewicz, Ryszard Kotys, Krystyna Wachelko-Zaleska. This amusing satire on the bourgeois pressure to reproduce was deeply influenced by the Czech New Wave. In Polish; English subtitles. 73 min.

Wednesday, December 17

- 6:00** *Zdjecia Probne (Screen Tests)*. 1977. Poland. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland, Jerzy Domaradzki, Pawel Kedzierski. With Daria Trafankowska, Andrzej Pieczynski. A bit like François Truffaut's Antoine Doinel cycle, the film presents three interrelated stories about a pair of aspiring film stars in musical-chairs relationships. Each episode has a different director. In Polish; English subtitles. 90 min.
- 8:00** *Total Eclipse*. 1995. USA/France. With Leonardo DiCaprio, David Thewlis, Romane Bohringer. A lavish and controversial take on the love affair between nineteenth-century French poets Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine. 110 min.

Thursday, December 18

- 6:00** *Aktorzy Prowincjonalni (Provincial Actors)*. 1978. Poland. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. With Halina Labonarska, Tadeusz Huk.
This Cannes prizewinner won Holland early recognition and, when it finally arrived here in 1983, put her on the map in America. The film reflects her love of theater, abhorrence of censorship, ambiguity toward relationships, and devilish sense of humor. In Polish; English subtitles. 107 min.
- 8:15** *Shot in the Heart*. 2001. USA. With Giovanni Ribisi, Elias Koteas, Sam Shepard, Amy Madigan.
Based on a memoir by the brother of convicted killer Gary Gilmore, *Shot in the Heart* recounts the days leading up to Gilmore's execution and his lawyer's agonizing decision on whether to continue appeals. This gritty drama demonstrated that Holland could master contemporary America's sordid underbelly, and it led to her successful work on *The Wire*. 98 min.

Friday, December 19

- 6:00** *Niedzielne Dzieci (Sunday Children)*. See Monday, December 15, 8:15.
- 7:45** *Wieczor u Abdona (Evening with Abdon)*
Cos Za Cos (Something for Something). See Monday, December 15, 6:00.

Saturday, December 20

- 1:00** *Zdjecia Probne (Screen Tests)*. See Wednesday, December 17, 6:00.
- 4:00** *Julie Walking Home (The Healer)*. See Sunday, December 14, 2:00.
- 7:00** *A Girl Like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*. See Sunday, December 14, 5:00.

Sunday, December 21

- 2:00** *Washington Square*. 1997. USA. With Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney, Maggie Smith, Ben Chaplin.
Holland's remake of William Wyler's *The Heiress* (1949) is closer to the Henry James novel on which both films are based. Holland asserted that James showed "the way human destinies are shaped by money," and she aspired to cross a Chekhovian feeling with Jamesian ambiguity—all flavored with a contemporary feminist sensibility. The beautifully shot and acted film was made in Baltimore, soon to be Holland's American base for *The Wire*. 115 min.
- 5:00** *The Secret Garden*. 1993. Great Britain. With Maggie Smith, John Lynch, Kate Maberly.
This remake of Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic children's book enabled Holland to decompress after the *Sturm und Drang* of her continental work. This had been her favorite book as a child, and she felt she needed a "vacation." 103 min.

Monday, December 22

- 6:00** *Total Eclipse*. See Wednesday, December 17, 8:00.
- 8:30** *Dybuk*. 2000. Poland. Based on the play *The Dybbuk*, by Szymon Ansky.

In her adaptation of Ansky's play about Jewish mysticism (famously filmed in Yiddish in 1937), Holland found that her toughest challenge was getting her Polish actors "to play real human beings, not clichéd Jews with quaint accents and movements." In Polish; English subtitles. 91 min.

Friday, December 26

6:00 *Shot in the Heart*. See Thursday, December 18, 8:15.

8:30 *Aktorzy Prowincjonalni (Provincial Actors)*. See Thursday, December 18, 6:00.

Saturday, December 27

1:00 *The Secret Garden*. See Sunday, December 21, 5:00.

4:00 *Washington Square*. See Sunday, December 21, 2:00.

7:00 *Dybuk*. See Monday, December 22, 8:30.

Sunday, December 28

2:00 *Kobieta Samotna (A Lonely Woman)*. 1981. Poland. Screenplay by Agnieszka Holland. With Maria Chwalibóg, Boguslaw Linda, Pawel Witczak. Selected by MoMA and the Film Society of Lincoln Center for *New Directors/New Films* in 1987 (six years after both the film and the director had been banned in Poland), *A Lonely Woman* depicts the grim reality of a young Polish woman (Chwalibóg) who is broken down by a totalitarian system. In Polish; English subtitles. 110 min.

4:30 *The Wire*. 2004–08. USA. Holland is proud to be a participating director in the HBO mega-hit series. This marathon screening includes the three episodes she has directed: "Moral Midgetry" (2004), "Corner Boys" (2006), and "React Quotes" (2008). Program approx. 150 min.

Monday, December 29

6:00 *Goraczka (Fever)*. 1981. Poland. With Olgierd Lukaszewicz, Barbara Grabowska, Adam Ferency. Although already a prizewinner, *Fever* was banned (as was *A Lonely Woman*) by the military government that took over Poland in 1981. The material, which deals with Polish anarchist resistance to Russian forces following the failed 1905 revolution, is treated in a manner worthy of Dostoevsky, showing that Holland could rival her mentor Wajda as a political filmmaker. In Polish; English subtitles. 120 min.

8:30 *Ekipa (Prime Minister)*. 2007. Poland. Directed by Agnieszka Holland, Kasia Adamik (Holland's daughter), Magdalena Lazarkiewicz (Holland's sister). With Marcin Perchuc, Janusz Gajos, Krzysztof Stroiński, Katarzyna Herman, Rafał Mackowiak, Andrzej Seweryn. Two episodes of a popular Polish political-thriller television show. In Polish; English subtitles. 103 min.

Tuesday, December 30

6:00 *Ekipa (Prime Minister)*. See Monday, December 29, 8:30.

8:30. *Goraczka (Fever)*. See Monday, December 29, 6:00.

Wednesday, December 31

5:30 *Kobieta Samotna (A Lonely Woman)*. See Sunday, December 28, 2:00.

7:45 *The Wire*. See Sunday, December 28, 4:30.