





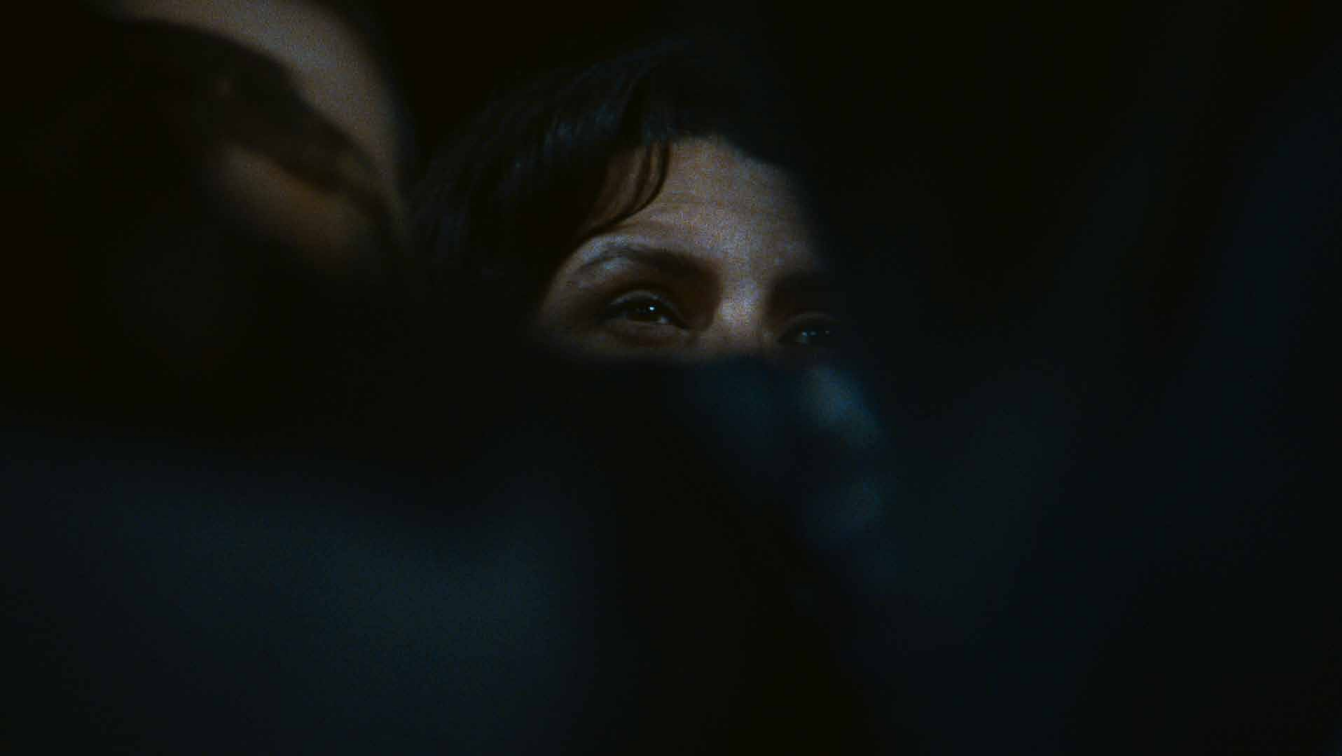
HUBA

/ PARASITE /

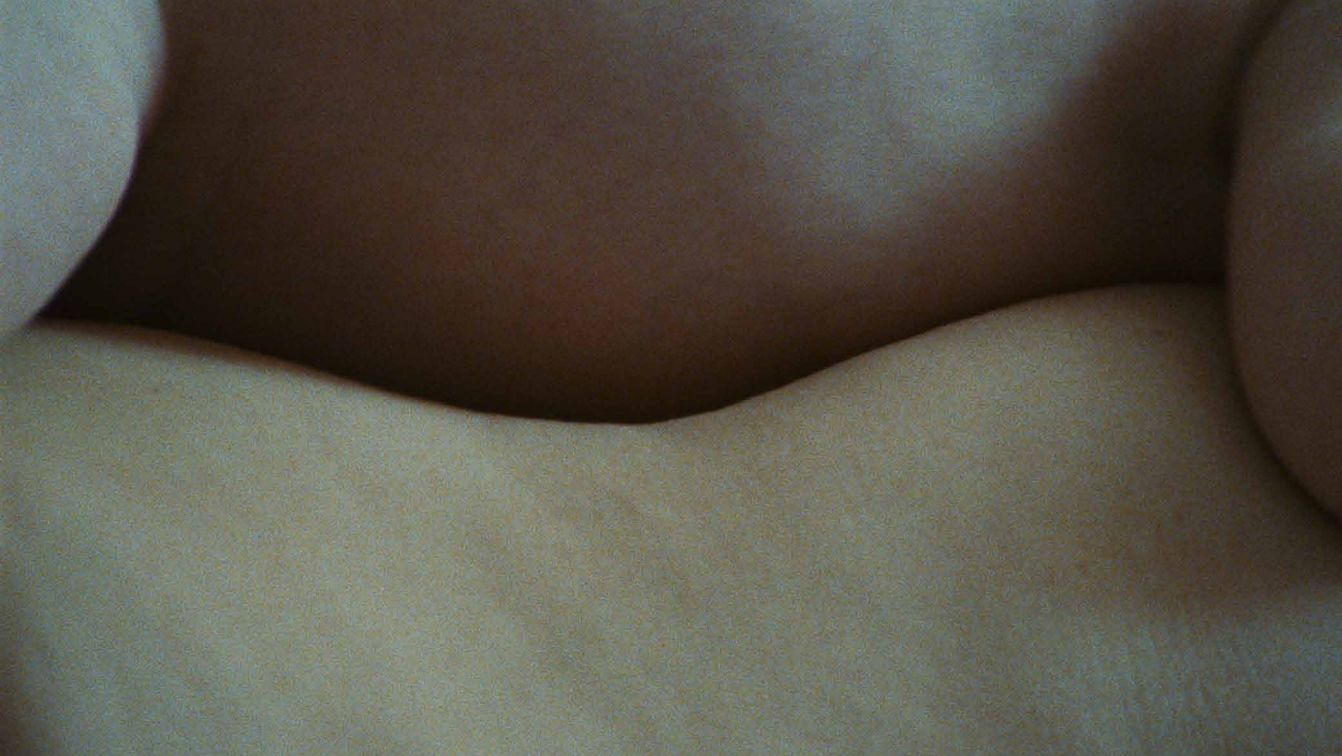
A film by Anka Sasnal and Wilhelm Sasnal















HUBA

/ Parasite /

A film by

Anka Sasnal and Wilhelm Sasnal

Poland

2013

drama

66 Min

Super 16 mm transferred to 35 mm

Produced by

Anka Sasnal

Wilhelm Sasnal

Sadie Coles HQ

2013

Contact

Filmpolis Agata Szymańska

Agata Szymańska

T +48 514 593 757

szymanska.agata@gmail.com

www.filmpolis.eu

German and International Press

claudiatomassini & associates

International Film Publicity

Claudia Tomassini

T +49 173 205 5794

claudia@claudiatomassini.com

www.claudiatomassini.com

www.hubafilm.com

Huba (Parasite) is a film about an ailing old man and a young mother. After retiring from the factory, the man, deprived of his daily routine, loses control over his time. Unable to eat or sleep, he starts drying up. The mother and child are like a single organism. Yet their relationship is, for all its closeness, one of dependence and inequality. The child, whose attachment to life is the strongest, is ravenous and needy; the woman, though enjoying a brief moment of freedom, is doomed to be a victim, while the old man has nothing to keep him going now that he can no longer work at the factory. When the three of them try to have a life together, they are like the Holy Family reversed. Brought together by chance, their lives intertwine in a web of oppression. The film follows their daily existence and slow decline.

Anka Sasnal

*only a fragment. Female hands on an old male stomach
kneading, stronger and stronger, intrusive, painful.*

Only a fragment. The first sentence in the scenario above defines our formal and storyboard decisions. We see a fragment of life, a place, a body. We're very close but only for a moment.

Their existence in reality, mutual relations, addiction, their physiological and emotional life, we have contracted all that to the process of eating.

The old one, separated from the factory, has nowhere to draw energy from. He cannot eat nor sleep.

The mother and the child are a conjoined organism but their proximity is violence. Paradoxically the child is the stronger one. Clinging strongly to life it is a devouring bloodsucker. It eats the mother every day – she eats to feed.

*ingesting .[he is]
cannot eat everything
cooks porridge every day
the bubbles appear slowly, they grow, opaque
the gurgling is sticky and nauseous,
then he eats, looks into his mouth,
the pulp runs down slowly,
warm slime remains on his gorge walls*

*mud splashes in his stomach
but it's sponged up quickly
dries out*

*no sperm
dry skin
lumps of blood*

*ingesting. [she is]
just the breasts, tight of milk
erect dark nipples, almost black
stretched skin on her thighs
her belly's soggy – her navel's bigger
seems chopped with a knife*

(...)

*lays down on the floor to feed
the child crawls over her,
messes up her hair, drools on her face
dry saliva stinks of milk*

*the child is on her stomach
flat, grown onto it**

We have subdued movie making to a rule that in fact seems more appropriate to literature – it occurs when reality falls apart into elements and builds a new world out of those parts, a world different from the 'normal' one but recognizable and relating to it.

Not only did such an approach give us the freedom of choice among these elements of reality but it also provided us with the possibility of using new, unrealistic and abstract ones, building suspense and a new meaning.

The story that we are telling is incomplete, fragmentary, degraded just like the world of our protagonists. The nonfictional record of reality is completed by abstract scenes, which muddle up the linearity of the story and make it metaphorical.

Anka Sasnal, Wilhelm Sasnal

* fragments from the script

Huba (Parasite), the new film by Wilhelm and Anka Sasnal, is a portrait of three loveless lives being played out in an unnamed city in Poland. Through a chain of mesmerizingly staged yet desolate vignettes, the film creeps towards a tragic outcome – tragic, that is, in its very ordinariness.

From the opening seconds of *Huba*, we are in a bleak 'nowhere realm' similar to the urban and rural hinterlands of the Sasnals' previous films, *Swineherd* (2008) and *It Looks Pretty From a Distance* (2011). The film was shot in the Mościce district of Tarnow, where the husband and wife auteurs are from, yet the setting exudes a universalised, dystopian air. It is evening or early morning, and the camera pans across an industrial landscape, revealing a Stygian scene of steaming chimneys and sprawling warehouses. This sombre twilight air permeates the action – or more accurately, the peculiar absence of action – which follows.

Just as place is ambiguous, characters are nameless. An air of dislocation and disillusionment builds as we witness the daily movements of an ailing old man working in a factory. Ill health forces him to abandon his job, and he becomes trapped in a new kind of cycle – one of waking, sleeping, and consuming cheap food and trash television in his drab apartment. A young woman abruptly appears in the narrative. She might be the man's daughter or carer – even his young lover – and yet they barely seem to notice one another. Their connection is never explained, and perhaps it hardly matters. Whatever incidents brought

them together have given way to an incident-free void in which time has lost all meaning. She the mother of young baby whose cries offer the only break from the silence which pervades their lives.

All three 'characters' are going through the motions of living, clinging to life and ingesting sustenance wherever they find it with an animal rapaciousness. The baby sucks noisily from its mother's breast; the old man clumsily drains a bottle of water. In a rare moment of dialogue during a trip to the hospital, a taciturn nurse tells the mother that the baby is underfed. Life goes on, but only just. *Huba* indeed has a disarmingly existential quality – the characters are existing, and nothing more. There is a world devoid of mirth, hope, intrigue or even words. The old man's emotionless movements bring to mind the air of stoic resignation in Theodore Roethke's poem 'The Waking': "I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow / I feel my fate in what I cannot fear." Silent and solitary, he is a man reduced to man's basic needs: eating and sleeping; unloved and unloving. Only one possible fate awaits him.

The three lives continue in a state of dumb dependency; they are parasites, perhaps, on one another. A mounting sense of tension arises from the film's scarcity of event or dialogue. Apart from the nurse's brusque words and the jabber of voices on the television, human speech is absent: the film articulates the tedious tragedy of lives in which nothing merits saying. Non-verbal sounds take on a magnified power: car

engines, wind, distant birdsong, the old man's laboured breathing as he struggles to sleep, or the sound of him slurping food – these are central to the slowly-mounting, unrelenting atmosphere of oppressiveness. In one scene, the child's hysterical cries are interwoven with the relentless, monotonous gating of vegetables being shredded.

While its absence of dialogue or direction strikes an almost surreal note, in visual terms, the film adopts a minutely-observed mode of grim 'kitchen sink' realism. The Sasnals show an acute attention to small details – the bubbling surface of a pot of gruel, the mundane contents of a shopping trolley, water dribbling out of tap and showerhead. These accumulate into a vivid tissue of incidental images – evocative in their very banality – a sequence of reverberating visual 'echoes' which ultimately only intensify the lurking sense of claustrophobia. A roundabout in a children's play area revolves creakingly; later on, as the woman morosely watches a motorbike race, the droning laps of the bikes suggest another tedious and meaningless cycle.

The film is unflinchingly real – starkly devoid of narrative – and yet a potent web of symbols emerges out of its grim fabric. The woman's night-time wandering through indistinct urban settings suggests a voyage through the world of the dead. The three figures moreover imply a modern-day version – or inversion – of the Holy Family, brought together by chance rather than holy destiny. Yet spiritual succour is nowhere to

be found; the world portrayed by *Huba* is a harrowingly unredemptive one. We are all at the mercy of our bodies, the story implies: flesh is the medium through which we live and cease to live. The baby lies wriggling in a set of scales, while later the old man lies on a hospital bed with a white-jacketed doctor prodding and prognosticating. Perhaps it is not insignificant that the commonest activity we find the characters mutely engaged in is eating – crunching on cereal, spooning in gruel, suckling.

There is a resounding note of emptiness in *Huba*, and yet the film is not without an element of political critique. It highlights the utter hopelessness of the neglected underclass of contemporary Poland (and further afield). Where, we ask, are these people's voices? Stasis, or a kind of frozenness, is the defining mood of *Huba*. Nothing happens, and this is the point. Wilhelm Sasnal's celebrated paintings have long been described as portrayals of Poland in the aftermath of communism; in *Huba*, we find the cinematic equivalent – a land in which comforting illusions and life-affirming ideals (even false ideals) have fallen away, leaving behind an irreparable void.

James Cahill



DIRECTORS

Anka Sasnal

b. 30.10.1973 in Tarnów, Poland

Anka Sasnal is an editor and scriptwriter. She studied Polish literature at Pedagogical University of Krakow and Gender Studies at Jagiellonian University in Krakow. She lives and works in Krakow, Poland.

Wilhelm Sasnal

b. 29.12.1972 in Tarnów, Poland

Wilhelm Sasnal is a painter and filmmaker. He studied architecture at the Krakow University of Technology, and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. He lives and works in Kraków, Poland.

Their film *It Looks Pretty From a Distance* competed in the Tiger Awards Competition in Rotterdam in 2012 and won Wrocław Film Award at the New Horizons IFF in 2011 and Grand Prix at the Crossing Europe Film Festival in Linz and Silver Apricot at Yerevan IFF in 2012. Their latest film *Alexander* had its international premiere at CPH DOX IFF 2013 where it was awarded a Special Mention Prize in NEW:VISION section.

FILMOGRAPHY

Huba (Parasite)

2013, feature film, 66 mins, super 16 mm transferred to 35 mm

Aleksander

2013, documentary / docufiction, 58 mins, super 16 mm transferred to 35 mm

Z daleka widok jest piękny

(It Looks Pretty from a Distance)

2011, feature film, 77 mins, super 16 mm transferred to 35 mm

Świniopas (Swineherd)

2008, feature film, 85 mins, super 16 mm transferred to 35 mm

SELECTED SHORT FILMS

Kacper

2010, 12 mins, 16 mm

Drugi kościół (The Other Church)

2008, 7:30 mins, 16 mm

Let Me Tell You a Film

2007, 11 mins, 16 mm

Mojave

2006, 6:30 mins, 16 mm

Widlik (Furcellaria)

2006, 9:30 mins, 16 mm

The Ranch

2006, 37 mins, super 8 mm

The River

2005 / 2006, 23:20 mins, 16 mm

Marfa

2005, 26 mins, 16 mm

Sześć krótkich filmów (Six Short Films)

2004, super 8 mm

Kilkadziesiąt sekund źle wywołanej taśmy filmowej

(Several Seconds of Badly Developed Film)

1997, 0:50 mins, 16 mm



CAST

Joanna Drozda

b. 08.11.1980 in Warsaw, Poland

Joanna Drozda is a graduate of Paseo Academy of Performing Arts in Kansas City, Missouri USA and has a Masters' Degree in Acting from National Drama School in Cracow. She's worked with many well known directors like Krystian Lupa (Premio Europa 2009) or Robert Wilson. She lives in Warsaw and performs all around Poland.



Jerzy Gajlikowski

b. 05.01.1949 in Bruszków Wielki, Poland

d. 29.03.2013 in Kraków, Poland

Jerzy Gajlikowski was trained as a mechanical engineer. He played in amateur theaters and appeared in a music video of Polish band Czesław Śpiewa. He lived and worked in Kraków.

CAST AND CREW

Written and Directed by

Anka Sasnal

Wilhelm Sasnal

Produced by

Anka Sasnal

Wilhelm Sasnal

Sadie Coles HQ

Executive Producer

Filmpolis Agata Szymańska

Production managers

Agata Szymańska

Paweł Przywara

Cast

Joanna Drozda

Jerzy Gajlikowski

Wojtek Słowik

Anna Łącka-Szczygieł

Krzysztof Pabian

Ewa Pękalska

Barbara Starek

Director of Photography

Wilhelm Sasnal

Sound by

Igor Kłaczyński

Editor

Beata Walentowska

Production Designer

Marek Zawierucha

Costume Designer

Ewelina Gąsior

Make-up Artist

Aleksandra Dutkiewicz

TECHNICAL DETAILS

International title

Huba (Parasite)

Original title

Huba

Category

feature film, drama

Duration

66 Mins

Shooting format

16 mm

Picture

Colour

Frame rate

24 FPS

Screen ratio

1,85:1

Sound

Dolby (R) Digital

Spoken language

Polish

Subtitles

English

Available formats

35 mm (4 reels), DCP, Bluray

Sadie Coles HQ



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