

a film by Liliana Komorowska

beauty and the b~~o~~east

PRESS KIT



plus @CAMERIMAGE 2012

Produced by QueenArt Films with the support of The S.M. Group International

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Directed by Liliana Komorowska



THE S.M. GROUP INTERNATIONAL INC.



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beauty and the breast

A first-time documentary filmmaker Liliana Komorowska offers a compelling and intimate insight into the devastating reality of breast cancer, as seen through the eyes of nine female patients.

Their individual stories and different points of view help demystify the deadly disease while painting poignant and often humorous intimate portraits of struggle, survival and hope.

The full-length documentary begins with the stories of a few patients, whose lumps are initially considered benign. Navigating the resistant medical system, these women felt lost, helpless and terrified. But thanks to their intuition and persistence, they eventually got the right diagnosis.

The film depicts the process of learning and accepting the terrifying verdict, and details the complexities of every stage of the disease. By following the patients' spiritual transformations, we witness how their minds and personalities are affected by the whole experience on an emotional level. Candid and self-effacing, the women bare their souls as well as their scars. Regardless of their social status, looks and age, they manage to dismiss society's general perception of feminine beauty and adapt to living with their mutilated bodies while still maintaining strength, grace and pride.

Beauty and the Breast is not only invaluable as a testament to human resilience, but it also proves that it's possible to reach timeless wisdom in the face of adversity.

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director's note

When I went to my first interview with a breast cancer patient, I didn't know enough about it, but I was scared to death of the subject matter.

I am a woman over 50 and two of my grandmothers, whom I had never met, died of the disease. I am an outsider who wonders whether it's possible to have enough strength to fight the disease on a daily basis and still live a quality life. Without my own personal experience of directly dealing with the disease, I realized it might be a challenge to create an insightful portrait of survival... but I was willing to take it. I was inspired by Alains Obomsawin, a Canadian filmmaker, who once said: "For me, a real documentary is when you're an objective bystander, listening to someone else's story; it should be them, not you, who share their experiences with the audience."

To achieve that, I first needed to create a strong bond with those women who were brave enough to reveal their stories to me. As they opened up and let me go deep underneath their skin, I was finally able to understand their pain as well as their need to speak out about the disease. Their candid confessions in front of the camera were some of their most heartbreaking, yet liberating experiences. They also changed my own life forever.

One of my subjects, after a mastectomy and then chemotherapy, observed: "I stood in front of the mirror, looking at my reflection and not recognizing myself. There was not one hair left on my body and a heavy bandage covered my mutilated breast. When I finally braved to unwrap it, I realized that it was my first encounter with... my real self." Having participated in these intimate journeys, I feel honoured. But I am also greatly encouraged since I know their experiences will reach the heart of everybody who watches the film, giving them not only an invaluable insight, but also some hope.

Being a woman is the main risk factor in developing breast cancer. One in 9 will develop it. How does one deal with this terrifying disease that directly attacks femininity?



Soraya is an ex-model who had a mastectomy of her left breast and 24 lymph nodes removed, followed by chemotherapy. We met when she completes her last radiation treatment.



Valerie, interior designer and breast cancer advocate. She was diagnosed at the age 60 with a regular mammogram. She takes a radical decision to have total bilateral mastectomy of her both breasts.



Amba, painter and visual arts performer, diagnosed after years of being misinformed, had a mastectomy of her left breast. She decided to take hormone-therapy and explore alternative medicine.



Lucie, model, singer and equestrian, after a year of hospital mix-ups, finally learned that the sore lump next to her breast implant was cancerous. She then went for two tumorectomies before deciding to do preventive double mastectomy with reconstructions.



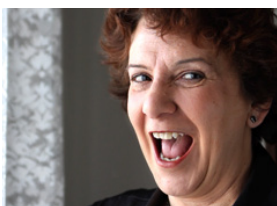
Susan is a co-creator of Sérénité program, Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation. Three days after she was diagnosed with cancer she found herself on the operating table having partial mastectomy, followed by aggressive chemotherapy and radiation.



Pamela is a travel agent, originally from Seychelles. She was misdiagnosed and waited many months before finding her courage and returning to the doctor to find out the truth about her condition.



Danuta, PhD. in linguistics. We meet her at the beginning of her journey right before she discovers the diagnosis of her cancer and available treatments.



Wendy, translator for the deaf, singer and song writer, recovers from her second breast cancer surgery and gets ready for her first chemo treatment.



Kathleen, preschool teacher is a victim of three cancers; the last at 27 years old is a breast cancer. We meet her after she has just completed another round of radiotherapy targeted at her bone metastasis.





biography

Liliana Komorowska is an accomplished artist and a graduate of the State Theatre Academy in Warsaw (Poland) with a Master of Arts degree (MA). As an actress she made her debut in a Masterpiece Theatre (TVP) as Abigail in *The Crucibles* that won her the Best Debut Award by an Actress from the Polish Television Academy.

She has performed classics in repertory theatre and was showcased in many award-winning films and television productions in Poland, England, United States and Canada. After becoming a soap opera star she moved from New York to Los Angeles where she made Hollywood Studio films working with such stars as Dame Diana Rigg, Peter Weller, Aidan Quinn, Donald Sutherland, Sir Ben Kingsley and Wesley Snipes amongst many.

Since 15 years established in Montreal (Canada) she leads her successful artistic career. With every passing year of being an actress Liliana has found herself falling into a symbiotic relationship with directing and producing. In 2005 she directed, produced and played a lead role in an adapted for stage play *The Banquet at Countess Fritouille* for Théâtre Prospero in Montreal.

In 2007 she produced with QueenArt Films first short documentary film *Paradis perdu, Paradis retrouvé*, broadcasted in 2012 by TV Polonia. Mentored by a proficient film producer Denise Robert, Liliana has found her passion for directing. A feature documentary *Beauty and the Breast* about the impact of breast cancer on lives of nine women, is her directorial debut.



Krzysztof Gierat (director of 52.KFF)
with Liliana Komorowska at the Krakow Film Festival



Interview with "Question for Breakfast"
a top rated TVP show



Bernard Poulin (Executive Producer)
& Liliana Komorowska (Director)



Beauty and the Beast Montreal's Premiere



Beauty and the Beast Montreal's Premiere



Liliana Komorowska receives the Best
Documentary Awards at the Montreal World Film
Festival



Liliana Komorowska's speech during the Whistler
Film Festival



Liliana Komorowska with David Linch during Plus
Camerimage Festival



“HEART-WRENCHING STORIES (...)
THE CINEMATOGRAPHY IS STUNNING
AND THE EDITING, MASTERFUL.

A LABOUR OF LOVE”

Bill Brownstein, the Gazette

“Compelling... powerful, hope infusing... a rich,
tumultuous portrait of women facing breast cancer...”

- Ryszard Jaźwiński, Radio Trójka

“A mesmerizing and intensely real documentary”

- “Pytanie na śniadanie”, TVP 2

“A filmmaker illustrates the power of human life-force to
fight cancer”

- Rafał Stanowski, Dziennik Polski

“Profound, poetic, moving and emotionally rich”

- Barbara Natkaniec, Gazeta Krakowska

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