



Family Secrets

Director: Gosia Juszcak

Genre: Documentary

Stage of Production: Development

Country: Poland

Runtime: 72'

Estimated date of premiere: 2028

Total Budget: 120.000 EUR

Financing in Place: 5.000

Synopsis:

After years of working with stories of others, the filmmaker turns her gaze towards her own family. Raised on heroic wartime narratives proudly repeated at family gatherings, she recently discovers another lineage of stories. Stories of women – marked by shame, silence, and social exclusion – very well hidden, up until now.

A grandmother who suffered from bipolar disorder that no one ever talked about. An aunt expelled from home for loving the “wrong” man. A great-aunt completely erased from the family tree after giving birth to an illegitimate child. Finally, a nanny – described as “part of the family” yet absent from family photographs and deprived of a life of her own.

The archival material and the absence of some family members in it speaks loudly and invites the filmmaker to reconstruct the full picture together with her relatives. The conversations, however, turn out to be more difficult than expected. Rather than establishing the facts, they reveal hesitation, denial, and the mechanisms through which families decide what deserves to be remembered and what doesn't. Some secrets turn out to be quite well guarded and the fear of stigma and conflict is still present.

Director's Statement:

This film is a space for an impossible encounter – one between me and the women in my family who were never heard. I want to understand them, accompany them, feel them, hug them. Honour them. Most of them are no longer here, so I try to reach them through what remains —photographs, documents, fragments of stories, silences. The archives speak loudly and I try to listen. I reconstruct their biographies slowly and with care, manipulating family archives to fill the blanks, and drawing on national archives to shape a story many women can recognise as their own.

The truth might never fully resurface, and that matters less than what becomes felt along the way. By entering these sometimes painful family stories, I am confronting my own relationship to them. I want to understand how the unspoken continues to live inside me, in my own struggle with depression and in the ways social expectations shaped my choices.

A mix of fear and fascination draws me to explore this generational trauma, one that has a woman's face. As my parents, aunts and uncles grow older, time is running out to ask uncomfortable questions. Breaking the silence may offer a way out of a pattern — but I don't yet know what it will cost.

Production Company Fundacja Fragment

Looking for: Funding Institutions, Private Investors, Coproducers