



FEAR OF FALLING

a film by Bartosz Konopka

A touching debut feature from a promising Polish director
nominated for the Academy Award 2010



synopsis

Tomek (30) escaped from the province and decided to sort out his life in a big city. He has a career as a TV reporter and has just started a family when he receives a message from a psychiatric hospital in his home town. His estranged father is there. Against himself and the advice of his closest ones, Tomek decides to reach out to his father, although they haven't seen each other for years. As a result, Tomek gets involved in a relationship on the verge of craziness and normality, which will make him re-evaluate his entire life.



director's statement

This film is very much one of a kind for me. I have never before tried to write something, which has come straight out of my personal life. The story it tells has haunted me for many years. The first time I tackled it was in my graduation film. I then tried to create a screenplay for a feature based on this story.

However, I was not yet ready to take it on. It was only after I lost my father and became a father myself that I began to see it from a new and painful perspective.

In January 2005, my wife Bogusia and I were expecting a child. The baby was already one week due. My mother had spent a month with us; she came to Warsaw specially for that. Finally, she could wait no longer; she had to go back to Vienna, to her work. On her way back, she was driving through Dąbrowa Górnicza – my hometown. She called about three days later – saying she had stayed longer, because she was not able to get into my father's apartment, and she wanted to see him. She finally had to call the fire department to get in. They had to break the door, they walked in through the balcony. It turned out my dad had died.

At first, the news knocked me down. I realized I had not settled all the things with my father. I hadn't talked with him. We didn't tell each other all the things we should have. And we won't be able to do it ever again.

Suddenly, you think that all these things you've been doing, this drive to work, to do films – all this suddenly becomes meaningless, because you didn't have time for the people close to you and you will never catch up. And you stay with this enormous sense of guilt, which then overwhelms you.



director's statement

The last sequence, when Tomek kidnaps his father from the hospital, did not happen in my life, I was never up for it. I never gave my father this few-day trip to an important place – the mountains. I thought: what will happen if I take this trip in my imagination? This film is the fulfilment of that story, a process bringing another person back to the living. After my father's death I thought I would write down certain things I still remember. Transferring memories into film narrative, and confabulating, helps you deal with them.

I first chose the actor – Krzysztof Stroiński – for the father's part. I knew I have a lot to „implant” into that actor. This text was for me a search for how to reach my father. And a story about love – a male melodrama, with difficult, harsh emotions, which exist between men.

This is a story about the search for love from another person, and the need to give it – to surround with love the person who needs it, although he denies it. About a need, which the main hero has never before realized, and which suddenly explodes with great strength. This becomes the most important thing in his life to such an extent that he neglects his home, his wife – he feels so much love. This love inspires him, motivates him and stimulates him on the one hand, and on the other hand tears his whole world apart. A strange love: a son's love towards his father, and in fact the love between two people who are close to one another, and yet cannot find a way to reach each other. This is the most important for me in this story.

How might one bring someone back to life when he simply doesn't want to be brought back? Why could the father's madness become an attractive concept of living for his son? Can illness cure a broken family?

The fear of falling means the fear of living, fear of meeting challenges of everyday life. How can this fear be overcome?

The Fear of Falling was induced by feelings, which tormented me a lot – that I hadn't had the time to say goodbye, to close certain things. It is a wound, which will never scar, and which is echoed in your life decisions and your peace of mind.

A black and white portrait of Bartosz Konopka, a man with a beard and short hair, looking thoughtfully to the side with his hand resting on his chin. The background is dark with some abstract light-colored shapes.

Bartosz Konopka

is one of the most frequently awarded Polish directors. His latest film "Rabbit a la Berlin" was nominated for the Academy Award 2010 in the Documentary Short Subject category. So far the film has won awards at festivals such as Hot Docs Toronto, Hamptons, Jihlava, Krakow Film Festival, Planete Doc Review.

Konopka's short feature debut "Three For the Taking"(2006) produced by Studio Munka won 12 awards at many different festivals, i.e. Grand Prix at Brest Film Festival and Best Debut Award at Message To Man IFF in St. Petersburg.

His documentary "The Goat Walker"(2004) was awarded by Planete Television at the Berlinale in 2004 and was then shown by all Planete channels worldwide.

It also won a number of audience awards at various festivals.

Bartosz holds a Master degree in film studies from the Jagiellonian University and has graduated from the directing department in the Kieślowski Radio and Television School in Katowice and the Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing.

Filmography

2011 **FEAR OF FALLING**
director, co-writer / feature /

2009 **RABBIT A LA BERLIN**
director, co-writer / documentary / 52' /

2007 **KINGS OF DOWNTOWN**
director / tv series /4x42' /

2006 **THREE FOR THE TAKING**
director, co-writer / feature film /40' /

2005 **SCENES FROM THE WARSAW UPRISING**
director, writer / TV drama / 70' / TVP

2004 **THE GOAT WALKER**
director, co-writer with Piotr Rosolowski/documentary /52' /

2003
THROUGH THE SEA director, writer/ documentary series – Ireland /3x25' /
POPAPRAŃCY director, writer / documentary / 30' /
TRZY HISTORIE O MIŁOŚCI director, writer / documentary / 25' /
WIELKIE MANEWRY director, writer / documentary / 25' /

2002
NIEBO NAD EUROPA director, writer / 30' /
CHŁOPAK Z SOSNOWCA director, writer / documentary / 25' / TVP1

2001
CZUBEK
director, writer / a graduation film – Katowice Film School / 13' / 35mm

Marcin Dorociński – graduated from the Theatre Academy in 1997. The same year he was awarded for the part of Creon in *Antigone* at the 15th Festival of Theatre Schools in Lodz, and started his collaboration with the Dramatyczny theatre. In 2005, he won the prize for best actor at the Koszalin Film Festival, as well as the Zbyszek Cybulski prize for the portrayal of Despero in *Pitbull*.

Dorociński received a letter of congratulation from the President of the Republic of Poland. He was awarded for the part of Fabio in *Luiza's Garden* at the Gdynia Feature Film Festival in 2007. He was nominated to the Polish Film Academy Award ORŁY 2009 for best male actor in the film *The Offsiders* by director Katarzyna Adamik.

Dorociński on "Fear of Falling": *"This film is very important to me. I put all my heart into it. I dedicate it to my father."*

Krzysztof Stroiński – graduated from the acting department of the National Polish Film School in Lodz. Since 1979 he has worked in several Warsaw theatres: Komedia (1979-1981), Dramatyczny (1981-1984), Nowy (1988-1989), Powszechny (since 1990) and Studio (guest starring). Known to the Polish public from numerous films, television series and theatre plays. He was awarded with the Polish Academy Award Prize, *Orzeł* in the category: *Best male actor in 2009*, and received an Honorary Mention at the 33rd Polish Film Festival in Gdynia for his part in the film „Scratch”.

Krzysztof Stroiński on "Fear of Falling": *"I really wanted to get this part. What appealed to me was the ambiguous area between something that is still intelligence and independence of character, and something, which is already a symptom of illness. The attempt at self-realization – the recognition and controlling of it - was a very rich material to build a part on. The cause of the tragedy lying in reality as well as brutality and painful honesty in the relations with the others - this required mutual integrity and sincerity in the talks and preparations – an intimate lesson, touching our own „fear of heights”. I would like to thank Bartek and Marcin."*





cast and crew

TOMEK – Marcin Dorociński

FATHER – Krzysztof Stroiński

EWA – Magdalena Popławska

MOTHER – Dorota Kolak

directed by: Bartosz Konopka

screenplay by: Piotr Borkowski, Bartosz Konopka

director of photography: Piotr Niemyjski

art director: Elwira Pluta

costume designer: Katarzyna Lewińska

sound editor: Jacek Hamela, Katarzyna Dzida-Hamela

editor: Jarosław Barzan

make-up: Janusz Kaleja

artistic supervisor: Agnieszka Holland

production manager: Ewa Jastrzębska

producers: Jacek Bromski, Dariusz Gajewski, Ewa Jastrzębska

production: Studio Munka/Polish Filmmakers Association

Poland – 2011 – 90 minutes – Color - 35mm - 1:1,85

A UNIQUE STUDIO DEVOTED TO FIRST FILMS

Studio Munka functions within the structures of Polish Filmmakers Association and was set up to focus exclusively on producing directorial debut films. The goal of the studio is to support talented young directors in making creative, art-house cinema.

Studio Munka is a joint initiative of the Polish Filmmakers Association, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Polish Film Institute and Polish Television (TVP) – the four most important institutions of the Polish film industry. Their support guarantees Studio a stable budget for film production, while its experienced team ensures that the films produced by the young directors are of high artistic value.

Apart from long feature debuts, Studio Munka is producing 30 minutes-long live-action debuts, 10-15 minutes length documentary debuts and 3-5 minutes length animation debuts. Our short films are present at various international festivals and two of them were nominated to European Film Award: "Glass Trap" the short documentary directed by Paweł Ferdek(2009) and "Hanoi-Warsaw" the short feature directed by Katarzyna Klimkiewicz, which won the EFA this year.

Up until now Studio Munka has developed an omnibus film „Demaquillage” consisting of three half-hour episodes directed by young female directors. Bartek Konopka's debut, „Fear of Falling” is the first long feature film that is entirely produced by the Studio. Two other feature films currently being produced by the Studio are Maria Sadowska's „Butterfly Wars” and Jarek Sztandera's „Mini”.

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**STUDIO
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