

# REEL SUSPECTS

R.S. SARL SIRET : 481 518 405 00024  
SIRET : 481 518 405 00024  
T.V.A. : FR 90 481 518 405  
PHONE: + 33 1 42 40 12 84  
FAX: + 33 9 57 73 07 66  
MOBILE: + 33 6 14 45 62 78  
SKYPE: matteolovadina  
EMAIL: m@reelsuspects.com  
WEB: [www.reelsuspects.com](http://www.reelsuspects.com)  
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## NUDE AREA



A film by Urszula ANTONIAK  
78 min, NETHERLANDS/POLAND, 2014  
Colour, 2:35, HD & DCP

### SHORT SYNOPSIS

Love discourse proceeds without words.

Love in 15 fragments is a portrait of female seduction featuring a Dutch girl from posh Amsterdam South who has a crush on a beautiful Arabic girl from the poor quarters of Amsterdam East. They meet each other in the nude area of a female only sauna where nudity means equality.

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## LONG SYNOPSIS

Love doesn't unfold like a story. Only the first and the last chapter are known. Love starts from Love and ends in letting go. In between there is tenderness and cruelty, waiting and fulfillment, ecstasy and disappointment. If love is a discourse, these are her figures of speech.

NUDE AREA presents an adolescent love between two girls. Childish cruelty is mixed with full-blown sensuality. Dreams and life reflect and complete each other. The end is known, the story will be told after the love is gone.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Urszula Antoniak is a Polish/Dutch screenwriter and director. Her feature film debut "Nothing Personal" starring Stephen Rea and Lotte Verbeek, won six awards at 2009 Locarno Film Festival including Best First Feature, Best Actress and FIPRESCI prize.

It also won Best Feature and Best Director awards at 2009 Dutch Film Festival in Utrecht and was nominated for Discovery Award by European Film Academy.

Her second feature "Code Blue" had its premiere during 2011 Cannes Film Festival at Directors Fortnight. "Code Blue" won Best Camera and Best Sound awards at 2011 Dutch Film Festival in Utrecht. Her screenplay "Life According to Nino" directed by Simone Dusseldorp was the opening film of 2014 Cinekid Film Festival.

### European Film Awards

#### 2010

- Nominated, European Discovery of the Year for Nothing Personal (2009).

### Locarno International Film Festival

#### 2009

- Won, Best First Feature for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Won, Youth Jury Award for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Won, FIPRESCI Prize for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Won, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury - Special Mention for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Won, C.I.C.A.E. Award for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Nominated, Golden Leopard for Nothing Personal (2009).

### Mar del Plata Film Festival

#### 2009

- Nominated, Best Film



for Nothing Personal (2009).

#### **Miami Film Festival**

**2010**

- Nominated, Grand Jury Prize  
World Competition for Nothing Personal (2009).

#### **Nederlands Film Festival**

**2011**

- Nominated, Film Poster Award  
for Code Blue (2011).
- Won, Golden Calf  
Best Director (Beste Regie) for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Nominated, Golden Calf  
Best Screenplay of a Feature Film (Beste Scenario) for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Nominated, Film Poster Award  
for Nothing Personal (2009).

#### **Palm Springs International Film Festival**

**2010**

- Nominated, New Voices/New Visions Grand Jury Prize  
for Nothing Personal (2009).

#### **Seville European Film Festival**

**2009**

- Won, Silver Giraldillo  
Best Film for Nothing Personal (2009).
- Won, Silver Giraldillo  
Best Film for Nothing Personal (2009).

#### **Stockholm Film Festival**

**2011**

- Nominated, Bronze Horse  
for Code Blue (2011).

**2009**

- Nominated, Bronze Horse  
for Nothing Personal (2009).

#### **T-Mobile New Horizons International Film Festival, Poland**

**2011**

- Nominated, Grand Prix

#### **International Competition for Code Blue (2011).**

#### **Warsaw International Film Festival**

**2009**

- Nominated, Grand Prix  
for Nothing Personal (2009).

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## CAST

Sammy Boonstra - Imaan Hammam

## CREW

**A production by** : Topkapi Films & Apple Film production in Co- production with Canal +. With support of the Netherlands Filmfund, and the Polish Film Institute.

**Producers** : Frans van Gestel, Arnold Heslenfeld, Laurette Schillings, Dariusz Jabłoński, Violetta Kamińska, Izabela Wójcik.

**Director:** Urszula Antoniak

**Scriptwriter:** Urszula Antoniak

**Cinematographer:** Piotr Sobocinski Jr.

**Production Designer:** Gerard Loomans

**Line producers** : Nicky Tüske, Niko Post, Andrzej Besztak

**Sound Design:** Maciej Powłowski

**Music (composer):** Ethan Rose, Pawel Mykietyn

**Production Sound:** Kees de Groot

**Editor:** Milenia Fiedler

**Additional Editor:** Katharina Wartena

**Costume Design:** Bho Roosterman – Vroegen

**Make-up:** Jacqueline Hoogendijk

**Casting:** Oimundo Casting, Rebecca van Unen

## TOPKAPI FILMS

Topkapi Films was founded in 2011 by Frans van Gestel and Arnold Heslenfeld. The company traces its origins to the merger in 2008 of Motel Films (founded in 1996) and IDTV Film. Since 2012 Laurette Schillings has joined the company as producer. Topkapi Films develops, produces and co-produces feature films and television drama for the Dutch and international market.

The company strives to build long-term relationships with writers and directors. With renowned talent as well as with upcoming talent Topkapi Films recently (co)produced films as THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN, THE FAMILY WAY, POST TENEBRAS LUX, THE HEINEKEN KIDNAPPING, CODE BLUE, BLACK BUTTERFLIES.

With focus on new ways of storytelling Topkapi Films collaborates with Freedom Lab ([www.freedomlab.org](http://www.freedomlab.org)) to develop a writers lab for innovative stories for different media including cinema.

Successful films (co)produced in the past include titles as BLACK BOOK, STELLET LICHT, LOVE IS ALL, THE MISFORTUNATES, JOY, GIGANTE, THE MAGICIANS, IN ORANGE.

*Rapenburgerstraat 123-1, 1011 VL Amsterdam, The Netherlands.  
+31 (0) 20 30 32 494, [info@topkapifilms.nl](mailto:info@topkapifilms.nl), [www.topkapifilms.nl](http://www.topkapifilms.nl)*

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## APPLE FILM

Apple Film Production, one of the first and leading independent production companies in Poland, was found in 1990 by Dariusz Jablonski. The company has produced many feature films with famous Polish directors like, Agnieszka Holland, Kasia Adamik (Janosik. The True Story), Krzysztof Krauze (Street Games), Robert Gliniski (Benek), Filip Bajon (The Spring To Come), Wladyslaw Pasikowski (The Cop), Malgorzata Szumowska, Andrzej Jakimowski, Krzysztof Zanussi (Solidarity, Solidarity) as well as with debutants later found as best debutants in Poland: Lukasz Barczyk (I'm Looking at you Marry), Artur Urbanski (Belissima), Iwona Siekierzynska (My Fried Chicken), Wojciech Smarzowski (The Auricle). Apple Film Production worked with international directors such as: Vladimir Michalek, Agnieszka Lukasiak, Ami Drodz, Michael Kreihsl.

The company has also produced many full length documentaries, tele-plays and TV series. All of these productions have been at a high artistic level, confirmed by many awards at domestic and international festivals or competitions. Many projects were made as international co-productions with producers and television stations in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, France, Austria and Germany. Recently, Apple Film has completed shooting a two feature films: co- production with Sweden - Between two fires by Agnieszka Lukasiak and co- production with Israel - My Australia by Ami Drodz.

## CINEUROPA REVIEW

Nude Area opened the Focus on Polish Cinema section at this year's Tallinn Black Nights Festival, and it immediately proved why we need more female directors. Many make films about lesbianism, but few take their discussion of the "L-word" as far as Urszula Antoniak's Polish-Dutch co-production does. In short, this film depicts a lesbian love affair that is so intense it cannot be experienced lucidly, in a linear way (and indeed, this movie is certainly not linear).

Instead, Antoniak divides her work into a catalogue of L-words (love, labour, limit, languor...), each acting as a chapter or "fragment" in this complex look at female desire. The result is a discussion that turns out to be universal. It becomes about how all-consuming love can be; how it can transport, overwhelm, fulfil, or even leave us unmoved. But Nude Area's tale of interracial love also asks some probing questions; ones that perhaps only a woman could ask aptly.

The film explores the West's tendency to attach fetish value to Eastern culture, reifying rather than respecting it. But instead of resisting that tendency, this film cuts it open for our consideration. Additionally, Antoniak's dissection of attitudes towards Islam carries with it a potential feminist critique: if the hijab is meant to keep a woman's beauty private from men, what is there to stop the lass at the local, women-only swimming baths from falling hopelessly in love with you?

Antoniak really demonstrates how complex feminism amendments can become when a woman is given room to explore them. One such example is feminism's exposure of art's tendency to depict men as gazers, whilst women merely appear – as if they were presenting themselves for man's objectifying looks. But Nude Area asks: what if the gazer and the observed are both women?

On this note of subjectivity and objectivity, the film opens with an epigraph taken from Roland

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Barthes: “[The lover] speaking within himself, amorously, confront[s] the other (the loved object), who does not speak.” Straight away, the suggestion is that Antoniak wants to take this dynamic beyond feminist territory. What we have instead is a cerebral look at human desire.

Desire proves to be an opportunity for the lover to project their wishes onto the beloved, relegating them to an object. But in this respect, *Nude Area* shows how little male and female desires differ. All the same, Antoniak never simply defers to Barthes' idea. The two lead actresses, Sammy Boonstra (Naomi) and Imaan Hammam (Fama), are forever moving between empowered and passive states, subjectivity and objectivity, fragility and strength – roles that these two actresses play perfectly.

Hammam, as the object of desire, has all the annoyance of Bambi being caught in the headlights of somebody else's passion, whilst Boonstra's desperately searching eyes flawlessly convey the equally helpless lover, turning this almost speechless film into a revelation. Boonstra often sits before us rather like a Romantic poet: mysteriously hidden behind her fringe, flanked by books, forever elegant.

But *Nude Area* constantly lulls us into her Romantic states, too. We happily sit in Naomi's rocking chair of fantasies – perhaps fantasies we all take to dizzying heights when sat on the bus. This movie relentlessly tips us out of our rockers as well, though, as it snaps us in and out of reveries, soundscapes and static images. And as a result, we never remain certain what is fantasy or fully realised fantasy; with the shift between the two sometimes being so bathetic it genuinely makes you smile.

Despite this irony, written words still unfold across the screen and lyrics flow, making poetry part of the film, despite the absence of dialogue. Images also communicate ideas metaphorically (like all the sexually charged, coursing water in this movie, for example). But water imagery coupled with shots of reflections even come to intricately suggest an unattainable, self-projected form of love... Put simply, *Nude Area* is just the most tantric, televisual foreplay imaginable.