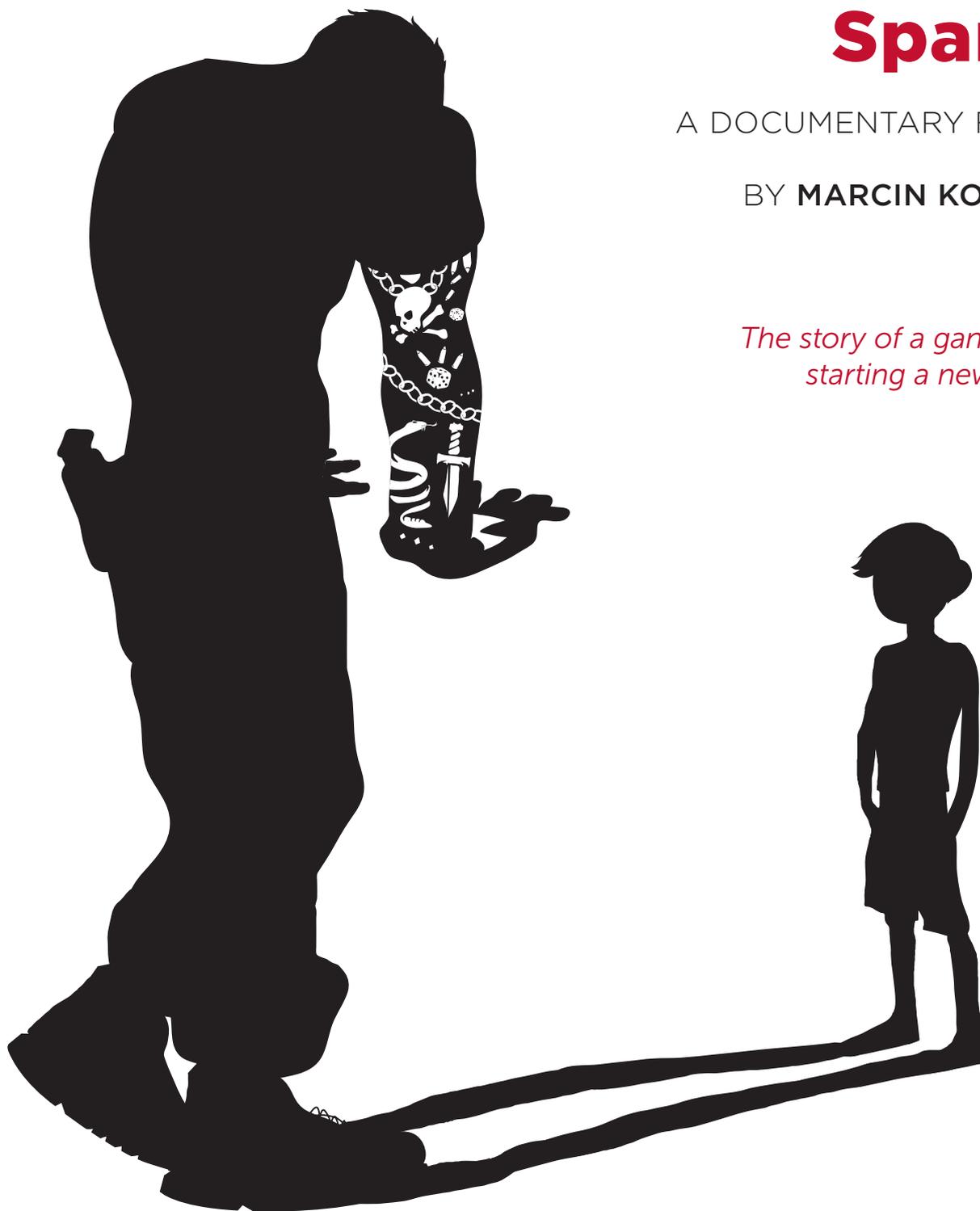


# Walking Spark

A DOCUMENTARY FILM

BY MARCIN KOPEĆ

*The story of a gangster  
starting a new life.*



*No one does evil intentionally. (Socrates)*



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*Such a film character is a treasure. The film is perfectly constructed, well conceived, and wisely narrated. This is a story that tells a lot not only about the man himself, but also about the world around him.*

Krzysztof Spór, film critic / 'Spór w kinie'

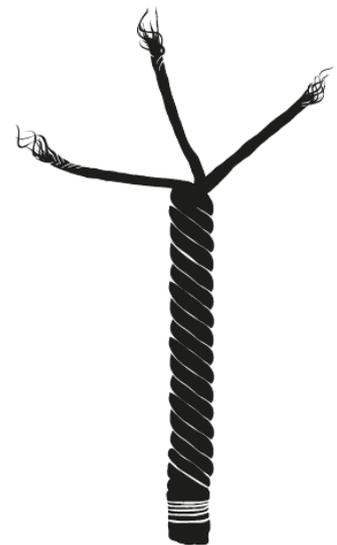
*Piotr, the main character of 'Walking Spark', is not only an ex-gangster, making his atonement. Not only a deeply hurt child whose world ended when he saw a pool of blood in his family house. In his glass, half-absent eyes there is something of Antoine's, the main character of 'The 400 Blows' by François Truffaut.*

Magdalena Felis, film critic / 'Stopklatka'

TO BE ABLE TO DO GOOD,  
YOU NEED TO COMMIT EVIL.



NIKOLAI GOGOL



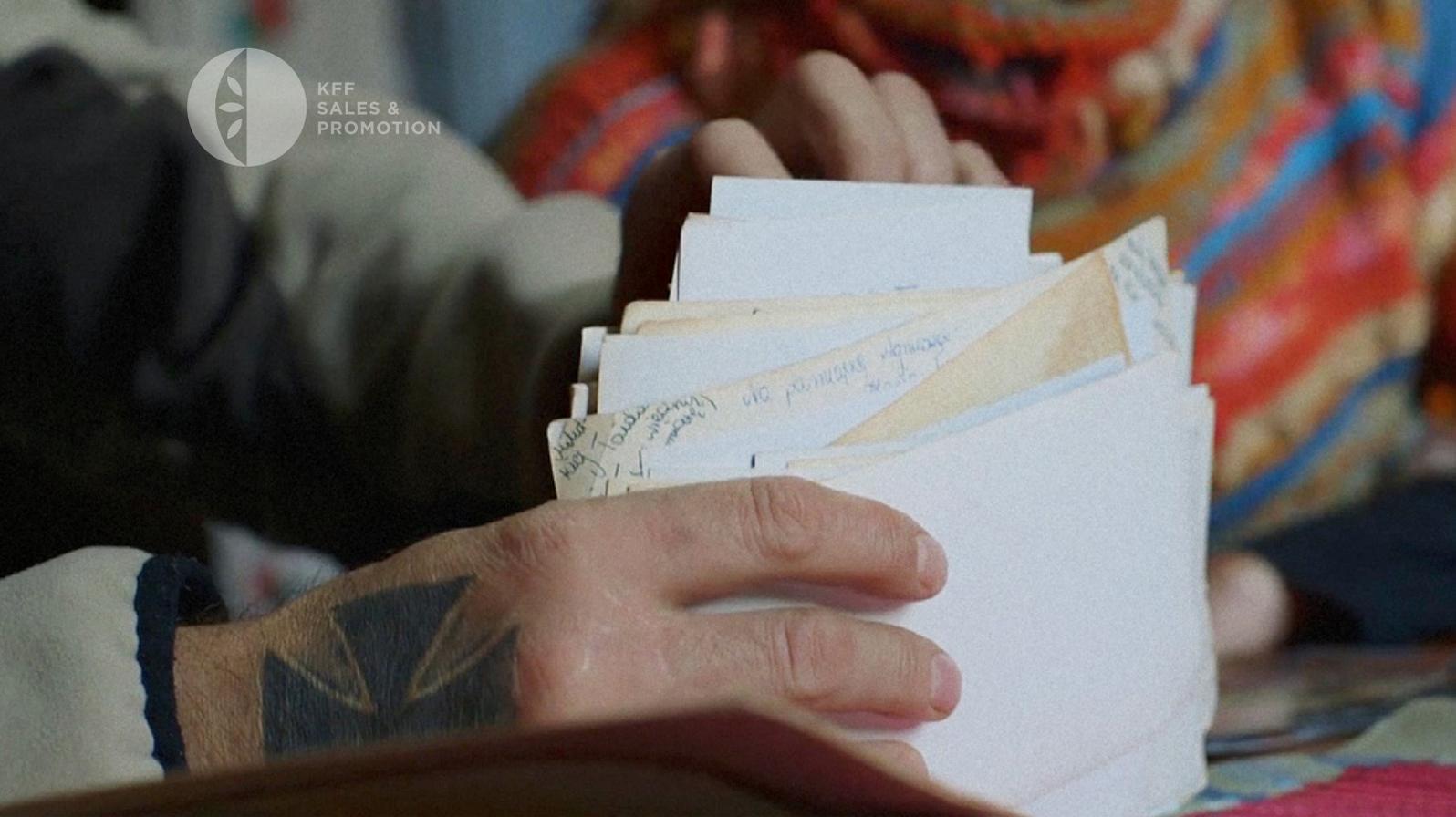


## SYNOPSIS

Piotr, a 45-years-old former member of the Warsaw mafia, after being released from prison, tries to settle his accounts with the past and start a new life. Piotr was a member of the Żoliborz gang, the last one to stay alive. In the 90s, the gang was one of the most cruel criminal groups sowing terror in Warsaw.

Throughout his entire life, Piotr caused suffering and aroused fear in people. After leaving prison, he takes up a legal job in a hospice, where he makes his first steps in a regular society, and overcomes inner and outer barriers. He fights with weaknesses and recalls his brutal and dark mafia past but does not deny it – apart from bringing painful experiences, it was also an important part of his life and a period of true friendships. The character's metamorphosis comes with the death of his brother, also a gangster. As a result, he begins to understand the pain and suffering that he brought to his victims. Apart from working in the hospice with older people, he also starts attending a Diamond Way Buddhism centre from the Karma Kagyu lineage. He tries to become a better person and repent for the past sins.

On his way, he meets a young artist named Magda. Inspired by his story, she decides to create an animation about it. In idyllic, wooded wilderness, Piotr shares the story of his traumatic childhood. From his gangster facade slowly emerges a sensitive and intelligent man. Thanks to Magda, Piotr begins confronting his dark past without sentiment. Will he adapt to this new life, based on different values? Will his metamorphosis last?



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I met Piotr in the Stupa House in Warsaw, one of the Diamond Way Buddhism centres from the Karma Kagyu lineage, founded by Lama Ole Nydahl. Before I got to meet Piotr in person, I have heard from my friends that an ex-bandit, former member of the Żoliborz gang, had started to attend the centre. I come from Gdynia where, in the 90s, the Polish mafia was present in the everyday lives of people. A view of huge muscled guys, dressed in black leather jackets, trying to subjugate the city was nothing uncommon, so I knew very well what to expect.

During the first meeting with Piotr I was surprised – he was far from that stereotype. He did not look like a classic mafia member, but rather a regular, bright guy. The difficult past was only reflected in his tattoos. When I got to know his story, I knew instantly that this was a theme for a film. I have always been interested in second chances and the topic of starting a new life. Can we fight old habits and start anew, or will we fall back into old patterns? Piotr agreed to become the character right away, but overcoming distance and building trust took a couple of years.

Throughout the film, we accompany Piotr in the first steps of his new life. We observe how he manages at work and slowly fights inner as well as outer barriers. But we do not know what will happen next and what will be the rest of the story. Will working in the hospice raise his sensitivity? Will he manage to break up with violence, heroin and his haunting past once and for all? Will he have enough strength and courage to build a new life based on new values? All of these questions emerge as a result of the meeting of two totally different people, worlds and value systems.



The main objective of the film is not to answer these questions, but rather give food for thought, in both individual and general dimension. When it comes to Piotr, we will be wondering whether his metamorphosis was real. Did it result from a conscious decision or was somehow forced by external circumstances? In a wider, general social context, being the background of the story, we can ponder upon the mechanisms of repeating certain schemes rooted in childhood - can we escape from childhood traumas and pathologies?





## **INTERVIEW WITH MAGDA KARA-SAJEK, THE AUTHOR OF THE ANIMATION EMPLOYED IN THE FILM**

### **In what circumstances did you happen to meet Piotr?**

At first, I knew Piotr only from a couple of video materials that the director was working on, and based on them I was supposed to create an animation. But this was not enough. Marcin decided to introduce Piotr to me, so that we could talk in person. For me, this was a huge challenge but already during our first meeting Piotr started to open up, and we chatted as if we were old friends. When we sat down with a cup of tea time stood still and hours went by unnoticed. However, the meeting was tough and tiring – in three days, I lost 8 kilograms! The clash of such a traumatic past and childhood with my comfortable, cosy world, where family and children are the most important values, was very difficult to me. Unexpectedly, I became a part of the film.

### **What was the origin of the idea to create an animation inspired by Piotr's story?**

The entire story, especially his past and traumatic childhood, had a great influence on me. As a mother of four, I believe that love and care that we give to our children give fruit in their adult life and shape their sensitivity. Piotr's cruel childhood, or rather the lack of it, scared me, but also explained his entire past. There are no evil children – they can only become evil as a result of bad experiences.

A majority of the animation are images recalled by Piotr from his past. Mostly, this is his past viewed through my eyes. The film contains only parts of the animation that I made but the majority represents experiences, images and feelings that Piotr remembers from that period.



**Was the animation conceived as a part of the film from the beginning?  
How long did it take to complete?**

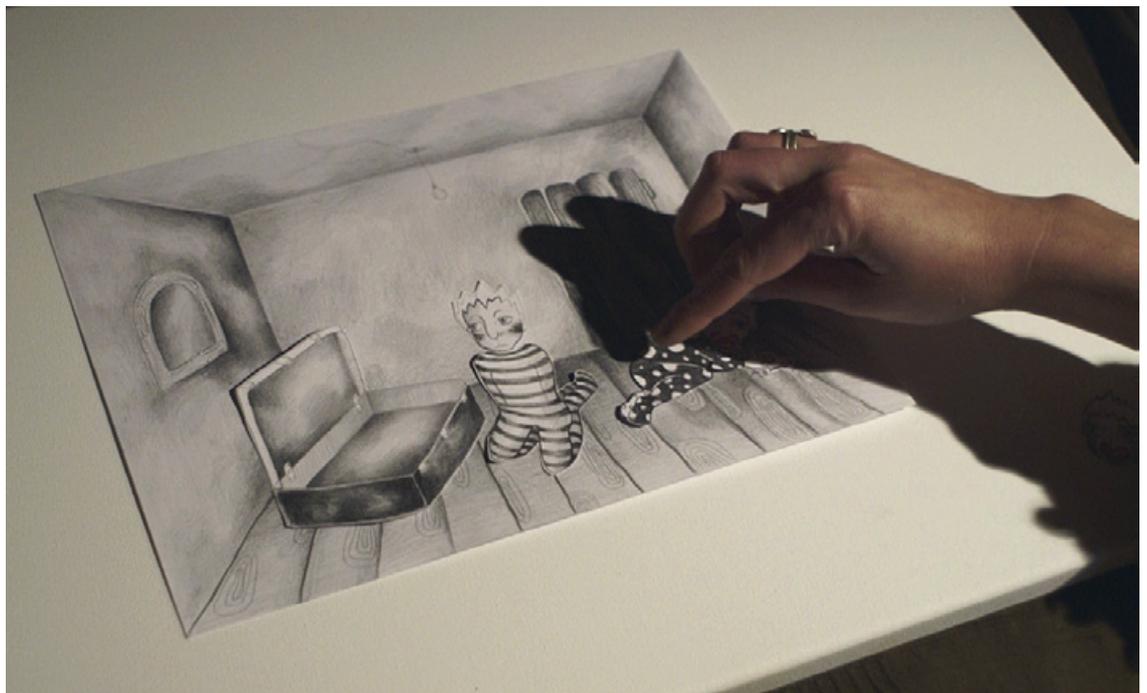
Marcin, the director, wanted the animation to be a part of the film from the beginning. He gave me creative freedom but our shared assumption was to make the animation for Piotr, in the first place. He watched it all and lived his life once more, but this time it was his life as seen through my eyes.

The making of the animation took three years, just as the film. New scenes were added, some were deleted as they turned out little important. The more I knew about Piotr and the stronger was our friendship, the more I understood his past.

**How did your collaboration with Piotr look like?**

Since the first meeting, there has been some specific connection and trust between us. I am a very good listener – when they are with me, people can say everything that they want to say. Rarely, I go deeper without being given the green light. At the beginning, I was only listening. First, I had to digest his story, and only then I was able to ask questions.

Our first talks were quite dry and devoid of emotions on Piotr's side. I suppose that only after he started to feel safe and comfortable, surrounded by nature, silence and care, he began sharing with me his sensitivity and images that he wanted to erase from his mind. Often, this was not easy. Piotr's entire past was extremely painful, both for me and for him. Different barriers emerged, the doors of memories shut down and we went back to some of the talks only after some time. Today, I feel like we have known one another for ages, that he is a family member, a friend. Often, I find it hard to believe that he had such a past. He is a very kind, sensitive and cheerful man – our Piotr.





## CREW



### **Marcin Kopec** / director

Born in 1978 in Gdynia, he is a first-time director with background in TV and photography. He earned his degree in Philosophy from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Gdansk and completed the DOK PRO documentary programme at the Wajda School. He has also participated in a number of theatre and screenwriting workshops and completed the Scratch DJ Academy in New York. In 2013, he completed a documentary study, *6 filmów o miłości*. *Walking Spark* is his festival debut.



### **Filip Drózd** / cinematography

He studied at the Faculty of Graphic Arts of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow and the Department of Direction of Photography of the Lodz Film School (diploma in 2014). Director of photography of many documentary and fiction films in Poland and abroad. Participant of artistic projects at the interface of art and film, as well as travelling and film. Most interested in the exploration of borders between feature and documentary film, and the searching for new forms.



### **Daniel Gąsiorowski** / editing

Born in 1977. Editor and sound operator. He worked on documentary and fiction films, among others, *Call Me Marianna* and *Starting Point*, which received numerous awards. He often collaborates with Kuba Czekaj; together they made films such as: *Don't be Afraid of the Dark Room*, *Twist & Blood*, *The Erlprince*.



## PRODUCTION

**SHIPsBOY** is a Warsaw-based production company, working in both fiction and documentaries. Founded in 2013, the company's main focus is on discovering and nurturing new talents – locally as well as internationally. Behind SHIPsBOY is a creative trio of two producers and a writer-director. Each of the partners brings different qualities to the mix, creating an experienced, energetic and audience-oriented production team. With knowledge gained from projects that we have worked on individually, we develop our slate of edgy, innovative, and audience-appealing feature films and creative documentaries. We already have good, consistent relationships with key Polish industry players, such as HBO Poland, TVP (Polish national broadcaster) as well as the Polish Film Institute and numerous regional funds.



### **Dawid Janicki**

Producer, co-owner of the SHIPsBOY production company. He was the creative producer behind a highly successful documentary animated series *Wartime Portraits*. The series won the Silver Medal at the New York Festivals World's Best TV & Film 2015, and received critical acclaim in Poland and abroad. His other projects include a feature documentary *Walking Spark* and a feature fiction *Out of Love* by Anna Jadowska. He also worked as a freelance producer on shorter commercial forms, including promotional campaigns for the Ministry of Regional Development and Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Vice-president of the Polish Audiovisual Producers Chamber of Commerce.



### **Joanna Szymańska**

Warsaw-based Polish producer, co-owner of the SHIPsBOY production company. Graduate of Film Studies and Law. Alumnus of the Berlinale Talent Campus (2011) and the EAVE Producers Workshop (2015). She gained her professional experience being involved in development and production of numerous fiction and documentary projects, including the Oscar®-nominated short documentary *Joanna* (dir. Aneta Kopacz) and the award-winning short fiction *Milky Brother* (dir. Vahram Mkhitryan), which brought her the Best Producer of Shorts and Documentaries

Award at the 54th Krakow Film Festival (2014). SHIPsBOY is her main field of professional activity. Joanna represents the company internationally and manages the co-productions produced by the firm. Actively involved in her local film industry, she is also a voting member of the European Film Academy.



## CO-PRODUCTION

**Telewizja Polska S.A** is the leader on the Polish television market. The station portfolio consists of two nation-wide channels, 16 regional channels, satellite channels – TV Polonia, TV Bielsat, as well as thematic channels – TVP Info, TVP Kultura, TVP Historia and TVP Sport. Since many years, TVP has successfully combined its mission of informing, educating and providing entertainment, with a varied programme offer, addressed to all viewers. The role of public television is also to promote and support Polish culture.

**The Polish Film Institute** has the aim to support the national film industry in Poland. Its comprehensive system enables the support for film projects at all stages – from the development of film projects, through production, to promotion, distribution and festival circulation of Polish and European films. The Polish Film Institute welcomes all foreign partners – producers, distributors and filmmakers alike – interested in all forms of collaboration with the Polish film industry.

**Mazovia Film Fund** operates within the structure of the Mazovia Institute of Culture. It was founded to support audiovisual productions through financial co-production contribution and the provision of services aimed at promoting the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, among others, by the production of feature films, documentaries and animations, as well as advertising materials.

**Fixafilm** is a post-production company which combines many years of experience with passion for finding perfect solutions, in all fields of its activity. It is the only company in Poland using the software employed in digital reconstruction on the post-production stage. As a result, they have become true experts in difficult cases.

**East Studio** is a production company operating in the fields of feature films, documentaries and advertising. The company focuses on socially important and universal topics, and aims at making cinema which is open and engaging for the viewer. Their work is concentrated on artistic productions, but they do not forget about commercial aspects of their projects.





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## CREDITS

DIRECTED BY: **MARCIN KOPEĆ**

SCRIPT: **MARCIN KOPEĆ**

ANIMATED BY: **MAGDA KARA-SAJEK**

CINEMATOGRAPHY: **FILIP DROŹDŹ**

MUSIC SUPERVISOR: **PAWEŁ JUZWUK**

SOUND DESIGN: **DARIUSZ WANCERZ**

EDITING: **DANIEL GAŚIOROWSKI**

PRODUCER: **DAWID JANICKI, JOANNA SZYMAŃSKA**

PRODUCTION COMPANY: **SHIPSBOY**

CO-FINANCING: **POLISH FILM INSTITUTE**

CO-PRODUCTION: **TVP S.A., THE MAZOVIA INSTITUTE OF CULTURE,  
MAZOVIA FILM FUND, FIXAFILM, EAST STUDIO**

## TECHNICAL DETAILS

SHOOTING COPY: **HD-2K**

PRINT COPY: **DCP**

LENGTH: **52'**

SPEED: **25**

SCREEN RATIO: **16:9**

LANGUAGE: **POLISH**

SUBTITLES: **ENGLISH**

SOUND: **5.1 DTS**

[SHIPSBOY.COM/WALKING-SPARK/](http://SHIPSBOY.COM/WALKING-SPARK/)





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## **INTERNATIONAL SALES AGENT**

**KFF SALES & PROMOTION** is a new branch of the Krakow Film Foundation, so far devoted to the festival promotion of Polish documentary films under the brand Polish Docs. Starting in 2016, film promotion is also accompanied by sales, which seems to be a natural development of the Foundation's former activities.

Polish documentaries receive numerous awards at festivals around the world, they are distinguished by thoroughness in approaching the topic and interesting visual layer. Traditions of the Polish documentary film school are still present, which does not mean that new films are made in the old style. Polish artists follow world trends, at the same time searching for their own, unique ways of expressions. The above qualities deserve to be presented not only to festival audiences. We believe that the international potential of new Polish documentaries is enormous, and should be used to promote Polish cinema to a wider audience.

### **CATALOGUE OF FILMS:**

***The Gift*** by Przemysław Kamiński

***Icon*** by Wojciech Kasperski

***The Internal Ear*** by Szymon Uliasz and Magdalena Gubała

***Walking Spark*** by Marcin Kopec

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