

**STRAND
RELEASING**

presents

THE ARTIST'S WIFE

A FILM BY
Tom Dolby

Starring Lena Olin, Bruce Dern

PRESS NOTES

OFFICIAL SELECTION

*Palm Springs International Film Festival
Mill Valley Film Festival
Hamptons International Film Festival*

Country of Origin: United States
Format: DCP / 1:2:39 / Color
Sound: Dolby Atmos Mix
Running Time: 95 minutes
Genre: Drama
Not Rated
In English

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SYNOPSIS

Claire (Lena Olin) lives a domestic life in the Hamptons as the wife of celebrated artist Richard Smythson (Bruce Dern). Once a promising painter herself, Claire now lives in the shadow of her husband's illustrious career. While preparing work for his final show, Richard's moods become increasingly erratic, and he is diagnosed with dementia. As his memory and behavior deteriorate, she shields his condition from the art community while trying to reconnect him with his estranged daughter and grandson from a previous marriage. Challenged by the loss of her world as she knew it, Claire must now decide whether to stand with Richard on the sidelines or step into the spotlight herself.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Lee Krasner. Elaine De Kooning. Camille Claudel. Dora Maar. History is filled with female artists who have supported their more famous husbands or partners. *The Artist's Wife* is a tribute to these women, a contemporary imagining of the journey of the stronger woman behind the man – and what happens when the relationship begins to crumble due to circumstances beyond either person's control.

In our cinematic landscape today, the experience of the middle-aged woman as she enters the third act of life is often ignored. In *The Artist's Wife*, Claire's passage is about new beginnings, about rediscovering the parts of herself that she left behind during the early years of her marriage, as well as recognizing qualities she never knew she had.

Stories about women spending their lives supporting their husbands are not, rightly so, where our culture is oriented today. They may strike us as retrograde or well-trodden ground, not worthy of exploration. In *The Artist's Wife*, we wanted to reclaim this narrative, showing the tail end of this journey of living in – and coming out of – the shadows. Though we see Claire making great sacrifices, with dignity, to the film's conclusion, we know she has a future beyond that with her husband. Claire's story, the part we see, is one of commitment, of sticking with the life she has chosen, at least until circumstances change. My hope is that *The Artist's Wife* honors the many women and men who have stuck by their partners, artists or otherwise, through challenging circumstances.

Though the film's story begins with Richard's disease causing the inciting series of incidents, *The Artist's Wife* is not an "Alzheimer's movie" in the traditional sense. Though there are many fine films in this subgenre, our story is instead about the caregiver, about Claire's experience with the disease. Six years ago, I was inspired by what my mother went through in supporting my father in his struggle with Alzheimer's. As the years went by after his death, I noticed that in the film, the perspective of the caretaker was largely ignored. Whether one views our story as an Alzheimer's movie or not, Richard's dementia represents to Claire a call to reclaim her own past when it is, like his memories, in danger of slipping away. His illness prompts her passage into her creative soul, not initially to protect his dignity, but to save her own. These two goals collide at the end of the film, and she must make the decision that is right for her.

Society and popular culture have told us that the years around sixty are about slowing down, about retiring, a word that is originated as meaning "to withdraw to a place of safety or seclusion." But why should the third act of life be one of retreating, repressing, hiding? My hope for Claire at the end of the film is that she is ready for a new chapter, one in which she will shine as brightly as her husband once did. "The problem with being constantly surrounded by bright lights," she says, "is that they make you feel there's already enough light in the world." May the film's narrative allow Claire to release this belief and let her talent run free, its brilliant beams lighting up the sky.

DIRECTOR TOM DOLBY

Tom Dolby's feature film writing and directing debut, *Last Weekend*, starring Patricia Clarkson, was released in 2014 by IFC/Sundance Selects and called "Checkhovian" by *The New York Times*, with Ms. Clarkson's performance hailed as "terrifically nuanced, heartbreaking, and often very funny" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Tom is the founder of Water's End Productions, where he and his team have developed a slate of narrative features and documentaries with the goal of supporting provocative and challenging human stories. The company funded the development of the Academy Award-winning film *Call Me By Your Name*, on which he served as an Executive Producer. Tom and Water's End have also produced the critically acclaimed films *Little Men*, *Regarding Susan Sontag*, *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*, and *Little Woods*, among others.

LENA OLIN

Lena Olin is an internationally acclaimed actress who can currently be seen starring in the UK series *Riviera* opposite Julia Stiles for Sky Atlantic. Recently, Lena wrapped a lead role opposite Bruce Dern in Tom Dolby's upcoming independent feature, *The Artist's Wife*. She also portrayed the pivotal role of 'Dierdre' in David Fincher's Netflix series *Mindhunter*. Previously, Lena was seen as a series regular in the half hour NBC comedy series, *Welcome to Sweden* created by Greg Poehler. Next up, Olin will be seen opposite Logan Lerman and Al Pacino in Amazon's highly anticipated series, *Hunters*.

The former Miss Scandinavia began her career on the National Stage in Stockholm in Ingmar Bergman's production of *King Lear*. She then went on to play the title role in Bergman's rendition of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. It was after that production that Ingmar Bergman cast her in *Face to Face* and soon after in the award-winning *Fanny and Alexander*. Olin's debut in a lead role on film was in *After the Rehearsal*, also directed by Bergman.

On the big screen, Olin and husband Lasse Hallström collaborated on the critically acclaimed film *Chocolat*, which received five Academy Award nominations. The duo then re-teamed for *Casanova*. Lena went on to star opposite Jennifer Garner in her first American television role ever; on the second season of *Alias*, earning an Emmy Award Nomination. Olin returned to *Alias* again in the fourth season, and was invited back for the series finale episode. In 1988, Olin garnered international acclaim opposite Daniel Day-Lewis in her first English speaking film, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. In 1989, she earned an Academy Award nomination for her work in *Enemies: A Love Story*. Olin then starred in *Romeo Is Bleeding* playing the outrageous hit woman Mona Demarkov. Her additional film credits include *The Reader* starring Kate Winslet and directed by Stephen Daldry, *Awake*, starring Hayden Christensen and Jessica Alba, and *Remember Me*, starring Robert Pattinson and Pierce Brosnan.

BRUCE DERN

In a long and distinguished career playing complex heroes and legendary villains, cinematic legend and two-time Academy Award nominee Bruce Dern has worked with such iconic directors as Alfred Hitchcock, Elia Kazan, and Francis Ford Coppola. Dern's revelatory portrayal of Woody Grant in Alexander Payne's *Nebraska* earned him a Best Actor nomination at the Academy Awards, the Golden Globes, and the BAFTAs. His turn in *Nebraska* also garnered him a Best Actor Award from the Cannes Film Festival and the National Board of Review. Other notable recent performances include Quentin Tarantino's films *The Hateful Eight* and *Django Unchained* and Patty Jenkins' *Monster*. His remarkable portrayal of Frank Harlow on the HBO hit *Big Love* earned him an Emmy nomination as well as a new generation of fans. Known for his down-to-earth charm and willingness to take creative risks on screen, Dern has worked alongside legends such as John Wayne, Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland, Jack Nicholson, Sean Connery, Robert Redford, Paul Newman, Ellen Burstyn, Kirk Douglas, Dennis Hopper, and Paul Newman. Dern received his first Oscar nomination for his heartbreaking performance as a Vietnam vet, playing opposite Jane Fonda in 1979's *Coming Home*. He studied with the renowned Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio. Dern is an avid runner, and estimates that he has run 110,000 miles in his lifetime. He and Diane Ladd are the parents of actress Laura Dern. In 2010, the three of them received stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the only family in history to receive this honor in one ceremony.

CAST

Claire Smythson
Richard Smythson
Angela Smythson
Danny
Joyce
Liza Caldwell
Ada Risi
Dr. Sheila Abrams
Gogo

Lena Olin
Bruce Dern
Juliet Rylance
Avan Jogia
Catherine Curtin
Tonya Pinkins
Stefanie Powers
Caryn West
Ravi Cabot-Conyers

CREW

Directed by
Written by
Story by
Produced by

Tom Dolby
Tom Dolby, Nicole Brending and Abdi Nazemian
Tom Dolby
Mike S. Ryan, Susanne Filkins, Tom Dolby, and Abdi
Nazemian

Executive Producer
Cinematographer
Edited by
Costume Designer
Production Designer
Composer
Music Supervisor
Casting By

Payton Dunham
Ryan Earl Parker
Gena Bleier
Jami Villers
John El Manahi
Jeff Grace
Linda Cohen
Tineka Becker, CSA

Distributed by

Strand Releasing

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