

**STRAND  
RELEASING**

*presents*

# The Artist's Wife

A FILM BY  
**Tom Dolby**

***Starring Lena Olin and Bruce Dern***

*with Juliet Rylance, Avan Jogia, Tonya Pinkins,  
Catherine Curtin, and Stefanie Powers*

## **PRESS NOTES**

### **OFFICIAL SELECTION**

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

*Sonoma International Film Festival (Jury Prize, Best U.S. Independent Feature)*

Country of Origin: United States  
Format: DCP / 2.39:1 / Color  
Sound: Dolby Atmos Mix  
Rated R for Language, Some Graphic Nudity,  
and Brief Sexuality

TRT: 95 minutes  
Genre: Drama, Romance  
English

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Claire (Lena Olin) lives a quiet 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 NOTES**

*The Artist's Wife* was conceived out of several impulses: First among these was my desire to explore "the woman next to the man" in a marriage between two creatives. I also wanted to create a film reflecting some of the life-changing experiences I had seen my mother go through with my father having dementia. Finally, the film's story demonstrates much of what I personally believe about commitment, loss, reconnection, and the healing—albeit painful—powers of creativity and forgiveness. Over one bleak winter in the Hamptons, when my father had recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, I started sketching out the story for *The Artist's Wife*.

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

The experience of the middle-aged woman as she enters the third act of life is often ignored in our filmic landscape. 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 inciting a 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. Seven years ago, I was inspired by what my mother went through in supporting my father in his struggle. As the years went by after his death, I noticed that in films, 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. As these two goals collide at the end of the film, 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 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.

## **TOM DOLBY (Director)**

Tom Dolby's feature film writing and directing debut, *Last Weekend*, starring Patricia Clarkson, was released in 2014 by IFC/Sundance Selects and called "Chekhovian" by *The New York Times*, with Ms. Clarkson's performance hailed as "terrifically nuanced, heartbreaking, and often very funny" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Dolby 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.

Dolby and Water's End have also produced the critically acclaimed films *Little Men*, *Regarding Susan Sontag*, *Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood*, *The House of Tomorrow*, and *Little Woods*, among others. Upcoming projects include an adaptation of the novel *Women in Sunlight* by *New York Times* bestselling author Frances Mayes (*Under the Tuscan Sun*).

Dolby is also the author of four novels, and his writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among others. Born in London and raised in San Francisco, he is a graduate of Yale University, where he received his B.A. in the history of art. He lives in Los Angeles with his two daughters. For many years, he had a house in Wainscott, NY, right next to East Hampton.

## **LENA OLIN (Claire)**

Celebrated as a versatile, intense leading lady, Academy Award nominee Lena Olin is widely considered to be the greatest actress to come out of Sweden since Ingrid Bergman. While still in drama school, Olin made an auspicious on-screen debut under the direction of the legendary Swedish auteur Ingmar Bergman in *Face to Face*. She continued working with Bergman on stage and screen, playing roles in the films *Fanny & Alexander* (winner of four Academy Awards, including Best Foreign Language Film) and *After the Rehearsal*.

Olin's English language film debut was *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, in which she played an artist, starring opposite Daniel Day-Lewis. This breakout role led to international fame, and Olin went on to work with directors such as Stephen Daldry (*The Reader*), Sidney Lumet (*Night Falls on Manhattan*), Roman Polanski (*The Ninth Gate*), Sydney Pollack (*Havana*), and Lasse Hallström (*Chocolat*). She has also been a co-star with actors such as Richard Gere, Robert Redford, and Johnny Depp.

In 1989, Olin received an Oscar nomination for *Enemies, A Love Story*. She also received the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actress for that film. Olin has also received a Golden Globe nomination for *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, an Emmy Award nomination for *Alias*, and a BAFTA nomination for *Chocolat*.

On television's *Alias*, Olin portrayed the iconic Irina Derevko, the mother of Jennifer Garner's character. She has starred in the television series *Riviera* as well as having a recurring role in the Amazon series *Hunters*. Olin is married to the director Lasse Hallström and lives in New York.

## **BRUCE DERN (Richard)**

In a long and distinguished career playing complex heroes and 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* as well as a recent turn in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. His 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 Oscar-winning 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.

## **SUPPORTING CAST**

**JULIET RYLANCE** (Angela) has stunned audiences with her brutally honest performances on television, in films, and on the stage. She has appeared in such beloved films as *Frances Ha* and *A Dog's Purpose*, and opposite Clive Owen on Steven Soderbergh's groundbreaking television show, *The Knick*. Early in her career, after graduating from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Rylance took on the role of Medea in Neil LaBute's *Bash* at the Union Theatre in London. From there, she played such iconic roles as Juliet, Cressida, Rosalind, and Desdemona. She has appeared at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, The Old Vic, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and been directed on stage by such notable directors as Sam Mendes. In *I Am Shakespeare*, written by her stepfather, Mark Rylance, she portrayed British writer Mary Sidney. For her work on the stage, Rylance has been nominated for a Lucille Lortel Award and an Obie Award. Rylance's film credits also include *Sinister* and its sequel, *Sinister 2*, *Love After Love*, and *Days and Nights*, which she also produced. On television, she has also appeared in *McMafia* and *American Gothic*. Rylance can currently be seen starring opposite Matthew Rhys in HBO's critically acclaimed series *Perry Mason*.

**AVAN JOGIA** (Danny) has repeatedly distinguished himself as a talented young actor to watch in films such as *Zombieland: Double Tap*, *Shaft*, *Paper Year*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Year of Spectacular Men*, *The New Romantic*, *The Exchange*, *I Am Michael*, and *Ten Thousand Saints*. On the small screen, Jogia recently starred in the series *The Stranger*, directed by Venna Sud. He was also one of the young leads of *Now Apocalypse*, directed by Gregg Araki and executive produced by Steven Soderbergh. Other TV work includes *Ghost Wars*, *Tut*, *Twisted*, and *Last Teenagers of the Apocalypse*, for which he also wrote and directed four episodes. Jogia directed his own short film, *Of Dogs and Men*, and will soon direct his first feature, *Door Mouse*. A star since his early teens, Jogia was featured as one of the faces for the Kenzo fashion brand and was shot by Annie Leibovitz for *Vogue*. In addition to his accomplishments in TV and film, Jogia's popularity across a variety of social media platforms has grown to almost 8 million followers.

**STEFANIE POWERS** (Ada Risi) is an internationally renowned star of television, stage, and screen. She continues to be widely recognized for her iconic leading role in the long-running television series *Hart to Hart*, where she played opposite Robert Wagner. Having starred in over thirty motion pictures, Powers' film career began when she was put under studio contract with

Columbia Pictures at age 16 and went on to work with screen legends such as John Wayne, Ava Gardner, Maureen O'Hara, Tallulah Bankhead, and Roger Moore. She has appeared on such celebrated television series as *Bonanza*, *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Love*, *American Style*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *McCloud*, *The Mod Squad*, *The Rockford Files*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, and *The Bionic Woman*. A two-time Emmy and five-time Golden Globe nominee, Powers was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1992. She is the founder and president of the William Holden Wildlife Foundation, established in 1982 to further her long-time partner's conservation work in East Africa after his death. As a breast and lung cancer survivor, Powers is also an outspoken advocate for cancer awareness.

**CATHERINE CURTIN** (Joyce) has enjoyed recurring and memorable roles on such era-defining television shows as *Orange is the New Black*, *Homeland*, *Insecure*, *Stranger Things*, and *The Loudest Voice*. Her film work includes *Bad Education*, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, and *Worth*. Among Curtin's theatre credits are productions of *Burning*, *Consent*, *The Lady from Dubuque*, *So Help Me God*, and *Love, Janis*. Curtin is a graduate of Princeton University and a member of the prestigious Actor's Studio and The Ensemble Theatre.

**TONYA PINKINS** (Liza Caldwell) is a Tony Award winner and three-time Tony Award nominee for her performances in *Caroline, or Change*, *Play On!*, and *Jelly's Last Jam*. In addition to her widely lauded theatre career, she can be seen in such television shows as *Madam Secretary*, *Fear the Walking Dead*, *The Strain*, and *Scandal*. Her film credits include *Enchanted*, *Fading Gigolo*, and *Newlyweds*. Pinkins' writing and directing debut, the independent film *Red Pill*, will be released soon.

**CARYN WEST** (Dr. Sheila Abrams) is an award-winning actress with many television, film, and top regional theatre leading role credits. Her Broadway work includes *Crimes of the Heart*, *The Nerd*, and *Dancing at Lughnasa*. As Sonia in *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* at the Hartford Stage, she won the 2014 Connecticut Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Featured Actress in a Play. Recent TV credits include *NCIS*, *Chicago PD*, and *Grey's Anatomy*. West is also a well-respected acting coach in West Hollywood and New York City.

**RAVI CABOT-CONYERS** (Gogo) can currently be seen alongside Rashida Jones and Kenya Barris in Barris' single-camera Netflix comedy, *#BlackAF*, where he stars as a series regular. Previously, he had a recurring role on the CBS All Access original series *Tell Me A Story*. On the big screen, he enjoyed a leading turn opposite Glynn Turman in Stephanie Turner's feature *Justine* and a supporting role alongside Martin Freeman in the Jason Winer-directed film *Ode to Joy*.

## **CAST**

Claire Smythson	Lena Olin
Richard Smythson	Bruce Dern
Angela Smythson	Juliet Rylance
Danny	Avan Jogia
Joyce	Catherine Curtin
Liza Caldwell	Tonya Pinkins
Ada Risi	Stefanie Powers
Dr. Sheila Abrams	Caryn West
Gogo	Ravi Cabot-Conyers

## **CREW**

Directed by	Tom Dolby
Written by	Tom Dolby & Nicole Brending and Abdi Nazemian
Story by	Tom Dolby
Produced by	Mike S. Ryan, Susanne Filkins, Tom Dolby, and Abdi Nazemian
Executive Producer	Payton Dunham
Cinematographer	Ryan Earl Parker
Edited by	Gena Bleier
Costume Designer	Jami Villers
Production Designer	John El Manahi
Composer	Jeff Grace
Music Supervisor	Linda Cohen
Casting by	Tineka Becker, CSA
Distributed by	Strand Releasing

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