

Rafael Lewandowski was born to a French mother and a Polish father. As a teenager, he directed amateur films in Super 8, then turned to film studies while becoming an assistant on numerous film shoots. From 1991 to 1996, he was a student at the national French film school, LA FEMIS, in DIRECTING DEPARTMENT.

After a few short fiction films, he began working on documentaries. His thesis film CELA [TSÈLA] (1996) was shot in Warsaw in 1996. It tells the story of an impossible love affair between a Polish woman and a French man during the Second World War. Finalized in 1998, A SHADOWED GAZE (1999) is a portrait of the famous set designer Willy Holt who was deported to Auschwitz, but testified about his experience in the concentration camp only after fifty years of silence. Dedicated to the media coverage of the Maurice Papon trial (accused of ordering the arrest and deportation of 1,560 Jews between 1942 and 1944), HEARINGS (2000) was filmed during this exceptional event in contemporary French history. Produced in 2005 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Solidarity, CHILDREN OF SOLIDARNOSC (2006) portrays four children of former militants of the trade union movement that shook the communist system in Eastern Europe. BYE, BYE DUBLIN! (2010) is the continuation of this story. The documentary diptych MINKOWSKI | SAGA (2013) and OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT (2017) is devoted to the tormented destinies of important families from Poland during the 20th Century. HERBERT. BARBARIAN IN THE GARDEN (2021) tells the moving story of the legendary Polish "national" poet Zbigniew Herbert. The six-episode series AT WAR FOR ALGERIA (2022) looks back at a conflict that left its mark on France and the post-1945 world, through the testimonies of those who lived through it on a daily basis. CYWIA AND RACHELA. THEY RESISTED IN THE WARSAW GHETTO (2023) retraces the parallel paths of two exceptional Jewish women who opposed the Nazis in occupied Poland; one with weapons - Cywia Lubetkin; the other with words - Rachela Auerbach.

While working on these documentaries exploring the relationship between individual and collective memory, Rafael Lewandowski also worked as an interviewer for the Shoah Foundation (created by Steven Spielberg), interviewing approximately one hundred former deportees, hidden children and partisans from World War II.

Son of a painter, he has also made several films about the performing arts: IN THE SHADOW OF DON GIOVANNI (2003), ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CANVAS (2005), THE ART OF SILENCE (2009) and MINKOWSKI | SAGA (2013) and he directed short documentary programs for FRANCE 5 and ARTE.

His documentary films have been selected and awarded in numerous festivals around the world (including Cinéma du Réel, New Documentaries - MOMA, Traces de Vies, Interviews, Amascultura, Warsaw Jewish Film Festival, Doc Review, One World...) and have been broadcast on numerous occasions on television (France 2, Planète, La Cinquième, ARTE, Canal + Poland, TVP, RTBF, RAI, TSR, Israeli Television, History...).

In 2010, Rafael Lewandowski directed his first feature film, THE MOLE (original title: KRET). Released with great success in Poland in 2011, it has been selected at a number of international festivals including FFM Montreal, Chigaco IFF, Manheim-Heilderlberg IFF, Mar del Plata IFF, Trieste IF... It received, among others, the Best Actor Award at the 35th Montreal International World Film Festival, as well as the Press Award and the Audience Award at the Arras Film Festival.

Since 1995, Rafael Lewandowski has been a regular speaker at the film workshops (for La Fémis, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ateliers Varan, APCVL, Cinémathèque Française, the French Cultural Institute of Tunis, ALBA school of Beirut, the Lillehammer Television School in Norway, the University of Warsaw...).

He is also an expert of the Polish Film Institute PISF, the MAZOVIA FILM FUND and the SILESIAN FILM FUND. President or member of the jury of numerous festivals (II Warsaw Jewish Film Festival, Lodz School Film Festival 2012, Short Film Competition of the Polish Film Festival of Gdynia 2013, "Off" Academy of Young Polish Cinema 2013...), he's co-directing since 2015 the international festival of French-speaking short films FRANKOFILM, ZIELONA GORA.

In 2007, Rafael Lewandowski created an independent production company based in Warsaw VERTIGO. In partnership with the producer Małgorzata Brzeczowska, he develops co-production projects between France and Poland. Within the framework of this activity, two feature-length documentaries: ALL OF ME WILL NOT DISAPPEAR (2022, written and directed by Joanna Grudzinska) and CHILDREN OF CHAOS (2023, directed by Agnes Pizzini and Julien Johan). A third is currently in production: AGAINST HISTORY (by Joanna Grudzinska).

Rafael Lewandowski received the Polityka weekly's Passport 2011 ("Paszport Polityki"), and in 2015 he was awarded the Knight of the Order Arts and Letters, which the French Government awards to deserving individuals for their advocacy in the fields of culture and art.

RAFAEL LEWANDOWSKI

Documentaries

Insurgé (The Resistance Fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto) (91' / Zadig Productions, Katyusha productions, Ethan Productions / 2023)
At War for Algeria (6x52' / INA, ARTE / 2022)
Herbert. Barbarian in the Garden (94' / Lutetia Arabians, Donten&Lacroix, Blick Productions / 2021)
Out of Limelight (85' / Vertigo, Zygmunt Zaleski Stitching / 2017)
Minkowski | Saga (85' & 58' / Vertigo & Fido Film / 2013)
Bye, Bye Dublin! (45' / Studio Filmowe Kalejdoskop, TVP 2 / 2010)
The Art of Silence (55' / Eureka Media, TVP Kultura / 2008)
Children of Solidarność (74' & 52' / digital beta / Kuiv Productions & Studio Filmowe Kalejdoskop / 2006)
Don Giovanni; Behind the Scene (75' / digital beta / Canal + Polska / 2003)
Hearings (90' / digital beta / Yenta Production, La fémis & Cités Télévision / 2000)
A Shadowed Gaze (52' / S.16mm / Porte Rouge, Images Plus & Rougemarine / 1999)
Cela [tsèla] (52' / 35 mm / La fémis & Fidélité Productions / 1996)
Shirley (20' / beta SP / La fémis / 1993)
Ainsi font, font, font... (6' / beta SP / La fémis / 1992)

Fictions

The Mole (108' / Metro Films / 2010)
A Ranch in Nevada (11' / 35 mm / La fémis / 1994)
Motor ! (9' / 35mm / La fémis / 1994)
Short Goodbyes (7' / 16mm / La fémis / 1992)
A Late Summer's Day (14' / 16mm / Auto-produit / 1991)

Films for television

Cameras and Justice (52' / Phares et Balises for Histoire / 2007)
Welcome to Joanna (26' / Riff International Production for ARTE - « Visages d'Europe » / 2006)
Welcome to Sebastian (26' / Riff International Production for ARTE - « Visages d'Europe » / 2006)
Coen Brothers on the Set (9' / Victoires International for Canal + / 2006)
On the Other Side of the Canvas (36' / Canal + Poland / 2004)
Mohamed Zran, Tunisian Film Maker (52' / Sangho Films for TV5 / 2003)
Cine Portraits (3 x 3'30 / "Après la sortie", La Cinquième / 2002)
Hitchcock and the Fine Arts (10' / "Absolument cinéma", La Cinquième / 2001)
From the Short Film to the Feature Film (10' / "Absolument cinéma", La Cinquième / 2001)
Youssef Chahine on the Set (9' / "Absolument cinéma", La Cinquième / 2000)
Chinese Movies; a New Era (11' / "Absolument cinéma", La 5 / 2000)
Cinerap (6' / Magazine "Absolument cinéma", La Cinquième / 2000)
Portrait of Sonia Rykiel (26' / MCM Paris for Paris Première / 1999)
The Volker Schloendörf's Cinema Lesson (C.N.C. / 1994)