

# Supermom- Kick-Off



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## IMPORTANT ISSUES

- The film workshops for single parents started
- Regular exchange between the participants via the blog - get connected!
- In Leipzig, Lodz, Paris and Belfast film work is in progress

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## Time for the Supermom film workshops

By Agnieszka Borowicz-Bartosik

The film workshops in all countries are in progress. Some short films are already finished. Below you will find more specific information about the single-parent groups and their creative work on the project.



*Psychodrama, Leipzig, Germany*

In the last months of 2011, the German participants from Leipzig started with the empowerment workshops to reflect their individual and common lone parent situation. The women worked on their power of expression and looked for perspectives of a local career network. Therefore they visited a congress especially for women and looked for mentorships in and around Leipzig.

In the following workshop "scriptwriting" the participants learned fundamental principles of dramatic composition and watched movies to analyse different scenes. They developed a common idea of the film and talked about the specifics of short stories and arc of suspense.

After this intensive practical implementation course they continued working on the story and the scenes of the common short movie with methods of psychodrama and

improvisation.

During the whole implementation period the Leipzig participants presented themselves and their family life in a short personal presentation on the Supermom blog.

In Lodz, Poland, the film workshops started on 24 October 2011, led by the independent film operator, Żaneta Golec. The workshops enjoy great popularity among all participants. The group got to know some rules of screenwriting and the film genre called "docufiction" and they also analysed the film techniques in several examples. The participants wrote their own stories, which were the basis for short film scenarios. During this activity they got to know rules of creating a storyboard, manner of narration and creating main characters. The next workshops were devoted to acting and the role of sound in the film (these workshops were lead by Sebastian Dumowski). Currently, the group is working on finalizing the film scenario.



*Photo by Żaneta Golec. Sound workshops, with Sebastian Dumowski Lodz, Poland.*

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## Time for the Supermom film workshops

The theoretical and practical training path realized within the framework of Supermom Kick-off project **in Padova, Italy**, went through various stages. During the first meetings the participants carried out activities to build the group and to share experiences with the help of different exercises aiming to empower them. The analysis of movies to better understand different techniques of course played a role also in Italy before creating an own topic for a short movie. Currently they are writing the script and planning the film shoot.

The short movie that is “under construction” is focused on the winding path of a woman that, left alone with a son, has to survive and overcome many obstacles, both material and emotional (the lack of services, the risk of losing custody of her child, many closed doors, etc).

The Italian team has planned about 10 scenes, and at the moment they are writing the screenplay. At the same time, they are also planning and organizing the film shoot, according to what is planned for each scene.



GERMANA

Gail

*The group play —  
What an animal are  
you?*

The topic and most of the scenes are coming from the real experiences of the participants. In the workshop it was interesting to see how such experiences gave birth to a new story. All participants wanted to tell a unique story, but unfortunately the group could only choose one for the short film!

The training **in Belfast, Northern Ireland**, began on 17 October 2011 and finished with the screening of the short film on 21 December 2011. The group was comprised of 13 members that met three times a week. The first week they mostly concentrated on story and story telling and looked at the themes and types of filmmaking that they wanted to develop further. Chris Baugh, a screenwriter, came in to give more insight into writing scripts. The second week, they looked at these details more and the group built on their technical knowledge.

During week 3, in addition to continued scriptwriting, we focused on the purely visual aspects of filmmaking. We studied composition, framing, and the use of colour in artwork, and explored how these elements of “visual language” could be applied to our short film.

Our trip to the Ulster Museum helped us understand how other artists use visual language, and then later that week, the participants got to put their learning into action with a hands-on photography with

photographer Kelly Morris.

The following

week (week 4), the group had a visit from Janine, who had trained as a makeup artist at a local makeup school. They also spent a day looking at the Art Department and their role in filmmaking.

Week 5 was spent preparing for the film shoot—choosing roles for each participant, gathering props and costumes, and consolidating the plans for the two days on set. Then, in week 6, the UK team had the incredible experience of creating the short film! Ribbons, a short film about 50 years of a woman’s life, is a mixture of normal, half speed and stop motion filming. Finally, a preview screening of

Ribbons took place on 21st December at the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast. The screening was for cast and crew members, and also staff at Gingerbread NI and Possibilities NI.

**In Paris, France**, the workshops have been in progress since 17 October 2011. For example, they had training on the software “after effects” to learn how to realize special effects video. They have also already started the first shots of the short film during a workshop from 2 to 14 November. The group meets each Thursday afternoon with a trainer to continue the workshops.



*„Ribbons” filming, Belfast,  
Northern Ireland*



*The group of single parents and film  
specialists from Northern Ireland  
screening their short film „Ribbons”*

## Interview with camera operator Andreas Lettenmeier

*By Sabine Roehrig-Mahhou*

**How did you get the idea to become a camera operator, what is interesting for you about it?**

I came to that profession laterally. After my A level and two attempts at the university, first economic geography, which was not interesting for me and engineering, I started a traineeship in a movie production. First I was general dog-sbody, but then I was employed and made my way through different assistances to the position of a television editor. The technological aspects, like camera operating and film editing, fascinated me, with the result that I studied further and looked over the shoulders of the camera operators and exercised practically. So I became a camera operator as a pure autodidact and learning by doing.

**How does an ordinary working day look like?**

No day is like the other one. Today I was filming for the "Augsburger Lechwerke", an energy provider, and I filmed together with an editor at four different locations, which meant spending a lot of time in the car. On other days I film on my own, some days with a big team or once in a while I spend all day at the computer with film editing.

It is a big double burden if one is on his own without an editor, because one must keep in mind many different things at the same time. But it is for example not possible to write beside filming if one gets an idea. Besides the technical side also artistic aspects have to be considered. Therefore the classical formation with editor, cameraman and camera assistant is the most successful and best, because it is an efficient team.

As a freelancer it means all-or-none, too much or too less and of course one takes as many orders as possible. So mostly I work on several projects simultaneously.

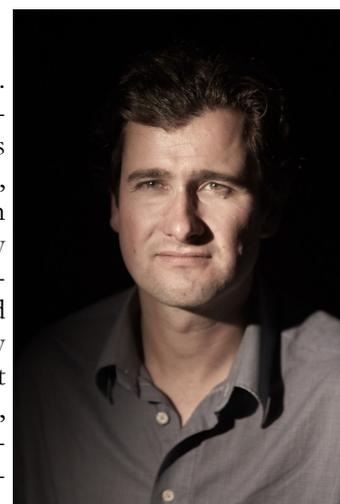
**That seems very stressful. How family-friendly is your job in your opinion?**

That depends on the situation, especially public-sector broadcaster or big production companies work together with employed cameramen. The salary is maybe a bit lower, but therefore one gains safety. Furthermore ones time and finances are sorted out better.

Nevertheless, even as an employee one has to take orders. You can't leave the set at 6 pm if the film shooting takes until midnight. If you want a job, where you work from 9 in the morning till 5 in the afternoon with weekends off, this is not the right profession for you.

I only know camera operators who don't have enough work or are working all day long. When you think today that you are off in two week's time, this can change two days before. Sometimes the profession is very stressful, but for sure it is very interesting and full of variety. You get to know many people, even famous ones, who are talking to just normally. You film in places you would never visit otherwise and which are really interesting. I have been, for example, to Germany's second biggest woodworking enterprise in a fac-

tory as big as 5 football fields. Every second they put massive boles inside the machines and produced floorboards, parquets and roof battens in high speed. I also had many film shootings with politicians, sportsmen, actors and so on. I experienced many things that other people just see in television. Of course, somebody has to take the pictures for the television program. And that's the camera operator.



*Andreas Lettenmeier (private photo)*

**Sure, it certainly sounds like a big challenge, especially to produce good footage of factual topics. Have you ever thought about producing feature movies?**

The section of feature film is pretty interesting, but the entrance is difficult, especially for newcomers. Of course also the graduates of film academies want to go there and can use their home advantage. An entrance here is imaginable over an assistantship. The material and every taping day are expensive (dozens of people are employed at the movie set of a feature film) and the technical mastering is very important.

Also you have to consider that one movie takes about 20 taping days. That means very good money, but you maybe don't get a following jobs for a longer time. That's why it's important to be known in the scene just as many good contacts are very important. As a television cameraman one is normally working about one to two days on a TV feature and has many clients. You always have something to do, so that this is sustainable.

I myself already supported actors who I am friends with in their casting and demo videos. By doing so we realized individual scenes in the style of a feature film. I must say, the scenic shooting is great fun to me, it is totally different from the work for TV or on image films. By the way, currently I am writing on a script for a feature movie just for fun, who knows maybe I will turn it into a movie.

**The final question, is there a hint you would give newcomers?**

Newcomers should inform themselves about the latest technology and purposely watch TV to sensitize themselves. The important question is where a picture is coming from and how it is shot. If, for example, one watches all the docu-soaps in television, a cameraman would have to walk frantically around the actors all the time if the pictures were not faked.

## Interview with camera operator Andreas Lettenmeier

To get to know a cameraman and to do a traineeship is a good opportunity. In doing so one gets a feeling for the technique and the realization and – just as important – one is getting contacts. Also a traineeship at a camera renting company is interesting. You get to know the technique and get in touch with cameramen.

If one thinks that the hand shot video from grandmas 70<sup>th</sup> birthday is an entrance into the business just because everybody clapped hands during the presentation then one

should reconsider his expectations. It is a long learning curve. One must see it like an apprenticeship and be concerned intensely with this profession around three years. With different traineeships and camera assistantships you can work your way up to a “junior cameraman”. That’s how one can get the entrance. Being a camera operator means constantly learning, one must be able to handle all formats, control the instrument camera and be capable of transforming pictures into art.

### Media professions

## How To Become... A Camera Operator?

By *Agnieszka Borowicz-Bartosik & Angela Maggiolo*



*Photo by A. Borowicz-Bartosik. Żaneta Golec— a camera operator during the workshops in Lodz, Poland.*

Film operator is a chief of photographic - cinematography team, who establishes with a director and a film set designer an artistic composition of a frame, lighting and kinds of applied film set (location). The main task of film operator is to establish artistic composition of a frame according to own artistic concept.

He/she is responsible for all that is involved with a picture. In the operating team there are also a chef operator, assistants of film operator, a camera driver, a lighting person, and a photographer.

It is good to remember that the camera is not only a tool but it is what will make the movie a masterpiece. It is fundamental to have a deep knowledge of the shootings considering always what are the characteristics of the scene that you will shoot, such as light, colours, dimensions and movements.

The camera operator shoots images for TV programmes, press reports and documentaries in studio or outdoors with a camera, following the instructions of the director. The most frequent activities of a camera operator can include: shoot the images considered as the most appropriate ones moving the camera in the most appropriate way, considering the features of the scene (light, dimensions, colour, movement), features of the camera itself, of the images planned, of the instructions given by the director through the headphones; coordinate your shootings with the ones of the other camera operators, collaborate with the shooting assistant and the audio engineers; give advice to the director to have particular visual effects.

What kind of personal attributes should a camera operator have?

The most important are photographic gifts and skills. A film operator also needs imagination, knowledge of film

conventions, knowledge of film history and technical knowledge about equipment, he uses. Creativity, self-discipline, concentration, knowledge of contemporary computer software are also essential skills in this work.

**In Poland** for someone, who is going to be a camera operator, the most common career path is to study operating techniques at one of the film schools or to study film, television and photography at one of the universities. We have several high schools to choose from: The National Film, Television and Theater High School in Lodz, The High School of Arts and Design in Lodz or The Arts Academy in Poznan or at The Silesian University. Mostly, these majors are extension or evening studies, so payable for students.

Other possibilities are to study photography at Art Academies, for example, in Krakow or Gdansk or at vocational colleges. For someone with a Master's Degree from another field there is also a chance to study operating skills or film and television realization in post-graduate mode. Film operating studies are 3 or 4 years long and they mainly consist in receiving a credit for practical exams. During practical workshops students prepare short films using professional equipment. They have also lots of obligatory classes, such as: the liberal arts, art history, film knowledge, visual arts, photography, history of film and scenography.

Nobody can become a camera operator by attending courses only; practical experience is also required. Possibilities of work are in a film studio or in television. Most camera operators are free lancers. A camera operator may also look for a job as an editor, picture producer, scriptwriter or even director.

**In Italy** it's necessary to attend a post diploma vocational training course. After studies a camera operator's activity is carried out in TV studios or cinema studios or outdoors, according to what is set up in the script, normally not following the normal working hours and often away from home. A camera operator has to use different kinds of camera, jibs, and equipment for light effects.

The German term cameraman or camerawoman includes defined occupations that can be differenced as follows:

- activity in "motion pictures", such as sport - and live broadcasts, shows, news coverage and other formats in the journalistic field (similar to photo-journalist);
- art and image making in the area of "cinematographic work" as produced film, television and video works, most notably in feature films, television dramas and series, but also staged documentary, industrial and advertising films (comparable with the photographer).

The job description can vary greatly depending on the type of work a camera operator undertakes. When working in television, recordings are often made in a studio with a live camera, or with a camera EB. The studio or live camera operator is part of a team that moves the camera, while the EB camera operator acts largely independently (EB camera operators often work in the news sector).

For film productions are artistically-photographic aspects: The movie camera man deals with the selection of themes and settings and will work with the director's visual and dramatic overall concept of the film and converts it photographically.

Training as a camera man or woman is not uniform in Germany. Either a photographic training with additional training in a film or television academy or a basic training at an art school or college. Already during the study period, it is important to gain practical experience.



*Photo by A.Borowicz-Bartosik.  
Behind the camera...*

Camera operators in Northern Ireland do not need to undergo any formal professional education, as this profession is based entirely on experience. One way to become an operator is to train within the camera department. This will give you a good background in all the technical kit that is used on set and also a working knowledge of how scenes are shot and put together. When approaching a production company for employment as a camera operator, it is vital to have examples of your work together on a show reel. This shows what style of work you are capable of and what level of production you have worked on. The best way to start building a show reel is to shoot music videos and short films for free. The more versatile you can be as an operator, the more work you are likely to get.

**In France** there are many ways to become a camera operator:

- from a second-year university level to the master degree in the field of broadcasting;
- By in-service training and initial training;
- By accreditation of professional prior learning.

Diplomas are of upper level.

It is important to remember that a camera operator is one specialization in the field of audiovisual technology. The audiovisual technician intervenes in the realization of shots by respecting the directives of production. He is in charge of the installation and the regulations of the audiovisual equipment and the lighting. He has to adapt himself to the business sectors and to the nature of the project. The technician works on the scene of shooting, in association with the technical teams and the other professionals (interpreters, journalists). He can specialize in technician sound, image, lighting or assembly.

## Developing creativity

*Based on [www.supermom-eu.blogspot.com](http://www.supermom-eu.blogspot.com)*

The Northern Ireland class took part in several creative exercises. During one exercise they worked in small groups and planned a script based only on a picture of a character, a set and a location. These pictures were very different from each other and this made the exercise very challenging. Below you find some stories that were written this class.

**"Drake"** Drake is the most popular rockstar on the planet. Fans queue for days just to get a glimpse of him. But his groupies have a tendency to mysteriously disappear... Beware of invitations to his sumptuous after parties, held in his glorious castle

in Wexford. Guests are impressed by the long drive through the dark forest to his huge castle, hidden amongst the trees. But there are reports of mysterious bite marks appearing on his guests' wrists and necks. There are also rumours of previously normal men and women, who have attended his parties, needing to be institutionalised shortly after and spending their days ranting about hidden spaceships. There are also rumours of sinister classification systems. But what are these people being classified for? Slaves? Concubines? Food...? (By Christiane and Rosemary)

## Developing creativity

**"Knowledge"** John black has a butterfly on his shoulder. It is the logo of his secret society. They call themselves the "Metamorphisists" and only wealthy and influential people can gain entry into this secret group. Anyone that this society considers to be an outsider is called "Cacooners". Jack is a wealthy oil tycoon and owns a successful horse ranch, which he uses as a front for his darker dealings. With the money he has made from his businesses he has bought two modern tower blocks that loom over the city of Texas. In one building the Metamorphisists hold their meetings. The other building has been converted into a plush and lavish hotel, each room having in its own unique theme. The hotel is used to show any new members that they have picked the winning side. However, the CIA have become aware of the Metamorphisists and their activities. A few years ago they planted one of their top agents within the secret society to try and understand what the Metamorphisists had planned



*Photo by A.Borowicz-Bartosik.  
A camera operator should be creative .*

for the world. The agent came back with disturbing reports. It seems as though they pain to replace love with fear and destroy the harmony that the Cacooners enjoy. But just how deep does this conspiracy go? And can it be stopped? (By Daniella and Meadhbh)

**"Space Hopper"** Billy Bob Morgan stars in this sci-fi romance story. Billy Bob lost both of his parents in a tragic accident and has been left to run the family Pharmacy business on his own. He always wanted to be an astronaut but has had to put those dreams aside to look after his responsibilities. Through boredom and the need to escape his mundane life, Billy Bob has been making his own bizarre concoctions from the ingredients at the Pharmacy. These concoctions are often

hallucinogenic in nature and take Billy Bob on strange and exciting trips. However, Billy Bob has started to believe that the picture of an American astronaut on his bedroom wall is telling him to travel to the middle of the Arizona desert so that they can go into space together. Can his long standing friend save him before he endangers his life on this crazy expedition? (By

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