

Short bio of the director

Rinio Dragasaki was born in 1980 and studied filmmaking in Athens and continued her studies on documentary in Barcelona. She has worked in the film and tv industry and has written and directed 4 short films and a feature film. In 2020 she was awarded the best director award for first feature in the Greek Film Academy Awards for her film *Cosmic Candy*.

Her short film, "My dad, Lenin and Freddy" was selected for several international festivals (Clemont-Ferrand, Sao Paulo, Chicago, Edinburgh and more). It won the award for best short film in the 2012 Greek Film Academy Awards and three more awards in the Drama International Short Film Festival. The film also screened in Canal + (France) and the SBS (Australia) channels.

Proavlio (Schoolyard) had its world premiere at the Berlin International Film festival, where it was a nominee for the Crystal Bear award, and one of the five best films of the year (2014) at Greek Film Academy Awards. The film was selected for many international film festivals (Guanajuato, Edinburgh, Dresden, Brest etc.) and was distinguished for its experimental style.

In 2019, Rinio Dragasaki took part in the exhibition of the artist Stefanos Rokos at the Benaki Museum in Athens with a short documentary "Stefanos Rokos: Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds/No More Shall We Part, 14 paintings, 17 years after".

The Greek-French production *Cosmic Candy* (2020) is her first feature film, the script was chosen to participate at the Sundance If Istanbul Screenwriter's Lab. The film had its world premiere at the Fantastic Fest in Austin Texas in 2019. Now she is developing her second feature called *Panellinios*.



What made you decide to become a filmmaker?

Like many other things I have done in my life, instinct led me to that decision in a kind of a magical way. At film school I went directly after high school. I was 17,5 years old. At first, I did a little research, I had heard from a friend that there is this school (Stavrakos School for Film) and I wanted to attend the Set Design department, but when I arrived there, I understood immediately that I preferred filmmaking. In retrospect, I realize that my family played a big part in my decision, although they were not completely on board at first, they supported my choice. That in 1998, for Greece anyhow, was not a given necessarily.

When you decided to become a filmmaker, were you inspired by another female director?

No, I didn't have as a role model neither a male nor a female director. I think what inspired me the most at first was that I have seen a lot of films from the age of 6 to 15 years old. I used to watch a lot of European films with my parents when we would go to the movies, but also many American films on video (late 80s- early 90s we had a video boom), and on TV also. The role models and the inspiration came afterwards when I was in film school and we were studying certain filmmakers and their work as a whole. Directors like **Agnes Varda** and all of her work, **Lynn Ramsay** (Rat catcher, Morven Cellar), **Lucile Hadzihalilovic** (Innocence, Evolution), **Sofia Coppola** and also I film that greatly inspired me was "Stories we tell" by **Sarah Polley**. Also going back in time, the particular cases of **Ida Lupino** (Hitchhiker) and **Penny Marshall** (Awakenings, Big).

You did your first short film in 2001, how did this come about and with what means did you manage to do it?

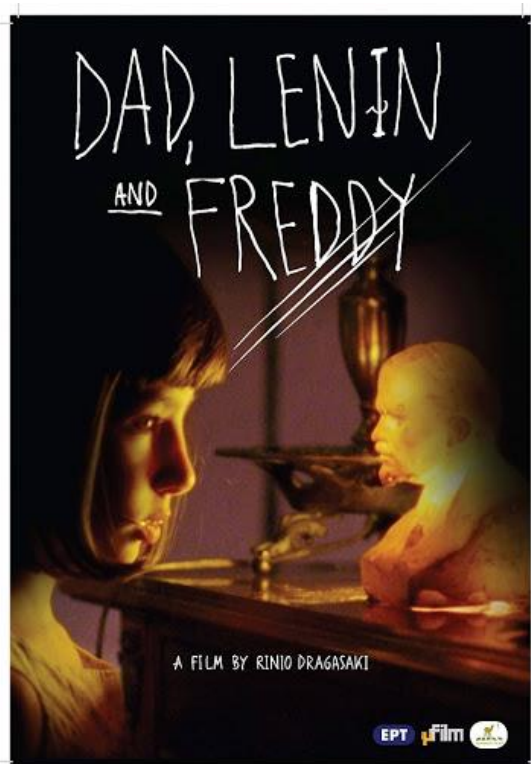
In 2001 I made my student film "Decibel". Then we shot on film with cameras that were given to us by the school. However, the costs were large, to buy and develop film. I don't think my movie is great, but for me it was a defining experience because I saw in a micro-scale all the stages required to make a film. It is something that until you experience it you cannot fully understand it. I started with the idea of a 3day shoot that ended it up being a 7day shoot. I went over budget and didn't abide to my original planning, but I learnt. Same goes for editing. In film it is very important to have practical experience, in theory everybody says a lot of things.

If a filmmaker starts out now where would you suggest she looks for funding to do her first film?

Nowadays, with digital technology things are easier. If someone wants to do a professional short film, they can submit their script either to the Greek Film Center, or the Greek public television (ERT) for their program Microfilm. Nevertheless, they should know that there is a lot of competition. If a filmmaker is starting out it is better for her to experiment first on her own, with smaller in scale scripts for start, to see what is her narrative perspective, her editing preferences, how it is to direct an actor and to not be disappointed if her first attempt doesn't work, it is part of the process.

After your film “My dad, Lenin and Freddy” (2011) that screened in international festivals and channels and was nominated for several awards and won some of them, there is an almost 10-year gap until your first feature. Was that your choice? Or was it due to circumstances?

This was due to two reasons. The first one was that I didn't have a script ready, and I haven't decided on the idea that would be my first feature. So that took some time. The second reason was that I chose to do my first feature “the right way”, the right way meaning professionally, meaning to find the funds needed for the specific script and at the same time all the collaborators to be paid accordingly. These two factors created the aforementioned delay. However, during these years I made another short documentary film, and I wrote a feature length script, so it was a creative delay in a way.

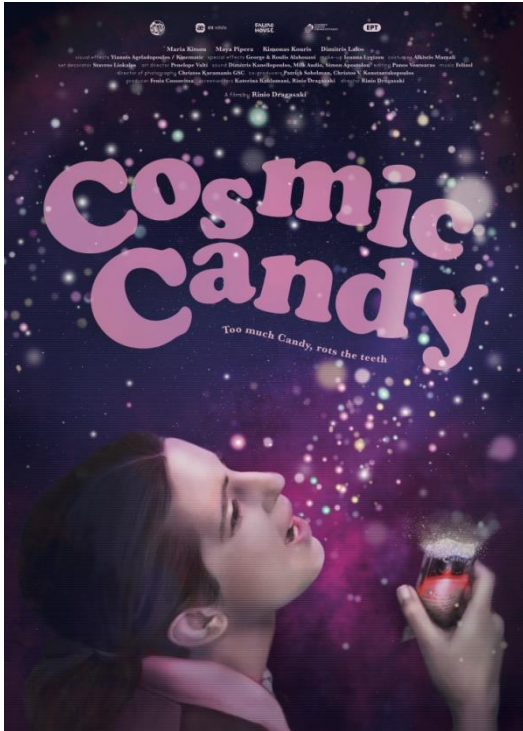


So, your first feature film comes out in 2020, Cosmic Candy, which is a Greek-French production, right? Can you talk about the process of finding funds for this film and how much time it took since writing the film until the shooting started?

Cosmic Candy, is a film that started with an idea from the screenwriter, Katerina Kaklamanis. Fenia Kosovitsa, our producer asked if I would be interested to direct. It was from the beginning a Greek-French production because of the professional and the friendly relationship of the Greek producer with the French co-producer- I have to say that the last 10 years the number of co-productions in Greece has risen, and Greek producers have had experiences and relationships with countries such as France, Germany, Italy but also countries in the Balkans, a lot of times a film ends up being a co-production because it is required in the script and other times, as in my case, without being part of the script. So in my case, we took advantage of this co-production in order to finish the post-production of the film (Mixing & Coloring) in labs in France.

The offer came in 2013 and back then we had a 12page treatment and not a full script yet. We spent some time with Katerina working on her idea and after participating in some script work shops we managed to have a finished script on October 2014. When we finished the draft, there was a “testing” period, meaning we sent it to different people to read, we saw what worked and what didn't. When we had the final draft ready, we submitted it for state funding (GFC, ERT) but also to the French Film Center (CNC), since we had French producers as well, finally we submitted it to Greek and French private funding that is in the film business. As expected, some approved it and

some didn't. A real problem that my generation, and younger ones from what I can see, faces is that the Greek Film Center (for a variety of reasons), takes a lot of time to give an answer concerning funding for a film. In my case it took 2 years. That creates huge problems in production management and as a result the film production is delayed. Thus, under these circumstances it took me about a year and a half to write the script and 2 years to find the required funding. If someone chooses to do a low budget film with their friends, they might make it faster, it is a matter of choice and script as well.



Tell us about the idea and the inspiration behind the film

The first scene we had was that a woman wakes up from a very deep sleep because someone rings her doorbell in the middle of the night, stumbling she manages to go to the door and through the peephole she realizes it is a small child that knocks on her door persistently. This scene on its own, gives you the idea for the whole movie. It is about the awakening of Anna (the main character), from a deep sleep that she has put herself in. Around this character and how they choose to see life- like a colorful, synthetic ball that she cannot touch- the whole movie was built and all the ideas were born of how comic and tragic is at the same time that a small child reminds you that life can be cruel and beautiful at the same time.

In all the years you have worked in tv and film sets, have you seen the number of women in the crew to increase?

I've worked in film sets as an assistant director and as a director as well. There are positions in the crew that are never filled by women. Such as cinematographer, electrician, sound engineer, key grip e tc., on the contrary for costume designer and makeup artist it is the other way around. Through the years that I have worked in film this hasn't changed I think, with the only exception the job of cinematographer. Nevertheless, what is interesting to me is that in the new generation of filmmakers I see many dynamic, talented female filmmakers.

In many countries the last few years there is an effort to have the 50/50 initiative applied concerning the participation of women in film production but in the selection of international film festivals as well. In Greece up until now, there has not been such an initiative. Is it something that you would want, that you discuss with other filmmakers and people who work in the business or do you think there isn't even a discussion about it yet?

Even though I understand the need for such measures in some cases, I have to admit I am a little reluctant towards them. Meaning I don't like in general when something is imposed. I am for freedom and meritocracy. I am afraid that with a measure like that there is the possible danger in some cases, not to take decisions based on merit (meaning if someone is good at their job or which film is better, if such a thing exists) but based on quotas that need to be filled.

How and at which rate are expressed, in your opinion and according to your experiences, discriminations based on gender in this profession? Was it something that you experienced or observed that you could share with us?

I never felt that because I am a woman, I had less opportunities to make a film. So, as a female filmmaker I feel completely equal with a male filmmaker. We are facing the same difficulties, we have to overcome the same problems, we will be judged as severely by the critics and spectators alike when they see our films. I cannot say however that it is the same in the workspace and especially when it comes to assignments.

Would they trust so easily a very big production and a commercial film to a female filmmaker? In advertising where free market rules apply, why there are practically no women directors? As well as in TV the numbers are very low. All the above for me show, that there is a problem deeply rooted in Greek society. It has to do with the way that men and women have been educated and grown up. So, on the one hand men have trouble accepting a woman in a position of power and women have trouble many times to demand this position for themselves. I think the discussion on the subject should start on that basis.

In the next 5 years what would you hope that would change in Greek cinema?

Greek cinema is in a period of redefining its relationship with the audience.

Unfortunately, through the years and mostly in the 90s, this relationship was damaged and an unhealthy situation was created. Greek audience gradually stopped watching Greek films and they formed a specific opinion about them. The last decade however, has been very active, even though financially our country was not in a good state, a new generation of filmmakers found ways to make movies with very little means, and by using their friendly relationships in the inner circle of filmmakers. Those films got international recognition and traveled to the five corners of the world. However, the spectrum of Greek films was not very wide. On one hand the country produced art house films for a more cinephile audience and on the other hand commercial comedies that did well in the box office but looked and felt like an extension of a TV series. There was a large part of the audience that could not find the kind of film that they would want to see.

However, this year's films didn't come from nowhere (*2020 we had several Greek films come out, with critical praise and good box office results for Greek standards*). They are a product of endless work, intense thinking and multiple collaborations that are intensely worked on the last few years, from low paid directors, producers, actors and many many other professionals in the field. So this year we see many well made films for different tastes, that are equal to

other European films. What I wish for the future, is for this work to be recognized and supported, so that Greek cinema can go off life support and find its relationship with the audience again and be able to grow -besides state funding that should exist- to be funded by its audience and the box office.

P.S.: All this before the pandemic, now we must also adjust to this new reality.

If you were to give an advice to young women that want to be professional filmmakers what would it be?

This field is magical. It is a wonderful feeling to be able to make a film from start to finish. However, whomever chooses to enter this field should know that it is a life choice that will never give you much security or a sense of balance, it will have a lot of ups and downs, a lot of frustration, moments of humiliation and moments of great vindication, recognition and creativity. It is a constant battle for everyone, male or female.

Can you talk about the film you are working on now?

I am working on developing a script for my next film called **Panhellenic** (Panelinios) that is between a mystery thriller and a fantasy film with some parts black comedy.



Finally, are some or all of your films online where people can watch them?

My short film **"My dad, Lenin and Freddy"** (2011) will be shortly in the on line platform Cinobo. My feature film **"Cosmic Candy"** will be on the online platform Spamfilx starting September 2020. And my short **"Courtyard"** (2014) can be seen on myvimeoaccount <https://vimeo.com/275571421>