

GINA JAQUELINE

JAN GUNNAR RØISE



Donostia Zinemaldia
Festival de San Sebastián
NEW DIRECTORS



A FILM BY MARLENE EMILIE LYNSTAD

NORDISK FILM PRODUKTION PRESENTS CUTE WITH SUPPORT FROM NEW DANISH SCREEN IN ASSOCIATION WITH NORDISK FILM DISTRIBUTION • TRUSTNORDISK • THE DANISH FILM INSTITUTE • NORDISK FILM & TV FOND • FILM I VAST • NOK • AMARCORD CASTING EIRO THORP & THOMAS ELLEY CASTING DESIGNER DIANA ØYENKJER KEY MAKE-UP ARTIST MARINA KAI SOUND DESIGNER EMIL SALLING COMPOSER JOSEFINE SKOV PRODUCTION DESIGNER SARA HELENE TILGAARD RASMUSSEN
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY THOMAS ØYERHOLM OFF EDITOR CARL GUSTAV NORDENTORFT CO-PRODUCERS KRISTINA BØRLESEN • THOMAS RØDSKAR • THOMAS HENRIKSEN • JOHANNA BERGSTRÄHLE & EVELINA JACOBSSON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KATRINE WIGELAND & TINE GREW PFEFFER PRODUCED BY CARL ØRSBÆCK ADELKOLDE WRITTEN BY MARLENE EMILIE LYNSTAD & EMILIE KJØFFERD LARSEN DIRECTED BY MARLENE EMILIE LYNSTAD



TRUST
NORDISK



FILM I
VAST

NOK

AMARCORD

CASTING

DESIGNER

KEY MAKE-UP

ARTIST

SOUND

DESIGNER

COMPOSER

PRODUCTION

DESIGNER

WRITTEN BY

DIRECTED BY

PRODUCED BY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

CASTING

DESIGNER

KEY MAKE-UP

ARTIST



Nordisk Film Production presents

CUTE

A film by Marlene Emilie Lyngstad



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LOGLINE

CUTE is an unsettling yet tender story about a man longing for childhood innocence and a woman yearning to reclaim hers.

SYNOPSIS

Troubled by forbidden feelings for his seven-year-old stepdaughter, Richard decides to leave his girlfriend. He retreats to his childhood home to renovate ahead of its sale, but his self-imposed exile is disrupted by the childlike presence of his mother's caregiver, Stella. He soon discovers her double life as a Lolita camgirl, and the two develop a transgressive surrogate father-daughter relationship. Their constructed reality begins to unravel when the stepdaughter he left behind reaches out.





THE DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS

Written by Marlene Emilie Lyngstad

I have accepted that I am unable to ignore the things that scare and sadden me. This is why, through my films, I attempt to reshape apathy and melancholia into curiosity.

Something that especially scares me is the blurred line between romantic love and fetishisation. **CUTE** is an attempt to examine this line. It is a story of two people who, more than anything, long for authentic intimacy, but who can't avoid humiliating each other in their pursuit of it.

Although the western world has become more tolerant of sexual taboos, adult attraction to children continues to be [for good reason] a huge social stigma. Nevertheless, we know the phenomenon exists and that the growth of the internet has created new ways of pursuing it. Production and sharing of sexualised material involving children has become a genuine social issue. On top of this unambiguous problem, the internet has also created a world of grey areas where fantasies can be lived out without directly involving a child. I am interested in the discussion of these grey areas involving the part of the population that suffers from paedophilia, who do not want to perpetrate abuse. How do you live with a shame that you know is justified? This is an existential question that moves me deeply. Apart from the main story about two individuals, I wish to bring attention to the world they live in. Does the present pop-cultural obsession with everything "cute" indicate a collective longing for and lack of innocence, care and emotional intimacy? Through the film's use of spaces (a sock factory, shopping centres, the internet), I aim to hint at the way greater forces affect the individual, even in the most intimate spaces.

Richard and Stella are both characters who are good at acting. I therefore had to look for actors with the ability to act on two levels: They had to be authentic in the part their character is playing, while also expressing the vulnerability and brokenness underneath.

I had already collaborated with Jan Gunnar on my graduation film from the National Film School, **NORWEGIAN OFFSPRING**, where we devised a character who was socially deviant, to put it mildly. This time we wanted to go in the opposite direction. We wanted to create a character who has spent his life acquiring normality. Jan Gunnar has a unique ability to care for and take responsibility for his coworkers. We applied this ability when developing Richard. We wanted to make him polite, well-dressed, well-educated, well-spoken, affluent, a "pleaser" – in many ways what I consider the stereotypical Norwegian. Beneath the surface is a restlessness. The character is never at rest. He needs to redecorate, cook, cater to others, prove his goodness. During the process, I have met with and spoken to multiple so-called "non-practicing paedophiles". What surprised me the most by far was their longing to talk about themselves. Even though they lived with great shame, many of them had an almost self-destructive urge to confide, both to their loved ones and to me, a stranger. This in spite of the obvious risk it entails. It was sometimes unclear to me whether they sought acceptance or punishment through the confessions. The idea of a non-practicing paedophile yearning for judgment became the key to the character of Richard.

My hunt for the character of Stella started with an examination of “age-play”, a BDSM subculture focusing on the power dynamics of a caregiver and a “little”. I was moved by witnessing the boiled-down longing for nurture and freedom of responsibility inherent in the role of a “little”, and I decided to use the sexual roleplay as a dramatic device.

At the other end of the spectrum, I was looking for adults who utilise the “cute” aesthetic to shape their identity. It was in this context that I contacted Gina Jaqueline. When Gina told me that she, like Stella, sells videos and photos on the OnlyFans platform, I brought her on as a kind of project consultant. As such, she was involved with the development of Stella from an early stage, and later in the process she was invited to a casting. Gina was a natural at expressing the performative side of Stella, but the thing that convinced me was her unique ability to also bring vulnerability and darkness to the character. That was why, after an extensive casting process with actors and other amateurs, we ended up giving the part to Gina. The collaboration with Gina turned out to be incredibly stimulating. She is analytical, playful and risk-taking, and she has an uncanny ability to surprise me with her take on a scene: the capacity to give me what I didn’t know I wanted.

I have tried to make a film that neither romanticises nor demonises. Instead, I have been concerned with examining “the inevitable”. The film is my attempt to deal with aspects of life that are difficult. I hope it will disturb some and comfort others. My wish is that the audience will leave disagreeing on whether they just witnessed a story of love or perversion.



Q & A

Richard and Stella both seem profoundly lonely when they meet. Was CUTE, for you, first and foremost a film about two lonely people finding each other?

I have accepted that I am unable to ignore the things that scare and sadden me. This is why, through my films, I attempt to reshape apathy and melancholia into curiosity.

Something that especially scares me is the blurred line between romantic love and fetishisation. CUTE is an attempt to examine this line. It's a story about two people who, more than anything, long for authentic intimacy, but who can't avoid humiliating each other in their pursuit of it. In that sense, it's a film about loneliness and the cost of escaping it. It's a love story, in the sense that it questions what love is.

They are very different characters, yet each seems to recognise something in the other that is missing from their own life. What draws Richard and Stella together?

A promise of unconditional love, perhaps.

During the research for my graduation film, Norwegian Offspring, I encountered a woman who introduced me to the term "age play", a BDSM subculture in which consenting adults explore the dynamics between a caregiver and a 'little'. I was strangely moved by this woman and her longing to regress to a childlike state. I could identify with her somehow. I once asked a sex worker if she had ever turned down a customer. She told me about this customer who wanted her to bring a teddy bear. This anecdote stuck with me. I was curious about this man and the moral dilemma he posed, and I became intrigued by what would happen if he was connected to the character of Stella, who has an autonomous desire to dress up as a child.

Richard is, of course, drawn by Stella's childlike self-representation, but above that, I think he is drawn by her openness. He sees her as someone who might accept him for who he is.

I hope their relationship is experienced as inevitable. Like in a classic tragedy.

Both Richard and Stella seem to be performing versions of themselves. What interested you about the gap between the person we present to others and what may be happening underneath?

I am very fascinated by the idea that personality is built around compensation. I don't think people have a hidden, authentic essence, but I do believe that people are full of incomprehensible contradictions.

Richard has spent his entire life constructing normality: being polite, educated, well-dressed, useful, generous. His striving for normality keeps him restless. He is never standing still; he needs to renovate, cook, take care of others, and prove his goodness.

During the process, I spoke with several people who experience pedophilic attraction but are committed to never acting on it. What surprised me the most by far was their urge to share their shame. Some of them had an almost self-destructive urge to confide, both to their loved ones and to me, a stranger. It was sometimes unclear to me whether they sought acceptance or punishment through their confessions. That tension, between concealment and confession, self-control and self-condemnation, became central to Richard.

Q & A

Stella has built a very specific persona based on what she can profit from. Her behaviour is shaped by what “works” with men. It is an act, but it is also her way of surviving. She knows that getting visibly older is a direct threat to this way of surviving. That it cannot last. Despite all her efforts to live, she also has this urge to destroy herself. She denies herself food and sleep. She keeps buying more than she can afford. In this way, she is kept dependent on her own act.

Richard is carrying an enormous burden of guilt, although the film never shows him acting reprehensibly. How did you approach a character whose greatest conflict is essentially with himself?

Although the Western world has become more tolerant of sexual taboos, adult attraction to children continues to be, for good reason, a huge social stigma. Nevertheless, we know the phenomenon exists and that the growth of the internet has created new ways of pursuing it.

Where real children are involved, the production and circulation of sexual material is clearly a matter of exploitation and abuse, and is a serious societal problem. A more ambiguous and contested area concerns fictional or symbolic material that associates childhood with sexuality without involving any actual child. The internet complicates this further because it creates spaces in which fantasy, representation and behaviour can blur.

I am interested in the discussion surrounding the grey areas concerning people who experience such attraction and are determined never to abuse a child. How do you live with a shame that you know is justified? This is an existential question that moves me deeply.

You had already worked with Jan Gunnar Røise on Norwegian Offspring. What made you want to work with him again, and what did you discover together in creating such a restrained and conflicted character?

I had already collaborated with Jan Gunnar on my graduation film from the National Film School, Norwegian Offspring, where we devised a character who was socially deviant. This time, we wanted to move in the opposite direction and avoid any visual or behavioural shorthand that would make Richard easy to categorise. Jan Gunnar has a unique ability to care for and take responsibility for his co-workers. We applied this ability when developing Richard. We wanted to make a character with a strong conscience.

How did Gina Jaqueline come to the project?

I got in contact with Gina because she was a fancier of the “cute” aesthetic. She has an impressive collection of cute objects and clothes, and I wanted to talk to her about her fascination with this aesthetic.

When Gina told me that she, like Stella, used to sell erotic content online on OnlyFans, I brought her on as a kind of project consultant. As such, she was involved in the development of Stella from an early stage, and later in the process, she was invited to a casting.

Due to her background, Gina was a natural at expressing the performative side of Stella, but what convinced me was her unique ability to also bring vulnerability and darkness to the character.

That was why, after an extensive casting process with actors and other amateurs, we ended up giving the part to Gina.

Q & A

What did Gina bring to Stella that convinced you she was the right person for the role, despite not coming from a conventional acting background?

The collaboration with Gina turned out to be very stimulating. She is analytical, playful and risk-taking. She had the ability to really surprise me with her take on a scene: the capacity to give me what I didn't know I wanted. This unpredictability made Stella more alive to me. Not like a character created on paper, but like a real mystery.

Stella has created a very specific persona and aesthetic around herself. How much did Gina's own understanding of online performance, image and self-presentation contribute to the character?

Gina has had previous work experiences that have made her exceptional at finding out what people want very quickly. With this part, she could play around with that and take it to an extreme. The big challenge was for Gina to portray Stella's vulnerability and neediness in the intimate and romantic moments of the film. One thing is to compromise for money, but Stella also makes compromises in her private life. To portray this, it was crucial to build trust between the actors. That's why we made sure to spend a lot of time together prior to the shoot. But after building up trust with Jan Gunnar over time, we got there. We did a lot of work on this before starting the shoot.

Jan Gunnar and Gina come from very different backgrounds as performers. What happened when you brought those two energies together on screen?

It gave me the dynamic I was looking for. Jan Gunnar is a masterful actor with many years of experience. In that sense, he is controlled and assured in his craft. Gina is extremely talented and intuitive. She works in the moment without overthinking things. This contrast was very exciting to work with.

Creating a safe working environment

The film enters emotionally and sexually delicate territory. How did you work with psychologists, intimacy coordinators and the actors themselves to prepare the material and create a safe environment?

First and foremost, I spent a lot of time with the actors prior to the shoot. We did test shoots, a lot of improvisations and had many talks about the vision and topic. Both Gina and Jan Gunnar were helping me shape the script and are credited as creative consultants. I think this helped build trust and an open environment.

It was also important that the actors had support outside of me, so we provided access to a psychologist. Regarding the intimate scenes, we worked with an intimacy coordinator. She had conversations with the actors to establish clear boundaries, and we collaborated on choreographing the scenes.

It was important to me that all crew members understood why we wanted to make this film. We had many discussions about how to approach the subject and the material responsibly.

Q & A

With the child actress, it was especially important to me to have an open dialogue with her parents from the very beginning. I provided them with the full script and had a long conversation with them about how I envisioned the scenes involving Ea. They were also invited into the editing room. With their guidance, we were able to decide what information was appropriate to share with Molly and how best to explain each scene to her in an age-appropriate way.

When writing the film, it was important to me that the scenes involving the child character could be experienced by Molly as playful and positive. I wanted the unease to come from the context understood by the audience, rather than from anything she herself was being asked to perform. For me, working with Molly was definitely one of the highlights of the process.

The production involved both professional actors and people without traditional acting experience, some of whom brought elements of their own lives into the process. How did you protect the cast while still allowing the performances to remain spontaneous and truthful?

It was important for us that everyone involved was playing a character. For some people, it might be a character that in some aspects resembles themselves, but it is still a character. I think it can be very liberating to play with, and exaggerate, certain aspects of oneself.

The producers describe wanting to create a space in which the film could be artistically fearless while remaining safe and transparent for everyone involved. How did that principle affect the way you worked on set?

The uncomfortable aspects of this film are mostly based in the context of the scenes, not in the scenes themselves. I asked the actors to let go of this context and trust me to hold on to the overall vision. Apart from Jan Gunnar, who also had to balance between the context and "the moment" in some scenes. As I mentioned, he's a very skilful actor and had no problem doing this.

I also try to be as co-creative as possible. I dare to be more fearless as a team than as a dictator.

The title also points towards a much broader contemporary fascination with cuteness, innocence and carefully constructed identities. Beyond Richard and Stella's story, what interested you about that aesthetic and what it might reveal about loneliness, desire and the need to be cared for?

I am interested in putting my characters up against circumstances they themselves can't control. Among these circumstances is their time. I was fascinated by this contemporary obsession with everything "cute" and whether it might express a collective longing for something we feel we have lost: innocence, care, emotional intimacy. And I became interested in how that desire is commercialised and performed: online, in shopping centres, in the objects we buy, even in the identities we construct. That is why the spaces in the film mattered to me. The sock factory, the shopping centres and the internet. They are part of the forces shaping Richard and Stella, even in what they experience as their most private desires.

SHORT BIOS



MARLENE EMILIE LYGSTAD, DIRECTOR & WRITER

Marlene Emilie Lyngstad [Born 1997] is a Norwegian director and screenwriter based in Denmark. In 2023, she graduated as a director from the National Film School of Denmark with her graduation film *Norwegian Offspring*, which won First Prize in the La Cinef section at the Cannes Film Festival. The film also received awards at several other festivals, including Nordisk Panorama and the Norwegian International Film Festival in Haugesund. Lyngstad looks where others turn away. With **CUTE**, she takes a deep step into the taboo of pedophilia, exploring the fluid boundary between love and fetishism.



GINA JAQUELINE, ACTRESS

Gina Jaqueline [born 1990] is a Danish media personality, influencer, and author. She rose to national prominence as the central subject of the documentary series *A Sugardater's Tale* [En sugardaters fortælling, 2017], based on her own life as a sugar dater. She has since established herself as a social media influencer and content creator on OnlyFans. In 2018, she made her debut as an author with the autobiographical book *Se mig* [Look at Me], reflecting on her upbringing, the fashion industry, and sugar dating. She makes her feature film acting debut in **CUTE**.



JAN GUNNAR RØISE, ACTOR

Jan Gunnar Røise [born 1975] is one of Norway's most versatile and acclaimed actors. He graduated from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2000 and has since enjoyed an extensive career across theatre, film, and television. Røise has been a permanent ensemble member at the National Theatre in Oslo for many years, while also establishing a strong international presence. He has received critical acclaim and numerous awards for his lead roles in prominent films such as the award-winning *Beware of Children* [Barn, 2019] and *Sex* [2024], which had its world premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival. Furthermore, Røise starred in the director's graduation film from the National Film School of Denmark, *Norwegian Offspring* [2023].

SHORT BIOS



CARL OSBÆCK ADELKILDE, PRODUCER

Carl Osbæck Adelkilde [born 1994] graduated as a producer from the National Film School of Denmark in 2023. **CUTE** is his feature film debut as a producer and marks the third film in his creative partnership with director Marlene Emilie Lyngstad. The duo previously collaborated on the midterm film *The Flesh We Live In* and, not least, the award-winning graduation film *Norwegian Offspring* [2023], which received widespread international acclaim. Following the completion of **CUTE**, Carl joined the leading production company Miso Film as a producer, which is behind a wide range of major international films and series.

PRODUCER STATEMENT

Written by Carl Osbæck Adelkilde

With **CUTE** we examine of one society's greatest and most painful taboos. Director Marlene Emilie Lyngstad has an amazing ability to turn the camera away from the familiar and toward the unfamiliar, forcing the audience to confront something you have instinctively wanted to ignore. This has resulted in an artistic practise where the audience is invited into a world where the familiar becomes strange, and the strange becomes intimate. It is in this particular interplay that you can truly explore complex existential questions.

To be able to work in this delicate grey area – where we also collaborate with the cast who are not trained actors and who bring their own personal experiences and baggage – we have focused on being fearless together, as a team and as colleagues. It has been vital to the process to create a safe space, both in the development and production stage. We have endeavoured to build a shared foundation and language across all departments and cast – both the professional actors and the real people who were part of the journey.

We have taken a gamble and tried to go the distance. For this project with high artistic ambitions, a limited budget and many risks, our focus has been on managing the uncontrollable and creating a solid framework within which the unpredictable could be allowed to occur.

The key to creating the most fearless, but simultaneously safe and secure, working environment has first and foremost been to establish a deep, shared understanding of the film's premise. With such a distinct directorial vision, it was imperative to invite everyone – both teams, actors and cast of real people – into the inner workings.

We have shared the insight into the artistic intentions, but also the difficult obstacles, the great risks and the concrete tools we have worked with to elevate the film. It is this transparency, co-creation and shared desire to want to see the vision through that has enabled us to lift together as one.

It has been hugely significant that this is the feature debut of many of the film's key creative roles. We are very much a continuation of the graduating class of the National Film School, and because we know each other so well, we have managed to establish the trust needed for everyone to take true artistic ownership. With **CUTE**, our ambition was to create an original Scandinavian narrative with a new form. We wanted to make the film with such nerve and wildness, as if it were the last film we would ever make – but at the same time we have insisted on doing everything we possibly could to do so in a safe working environment and within a framework that protects both the teams and the cast.





PRODUCTION INFO

Length

106 min

Genre

Drama

Production year

2026

World premiere

20.09.2026 - at San
Sebastian International Film
Festival

Production company

Nordisk Film Production

In co-production with:

Nordisk Film Prodcuton
Sverige, Film i Väst &
Amarcord

Cast

Richard: Jan Gunnar Røise
Stella: Gina Jaqueline
Lillian: Karin Bertling
Ea: Molly Kirk Rasmussen
Helle: Kitt Maiken Mortensen

Crew

Director: Marlene Emilie
Lyngstad
Screenwriters: Marlene Emilie
Lyngstad & Emilie Koefoed
Larsen
Producer: Carl Osbæck
Adelkilde

Co-Producere:

Thomas Robsahm
Thomas Heinesen
Kristina Börjeson
Evelina Jacobsson
Johanna Bergensträhle

Executive producers:

Katrine Vogelsang
Tine Pfeiffer

Director of Photography: Thomas
Dyrholm

Sound design: Emil Salling

Editor: Carl Gustav
Nordentoft

Composer: Josefine Skov

Production Design: Sara Helene
Tilgaard Rasmussen

Costume design: Diana Dybkjær

Make-up: Maria Kai

Casting: Gro Terp & Thomas Elley