

# N O R M A L

By Adele Tulli

Italy/Sweden | ov. Italian | 70 min | 2019



# LOGLINE

NORMAL is an unsettling visual journey through gender norms in contemporary society.

Immersed in a kaleidoscopic mosaic of visually powerful scenes, viewers experience the ritualised performance of femininity and masculinity hidden in ordinary interactions, from birth to adulthood.

Isolating the slightly grotesque, uncanny elements surrounding our everyday life, NORMAL meditates on what remains imperceptible about it – its governing norms, its inner mechanisms. The result is that what counts as 'normal' does not feel so reassuring, anymore.



# SYNOPSIS

Original and visually daring, NORMAL is a genre-bending documentary that reflects on how female and male identities are performed in everyday interactions, through a collage of immersive scenes filmed all over Italy. Capturing some of the most iconic moments in people's life, from birth to adulthood, NORMAL reveals how our gender defines us in most of the things we do, affecting our gestures, desires, behaviours, and aspirations.

At the gym or at the beach; in a disco or in a church; at funfairs, public parks and beauty centres: NORMAL explores the collective choreographies of gender in ordinary and familiar situations, resulting in a ballet of moving images that depict the events while simultaneously meditating on their significance. Do we live in a world of constant performance? With its open form and contemplative pace, NORMAL offers a riveting experience into the spectacle of gender in everyday life, inviting the audience to question and unravel the very idea of normality.

# FESTIVALS

69 Berlinale - Panorama

Thessaloniki Documentary Festival

CPH:DOX

Frames of Representation, London



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

In today's world, gender is a battlefield. Violence, discrimination and inequality on the basis of gender and sexuality dramatically fill up global statistics and gender normative roles still represent a powerful regulator of individual expression and social relations. *NORMAL* reflects on how gender norms are implicit, unsaid rules that permeate our lives, often so subtle and deep within us, that they go unnoticed and unquestioned, becoming normal. Through a slightly alienating and yet intimate lens, the film looks at gender as a collective and quotidian *mise-en-scène*, a social ceremony that shapes our bodies and affects our desires. Focusing on the public performances of gender in everyday life, *NORMAL* intends to explore the contradictions and struggles that populate our existences, while having to conform to society's expectations.

With a personal use of montage, sound and framing, the film overtly bends the text's boundaries in order to reinterpret meanings: not pursuing the factual and accurate depiction of facts and events, it is in fact meant to reproduce the uncertain, associative nature of reasoning, and to reflect a subjective meditation on the everyday constraints of gendered reality in Italy. With its fragmentary structure blending together documentary and experimental aesthetics, *NORMAL* therefore aims to transgress immediate answers and closed definitions and to generate, instead, a visual field where reality can be interpreted, problematized and reimagined. Eventually, the film aims to inspire a conversation about the performative nature of our social identities.

# PRODUCTION NOTES

With its original take on contemporary Italy, *NORMAL* reflects on the timely and global issue of gender norms and stereotypes, and therefore aims to reach an international audience. The director combines her academic research with an innovative film language, producing a poignant reflection on a current and crucial matter. *NORMAL* does not simply represent reality but interrogates it, delving into its inner structures. Avoiding didactic and pedagogical explanations, while playing creatively with images and sounds, the film presents a disorienting and provocative portrait of accepted ideas of normality, stimulating in the audience a conflicting feeling of coalesced familiarity and alienation. We believe this work makes an important contribution to the ongoing reflections on social gender norms and their impact on everyone's lives.

# FORM AND STYLE

*NORMAL* blends experimental and documentary aesthetics and plays with the artificiality of the filmmaking process to reveal the constructed – indeed, performative – nature of the world around us. The short visual poems portraying ordinary situations are characterised by an artificial look, intentionally defying aesthetics of objectivity and invisibility. Even though the scenes are shot in real locations, they feel stylised and staged: frames are carefully composed, looking for unnatural symmetries, and camera angles are often frontal and static, focusing on repeated and contrived gestures. An associative editing suggests a field of connections between images and ideas, following the principle that when familiar but unrelated objects are placed side by side, both start to shimmer with strangeness and resonance alike. Realist representation is therefore suspended, dispersed, interrupted and greater emphasis is given to the performative dimension of representation. This visual approach aims to create a sense of surreal displacement and confusion in looking at ordinary, normal situations, inviting the viewer to problematize and reimagine reality.

*NORMAL*, ultimately, eschews differentiations between what is considered real and what is considered artificial. It does so by playing with the idea that this binary opposition is not only inapplicable to cinema but to life itself: eventually, our life too is the result of a complex convergence of social norms that precede us and exceed us, and eventually act upon us.





## DIRECTOR'S BIO: ADELE TULLI

Adele Tulli is a filmmaker and an academic interested in documentary experimental practices, as well as in gender studies and visual anthropology. In 2018 she has completed a practice-based PhD at Roehampton University in London, exploring subversive film aesthetics within queer and feminist contexts. She has directed award-winning films such as *365 without 377*, about the struggles of the LGBT community in India, and *Rebel Menopause*, on feminist activist Thérèse Clerc. Both films have been broadcasted internationally and have been screened at numerous festivals (Sheffield DocFest, WatchDocs, Guadalajara International FF, Flare BFI/London, Frameline/San Francisco, NewFest/NY, Mix Brasil, Turin LGBT Film Festival, Films de Femmes/Creteil, and many more) and won several awards. Her latest film, *Normal*, a visual journey through the performance of gender in contemporary Italy, will premiere in 2019.

## PRODUCTION: FILMAFFAIR

FilmAffair is a brand new independent production company based in Rome, realizing films of strong artistic value confronting the social, political and ethical questions of our time. Its founders, Valeria Adilardi, Luca Ricciardi, Laura Romano, Mauro Vicentini are a long experienced team in documentary development and production, that focuses on impact documentaries for theatrical release and projects exploring new frontiers of storytelling. Latest productions include: *SQIZO* by Duccio Fabbri, co-produced with EPSI Film (USA), *Les Films d'Ici* and RAI Cinema, distributed by Cinephil (in production).



# C R E D I T S

a FilmAffair production

Produced by Valeria Adilardi, Luca Ricciardi, Laura Romano

In co-production with AAMOD (Audiovisual Archive of the Democratic and Labour Movement)

In association with Istituto Luce Cinecittà and Intramovies

In collaboration with RAI Cinema and Ginestra Film

With the support of: Eurimages, Arts and Humanities Research Council UK,

Roehampton University, Atelier di Post-produzione Milano Film Network 2017

Cinematography: Clarissa Cappellani, Francesca Zonars

Editing: Ilaria Fraioli with Elisa Cantelli and Adele Tulli

Original Music: Andrea Koch

Sound Recording: Davide Pesola

Sound Design: Riccardo Spagnol

Sound Mix: Paolo Segat

Post-Production and Color: Mauro Vicentini

Academic Support: Caroline Bainbridge, Enrica Colusso

Research and Location Scouting: Alessia Petitto

Assistant Producers: Elisa Accattoli, Ilaria Quintas

With the kind participation of:

MAMMAGYM® di Eleonora Vallone - AQUANIENE THE SPORT CLUB (Rome), LANFOSSI GIOIELLI (Milan), CIRCUITO DI POMPOSA (San Giuseppe di Comacchio), TROFEO ITALIA MINIMOTO UIISP, MAMMAFIT® (Milan), LA NUOVA FARO - UNOGIOCHI SRL (Omegna), NOTTE ROSA (Rimini), MONDADORI BOOKSTORE (Lecce), ROME VIDEO GAME LAB - ISTITUTO LUCE CINECITTA' (Rome), SOFT AIR RIVER (Rome), COMITATO FESTA PATRONALE di S. SEBASTIANO MARTIRE, PATRONO DI RACALE (Racale), HAPPY LAKE PEDALO' EUR (Rome), PUATRaining ITALIA, SUNTIME BEAUTY CENTER e SOLARIUM (Rome), BLANCO BEACH CLUB FREGENE MARITTIMA (Rome), RIPARI YOUNG GROUP - PHOTO and FILM SHOOTING, DIOCESI DI ALBANO - UFFICIO DIOCESANO PER LA PASTORALE DELLA FAMIGLIA (Albano), ASD BLACK LIONS MOTOCLUB, BAGNI EMILIO 110 (Rimini), SALENTO SPORT CONVENTION - PARCO GONDAR - (Gallipoli), ECO RESORT 'LE SIRENÈ' - PUNTA PIZZO (Gallipoli), MISS MONDO ITALIA, TULLE & CHAMPAGNE WEDDING PLANNER (Lecce), ATELIER PRINCIPE FRANZ SPOSA (Lecce), LUXURY LIMOUSINE MILANO SRL, BAIÀ LUNA (Milan), PALACONGRESSI - ANDALO LIFE PARK (Andalo), FONDAZIONE TEATRO COMUNALE DI FERRARA (Ferrara).

## INTERNATIONAL SALES

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