what does the Mud whisper

KRAKOW FILM FESTIVAL
SHORT FILM COMPETITION
2025

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2025



film by **DEA TCHOLOKAVA**

RADIUM FILMS PRESENTS

short documentary film **WHAT DOES THE MUD WHISPER**

director **DEA TCHOLOKAVA** | director of photography **BARTEK BŁEDOWSKI** | editor **EKA TSOTSORIA, DEA TCHOLOKAVA**

original music **NIKA PANIASHVILI** | sound design and mixing **NIKA PANIASHVILI** | producer **IRINA GELASHVILI**

RADIUM FILMS

RIA KEBURIA FOUNDATION

Georgian National Film Center

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Short Documentary

WHAT DOES THE MUD WHISPER

18 min
Georgia
2025
DCP Dolby 5.1
Georgian

CONTACTS

DISTRIBUTOR

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LOGLINE

In a land where mud holds memory, a little girl named Tako embarks us through myth and imagination, crafting new stories from ancient echoes.

SYNOPSIS

In the heart of Georgia, where myth and reality intertwine, little Tako embarks on a journey to uncover the ancient secret of the region's healing mud. For generations, people have traveled to this mystical place, seeking cures for their ailments and hoping to prolong their lives. This documentary portrays the life of a child, which symbolizes the people who shape and sustain contemporary myths, revealing how ordinary folk craft legends that blur the lines between healing, belief, and imagination.

FILM'S CREDITS

DIRECTOR Dea Tcholokava

PRODUCER Irina Gelashvili

DOP Bartek Błedowski

EDITOR Eka Tsotsoria, Dea Tcholokava

ORIGINAL MUSIC Nika Phaniashvili

SOUND DESIGN AND MIXING Nika Phaniashvili

CHARACTER Tako Intskirveli

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The country where I was born and raised is strange, every little thing there has its story, its myth. We don't know exactly where those folk myths and legends come from, if they come from individuals or collectives, are those myths real stories? what road did they take and how would they transfer during the time and space.

When I first found myself in Akhtala, I started to observe this mystical place and its present life. I was obsessed by its galactic mud and the way it is frozen in time through its mystical craters and lakes.

But day by day I got to know that this place does not only freeze in time but this is the place where belief, hope, healing and brutal reality mix and this mixture is giving birth to myths and legends. There, in the dark volcano, dreams and reality juxtapose. Every new second there is a new story which is boiling in the mud crater. People there live in stories and myths which transcend time and space.

I frequently ask myself, what is the world I live in, in the middle of this big political chaos, is there still a space for Myths? for legends? for some unknown places and people? how should we tell stories of magic if there is only brutality, traumas, fear, death and darkness in front of us. Is there still belief? belief in magic, myths, is there still hope? And what I discovered through this journey of making this documentary is that for us, human storytelling is the something that makes us believe in changes, gives us hope.

While watching Tako, the main character of my film, I was wondering what if all the tales and myths are told out of darkness. That loneliness, sadness and fears of the future might urge us to give birth to new and reshaped myths. What if the dark times, disappointments can be tools too.

Just like when Tako takes this unromanticized, untamed material which is Mud into her hands and transfers it into a new myth, a new legend, into a new belief, the one of the mud man. She not only takes and accepts folk, old myths, but slowly sculpts and gives them new shape and moreover a new life.

This is a film about the stories that arise from the mud, about how myths are reshaped and how they connect us to the past and guide us into the future. And how they- the people who listened, reshaped, created those stories - remain in space and time and therefore stay immortal.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Dea Tcholokava is a Georgian filmmaker with an academic background in socio-political sciences and filmmaking, studied in both Georgia and Germany. She has collaborated with the Caucasus-based media platform Chai Khana on several projects, including Traffic Diaryand Of Kids and Sea. Dea has also worked as an editor and assistant director alongside esteemed Georgian filmmakers such as Lana Gogoberidze, Tato Kotetishvili, and Bakur Bakuradze. Her recent short documentary What Does the Mud Whisper premiered at the Krakow Film Festival in 2025. That same year, she was awarded the Documenta Archive and Goethe-Institut Fellowship.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION COMPANY

Radium Films is the Georgian production company based in Tbilisi that has brought together a collective of fresh, new Caucasian talents. And they're mostly female artists/storytellers. Founded in late 2022, Radium Films stands as a testament to the dynamic prowess of the women at its helm. Rooted in the rich heritage of Georgia, the name "Radium" pays homage to the historic significance of the first movie theater built in the country back in 1911. The company already has projects on its record actively competing in the global market."Radium," derived from the Latin word meaning "ray," embodies the company's purpose – to illuminate the shadows, to cast light upon the unspoken, and to amplify voices that demand to be heard.

Shedding light into the shadows!

RADIUM FILMS



THIS FILM PROJECT WAS A PARTICIPANT AT

B2B Doc, Cinedoc pitch, Dok Leipzig, East Silver short pitch
(in Millenium Doc against the Gravity)

FILM FESTIVALS

Krakow International Film Festival 2025 | Doc Edge 2025



Tina Laghidze's

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FILM

One person's reality can be another's fantasy.

As in every fairytale, the world of our characters is both hostile and magical, and the path they must follow is full of trials.

Set against the harsh political, social, and economic backdrop of contemporary Georgia, What Does the Mud Whisper? transforms a real story into a fairytale through the lens of filmmaker Dea Tcholokava and her protagonist, six-year-old Tako.

Tako is both a real child and a universal, almost archetypal figure—like Odysseus or Penelope.

Her personal odyssey is filled with challenges: injustice, poverty, loneliness, and unanswered questions in her search for what is good and what is not.

Once a renowned therapeutic mud resort, Akhtala in Kakheti is now a forgotten, decaying place on the brink of disappearing. Its fate has been shaped by environmental neglect, political corruption, and economic exploitation. Local people, like Tako's grandmother, are kept in deliberate poverty to preserve a supply of cheap labor.

In the crumbling, waterless sanatorium, Tako's grandmother works as a linen washer, laboring under harsh conditions.

And so, Tako spends most of her days alone—wandering through a vast, muddy world like a "mud princess" in a pink dress, left with her own thoughts and questions:

"Mud man, are you here?"

"Mud man, I think you're here—I see your breath, I see bubbles rising..."

"I think you're here! Answer me!"

The film can be seen as a metaphor for the search for God, or meaning. After all, don't we all spend our lives looking for answers to the same questions? Tako believes in the Mud Man. She's certain he's her friend and that together, they can overcome life's unfairness. So she talks to him constantly:

"Mud man, how do you keep yourself entertained? Tell me!"

"To feel invisible, excluded, and alien in your own country, your own world, your own planet—that pain is what connected me to this little girl," says director Dea Tcholokava. It is through the sensitivity of her perspective that the film's unique visual language emerges.

Tina Laghidze's

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FILM

In this poetic short documentary, the passage of time is subtly revealed. Two years later, we see an older Tako walking between laundry lines, still asking the same questions. As a viewer, I was struck with fear—what if, in the next shot, we see an aged Tako in the same pink dress, laying out linens just like her grandmother, still asking those same questions, unaware that the magical world around her has withered into ordinary decay?

It often seems that we spend our lives not solving our real problems, but chasing lesser ones. In today's world, we are taught to suppress our childlike qualities—our capacity for imagination, creativity, listening—and instead reshape the organic world to suit ourselves. This, inevitably, leads to ecological, socio-economic, and political crises.

Tako doesn't understand these systems, but she senses that her world is disappearing. The healing mud—this place's soul—might soon dry up and vanish, leaving behind nothing but a legend. But because Tako is still a child, still full of belief, I hope the Mud Man will notice her—and that her world might be saved.

Just as I hope that Dea Tcholokava's distinct, unflinching, and tender artistic vision will not go unnoticed in the world of cinema.

These days, I often hear that documentary cinema is undergoing a renaissance. While fiction film faces a global crisis, documentaries are expanding their form and breaking new ground. Dea Tcholokava's short documentary What Does the Mud Whisper? is a brilliant example. She merges reality and illusion within the cinematic frame, crafting a rare and striking new genre: the social fairytale.

