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Arlene Bogna's Canvas

By [RaeAnne Marsh](#) (July 2007)

"The Little PSA That Could" is what filmmaker Arlene Bogna calls her Women In Film-produced project for A Window Between Worlds.

Shot like a narrative film, the PSA *Canvas* shows one woman as a complex and strong character - a role notoriously rare in feature films. The film benefits from the practiced hand of film editor Paul Hirsch, whose filmography glitters with Oscar gold for his editing of *Star Wars*. "He has an emotional sensitivity," Bogna notes. Also important: "He has a narrative background. What we were doing was more like a feature than a commercial. He understood how to bring out characters' emotions."

Thrilled by the opportunity to work with a talent she refers to as "a legend," Bogna also found him respectful of her vision for the PSA. And Hirsch helped her create the temp music to communicate that vision to composer Rob Simonsen, who then wrote a composition specifically for the piece.

Women In Film (WIF) produces four public service announcements (PSAs) per year, and there is keen competition to be selected a director. The organization was founded to promote women in the entertainment and media industries, so it is not surprising that most of the organizations it chooses for the PSA program are charities that, also, benefit women and children.

A WIF of Opportunity

Bogna's industry experience began with motion graphic design and visual effects. A second assistant director for *Killers* (1997) and set dresser for *Gone Postal* (2005), she directed and produced the short film *Patriot Johnny* (also in 2005). The bulk of her experience has been in motion picture advertising (for Disney, Paramount, Warner Bros., Universal and DreamWorks) and Bogna was recognized in 2002 with a Golden Trailer Award nomination for Best Art Direction on the trailer for M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs*. For the UCLA film school grad, the thrill of being selected a director for WIF's PSA program was the opportunity it afforded her "to show my work, to do my craft, to meet people," she says.

The Role and the Goal

Bogna is also an exhibiting painter and photographer, and discovered a shared passion in *A Window Between Worlds*, a non-profit that helps abused women and children gain a sense of renewal and power through artistic expression. In *Canvas*, the paintbrush is as much the star as lead Giselle Tongi, of whom Bogna says, "I asked her to bare her soul for this project." Behind the reverie of a voice-over, fragmented close-ups go back and forth from paintbrush to Tongi's eyes in shielded introspection. Explains Bogna, "You don't get the whole picture until the end" - when she brings it all together to drive home the epiphany the project produced in her: "We discovered the soul is beyond abuse."

Eschewing stereotypes and endowing dignity to her characters is Bogna's ongoing focus. "Complex female characters appeal to me," she states. Directing the short *Whoa Nellie!* is her current endeavor, and she is in talks to direct a feature indie. Bogna also stays busy with her post-production company, Vista Point Pictures, founded this past spring to fill what she saw as a void in high-level creative services for indie filmmakers.

Canvas, which screens at the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival this month, has earned Bogna two awards - an Aurora and a Telly. It also gained her another unexpected commendation: At this year's WIF Crystal/Lucy Awards, in the midst of her acceptance speech of her Crystal Award for excellence in film, Academy Award winner Renée Zellweger acknowledged Bogna, saying, "I want to congratulate Arlene Bogna for her PSA for *A Window Between Worlds*, which won the Platinum Aurora Award for Best of Show." Relates Bogna, "That was very special."

Above image: Arlene Bogna at the camera. Photo by Anthony Ferranti Jr.



Actress Giselle Tongi in *Canvas*