

PRESS KIT

Premiering at
Bushwick Film Festival

October 27, 2023



VANITAS

written and directed by **LUCY GAMADES**

a GOOSE PICTURE presented by PEEPAW'S BASEMENT FILMS

starring **MEGAN GREENER NICOLE ONYEJE JULIANNA ZINKEL MICHAEL BAKKENSEN HUDSON PAUL ALLEGRA NOVIKOV
JACQUELINE O. RENE ESIRI MADAGWA JR. and LONI ACKERMAN as "MOM"** casting by **JOSHUA MICHAEL PAYNE**
director of photography **ALEXA CARROLL** production design **JUSTINE MUJICA** costume design **BECKY FLAHERTY** first assistant director **DAN ROBERTSON**
sound design **MICHAEL SPENCER** colorist **RYAN URZI** produced by **LUCY GAMADES MICHAEL SPENCER ALEXA CARROLL**
line producer **RYAN LEIBOWITZ** associate producers **MICHAEL ROBERT FERLITA BROOKS BENNETT MARY SIKOROVSKY**
executive producer **MICHAEL SPENCER**



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FILM INFORMATION



VANITAS

writer & director
Lucy Gamades

director of photography
Alexa Carroll

executive producer
Michael Spencer

CONTACT INFO

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TECHNICAL SPECS

Total Run Time: 10:39
DCP 5.1 surround 1.85:1
Negative Format: 16mm
Color, English



LOGLINE

A woman hires an amateur photographer to document her estranged family's last day with their dying matriarch, but her sister is running late.



SYNOPSIS

Monica has always longed for the approval of her narcissistic Mom. In one final grand gesture, she hires Lily -- who would be out of her depth at a senior photo session -- to take pictures of the family with their dying matriarch. Personalities clash as they wait for Rose, Mom's favorite child, who may or may not show up.

This bleaky funny film explores themes of grief in the age of social media, family and generational disconnect, and the moments we choose to share with others.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

At a time of unprecedented posting, we can say anything to pretty much anyone, whenever we want. We have complete access to each other, and yet, three in five Americans report feeling lonely.

People much smarter than I have tackled this topic at length, so what I wanted to do with *Vanitas* was whittle the idea down into a specific subtopic: **"When sad things happen to you, and you lack community, what do you do about it? Who do you invite in?"**

Many people write raw and honestly about grief online, helping others feel less alone by connecting with someone else's words.

...And then there is TikTok.

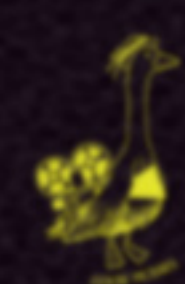
I stumbled down a rabbit hole one day and discovered a whole side of #griefftok, where people share bare-faced diary entries about the deaths of loved ones. Sometimes they sob. Sometimes they post Ring camera footage of an EMT taking a body out of their house while they caterwaul nearby, and Coldplay collects a few cents as their song coos over the video.

Why? Why would you post something this personal on a platform for everyone to see and then choose to overlay it with "Fix You?" Is it an urge to connect? Is it Main Character Syndrome gone completely off the rails?

Monica brings her family together under the pretense of creating lasting final memories of Mom, but the photos are staged. No one wants to be there. Mom certainly isn't going to remember it. So why do it? Who does it help?

Vanitas is a black comedy about what we do when we reconcile the reality of our families with the images in our heads.

- Lucy Gamades, writer & director



MEET THE CAST



a. Megan Greener as Monica || Megan has worked in film, theatre, commercials, and several web series. She is an audition coach for Heidi Marshall studios and a teaching artist for Developing Artists Theatre Company.

b. Nicole Onyeje as Lily || Nicole is a Texas-based songwriter and actress. She recently played Nika in Andrew Bujalski's "Support the Girls" alongside White Lotus star Haley Lu Richardson.

c. Loni Ackerman as Mom || Loni's previous roles include Eva Peron in the original Broadway production of Evita; a Boylan sister in "Annie (1982)"; and Grizabella in Broadway's "Cats" from 1988-1991.

d. Julianna Zinkel as Melissa || Julianna is a film and theatre actress known for playing Sandra Elliot opposite Kate Winslet in "Mare of Easttown." You can currently catch her in FX's Fleishman is in Trouble.

e. Michael Bakkensen as Ted || Born in Portland, OR, Michael earned a BA in English at Yale, studying Shakespeare with the late Harold Bloom. Michael moved to NY for the Broadway revival of "The Man Who Came to Dinner" with Nathan Lane and Jean Smart.

f. Jacqueline O. Rene as Jackie || Jacqueline is currently on Broadway in The Lion King. Her previous credits include "Law and Order: Organized Crime" and "Gotham."

g. Hudson Paul as Mattie || In his young career, Hudson has already been seen in "Law and Order: SVU," "New Amsterdam," and "Saturday Night Live," as well as Off-Broadway in "Oresteia."

h. Allegra Novikov as Madison || Allegra Novikov is an American actor of Asian and Scottish descent. Her father is an Olympic gold medalist, and she is a State champion in gymnastics. Now a competitive fencer, Allegra finished 2nd in the Southeast Region in 2020.

i. Esiri Madagwa Jr. as Jake the Nurse || Esiri is a NY-based actor and writer. Previous roles include Avery in Annie Baker's "The Flick" and Willie in "Master Harold... and the Boys."



MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



Lucy Gamades || writer & director, producer

Lucy is a Brooklyn-based writer, director and producer with a style that has been described as "cheerfully macabre." She completed a dual degree program in film and history at Boston University. Recent projects include "A Little Tent," which won Best Dark Comedy at Indie Short Fest; and the "More to History" promo series for the History Channel. She has worked in post-production at Conde Nast, creating for brands like Allure, GQ, and Vogue.



Alexa Carroll || director of photography, producer

Alexa is an NYC-based filmmaker. Her diverse portfolio includes narrative, documentary, music video, and dance/movement based films. Recently, Alexa served as 2nd Unit DP for the feature film "Best Summer Ever," which took home the Special Jury Award at SXSW in 2020. Additional DP credits include a Vimeo staff pick music video for "MEWITHOUTYOU," Tribeca official selection "Let Liv," Snail Mail's "Ben Franklin" music video, and commercial work for clients including Vogue, Coach, CVS, Moderna, DL1961, and Lands' End. She graduated from Drexel University in 2016.



Michael Spencer || sound designer, executive producer

Michael is an NYC-based sound designer and production sound mixer. His works span a multitude of genres, including narrative, commercial, documentary & reality, and music. Key projects include Chatanooga Film Festival official selection "The Third" (2023), Amazon Music's documentary short "Message in the Music," and HGTV's "Who's Afraid of a Cheap Old House?" The son of a Myrtle Beach, SC mortician, he studied musical theatre performance at Belmont University in Nashville, TN. He is the founder of Peepaw's Basement Films. peepawsbasement.com



Thank you for reading.

- the Vanitas team

