



A Woman Like Me

DIRS Alex Sichel & Elizabeth Giamatti 2015 USA 84 min

After finding out she has terminal breast cancer, co-director Alex Sichel confronts this hard truth the only way she knows how: through her filmmaking. While she shoots the beautifully art-directed movie that had been playing in her head ever since her diagnosis—a narrative about her alter ego, Anna Seashell (a luminous Lili Taylor), who re- and pre-enacts Sichel's own idealized journey to “dying in a compassionate way”—she documents the flipside of *A Woman Like Me*, a *cinéma* whose *vérité* is harrowing but also funny, magical, and meta. Medical appointments are driven to, needles pierce the skin, alternative healers “cure,” family members argue and grieve. Throughout, Sichel greets challenges in her frank and darkly humorous way, from the ridiculousness of swallowing barium to her struggle to meaningfully practice her Buddhist faith. She is aglow with pluck, creative intensity, and a fierce sadness over the well-being of her husband and young daughter—but it is a glow that will abruptly be extinguished. We know it from the film's opening seconds: a countdown leader that cuts to black. We are haunted by the fact that Sichel (whose brilliant 1997 directorial debut *All Over Me* was revisited at Frameline36) necessarily had a co-director in dear friend Elizabeth Giamatti, who accepted their SXSW Special Jury Recognition for Directing. Together they concocted a magnificent hybrid that weaves the real and the imagined, “truth” and performance, life and the desire to go joyfully toward death.

— LUCY LAIRD

Saturday, June 20, 4:00 pm · Roxie

\$8 members, \$10 general · WOMA20R
