

ANIMAL is the result of a collaboration between two directors — another chapter in my long-term creative partnership with Urszula Dubowska. Our work grows out of the collision of two different perspectives on the same subject, theme, and form. It is this diversity that allows us to create films that resist the obvious.

From my side, I made **ANIMAL** because I have always been drawn to forms that escape convention. For over twenty years, I have been asking myself one question:

How far can documentary cinema move toward fictional narration and cinematic language without losing its identity?

Each film is my attempt to answer this — not theoretically, but through storytelling, structure, and the tools used in the filmmaking process. Not every subject, however, allows for such exploration.

Józef Wilkoń is the ideal protagonist for this kind of inquiry. He is precise, grounded in the physical world, and at the same time profoundly intuitive. His relationship with nature has nothing to do with ideology. He does not seek to “repair the world.” Instead, he shows how to live in such a way that repair becomes unnecessary. Wilkoń does not treat animals as symbols. They are not metaphors — they are present beings. When he paints or sculpts, he is not creating representations, but entering into a dialogue. I wanted the camera to enter that dialogue with him, rather than explaining it from a distance.

That is why the film avoids classic interviews. I was not interested in explanation. I was interested in presence. In attention. In the physical act of creation unfolding in real time: a stain travelling across paper, wood resisting the hand, a form slowly revealing itself.

I did not want to make a film *about* nature. I wanted the film to behave like nature.

I did not want to make a film *about* art. I wanted the film itself to become a form of listening.

Working on this project, I felt that Wilkoń is not trying to change the world. He offers something more demanding: a way of being within it. A way of seeing. A way of not harming.

That is why this film exists.

Ryszard Wiencek