

Laterna Magica presents

Letter to J

a film by Nils De Coster



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www.laternamagica-production.fr

Letter to J

written and directed by Nils De Coster

Year 2026 / Duration 150 minutes / aspect ratio 1.85 / color and black&white / Sound 5.1

produced by Laterna Magica

Letter to J recounts, in the form of a « cinematic letter », my last stay at the house where my Danish grandparents once lived, in Helsingør, Denmark, and how I am trying to bid it farewell, knowing that the place will soon be put up for sale.

This is the secret garden of my childhood. I used to come here with my family every summer.

Memories and characters from the past resurface, questioning my life today and my 53 years of « Danishness » — that part of myself that has always remained tied to my mother's homeland.

Meticulously guided by my voice-over - by turns descriptive, narrative, and introspective — **Letter to J** invites us to wander through time and space, allowing a patchwork of images and sounds, stories and situations, eras and objects, feelings and emotions to emerge, from which the identity of the person I am addressing gradually takes shape: that of a brother tragically lost.

Through this sensory experience of duration, of the passage of time and its effects, of the successive transformations it brings about and the absences it implies, I seek, through precision of detail, to shed light on the places where the imagination of childhood takes root, and how the transition to adulthood can give rise to misunderstandings and life's unexpected derailments.

A portrait of an « ordinary » family, **Letter to J** is also food for thought on the course of the world, on the meaning of modernization and progress upon which it is built, and on the place reserved for human beings within it.

In other words, it questions each person's identity: how we shape ourselves to either succeed or fail in becoming part of the orchestra, and what part we play within it.

Letter to J is thus a multi-layered film, where history — both grand and intimate — intermingles, driven by a dramaturgy of absence that unfolds slowly.

Having studied and practiced Visual Arts in my youth, I have always retained a handcrafted approach to my work. That is why, with this film, it felt right to attempt the genre of the self-portrait, as painters do, in order to tell this personal and family story.

It is therefore naturally myself who appears in my own role and who assumes every position at every stage of the filmmaking process, with the exception of the figure of the friend — a kind of double or imaginary brother — played by a friend as himself.

Like a painter in his studio, I patiently arranged the various materials I had accumulated — footage, photographic documents and archives, digitized videos from different eras, as well as texts and music that I composed and performed — within reach and at eye level.

How can one grasp the depth of existence?

How can its memory be inscribed through film?

Whether in the making of it or in the moment of its screening in the theater, I wanted to give this film time, so that it might become imbued with it, and so that the viewer could fully immerse themselves within it.