

Director Gillies MacKinnon and Director of Photography John de Borman, BSC, collaborators on **Small Faces, Trojan Eddie, Hideous Kinky** and **Pure**, have just completed **Tara Road**, a rather uncharacteristic film for MacKinnon. "People tell me my films are dark and although **Tara Road** has dark patches, it's lighter and softer round the edges than others I've made in the past," he remarks. "Apart from my usual dramaturgical input and ideas for the basic look of the main characters' houses, I didn't come across with my usual strong agenda on how I wanted scenes to be played. Instead, I concentrated on the actors more than in other films and left a lot to John."



MacKinnon and de Borman share art school backgrounds and have "a fantastic working relationship; we've even developed a creative shorthand," says de Borman. "We often refer to paintings, sculptures and small independent films we've seen. Gillies is a great drama Director and strong on story telling. At times I influence him to do things in a

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grander way and other times he guides me when scenes become too visual. He wanted, in this case, to make the characters in **Tara Road** very real, so we decided to introduce movement as opposed to the tableaux approach."

Based on novelist Maeve Binchy's "beautiful human story", **Tara Road** is about two women who suffer personal tragedies: Ria (Olivia Williams) from Dublin and Marilyn (Andie McDowell) from Connecticut. After a chance meeting, they decide to swap houses for the summer and alter the course of their lives.

MacKinnon and de Borman used paintings as influences for the look of the women's houses. "We wanted Ria's to be visually busy, sensual and rich in colour with burgundy reds and a patterned feeling; akin to Bonnard's work," notes de Borman who also used the colour palette to sharply contrast homemaker Ria's warm, but scatty nature and arty attire with Marilyn's very repressed, insular character. Marilyn's house in Connecticut with its pristine, angular look and stark colouring is partly inspired by Hockney and especially the overhead crane shots of Ria swimming backwards and forwards in Marilyn's pool also brings the artist's LA graphic images to mind."

Although de Borman adopts a different approach to each film, his "constant" is an ARRIcam with its "fantastic viewing system and very bright viewfinder" and COOKE S4 lens through which he lights. Kodak VISION2 500T 5218 was his choice for **Tara Road**. "5218 is the best stock I've used so



into the dark shadowy areas better than a slower stock would have done. 5218 really is unbeatable."

The changeable Dublin weather affected the five week winter shoot to such an extent that de Borman had to shoot several scenes night-for-day and day-for-night. "Lighting all the rooms in the large house was a problem, especially as the weather would go up and down like a yo-yo, so we mounted on both sides of the house 18 kW and cinepars on four massive cherry pickers which allowed us versatility in shooting any direction. At times we had to use the lights to make the garden look like day in the back of the shot as we had lost the light by 3pm and had to match the rest of the scene. Conversely, I started to get nervous with very low light levels inside rooms and

## Tara Road: A tale of two women

far; it has huge latitude, very little grain and most important it isn't too contrasty. The saturation is great: strong colours and not too theatrical. It picked up the reds in the Dublin house fabulously. I even used it

in Capetown, which doubled for Connecticut, and shot with a wide aperture by ND'ing a lot. Despite the large amount of filtration in front of the lens, which meant I couldn't see much when I was shooting, it came out brilliantly and to my mind dug

bright windows six or seven stops over, but 5218 coped incredibly well with all these variations."

"In one day-for-night sequence when Marilyn is in the kitchen, we decided to ND the windows enormously to reproduce night and, with rain machines hitting the glass, we skimmed the side with a light to capture the speckledness of rain. It's not the sort of thing I would normally want to do, but cast scheduling and weather made everything topsy turvy on this film ...anyway it turned out to be a rather convincing effect" comments de Borman. ■