



PRESS KIT

THAT WHICH DOES NOT KILL

directed by Alexe Poukine

DOCUMENTARY | BE/FR | 16/9 | 85 min | 2019

Production

Centre Vidéo de Bruxelles / Alter Ego Production

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FESTIVALS & THEATRICAL RELEASE

**WORD PREMIERE - 50th INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL VISIONS DU RÉEL,
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International Feature Film Competition
*Jury Prize for Most Innovative Feature Film***

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Prize for Best Feature Documentary

ZINEBI - BILBAO - ES | 8 > 15.11

FESTIVAL DE CINE DE SEVILLA - ES | 8 > 16.11

RIDM, MONTREAL - CA | 14 > 24.11

FESTIVAL Les Créatives, GENEVA - CH | 12 > 25.11

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SCAM Belgium

Prize for Best Documentary 2019

MAGRITTE - BE

THEATRICAL RELEASE - BELGIUM

Wednesday 18 September 2019

Flagey Studio 5 – Brussels



SYNOPSIS

Ada is 19. A man she knows invites her to dinner and she accepts. Everything goes so quickly. She doesn't defend herself. Body and mind in tatters. In spite or because of that, she returns twice to confront him. Her story is intertwined with others, each one different yet all the same – a nasty, insane, commonplace story.

CAST & CREW

Documentary | BE/FR | 2019 | 85' | 16/9 | 5.1 | OV FR – EN & NL ST

Available formats: DCP | DIGITAL FILE | BLU RAY

Available versions : OV FR – OV FR / EN & NL ST

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Text | Ada Leiris |
| Direction & Screenplay | Alexe Poukine |
| Image | Elin Kirschfink |
| Sound | Bruno Schweisguth |
| Editing | Agnès Bruckert |
| Sound editing | Bruno Schweisguth |
| Sound mixing | Rémi Gérard |
| Calibration | Miléna Trivier |
| Production | Centre Vidéo de Bruxelles – CVB - Michel Steyaert Alter Ego Production - Cécile Lestrade, Elise Hug |
| Executive producer | Cyril Bibas - CVB |
| Production assistants | Jeanne Humbert, Marc Jottard – CVB Sonia Ben Slama – Alter Ego Production |
| Co-production | Centre de l'Audiovisuel à Bruxelles – CBA TAKE FIVE RTBF –Télévision belge |
| With the support of | Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles |
| With the support of | Centre National de la Cinématographie et de l'Image Animée, de la PROCIREP - Société des Producteurs & ANGOA, du programme d'entreprise de Ciclic - Région Centre-Val de Loire, de Bip TV, du Tax Shelter, du Gouvernement Fédéral belge. |
| Cast | Conchita Paz, Epona Guillaume, Aurore Fattier, Marijke Pinoy, Marie Préchac, Sophie Sénécaut, Anne Jacob, Tristan Lamour, Noémie Boes, Maxime Maes, Yves- Marina Gnahoua, Tiphaine Gentilleau, Séverine Degilhage, Laurence Rosier |
| And the participation of | Adam Amir, Barbara De Naeyer, Maïa Descamps, Stéphanie Jaquet, Sloane Kersusan, Matti King, Nathalie Kumps, Edouard Leport, Françoise Leroux, Eliette Makhloufi, Lorie Second, Jean-Louis Simoens |



Like one who seeks to warn the city of an impending flood, but speaks another language... So do we come forward and report that evil has been done to us.

*“When evil-doing comes like falling rain”, by **Bertolt Brecht***

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2013, at the end of a screening of my first feature film, a woman of my age came up to me. She told me that she had a story to tell, something that had happened nine years earlier, and she didn't know what to do with it.

We met again. Ada told me how, when she had just turned 19, she was raped three times in the same week by a man she knew.

While she told me this story, and despite my real empathy for her, I found myself unwillingly noticing all the elements that did not correspond to my fantasized image of rape: an act committed at night, in a deserted alley by an unknown, brutal, if not armed mentally ill man.

This story continued to pursue me. I have talked about it to people around me. Several very close friends have told me that they had had a similar experience. I was very troubled by their large number, as well as by the fact that they hadn't told me about it.

It became very clear to me that I had never realized what the essence of this experience was. I wanted to understand what we can make out of the harm that has been made to us, and that we have to some extent "let happen".

I was not raped. But like all girls, I grew up with this threat and with the certainty, on several occasions, that I had narrowly escaped it. At 19, my representations of love were so naive, my limits so vague, that if, like Ada, I had come across the wrong person, I don't know if I would have managed better than her.

One of the reasons I made this film is the certainty that Ada's story was not just a personal catastrophe, but part of a wide-ranging societal phenomenon.

At the time I decided to make this documentary, the Weinstein case had not been made public, and I realized how difficult it was to hear and identify with a woman who was not the "right victim". The reactions to Ada's story were sometimes very strong and I knew that one of the challenges of the film would be to succeed in transmitting something from this story that would speak to everyone, without letting its violence silence the rest, nor letting it harm the person who experienced it.

How can we collectively share a fundamentally and intimately destructive experience, with major repercussions, which has nevertheless remained hidden?

Because I wanted to go beyond the simple recording of reality, so as to avoid being anecdotal or explanatory, I decided to take a fictional detour by asking Ada to write her story and inviting several people to literally put themselves in Ada's "place".

The construction of the story [ou: story-telling?] is organized in a way that the viewer

follows the same path as Ada, first unable to qualify what Ada is confronted with. The nature of the event remains unclear for a long time and the word "rape" does not appear until quite late in the film. Far from covering the diversity of experiences it refers to, this term in fact almost passively hides the reality it claims to describe.

By choosing that Ada exists only through the story told, I wanted the viewer to create him/herself the image of this woman, through faces that could all be Ada's and that at the same time are not her. I wanted this imaginary face, universal because demultiplied, to guide the viewer from one end of the film to the other.

Because the empathy we feel for someone is often linked to their personality rather than to the facts they have experienced and are telling us, I wanted the different parts of the story to be played by various performers. In so doing, I wanted the viewer to question his/her identification mechanisms.

If the film mixes play and testimony by a *mise en abyme* of the story through its protagonists, it remains a documentary: it documents not only Ada's story, but also those of the people who embody her and make connections with her.

Alexe Poukine



The few times – mostly very pissed - when I have wanted to tell this story, have I used the word? Never. The few times I have attempted to talk about it, I'd skirted around the word "rape": "assaulted", "mixed up", "in a tight corner", "hassled"...whatever. As long as the aggression is not called "rape", the attack loses its specificity, can be compared with other attacks, like getting mugged, picked up by the cops, held for questioning, beaten. This short-sighted strategy does have advantages, because as soon as you name your rape a rape, the women-controlling mechanisms suddenly swing into action: do you want everyone to know what happened to you? Do you want everyone to see you as a woman who has been subject to that? And, in any case, you must be a total slut to have escaped alive. Any woman who values her dignity would rather die.

Virginie Despentes, *King Kong Theory*

THE OTHER'S PLACE

Interview by Anne Feuillère on Cinergie.be

What is the origin of this project?

Ada came to see me after the screening of my first film, to tell me that she had a story to tell. I saw her again later in Brussels and she told me that she had been raped three times in the same week by a man she knew. What shocked me was that I, who am more like a "primal feminist", realized that I was kind of sceptical about what she told me. It didn't match my representation of rape: committed by night, by a stranger, a dangerous and armed man... Plus there were some inconsistencies in her story, jumps in time... In fact, she dissociated when she talked about her experience, but I didn't know about this process at the time. I didn't have the tools to understand her, hence I didn't understand her. But I was obsessed with it. I asked Ada to tell me her story, which she did very patiently: I have recorded her story for two years. At the same time, I have read a lot about trauma, dissociation, the mechanisms of traumatic memory.

How did you end up with a polyphonic storytelling ?

(...)When I started talking about this story to people around me, most of my female friends told me that they had experienced a similar story and Ada's reaction did not surprise them at all. That's the main reason why I did this film, I think. Several of my male friends told me that if what Ada described was rape, then they were rapists themselves. Our society builds a representation of the rapist as a kind of monster, a sadist, a pervert, maybe even a little mentally retarded... This is absolutely not the case. I met several rape perpetrators for the film, sometimes adorable people, who could be my best friends! After a while, I understood that the subject of the film was empathy, and the following question: how can you identify with someone who has experienced this? So I asked Ada to write this text, which I divided into several parts, and I looked for people who could interpret and comment on it. I wanted them to put themselves in Ada's shoes and explain me what they felt. And in a rather extraordinary way, even the sceptics, by saying those words [faute de frappe dans la version française je crois], by incorporating them, everyone came to understand her, or at least by feeling touched in one way or another, I think. Only by walking the same way she had walked, by putting themselves in her shoes, by obliging themselves to do so.

How did you meet and choose those people, those witnesses?

We had to find people who had something to say on the subject. I wanted to hear different point of views: victims, of course, but also perpetrators of rape, and people confronted with the issue of rape in their professional practice. (...) Half of the participants are not professional actors. Another difficulty was not to get carried away by the performances:

everyone had to play well enough to allow us to listen, yet badly enough so as not to mask the film's genuine stake.

Could you expect what the text would trigger?

Yes. No. (...) Ada's story – and this is why it is so interesting – is tragically common yet seems extraordinary to many people, precisely because it is totally different from the fantasised image of rape. Except that in 80% of cases, the victim knows the person who abuses her/him, and that one third of rapes take place within a relationship... It strikes me a lot: we easily question the fact that Ada went back to see this man but nobody questions the fact that he raped her! There's a huge educational problem, which explains, in my opinion, the huge number of rapes. A threat has been hanging over all of us since we were very young, we all know that it can happen to us, except that we are completely misrepresenting it. As a result, when this happens, we don't know what's happening, we are totally unable to tell ourselves what's happening, to such extent that we can't even move. Most women are completely aghasted. And most men think that what they are doing, i.e. forcing a woman to have sex, is not rape. The huge gap concerns the definition of consent. It is not by hitting a woman - or a man - that we succeed in raping her/him but by having a hold on her/him. Most rapes occur without physical brutality. It's endemic. It's completely terrifying. And the most terrible thing about all this is that it's so terribly commonplace.

It seemed to me that Ada's text had its own tone, its own recognizable prosody no matter who said it. Is it something you built?

No. (...) I knew I wanted to blur the lines somehow, since we were moving from an individual to a global story. The editing was quite complex. We also wanted Ada to exist through several people, through several faces but with her own existence. We have chosen consistent shots. To help identify Ada's voice as a written text, for example, we kept the same take twice. A woman says exactly the same thing twice, but in a quite different way. A lot of people don't notice it! On the other hand, a passage of the text is said twice by two different people, a woman and a man. And often people don't hear it. Because it's another body, another sex maybe too? We no longer hear or imagine the same thing while the words are the same. I was very interested in this phenomenon. During the casting, I noticed that some people, when they told me the story, provoked in me a total empathy, I had tears in my eyes... And the same story told by other people, more distant, with less emotion or in a drier way, did not move me at all. Yet it is often difficult for these victims to feel empathetic/trigger empathy due to an absence of bond, as if something had been cut off. Finally, we do not identify ourselves with what a person has experienced but with what she/he is, with how we identify with her/him, perhaps with what we believe a "right victim" is. For me, this film is three times a documentary: about Ada, about the 14 people who reveal part of their story and about how you can put yourself - or not - in someone's place. (...) It's terrible, but we're full of clichés that make our listening very different. That's why this film is for me a documentary about interpretation, about what we represent, about what people embody. But the spectator must, as a result, accept to play the game, to question how the *dispositif* affects him/her. You can miss the film completely if you don't want to question the form of the film. The viewer's position is demanding.

But you're building the viewer's position. By asking people to comment on the text, you don't require adherence to the story. On the contrary, a kind of putting into words of everything that can pass through the spectator's head is said through the text's comments.

Yes, we have worked a lot on this position. That was the challenge, to get the viewer to listen to this story, not to reject it outright from the beginning. With my editor, we made sure that the word "rape" didn't appear until Ada said it in her story. I wanted the viewer to go back down Ada's path and wonder how he/she would describe what Ada had been through. We start from a certain form of scepticism felt by any spectator who has not worked on the issue, and who first questions the victim's actions. In this sense too, the film requires the viewer to constantly ask him/herself what he/she hears and thinks. I tried to get him/her to go through this story very slowly so that he/she would come to the conclusion that it was indeed a rape, perhaps not a legally admissible rape, but for her, it is indeed a rape. We do not have to question that. For me, it was very important for the viewer to make this journey. I don't know if I succeeded....

There is a certain softness in your film that comes from your framing, from those windows in the background, from the privacy of the apartments. All this builds the attention, that of the viewer [ou alors remplacer "viewer" par "spectator" partout dans le texte], and that of the people you film, like a delicacy that aims to avoid hurting them or us.

(...) The film is very soft and enveloping compared to the reported reality. Even if we call a spade a spade. But in comparison to the violence endured, it is very digestible. We chose not to tell all the brutalities experienced. They are mentioned, we understand them halfway. I think otherwise the viewer would have refused the film *en bloc*. I thought it was important and beautiful to see how all these people found very different ways to get by. It wasn't about staying in horror. I really wanted to make this film in order to think about what we can make out of the harm that has been done to us. Everyone has to ask themselves what he/she consents to, and make the other consent to... It is a question of responsibility, not guilt. The difference between the two is very important. (...)

In the film, an actress evokes "femininity à deux balles [pas traduisible, si?]"...

Yes, I love this sequence. (laughs) You can be responsible for following a man you knew you absolutely shouldn't have followed, but that doesn't send you to jail. While forcing a woman to have sex when she didn't want to, yes, it leads to prison. That's the difference between responsibility and guilt. (...) Men have a long way to go, to say to themselves: "Am I doing something to someone, is it legitimate? Does that make me happy?" Women have begun to do this work of deconstructing patriarchy; when you are a victim, you have more reasons to question things, than when you are on the dominant side. But we all have a lot to lose, man and woman alike, in this domination. The representation of manhood, of masculinity, is absolutely deplorable, it hurts men as much as women. (...) Finding men who agree to testify in the film as rape victims and as perpetrators of rape has been extremely difficult. I started writing about the film before the Weinstein affair, we shot

after that: it was night and day. When the word began to come out, it was happening in all directions, I didn't know what to do with all the women's testimonies... For men, it's more complicated. Already recognizing oneself as a victim is terribly difficult. But recognizing to be a rapist is something else. I am very grateful to these men who participated in the film.

That was the challenge of your film, to deconstruct our representations of rape.

A real question came up at some point: who are we making this film for? Do we have to go a long way and explain everything? Or is it up to the viewer to try to get through all this? At one point, we chose to make a film that was more metaphysical than sociological. We could have done something else, we had magnificent testimonies from commissioners, psychologists, lawyers... But we really wanted to make a film about a human experience. And the words of some revoked the words of others. The experts' words were too distant. It was becoming violent. As for male experts, even if what they said was beautiful, there was almost like a patriarchal violence.

Why did you decide to close your film on this last testimony? To let us know that it's an endless story that we have to tackle [and take care of]?

For many reasons. First because she [the last testimony] refers to Ada by saying: "She says it and I live it". She makes a very explicit link between herself and Ada. I was very interested in ending on this because the film tells a story that is not only individual. Rape happens to a lot of women and men, many people share it, it is a societal issue. Then she talks about how traumatic memory handicaps her, and says she no longer knows if she can be responsible for her daughter. I meant to focus on the transfer of suffering, its consequences. We can't sit back down and pretend it did not happen. You have to "take care" of it, you can recover from a rape, I don't know to what extent, but in any case life is not over. You have to accept that you've been a victim, and work on it. Not much is being done today, but some things are being put in place, there are care facilities, and also for the perpetrators of rape. Ada said in the text that for both the victim and the executioner, it is a state you go through. But first you have to recognize it to get through it. It is not a definition of identity.

SOME FIGURES

- 91% of the persons raped are women.
 - 1 in 10 women has been or will be raped in her lifetime.
 - 80% of the time, the perpetrator is known to the victim, and one third of rapes take place within the couple.
 - 67% of rapes take place in the home of the victim or perpetrator.
 - 45% of rapes are committed during the day and not at night.
 - 49% of rapes are committed without any physical violence.
 - 90% of rapists have no mental pathology.
-
- 56% of Belgians know at least one person who has been victim of serious sexual violence in their environment.
 - 7% are and/or were sexually assaulted/abused by an adult while they were still minors
 - 13% of women have been raped and/or are still being raped (other than by their partner/spouse).
 - 24.9% of women were pushed into forced sex by their partner.
 - Two out of six women victims of serious sexual violence have never taken the slightest step, even to confide in someone they know.
 - 24.4% of women who have been exposed to serious sexual violence "trivialize" the act (i.e. they no longer consider it "very serious" or "serious"). In other words, the aggression(s) they suffer and/or have suffered is/are from their point of view "understandable" or "acceptable".

Source – Amnesty International – Survey conducted in Belgium in 2014 among 2000 Belgians

ALEXE POUKINE

BIO-FILMOGRAPHY



*Born in 1982, Alexe Poukine is a director and scriptwriter. After attending drama classes, she studied ethnology, documentary filmmaking and scriptwriting. **Petites Morts**, her graduation film, has been selected in several international festivals. Her first feature-length documentary film, **Dormir, dormir dans les pierres**, was screened in 2013 in numerous festivals. In parallel to the shooting of her second documentary film **Sans frapper**, she is writing a feature-length fiction film.*

Filmography

Frères (feature-length fiction film, in development, Geko Films)

Dormir, dormir dans les pierres (documentary, 74', 2013, Abacaris Films)
Festival selections: Etats Généraux du film documentaire (Lussas), **Traces de Vie (Clermont-Ferrand) - Prix du regard Social**, Le Mois du Film Documentaire 2014 et 2015, Escales Documentaires de La Rochelle, Résistances (Foix), etc

Être Né Quelque Part (documentary portraits – “défi jeune envie d'agir” scholarship)

Petites Morts (documentary, 13', 2008, Ardèche Image)
Festival selections: Festival du court-métrage (Clermont-Ferrand), Les Écrans Documentaires (Arcueil), Rencontres du film documentaire de Mellionnec, Festival Henri Langlois (Poitiers), Festival du film universitaire de Rio de Janeiro, etc

Other professional activities

Photographer :

Exposition & publication of the book *Un bouquet de houx vert et de bruyère en fleur* (Editions Paradox - production FNAC) Quinzaine Photographique Nantaise (2012) , Galeries de la FNAC des Ternes, de Bordeaux et de Nantes

Photographer for Cinéma du Réel IFF, Paris, March 2006

COP / Casting / Video assistant / Projectionist (Grand Palais, Paris, 2008-2009)

PRODUCERS



CVB - Centre Vidéo de Bruxelles - As an audiovisual production workshop and a continuing education association recognised by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the Centre Vidéo de Bruxelles views itself as a centre for image whose five main areas of interest are: auteur and creative documentaries that explore new forms and deal mainly with social, political and artistic issues; working closely with associations to

serve common aims; video workshops, which are tools that truly encourage creativity and reflection and are accessible to all; working to promote a catalogue that reflects a coherent editorial line and a rich production history; continual research and reflection on images and their power to tell the truth. A diversity of approaches, original content, the meeting of different genres, practices and views, hybridisation, combining an artistic approach with a more social one in dealing with societal challenges, paying attention to individuals who are not experts, politicians or leaders, but ordinary citizens are just some of the leitmotifs that guide our approach.

Film Catalogue

Sous la douche, le ciel – Effi Weiss & Amir Borenstein (85'/2018) | ***Charleroi le pays aux 60 montagnes*** – Guy-Marc Hinant (126'/2018) | ***La place de l'homme*** – Coline Grando (60'/2017) | ***Oltremare*** – Loredana Bianconi (83'-2017) | ***La terre abandonnée*** – Gilles Laurent (73'/2016) | ***Casus Belli, sur les sentiers de la paix*** – Anne Lévy-Morelle (101'/2014) | ***I comme Iran*** – Sanaz Azari (50'/2014) | ***Mauvaise Herbes*** – Catherine Wielant et Caroline Vercrusse (50'/2013) | ***Deux fois le même fleuve*** – Effi Weiss et Amir Borenstein (110'/2013) | ***Chaumière*** - Emmanuel Marre (70'/2013) | ***Bons baisers de la colonie*** - Nathalie Borgers (74'/2011) | ***Le geste ordinaire*** Maxime Coton (64'/2010) | ***Dem dikk (aller retour)*** - Karine Birgé (54'/2010) | ***Le bateau du père*** - Clémence Hébert (75'/2009) | ***Autoportraits de l'autre. De Belgique en Palestine*** - Gérard Preszow (48'/2008) | ***Los Nietos, quand l'Espagne exhume son passé*** - Marie-Paule Jeunehomme (59'/2008) | **Trilogie tropicale : *La Belgique vue des Tropiques, Ça déménage sous les Tropiques, Voyage aux Tropiques*** ateliers vidéos (2006-2008) | ***L'argent des pauvres*** - Charlotte Randour (24'/2005) | ***La Cité dans tous ses Etats*** - Jacques Borzykowski et Vincent Cartuyvels (30'/2004) | ***La raison du plus fort*** - Patric Jean (85'/2003) | ***Chaînes de garde*** - Nicolas Torres Correia (25'/2002) | ***Les enfants du Borinage, lettre à Henri Storck*** de Patric Jean (54'/1999)



**ALTER EGO
PRODUCTION**

Alter Ego was created in Orléans in 2001 by Simon Leclère, film director.

Since 2008, Cécile Lestrade has been the artistic director of the company, which was joined in 2014 by Elise Hug. The producers welcome and defend authors' projects, without

exclusion of content or form, provided that singular views are expressed.

Film Catalogue

Le crack – Maxence Voiseux (54'/2019) | ***Enfermés mais vivants*** – Clémence Davigo (66'/2018) | ***L'époque*** – Matthieu Bareyre (94'/2018) | ***Samouni Road*** – Stefano Savona (126'/2018) |

Maternité secrète – Sophie Bredier (82'/2017) | ***La mécanique des corps*** – Matthieu Chatellier (78'/2016)

CO-PRODUCERS



Take Five Productions



CBA – Centre de l'audiovisuel à Bruxelles



RTBF – Télévision Belge

SUPPORTS

Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds.

CVB is supported by the Commission communautaire française et la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.



DISTRIBUTION

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