



BEYOND THE BORDER

A Film by Ana Otasevic

LOGLINE

In Kosovo two nations fight for the same land.
Is there a way to reconcile? I take a journey to find out.

SYNOPSIS

Strpce and Ferizaj are towns on the foothill of the mountain Shar, in the southeast of Kosovo. First is a Serbian enclave, the second is a place where Albanians live.

People from these two neighbouring towns speak a different language and pray to a different god. The memories of the Kosovo war in 1999 are vivid. The border set between the two people didn't resolve the conflict.

Twenty years after the war, tensions are rising again.

Beyond the border is a story about two towns sharing the same land but not the same destiny. I search for signs of reconciliation in a place full of antagonisms.

What makes a homeland - the land or its people - I wonder. And if you were to choose? The protagonists want to live in the present, but the past is never far. Is reconciliation between them possible?

As they open their door to me, I step in their world to find it out.

TREATMENT

When I went to Kosovo for the first time a few years ago, the border that was set up after the war was barely visible. Since then, I have returned many times. The uneasy feeling didn't disappear - the place is tough, full of scars - but the passion to discover it only grew.

Twenty-five years after the war, I take the road to the south of Kosovo to discover if reconciliation between the two people is possible.

I am heading to the south with mixed feelings - restlessness about facing the consequences of the war and desire to personally discover the region that remains unknown.

On the foothill of the Sar mountain Strpce and Ferizaj – a Serbian enclave and a town populated with Albanians – represent two divided nations. Before the war they used to live together. The conflict sealed their separation in blood – the heroes on one side are executioners for the other. Monuments and flags mark the territory.

Traces of the war has almost disappeared, but not the memory of the war. On the faces of the people I meet in both places, I read verses of the poem *A Man Sing After the War*, written by a Serbian poet Dusan Vasiljev after the First World War: *I waded in blood up to my knees/and I have no more dreams. (...) I am not looking for prey/Give me only a handful of air/and a taste of the white dew of morning/All the rest is for you.* After the war in Kosovo, the poem had a new, tragic resonance interpreted by the famous Yugoslav actor of Albanian origin born in Kosovo, Bekim Fehmiu. Behind the image of eternal antagonism between two people, there is a tragedy of human existence in war and slow and painful awakening which comes after.

Every new trip to Kosovo is a reencounter with borders, whether physical or mental. The border is a metaphor of life in Kosovo and overcoming the borders is a dream for the people living there. I think about it while crossing the border with Kosovo. Policemen are sitting in grey containers, financed by the European Union, the sign says. Stray dogs – real guardians of the place - are barking on vehicles approaching.

On the road to Ferizaj I meet **Zoran** (46), a Serbian artist who goes back to his hometown for the first time after the war. He spent years after the war drinking and drawing. Art is a healing process for him, a therapy. In Ferizaj he organises a drawing session with young Albanians. They meet and draw together. They exchange in Albanian, Macedonian,

laughing while trying to understand each other and find the right words. After the war Albanians stopped using Serbian and Serbs don't learn Albanian. During the drawing class, **Lebibe** (20), a girl with a long brown hair and bright eyes, talks about the patriarchal society in Kosovo and the courage it takes to confront it.

In Strpce **Gorica** (42), a school secretary, is determined to find the remains of her father, kidnaped in the aftermath of the war. She is part of the Serbian association of families of the missing in the conflict. **Gjyla** (52) runs an association of the Albanian families of the missing. Her husband was taken by the Serbian paramilitaries in the war, and she never saw him again. Both women work together trying to put pressure on their governments to reveal the fate of their loved ones. They prepare a meeting in Pristina, where families from both sides of the conflict will meet.

In Ferizaj, an imam is talking about a role of women in Islam on a local TV station. Later, in his mosque during the Ramadan, he is addressing his followers. Lebibe is preparing iftar with her mother.

On the Serbian side, the monks from the local monastery are preparing for the Easter ceremonies. In a local radio, the speaker is reading the news about new clashes in the north of Kosovo between the local Serbians and Kosovo police.

The tensions are rising in the villages on Sar Mountain.

TEAM MEMBERS

Ana Otasevic is a director and producer from Belgrade living in Paris. She has specialized in the field of documentaries and social, political and cultural topics. She worked for the BBC World Service and she was a correspondent for international media in France, before taking an independent path as a documentary filmmaker. Her short documentary, *LE PAIN VOYOU* (2014), was broadcasted on the French TF 2. Her first feature documentary, *NEDJO'S HOUSE* (2016), was shown in festivals and was broadcasted on French TV Public Sénat. In 2018, she founded a production company DARMAR FILMS to produce films with a strong personal voice. *BEYOND THE BORDER* is her second feature documentary.

Link to the previous film:

La Maison de Nedjo

<https://vimeo.com/274967584>

Password: OTAN

Laura Briand is a producer at LES FILMS D'ICI.

Les Films d'Ici plays an important role in the production of documentary content in France and internationally. Their films are regularly selected for festivals, frequently broadcast on television and increasingly present on the Internet.

They are passionate about producing documentaries and they continue to work with international partners, develop co-productions and produce feature-length movies for general release.

They are committed to producing and screening these images of the world. Their desire is always to bring together spectators and directors within the imaginary conversation of film, as films also come to life in the eyes of their beholders.

Investing in meaningful images is how they gradually build the utopias that inspire us all. Exploring the world through picture – a never-ending quest.

Pablo Ferro is a Serbian-Cuban director of photography based in Belgrade. He was raised in a family of filmmakers, surrounded with cameras. His work has been presented at festivals around the globe and received international recognition.

Best Cinematographer awards:

WALL OF DEATH, AND ALL THAT, 2016, BELDOX

UNPLUGGED, 2014, Paklenica Film Festival

FREEDOM OR NOTHING, 2008, Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival

ARTISTIC STATEMENT

The protagonists of the film come from both sides. Our relationship is a fruit of many visits to Kosovo I have conducted in a past few years. Immersive approach allows me to get close to them. I use narration in the film to express intimate reflections on the place and the people I meet. This storytelling method where my voice guides a spectator is also a way to connect the two sides.

The process of working on this film is self-transforming, and often leads to confronting the assumptions about the place and the people living there. I'm interested in the clash between the reality told by the media and the reality that I discover in the process of filming. The film should be the opportunity to see the neighbors in a different light. I see it as a contribution to the process of reconciliation. That means confronting the assumptions about the place and the people living there. This transformation from assumption to an appreciation of the reality is in the core of my approach to documentary.

FUNDING

Name	SOURCE		Type of investment	%	Status
Country 1	SERBIA				
<i>Film Fund</i>	FCS*	€ 45 000,00	<i>subvention</i>	17,0%	<i>confirmed</i>
<i>Film Fund</i>	Doha Film Institute - postprod	€ 20 000,00	<i>subvention</i>	7,0%	<i>to apply</i>
<i>Producer</i>	DarMar Films	€ 2 000,00	<i>in-kind</i>	1,0%	<i>confirmed</i>
Subtotal		€ 67 000,00		25,0%	
	*Film Center Serbia				
Country 2	FRANCE				
<i>Festival</i>	Figra - <i>Coup de pouce</i>	€ 1 500,00	<i>subvention</i>	0,5%	<i>confirmed</i>
<i>Producer</i>	Les Films d'Ici	€ 100,00	<i>subvention</i>	0,5%	<i>confirmed</i>
<i>Film Fund</i>	CNC	€ 50 000,00	<i>subvention</i>	20,0%	<i>pending</i>
<i>Television</i>	ARTE France	€120 000,00	<i>pre-buy</i>	47,0%	<i>pending</i>
<i>Film Fund</i>	Procirep	€ 18 900,00	<i>subvention</i>	7,0%	<i>to apply</i>
Subtotal		€190 500,00		75,0%	
TOTAL		€257 500,00		100%	

