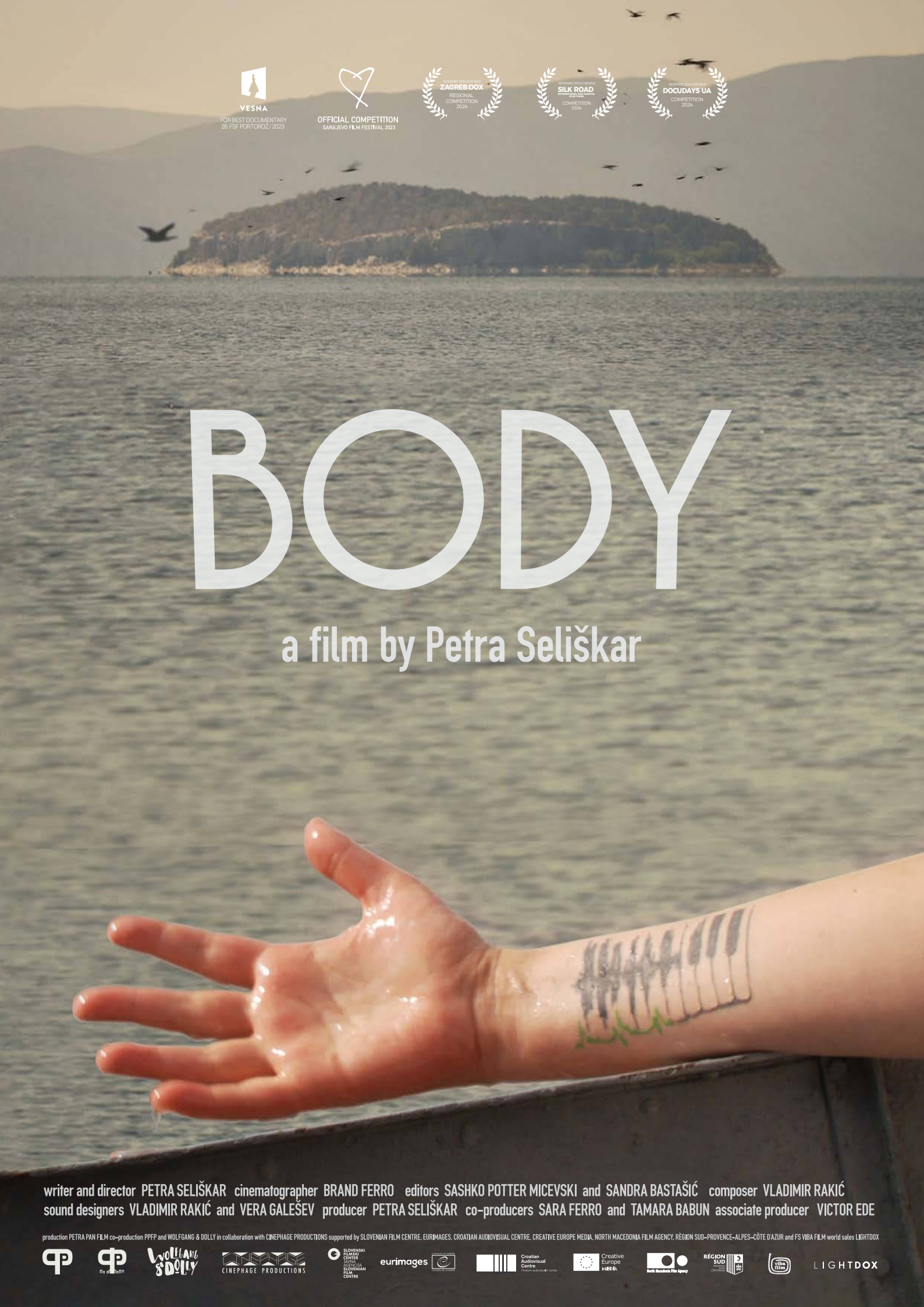


writer and director PETRA SELIŠKAR cinematographer BRAND FERRO editors SASHKO POTTER MICEVSKI and SANDRA BASTAŠIĆ composer VLADIMIR RAKIĆ
sound designers VLADIMIR RAKIĆ and VERA GALEŠEV producer PETRA SELIŠKAR co-producers SARA FERRO and TAMARA BABUN associate producer VICTOR EDE

production PETRA PAN FILM co-production PPFP and WOLFGANG & DOLLY in collaboration with CINEPHAGE PRODUCTIONS supported by SLOVENIAN FILM CENTRE, EURIMAGES, CROATIAN AUDIOVISUAL CENTRE, CREATIVE EUROPE MEDIA, NORTH MACEDONIA FILM AGENCY, RÉGION SUD–PROVENCE–ALPES–CÔTE D'AZUR and FS VIBA FILM world sales LIGHTDOX

BODY

SLOVENIA, CROATIA, NORTH MACEDONIA
Creative documentary
2023

Writer and director: Petra Seliškar
Cinematographer: Brand Ferro
Editors: Sashko Potter Micevski, Sandra Bastašić
Composer: Vladimir Rakić
Sound designers: Vladimir Rakić, Vera Galešev
Producer: Petra Seliškar
Co-producers: Sara Ferro, Tamara Babun
Associate producer: Victor Ede
Production: Petra Pan Film (Slovenia)
Co-production: PPFP (North Macedonia), Wolfgang & Dolly (Croatia)
World sales: Lightdox
Running time: 91 min
Format: DCP

With the support of: Slovenian Film Centre, Croatian Audiovisual Centre, North Macedonia Film Agency, Eurimages, Creative Europe Media and Région Sud - Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur.

Developed with the support of: EX ORIENTE Workshop, EURODOC 2019, LAST STOP TRIESTE 2022 - Flow Digital Cinema Award, International Documentary Acossiation (IDA).

Trailer: vimeo.com/812511842/f03228ae93



LOGLINE

Filmed over a period of 20 years, *Body* is a sensitive and intimate exploration of the extraordinary life and intricate inner world of a woman who fights to resist a series of rare auto-immune diseases with her indomitable spirit.

SYNOPSIS

Body is a poignant feature documentary by acclaimed director Petra Seliškar, spanning two decades of her close friend Urška's extraordinary life, battling rare auto-immune diseases. Once a fashion model, now a professional pianist, Urška faces immense challenges, yet never loses her indomitable spirit. The film blends intimate conversations, personal archives and creative visuals to explore the mysteries of the human body and the power of art and friendship to understand its essence. A tumultuous journey towards healing and self-acceptance.

Key words: #autoimmune disease #family #friendship #women #self-acceptance #human interest #mother-daughter #healing #archives #water

A STORY OF FRIENDSHIP, DISEASE AND FILMMAKING



There are rare and peculiar diseases in Urška's body that seem to come from nothing. But just as these illnesses must have a cause even if we don't recognise it, films that are as rare as this one come from a complex combination of experience, talent, wit, curiosity, instinct and finally, a little pinch of luck. They grow through situations in which a filmmaker finds themselves present "by chance", and where a cinematic challenge seems to come to them on its own.

The long-lasting friendship between Petra and Urška put Petra in such a situation. Since they were young, the two friends have used to film each other often. Petra has kept a lot of beautiful archive footage about their friendship, the oldest materials hailing from the 1990s, when they were still teenagers, in the first decade after the breakdown of Yugoslavia. Later on, when Petra began to study cinema, this practice became more concrete, and the images more precise.

In 2003, as Petra and her partner, cinematographer Brand Ferro were traveling around North Macedonia and discovering remote areas, people and stories, they ended up in the house of Mitko Filev. Brand knew him from his cine-amateur period, but suddenly they realised that Mitko has inherited fortune-telling genes of his Grandma Vanga. They then decided to start working on the film entitled The Man Between Light and Shadow, and as they followed Mitko's healing activities, Urška soon jumped into the story "by chance".

In 2004, after Urška's first collapse, Petra began to film her convalescence. The process was natural between the two friends. Soon enough, the exceptionality of Urška's medical profile and the history of their relationship resulted in the project of a film. But a few months after the collapse, Urška, struggling with a difficult recovery, asked Petra to stop filming. They kept seeing each other, but the idea of the film remained on stand-by. It was only seven years later, while Urška was slowly recovering from her stroke, that Petra received a phone call from her friend: "I would like us to finish this film", she said. Petra, of course, had been waiting and hoping for such a moment to come.

She started again to follow Urška in her umpteenth return to life, her slow and laborious journey towards a complete and happy acceptance of her body and herself. In the film, little by little, the metamorphosis of the "character" occurs.







INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR
BY VLADAN PETKOVIĆ

How did you and Urška meet?

We met in a Ljubljana bar when we were about 16 or 17. She was waiting tables there, and by then she had already left home. We both attended an experimental theatre school and that's where we clicked. There was also Tita, who appears in the film in the maternity ward scene. The three of us were very tight as we all grew up in messed up, complicated families. We rebelled with our strange haircuts and transgressive clothing, we basically screamed for attention because we preferred to be attacked and shouted at than to keep talking about the painful things we were experiencing at home. That must have been why we bonded so strongly, and we still have this bond to this day. But Urška's teenage years were particularly difficult for her.

You have been shooting with Urška for many years, on and off. When did you realise you had a film?

When Urška first came with Zoja to Macedonia in 2005, it was in order to escape Slovenia and her problems so we went to Lake Prespa to relax. She had wanted to stay for a week and ended up staying almost two months. She'd left all her problems behind, before that she was living with Zoja at the student campus as a single mother.

After swimming in Prespa, Urška got an infection and went back to Ljubljana. A few weeks passed and then Urška's sister called to tell us she was in a coma for six days. The scenes at Prespa were filmed only two weeks before the ones in the Ljubljana hospital.

I think I realised I could make a film when she had started walking again the first time she was hospitalised. I kept asking her to keep filming, but she kept refusing. Five years after her second collapse, at one point she suddenly called me on the phone and I heard her playing the piano. She was so thrilled she could play again, she invited me to come over and shoot. She realised that making of this film was also a sort of therapy for her, that it will help her understand what it was that happened to her. That was the key moment when I knew we had a film.

Can you tell us a bit about the healer, Mitko Filev, who appears in the film the first time she is in the hospital?

Actually these scenes were shot for a film about Mitko that I was at making at the time, but which I never finished.

On the eleventh day of Urška's coma, it was a critical situation. No fewer than 45 doctors had looked at her and they gave her a high-grade corticosteroid therapy but nothing helped. That's when I called Mitko. He started working with her remotely, and she woke up. It could be a coincidence, but it's a fact that it happened when he started working with her.

What comes out in those hospital scenes, but also throughout the film, is Urška's incredible positivity, she keeps laughing and making jokes.

She's had so many disasters in her life, from her parents who abused her to everything that happened later, but she has this eternal, invincible laughter. In fact, in the editing we had to tone it down and throw some of it out, because she keeps clowning around. I'm sure it's this defensive mechanism that kept her alive. She's simply like that. She is able to laugh at the most difficult things, her hospital stories are a total crack-up. That's why we had her read her diary in the voice-over, so that she could get into her deep, intimate issues.

How did you and Urška work together, and especially how did you develop these oneiric, nightmarish scenes that accompany her voice-over?

We started from Urška's diary and we used it to single out the key themes. I really needed her to work with me on the script because I wouldn't have been able to write how she felt, it had to be her. I would always consult her or even she would write some pieces that would end up in the treatment, but she never wanted to interfere in the film itself.

I wanted the viewer to feel physically as if they went inside the body and felt what Urška was feeling, all those pains and uncertainties. I was wondering how to enter this world and bring the audience into it. We tried to achieve it through music and sound design, together with composer and sound designer Vladimir Rakić. I wanted viewers to really feel it physically because it's something that words can't capture. It is a state between dreams, reality and the damage done by the illness and drugs. It takes a lot of energy to pull yourself out of it and to get back into the normal world, I find that extremely fascinating.

The visuals are pretty abstract because I didn't want to repeat what she says in the voice-over. We tried to represent the body on the cellular level, something that the audience travels through. It's a mix of microscopic images of cells and underwater scenes with the fish. These are actually arapaima fish from the Amazon that we shot in the Leipzig Zoo. They are so ugly that they are beautiful to me, I loved them. They fit perfectly what I imagined as a kid was on the bottom of the lake so I wanted them to represent her deepest fears.



Water is a very important element in the film - the film starts and ends at Lake Prespa, with 15 years passing in between.

We wanted to go back to Prespa because Urška had always been afraid of it. That's when she first told me on camera that she had wanted to commit suicide. I had no idea.

At one point she went to swim to the island which is 7.5 km away. She is a swimmer, and her relationship with water seems very natural, it seems like it is cleansing her. But in fact, water keeps pulling her down until she reaches the island. It is very symbolic, but back then I didn't see this connection clearly. Her subconscious, her family issues, her sexuality: all of this is pulling her down, drowning her. This murky lake water is actually illness, until she reaches the island, which in a way reconciles her with all these issues. She has found an inner balance there and when she swims back, there is no murkiness, we only film her on the surface, with birds flying above.

For me, the water means both illness and her subconscious that is drowning her, but on the other hand, when she opens up to me on-camera, she releases all the horrors and, in a way, heals herself. It may sound preposterous, but it is a fact that since then she has been completely healthy. She still suffers consequences of all the strong drugs she had been taking for therapy for years, and when she stopped chemotherapy, she realised her body was not what it used to be and never will be. For a woman, this is very difficult, but she has accepted it, she has survived and she will keep living.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



PETRA SELIŠKAR
DIRECTOR, SCREENWRITER, PRODUCER

Petra Seliškar (b. 1978 in Ljubljana) is a director, producer and writer. She has the ability to clearly see importance in hidden details, and through them, the essence in art, culture, nature, and all aspects of life. This is why she has dedicated her time on this planet to life's little pleasures, and of course, documentary cinema.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY:

- *Farewell* (writer, director), documentary, 2020 - Special Award Dok'n'ritam FF Belgrade, Grossman FF Award for Best Music Documentary
- *My World Is Upside Down* (writer, director), documentary, 2016 - Best Cinematography in Documentary Film and Special Mention in the Documentary Competition at SEE Festival LA
- *Mama Europa* (writer, director), documentary, 2014 - Trieste FF, Rotterdam IFF, Sarajevo FF, ZagrebDox, DokuFest Prizren, Best Documentary at Tuzla FF
- *The Grandmothers of the Revolution* (director, producer), documentary, 2006 - IDFA, Jihlava IDFF, Sarajevo FF, Small Stamp at ZagrebDox, Grand Prix at Asterfest Strumica, Darko Bratina award

AS CO-PRODUCER:

- *Wonder When You'll Miss Me* by Francesco Fe, fiction, 2019 (Italy, Slovenia) - BRB Casting Award – Best Young Actor at Alice nella Città 2019, independent section of the Rome Film Fest, for Beatrice Grannò.
- *Days of Madness* by Damjan Nenadić, documentary, 2018 (Croatia, Slovenia) - Special mention at ZagrebDox 2018, Vesna Award for Special Achievement at Festival of Slovenian Film 2018, Best documentary feature film at FICCSUR - Southern Cone IFF 2019, Audience award at Underhill Fest 2019, Special mention in the category of ethics and human rights at Croatian Film Days 2019
- *Beyond Boundaries* by Peter Zach, documentary, 2016 (Germany, Slovenia) - MakeDox, Festival of Slovenian Film, IFF Mannheim-Heidelberg, Trieste FF, DokFest München, Diagonale FF, IFF Innsbruck, Der Neue Heimatfilm
- *Perfect Circle* by Claudia Tosi, documentary, 2015 (Italy, Slovenia, UK, Netherlands) - Festival dei Popoli Florence, Trieste FF, Docpoint Helsinki Moral approach award 2016
- *Mostar United* by Claudia Tosi, documentary, 2008 (Italy, Slovenia) - Sarajevo FF, Prix Europa nomination

imdb.com

THE CREATIVE TEAM

BRAND FERRO
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Brand Ferro (b. 1968 in Skopje) is a real passionate Southern mix. A Macedonian-Cuban, he has the singular talent in recognizing and employing authenticity, whether in art, food or wine. His greatest passion, though, is cinema. He has received multiple international awards for his exceptional documentary cinematography.

imdb.com

SASHKO POTTER MICEVSKI
EDITOR

A graduate of the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, UK, Sashko is a freelance editor, sound designer and producer based in London and Skopje, where he owns sound stages and editing suites. He has worked on numerous internationally acclaimed short and feature-length fiction and documentary films.

sashkopotter.com

SANDRA BASTAŠIĆ
EDITOR

Sandra Bastašic (b. 1983 in Zagreb). She's currently working as an editor on different film genres and forms, as well as in other related positions in audio-visual projects. In 2014, after she finished her studies, the area of her creative interest became film titles and animation in contemporary art. She collaborated with Petra Seliškar on Damjan Nenadic's documentary *Days of Madness*.

imdb.com

VLADIMIR RAKIĆ
COMPOSER

Vladimir Rakić (b. 1974 in Novi Sad) lives and works in Amsterdam and Novi Sad. He has worked on over 130 documentary, feature, and animated films as well as in various segments of sound design such as editing, recording, designing, mixing, and composing. He is also a lecturer at the Dutch Film Academy in Amsterdam

vladimirrakic.com

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

PETRA PAN FILM

Petra Pan Film is a Slovenian production company founded in 2003 by the film director Petra Seliškar and the cinematographer Brand Ferro. It produces creative documentaries and arthouse fiction films that are strongly committed to individual vision and authorship as well as long term research based topics. In 2010, Seliškar and Ferro established the Festival of Creative Documentary Film MakeDox in Skopje, a favourite of many documentary filmmakers and audiences who enjoy its uncompromising programming and hospitable, informal atmosphere. In 20 years the company received many national and international awards.

petrapanfilm.com

PPFP

PPFP is a Macedonian production company established in 2007 and run by Sara Ferro. It is one of the few creative documentary production companies in North Macedonia, focusing mainly on auteur-driven documentary films. It specifically connects various countries to N. Macedonia and Balkan countries in terms of co-production and distribution. With their approach they are succeeding in finding the right ways to reach audiences also outside TV channels and traditional cinemas.

WOLFGANG & DOLLY

WOLFGANG & DOLLY is a boutique production company from Zagreb, Croatia. It was founded in 2017 by Tamara Babun with the desire to produce creative audio-visual works that tackle socially relevant topics and safeguard a drop of hope for the audience. The company is developing documentary, fiction and animated content but are not afraid to try producing hybrid experiences either.

wolfgangdolly.com

CINEPHAGE PRODUCTIONS

Co-founded by Victor Ede and Jean-Robert Viallet, Cinéphage Productions started to develop and produce its own projects in 2015. The company is based in Marseilles, France. Cinéphage has carried out french-speaking international co-productions with major European public broadcasters, international projects co-developed with partners from Europe, USA and Middle East for TV and theatrical release, and some more local projects from the South region of France.

cinephage.fr

FESTIVAL & AWARDS

World Premiere: Sarajevo Film Festival 2023
2023 MakeDox (North Macedonian Premiere)
2023 Festival Slovenskega Filma Portorož (Slovenian Premiere)
2023 City of Women, International Festival of Contemporary Arts
2023 Cineast Film Festival (Luxembourg Premiere)
2024 FIPADOC (French Premiere)
2024 É Tudo Verdade / It's All True (Latin American Premiere)
2024 ZagrebDox
2024 DOK.fest München (German Premiere)
2024 Beldocs (Serbian Premiere)
2024 Docudays International Human Rights Documentary FF (Ukrainian Premiere)
2024 Underhill Fest (Montenegro Premiere)
2024 IceDocs (Icelandic Premiere)
2024 The Silk Road International Film Festival (SRIFF) (Chinese Premiere)
2024 Verzio Film Festival (Hungarian Premiere)
2024 Slo Vision Festival Berlin

AWARDS

Vesna Award for Best Documentary Feature at Festival Slovenskega Filma Portorož 2023

NOMINATIONS

2023 Nominee Heart of Sarajevo, Best Documentary Sarajevo film festival
Docudays UA International Documentary Human Rights Film Festival 2024 Nominee DOCU/WORLD , Best Documentary
ZagrebDox 2024 Nominee Big Stamp, Regional Competition
Silk Road International Film Festival China 2024 Nominee Golden Silk Road Award, Best Documentary

PRESS

"Petra Seliškar, the energetic, innovative and resourceful director of several feature documentaries managed to create a little masterpiece this time."
"A film about the love for life"
Melita Zajc, Modern Times Review

"Body is a visually stunning and emotionally breathtaking piece of cinema."
Marko Stojiljković, Cineuropa

"As Petra Seliškar says: I wanted the viewers to really physically feel what words cannot describe. She succeeded perfectly in this. The body is really body horror. You will feel it."
Marcel Štefančič , Mladina

"Verbalisation and visualisation of her rich inner life and thoughts make Body an emotional and visually impressive documentary with which Seliškar intertwines life and art into one. The power of the human spirit and film become one Body."
Slobodna Dalmacija

CONTACT

World Sales

LIGHTDOX

hello@lightdox.com

lightdox.com

Production

PETRA PAN FILM

petrapanfilm@gmail.com

petrapanfilm.com

Regional press

PONTO agency

Sanija Hasanić

sanija@ponto.hr

HR mob: +385 98 745 591

BiH mob: +387 60 3267 322

International press

LIGHTDOX

Bojana Marić

hello@lightdox.com

