



Dubina dva

Depth Two

Ognjen Glavonić

Producer Dragana Jovović, Sandra Orlović, Sophie Erbs. **Production companies** Non-Aligned Films (Pančevo, Serbia), Humanitarian Law Center (Belgrade, Serbia), Cinéma Defacto (Paris, France). **Written and directed by** Ognjen Glavonić. **Director of photography** Tatjana Krstevski. **Editor** Jelena Maksimović. **Sound design** Jakov Munižaba. **Sound** Pavle Dinulović.

DCP, colour. 80 min. Serbian, Albanian.

Premiere 13 February 2016, Berlinale Forum

1999: While NATO was bombing Yugoslavia, a truck containing 53 dead bodies plunged into the Danube near the border with Romania. No enquiries were carried out. Previously, in Suva Reka, Kosovo: Serbian police herd villagers together. A woman experiences terrible things, bodies disappear into remote mass graves. People as little more than mere matter. Monstrous events, each and every detail organised according to a logistics of cruelty by a state enacting a deadly secret plan aimed at its own population. Ognjen Glavonić's *Dubina dva* succeeds in measuring truth. The documentary draws on the mechanics of a thriller to reconstruct the atrocities, allowing eyewitnesses from back then to have their say in voiceover, their testimonies accompanied by images from the present. We hear the voices of perpetrators but also that of a victim. People can kill people, but not memories.

Ansgar Vogt

A thriller documentary

A memorial is an object that serves to focus our memory on something – a person, an event. It can also be a visual mark, a visual entity that can be created to signify a troubling chapter in history. In 2001, a mass grave containing more than 700 bodies was found on the outskirts of Belgrade. Despite the disturbing proximity of the site of the mass grave to the centre of the capital city of Serbia, today, fifteen years later, this place remains unmarked. There's no memorial of any kind, and almost nobody in present-day Serbia even knows about the case or the story behind it. It is still a public secret.

By using light and sound, a combination of spoken testimonies and images of the places where the terrible crimes happened, I wanted to make a film that speaks directly to the sensations, imagination and emotions of the viewer. This film is an attempt to uncover, shed a light on and give a voice to this story, intentionally buried in silence. *Dubina dva*, a thriller documentary and a kind of film-memorial, is also a rebellion against the on-going oblivion.

Ognjen Glavonić

“We wanted to combine the images in the tone and atmosphere”

You decided for an artistic and dramaturgical concept that is quite unusual for subjects like this. Dubina dva brings the events much closer to the spectator than a traditional documentary. In a way, the structure follows the structure of a political thriller, while the format is experimental. Was there a specific point during your research when you decided in favour of that and to connect those dramaturgical and artistic formats?

Ognjen Glavonić: The idea for this film was born while I was preparing and researching for a different one, a fiction film, called 'The Load', which is about a similar subject, the same case, but from a different angle and perspective. That film, which I've been working on for more than six years now, follows a driver who drove a freezer truck through Serbia during the NATO bombing in 1999. It is based on several testimonies of drivers, but it is, above all, a fiction film. It tracks a metaphysical, inner journey of the character, as well as the journey through the darkness of the society at a specific moment of its decay. Through the on-going research, I was finding out more and more information, stories and ideas. I realised I had to put them aside and accumulate them, as I did not want them to interfere with the narrative structure and the style of the planned fiction film. As time passed, those stories I put aside started to grow, and I started to articulate them towards something that could be a film that would, in a different style, complement and serve as an upgrade of a future fiction film, so they could work as a diptych. Eventually I had the idea of making a short film comprising the images of one location, of empty spaces on that location, and several monologues about what happened there, from the people who participated in the event. That was the beginning of *Dubina dva*, and, eventually, it grew into a feature-length film in a similar style: a combination of spoken testimonies and images of the places where the crimes happened seventeen years ago.

From the start I knew that I did not want to make a video reconstruction of the event, or make any kind of reportage. I

wanted to structure the narrative as a mystery, a thriller, by giving the parts and traces of the bigger story, but leaving to the audience the chance to complete it, connect it together. This way, by not reconstructing the event through images, I wanted to speak directly to the senses, imagination and emotions of the audience. I wanted to leave them an opportunity to create the images and sensations for themselves. Questions raised and images created that way are engraved far more deeply and strongly than any other standard distribution of facts and information could ever do.

Where did you find the monologues and how did you select the passages for your film?

The monologues you hear are actually the testimonies from the people who were related to this case. We recorded only one interview, and the rest is from the material that is available to the public, which was shown on several TV channels in Serbia over the years – the trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We did not get the audio of the testimonies from the trials at the Special Court in Belgrade, even though they have been recorded and should be open and available to public. We watched several hundred hours of testimonies recorded during almost ten years of trials, on three different cases. During ten months of editing, we chose the people and passages you hear in the film. Previous edits of the film had a lot more witnesses, and also a lot of archive material, but eventually the editor, Jelena Maksimović, and I created a small book of rules that helped us shape and find the film we were searching for. We decided to use only personal and intimate stories, memories, and recollections of each of the witnesses, and to use only the witnesses who were present, who saw with their own eyes what they are talking about.

Do the images show the authentic locations?

We started the journey through Serbia and Kosovo to record the authentic locations where the events took place. On our way we also stopped and recorded the spaces and details that grabbed our attention, and intuitively seemed to be a part of the film that we were making. Also, I wanted to incorporate some imagery that is very personal, and is important to myself, as they reminded me of my own childhood at the time when the events from the film took place. The images came first – we did not have the spoken testimonies yet. And when we started editing we knew that we did not want to use the images suggestively, or as an illustration. We wanted to combine and connect them in the tone and atmosphere, taking care that the rhythm of the editing followed the flow of the stories.

You were one of the few Serbian filmmakers who were among the first people to visit Kosovo after it became an independent state. Did your visit inspire you to address the commemorative culture in your country?

I visited Kosovo when I went to a film festival there. The people you meet at film festivals are not your typical, normal and average crowd, nor is that kind of visit the actual showcase of how the real living situation is in any specific place. So I cannot say that my visit inspired me to make a film about this subject, especially as I first visited Kosovo after I started the work on my fiction film. Also, I think my film has more to do with my own surroundings, the place I currently live in – Belgrade and Serbia – than it has to do with Kosovo. I think

it is really important that my colleagues, the filmmakers from the ex-Yugoslav countries, turn their cameras, their lenses and their focus towards the mirror, toward ourselves – to problematise, dissect and question what is, and what constitutes our heritage, our recent history.

You deal also with 'lighter' subjects, like in Živan Makes a Punk Festival, and you run a small film festival in Pančevo, close to Belgrade. How do you bear the antagonism between the heavy burden of recent Serbian history on the one hand, and on the other hand, the almost light-hearted way people overcome that burden by using black humour and warmth?

Živan Makes a Punk Festival is a documentary about one man's dream and the struggle it takes to follow the path of fulfilment. When all the circumstances are against you, and the people around you don't really care about what you are trying to do, the only capital you have is your own enthusiasm, which usually borders on obsession. It's a film about the feelings you get when you try to achieve something in an environment that's just not interested in what you have to say. As for myself, the Pančevo Film Festival is also a product of similar enthusiasm. I think the way to function and live in this system is by creating for yourself a place where you can showcase things (films/music/subjects) that are not very visible or present, but you feel are important, and that kind of place/film/manifestation is, at the same time, changing and enriching your environment.

Interview: Bernd Buder, January 2016



Ognjen Glavonić was born in Pančevo, former Yugoslavia, now Republic of Serbia, in 1985. He studied Film and Television Directing at the University of Arts in Belgrade. He is the director and one of the founders of the Pančevo Film Festival in Serbia. *Dubina Dva/Depth Two* is his second feature-length documentary.

Films

2009: *Živan Pujic Jimmy* (20 min.). 2010: *Ritam gitara, prateći vokal/Rhythm Guitar, Back Vocals* (23 min.). 2012: *Od pepela/Made of Ashes* (17 min.). 2014: *Živan pravi pank festival/Živan Makes a Punk Festival* (63 min.). 2016: *Dubina dva / Depth Two*.