

TARANTULA PRESENTS

MOS STELLARIUM

by Karolina Markiewicz and Pascal Piron

PRESS KIT

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LUXEMBOURG - 2015 - 55 MIN - IMAGE 1.85 - SOUND : STEREO

IN THEATER: NOVEMBER 11TH 2015



TARANTULA



FILM FUND
LUXEMBOURG

SYNOPSIS

Six young refugees talk about their escapes and trips, as well as the new problems they encounter in Luxembourg.

Mos Stellarium is a poetic feature documentary about Dzemil, Milena, Anna, Yunus, Rijad and Eko. In all intimacy, they tell their stories as young refugees. Attached to the travelled landscapes and all the encounters, the memories look back at these strange journey and turn to the future. It is, in a way, the human existence in a universal sense.

Like mysterious maps of constellations, their voyages began in Afghanistan, Syria, Kosovo or Montenegro. They headed for Europe, Luxembourg in particular, and their destinies turn them into young adults by accident, but full of dignity nonetheless.

CREW LIST

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Directors | Karolina Markiewicz and Pascal Piron |
| Producer | Elise André |
| Associated producer | Donato Rotunno |
| Camera | Jako Raybaut |
| Editor | Félix Sorger |
| Sound editor and mixer | Loïc Collignon |
| Foley | Olaf Simon |
| Music composer | Nima Azarmgin |
| Colour grading | Raoul Nadalet |

With the support of *FILM FUND LUXEMBOURG*

WHAT DOES THE TITLE REFER TO?

The title *MOS STELLARIUM* means «morals of the constellations», with reference to the name of a European police operation organised in all EU countries in October 2014: *Mos Maiorum*. The authorities undertook to outline the journeys, different routes and the networks of people smugglers. The collation of the information gathered during this police operation formed constellation-like networks across the map of Europe.

Constellations are images which outline the connections between different points and which mirror the stars. We attempt to read meaning into these images and lay down rules and guidelines to steer us in our every-

day life; we try to construe behaviour patterns for our societies. In this case, the aim of the constellation formed by this police investigation was to break up a people-smuggling ring. Operation Mos Maiorum led to many asylum seekers being sent back to their countries of origin as these countries are no longer at war. Mos Maiorum is an operation among many others regularly carried out throughout the EU territory. These operations often bear a Greek or Latin name, mainly for linguistic reasons. Whereas constellations realistically have little impact on our life, those that represent migrations have a direct link with us

TARANTULA

Drawing on its twenty years of experience in co-production, Tarantula is endorsing a scenario and the issues it raises. Director, producers and actors - in the broadest sense of the word -, all those that allow the film to come into being. To support these artistically ambitious projects, Tarantula joined forces with neighbouring countries.

Several films stand out among the films that Tarantula has co-produced: *A Piece of Sky* by Bénédicte Liénard, a feature film which drew attention at the Festival de Cannes in the official selection Un Certain Regard in 2002, *Fratricide* by Yilmaz Arslan which received the Silver Leopard at the Locarno Festival in 2005, but also *Nue Propriété* by Joachim Lafosse selected at the Venice Film Festival in 2006, *Carré Blanc* by Jean-Baptiste Leonetti shown at the Toronto Film Festival in 2011, *Mobile Home* by François Pirot selected at the Locarno Festival in 2012 and *Secrets of war* which has received numerous awards at festivals worldwide.

Wishing to receive support both from an artistic and technical point of view, Karolina Markiewicz and Pascal Piron turned to Tarantula which is well known for its commitment to topics such as exile, migration, culture and a questioning of the world, echoing the issues at the heart of their project. A meeting was set up with a sense of urgency due to the desire and need for a new perspective to give the stories of these adolescent refugees in Luxembourg a wider audience.

This project immediately appealed to the Tarantula team due to its quality and poetry, the sincere commitment of both filmmakers and especially due to the urgency of its topic: the distress and fears of young people in the current world, and more specifically in Europe, when coping with exile and integration. A documentary reflecting a global issue set in the reality of Luxembourg.

For three years, Tarantula Distribution's creative team has been supporting film releases in the Benelux countries and ensured that the projects are brought to the attention of their target audience. Today, Tarantula Distribution is offering a teaching pack in connection with the film *Mos Stellarium* to provide teachers with complementary activities enabling them to research or develop learning objectives set out in the teaching programmes.

This 20-page file includes pictures from the movie and the film set, as well as documents and official figures provided by the Luxembourg Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Immigration, an interview of the directors, information regarding associations and possible actions to help migrants.

The themes of the film may be developed in the classroom in different ways and we encourage teachers to expand their classroom approach through the documents provided and suggest some possible follow up projects (discussions with asylum-seeker students, newspaper articles, novels, comics, songs, movies...)

The full teaching pack is available on www.tarantula.lu

THE DIRECTORS



KAROLINA MARKIEWICZ ET PASCAL PIRON

are both teachers. In addition, they both work on an artistic processes based on different types of media and they focus on similar interests and themes, including immigration and the problems of young people dealing with exile and asylum, with an awareness of image and its impact on viewers. In practice, their partnership started in 2013 with the idea of an exhibition for the Kiosk of the AICA Luxembourg (International Association of Art Critics - Luxembourg, which Karolina belongs to).

This led to the conceptualisation and realisation of the installation «Everybody should

have the right to die in an expensive car» (presented from July 2013 to March 2014). On the one hand, this work and the ensuing collaboration allowed Pascal Piron to break away from painting and consider the image differently: his artwork developed from a two-dimensional representation to include a spatial dimension. He believes that this encounter allowed his work to progress to include other media, and other artistic forms, in particular film. On the other hand, for Karolina Markiewicz, this collaboration was an opportunity to return to her research on the theme of identity (she is the daughter of Polish immigrants, political refugees fleeing the civil conflict who arrived in Luxembourg in 1975), but also documentation and film-making, and to complete a documentary project she had begun in 2004 by co-directing the prototype documentary *Les Formidables*, retracing the fears of five teenagers, among whom were asylum seekers - some of her former students.

The project was initially showcased in the exhibition *Angste Povera* of the PNSL Collectif

(15 May to 29 June 2014), but also the *Rencontres Internationales* in Paris in December 2014.

Furthermore, this collaboration has expanded to several other projects (installations, video, theatre, visual arts) which aim to observe the individual as part of the human community, which seems somewhat resigned in appearance, in complex contexts. When observed through certain events and artistic works - film, art work, play, musical composition or architectural projects - the individual appears lucid and strong.

One of these projects is the video blog *Kulturstruktur/video talks* which via close-up image and a sustained attention in the conversation, presents forthright statements by artists or representatives of cultural institutions, such as the filmmakers, Luc Dardenne, Sabine Lubbe Bakker and Niels von Koevorden, Sergei Loznitsa, Joshua Oppenheimer, Kathryn Hunter or theatre personalities such as Frank Feitler, Romeo Castellucci, Lemi Ponifasio, to name but a few.

STARTING POINT OF THE PROJET

This project is based on written documentation work spanning over several years which Karolina Markiewicz started when she began teaching in a Luxembourg secondary school in 2006. She soon found that many asylum-seeker students wanted to confide in her as their integration classroom teacher, and they wished to share their story and explain their situation. With their permission, she wrote down their stories and reviewed them as necessary, often with them. When they met in 2013, Karolina Markiewicz and Pascal Piron, both highly aware of this modern-day issue, discussed the subject, reflected on it, started writing and soon wanted to make a documentary taking a poetic standpoint to ensure the anonymity of the young people. The film aims to portray the lives of six young refugees living in Luxembourg and Montenegro. It traces their daily student activities but also the administrative tasks they carry out as they manage the asylum procedures for their families and for themselves (they are the ones who speak the official languages of Luxembourg), and also focuses on their fears

and peculiarities.

Far from being judgemental or political, the intention is to give them a voice and bring a personal and humane touch. The film raises many questions on how human beings evolve in a specific context - that is to say, it presents each young person as an individual, while maintaining his/her anonymity, not only for his/her safety but also to establish a form of universality concerning the subject of exile.

The six chapters focusing on six young asylum seekers move from the context-specific, i.e. the individual - he/she is presented through various isolated physical features (a close-up of an eye, an ear, a mouth, hands, hair...) - and moves towards universality. Although their accounts are unique, they become representative, not representative of all refugees, but more specifically of an idea. An idea through which the viewer wants to discover their life journey. These journeys

are distinctive, but mostly they are long and painful because they are not temporary or limited in time, but rather permanent. Even after obtaining papers allowing them to reside in Luxembourg or after the cancellation of the procedure of return to their country of origin (here Montenegro), anxiety, melancholy persist and the quest for integration is perpetual.

The film aims to portray the lives of six young refugees living in Luxembourg and Montenegro

The intention is not to judge their situations or to defend a political position, but to give them a voice and bring a personal and humane touch.

In the delicate current context, at a time when there are over 57 million refugees throughout the world and when asylum policies are complex, the procedures long and complicated, there is mounting sense of loneliness and misunderstanding, especially among young people. In Luxembourg, the most courageous are totally committed to their academic and extracurricular activities, despite the ever-present underlying risk of deportation.

These are long corridors of exile, to quote the French sociologist and anthropologist, Michel Agier («Dans le couloir des exiles. Etre étranger dans un monde commun» Editions du Croquant, 2011»). From an epistemological point of view first of all, adopting a decentred and empathetic stance, which are characteristic of the discipline, he reminds us that foreignness and identity are only normative «fictions». Having set the framework, he

turns the political implications with what the author refers to as «fractioned globalisation» characterised by a double process: the collapse of borders which are replaced by walls and the creation of new worlds within these corridors of exile. How can we, on the basis of this situation and from an anthropological perspective, build «a communal world». This is the essential premise of Mos Stellarium. The film *Les Formidables* can be considered to be a prototype for Mos Stellarium. New accounts, new images and a new soundtrack come to enrich this new film and the return to the country of origin is also discussed as one young person sees this asylum request turned down.

THE INSTALLATION

This project was the choice of the Casino Luxembourg - Forum of Contemporary Art for its selection and was then invited by the Kunstverein Schichtwechsel of Liechtenstein, which presented a video installation on four screens composed of extracts from the film from July to October 2015 at the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein. This installation represented Liechtenstein at the Contemporary Art Biennale in Venice this autumn 2015. The installation establishes a link firstly between migrants and stars, as isolated elements and secondly between their courses, the migrations and stellar images.

YUNUS was never precisely my pupil, he was in some of my colleagues' classrooms. With some really committed teachers, not those who lounge around in the comfortable teacher position, those who listen and try to help. But Yunus and I always greet each other. He greets everyone, he is polite. His story is tough: at thirteen, he fled Afghanistan, he tells his story in detail. He left with his family and other people; he can remember around forty people and several smugglers. The people who claim to save other people - all for the money. Undoubtedly the most vile network, the most uncontrollable in the world. He was separated from his family during the crossing between Tur-

ANNA is the youngest of the six protagonists. She arrived two years ago with her younger brother and her parents. All together. In a truck. She does not remember the journey, she slept, someone must have given her something. It lasted seven days and twelve hours, that she knows. They left Syria during the night and arrived at the Luxembourg border one morning. Here, the

key and Greece. The journey was long (it took nine months, often hidden in wooden freight boxes). He finally arrived in Luxembourg on the 24th of December 2008, alone. He is thin, he has got used to not eating and to confined spaces. He is small but elegant. And like many Afghans in Luxembourg, he has become an model student, honest, hardworking, and obviously he arouses the teachers' empathy. In 2012, he participated in an exhibition on Afghanistan at Neumünster Abbey, he shared his story in classrooms. He does not know if he likes doing this or not. He says it's good for the others, for those who want to know. At first he lived in a shelter for young adults and it was hard - he

sky is blue and the pavements are clean, no debris or blood everywhere, the children's bodies are not mangled, they walk, they play, they laugh. Here, there are no bombs exploding nearby or far away. Here, you can relax and think about the next step in your life. She wants to be an actress or a doctor to please her parents. She is tall, very pretty and yes, from now on, she can do anything. Her school and music kept

didn't have much opportunity to focus on himself. No space to be a self-centred teenager. He can't deal with frivolity either: he bears the weight of his journey, the reasons that lead to his departure, and traditions. The Luxembourg authorities, overwhelmed by this kind of destiny, struggled to cope with his case, they were afraid to trust this kid, they organised meetings to decide on his fate. Eventually, they granted him asylum and managed to locate his parents and his brothers, all alive, and after three years of moving around France, they joined Yunus in Luxembourg. He didn't recognise his brothers; they had all changed. He has been living in Luxembourg for six years.

her going; One direction's naive lyrics will breathe life into any young girl. The memory of her friends back in Damascus, dead or alive, haunt her, but she knows that her life experience makes her lucid and vigilant. «You have to be brave and tolerant, otherwise you destroy everything», she says with a long black lock of hair in front of her eyes.





EKO had to go back with his two brothers and his parents. They had been in Luxembourg for two years, they went to school, they learned everything there was to learn, and one day, just before Christmas, the police came to get them. They were placed in an immigration detention facility for three days. His eight-year old brother cried nonstop. His mother who had recently undergone surgery also wept. Nobody would accept to treat her without money or presents in Montenegro.

His father tried to find solutions. Fast. And then they were boarding a plane and they landed in Podgorica. They continued on towards northern Montenegro without anything. No papers, not even those needed to re-enrol in school. Their situation was even worse than before they left: no home, no jobs, nothing but the beautiful black mountains. Today they live with their grandparents and they have nothing. His younger brother still cries, he can't understand. They are all still taken aback but

they are friendly: Luxembourg was great. Eko would like to come back one day, to see all his friends again, to play football, to get the chance to become someone, as he says. Even speak Luxembourgish again. He frowns as he wonders what his future holds. He struggles to swallow his saliva.

MILENA 18. Precious. Discreet. When you run into her around the school, she shies away. She is polite, she says hello. For over seven years now, she has been saying hello. She has a downcast expression with a serious gaze framed by seemingly endless eyelashes. She is Kosovan. This young girl lives for her family (for whom she is concerned, she only wants the best for them), she protects them from all administrative procedures. She translates the letters and stands in the queue at the counter of the Ministry for Foreigners, as they call it. She does it all. For her family and the neighbours at the hostel. She left Kosovo at the

age of thirteen, she had never been anywhere else before. Luxembourg is another world. But she has got used to it. She is a student in paramedical class, top of the class. One day, the asylum procedure of her family was cancelled. They were cancelled, as they say. Today, things are on hold again, she is waiting for the residence permit. She has attended school for over four years, she fulfils the criteria of the new law, but it has not been passed yet. They will find work, accommodation, if necessary she will take care of everything, again. Even though she finds it hard to trust the system here - she is upset by the procedures

- she wants to stay. It's better here and here she will become a nurse.



RIJAD 22 years old, his family is in Luxembourg: his mother and younger brother. He remembers the war, fleeing through Sarajevo and then their life in Germany. For more than ten years. But they didn't get the papers, they had to return to Montenegro. He belongs to the Muslim minority so it has never been easy anywhere. He is alone now, he is studying law, he will be a lawyer. It will be difficult to practice his profession

in Montenegro without being corrupt, difficult to remain independent. But he wants to try; for things to change, people have to stay. He tries to see his family as often as possible. He takes the bus and travels the thousands of kilometres to get to Luxembourg. Here, his brother is happier, even though he does not have papers yet, even though he can't return to Montenegro. Not yet. But a

glimmer of hope shines in their beautiful blue eyes.



DZEMIL 18 years old: tall, fair-haired, fragile, a bit too thin. He has bright blue eyes that look immensely sad. He comes from Montenegro and lives in Luxembourg with his mother in a centre for asylum seekers. He says that he does not like to talk too much, yet as soon as he gets a chance, he tells his life story. Often after class. He probably does not like to talk in front of others, he needs to have absolute trust. Proximity. He thinks a lot while talking, sometimes he starts, he gets agitated, smiles or looks desperately sad. He remembers snippets from his childhood and talks about them. His eyes fill up with tears easily. He is a wrestler, a combat

sport; he has health issues, he often suffers from nosebleeds and feels weak, tired. He does not get much sleep when administrative matters regarding his situation and that of his mother get complicated. He deals with the lawyer, the doctors (his mother suffers from cataracts and other health problems), he pays the bills and works whenever he can. He does odd maintenance jobs, for example. He likes being in secondary school. He feels protected, he says. He is very handsome and is popular with some of the girls in his class. The teachers like him a lot too. And he likes some in return, then he has a friendly

relationship with them, he asks them how they are. He feels great empathy towards people around him, he is pleasant, smiling, he listens and does not respond right away. His appearance is always neat. He often wears the same clothes, but he looks clean; his hair is well cut (despite the lack of money, his mother and he are very firm about this: don't inspire doubt or pity, go unnoticed). He has dreams: one day to drive his own car, ideally, a matte black BMW, never go back to live in Montenegro or anywhere else there, and participate in a martial arts course in Los Angeles. He often says that he would like to be able to bear anything, like in wrestling competitions when he tackles his opponent head on, even when it comes to the blows. But the trying circumstances which he and his mother are facing (he seems more worried about her) and the brutal situations (police interrogations and signature of documents under duress, the hostility he feels from officials, the lack of money and the deep fear of the future) come as the hardest blows.



TARANTULA

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